



Houria CIC

## Safeguarding Policy

### Introduction

The act of safeguarding is to protect children, young people and adults at risk from abuse, neglect or harm. Safeguarding involves people and organisations working together to stop abuse and neglect occurring and intervening effectively in situations if we do see abuse taking place.

In the context of safeguarding adults, the vulnerability of the adult at risk is related to how able they are to make and exercise their own informed choices free from duress, pressure or undue influence of any sort and to protect themselves from abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Vulnerability can be seen as a continuum – this approach reflects the shifting nature of vulnerability and encourages practitioners to identify the potential of acquired vulnerability due to wider circumstances – in that an adult can be temporarily vulnerable. Vulnerability may be an important factor in safeguarding concerns relating to Domestic Abuse, Female Genital Cutting (FGM) and Slavery.

The aims of safeguarding adults are:

- To prevent harm and reduce the risk of abuse or neglect to adults with care and support needs
- To safeguard individuals in a way that supports them in making choices and having control in how they choose to live their lives.
- To promote an outcomes approach in safeguarding that works for people resulting in the best experience possible
- To raise public awareness so that professionals, other staff and communities as a whole play their part in preventing, identifying and responding to abuse and neglect.

Houria CIC aims to adopt the highest possible standards and take all reasonable steps in relation to the safety and welfare of the people we serve. Please refer to the Code of Conduct for a detailed outline of the way in which all parties involved in Houria CIC are required to interact with one another.

Volunteers are required to do the following before directly working with any of our Sisters:

1. Provide or show proof of application for a DBS certificate
2. Attend safeguarding training with Houria CIC
3. Read this policy and be aware of your responsibilities.

## **Policy Overview**

This policy is ratified by Houria CIC Directors. It is reviewed biennially. This policy applies to all the volunteers of Houria CIC and anyone working with or on behalf of the group.

It is the duty of Houria CIC to assess the needs for care and support of the adults who it supports. Houria has a responsibility when recruiting beneficiaries of the project and volunteers to assess:

- a) whether the adult does have needs for care and support, and
- b) if the adult does, what those needs are.

Houria is under a duty to undertake, or cause others to undertake, an adult safeguarding enquiry when it has a reasonable belief that an adult:

- a) Has care and support needs;
- b) Is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect; and
- c) Is unable to protect themselves from that abuse or neglect because of their care and support needs

Knowing how to spot the signs of potential abuse and neglect is everyone's responsibility, and concerns should always be raised if one has them.

Houria CIC's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is Kimberly De Portela E Prado (CEO - 07377059699). Kim is responsible for keeping abreast of guidance changes and will attend appropriate training on behalf of the organisation.

## **Houria CIC's Safeguarding Policy**

This policy will contribute to safeguarding volunteers, employees and service users by:

- Contributing to the establishment of a safe, resilient and robust ethos in the group, built on mutual respect, and shared values;
- Implementing robust and deliverable safeguarding and protection policies and procedures;
- Working in partnership with other agencies in our area who have expertise in working with vulnerable people, children and refugees, including the local authority and the police.

Encouraging all members of the group to participate by:

- alerting the DSL to any signs and indicators that all might not be well with a service user
- developing awareness of the risks and vulnerabilities volunteers, employees and service users may face;
- addressing concerns at the earliest possible stage.

All volunteers and employees of Houria CIC will:

- be aware of this safeguarding policy;
- attend safeguarding training;
- attend induction training
- be subject to appropriate background checks and be in receipt of a DBS certificate (Disclosure Barring Service).
- be alert to signs and indicators of possible abuse
- record concerns and give the record immediately to the DSL

## **Safeguarding Responsibilities**

The Directors of Houria CIC hold the responsibility to ensure that the safeguarding policy is implemented. They will ensure that:

- Houria CIC has a safeguarding policy that meets the requirements of the government's Charity Commission;
- Houria CIC operates appropriate checks on volunteers and employees via DBS;
- at least one senior member of the Houria CIC acts as DSL;
- the DSL attends the appropriate training session;

- arrangements are put in place in the event of a complaint against a volunteer or employee by a service user;
- Houria CIC reviews its policies/procedures regularly and remedies any deficiencies or weaknesses brought to its attention without delay;
- all volunteers and employees attend a safeguarding training/information session when they are onboarded.

## **Safer Selection**

Houria CIC has policies in place to ensure that volunteers working with refugee children, young people and vulnerable adults are selected safely. Measures to ensure this include:

- Scrutinising individuals who volunteer for these roles, by verifying identity documentation and qualifications, checking employment or volunteering history and obtaining references (this includes people acting as interpreters for the group).
- Undertaking appropriate checks through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

## **The Designated Safeguarding Lead**

Houria CIC's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is Kimberly De Portela E Prado (CEO - 07377059699). The DSL is responsible and accountable for safeguarding within Houria CIC. If and when there are safeguarding concerns about any member of the organisation, the DSL will decide what steps should be taken and advise the group on escalation steps and/or bringing in expert, outside agencies. Houria CIC intends to enlist a trustee with a responsibility for monitoring safeguarding.

Safeguarding will be dealt with in a confidential manner. The DSL may have to act through an interpreter but in that case the interpreter should be aware of the need for confidentiality. Other members of the group will be informed of relevant details only when the DSL feels their having knowledge of a situation will improve their ability to deal with an individual and / or family.

A written record will be made of what information has been shared with whom, and when. Where necessary, any written records will be stored on secure files in a central place separate from project material and access to these records by volunteers or employees other than the DSL will be restricted.

The DSL will have overall responsibility for liaising with outside agencies, including the police and the Home Office, in the unlikely event that a service user is regarded as open to radicalisation.

## Reporting a Safeguarding Concern

If you suspect abuse or someone tells you of alleged abuse it is your duty to report this as soon as possible to Houria CIC's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):

Kimberly De Portela E Prado: 07377059699

If you urgently need to make a safeguarding referral and Kim is not available the numbers for the relevant South West councils are:

Bristol City Council Tel: 0117 922 2700

South Gloucestershire Council Tel: 01454 868007

You may be asked to write down the details of the incident or concern but you will be guided by the Houria CIC Safeguarding team. It is the Safeguarding team's responsibility to escalate the concerns further it is not a volunteer's responsibility.

Never, ever, turn away or do nothing. If you have a worry, make sure you talk to the DSL about it.

Your Responsibilities:

- Recognise risk
- Respond
- Respect
- Report

A disclosure in this circumstance would be when a Sister tells you something that has affected her, for example about instances of abuse. Part of what Houria offers to the Sisters is a safe space to be themselves and say what they think. As a Houria volunteer, the women may discuss things that concern or affect them. This could include concerns involving another member of the team or something outside of Houria altogether.

Discussing difficult topics with the Sisters may be difficult to hear and tough to deal with. Following these Dos and Don'ts will help you offer them the best support possible.

## **Do:**

- remain calm, approachable and receptive
- listen carefully, without interrupting
- acknowledge you understand how difficult this may be
- make it clear that you are taking what is said seriously
- reassure them that they have done the right thing in telling you
- let them know that you'll do everything you can to help them
- contact the police or other emergency services first if there is an immediate threat to someone's health or safety
- make a written record of exactly what has been said
- submit this report to the DSL immediately

## **Don't:**

- promise confidentiality - you will have to share your knowledge with a limited number of people that need to know
- ask leading or probing questions
- investigate / call social services
- repeatedly question or ask the Sister to repeat the disclosure
- discuss the disclosure with people who do not need to know
- say nothing or delay in reporting the disclosure to the DSL. be guided by your best intentions and be assured that you will be supported by the organisation

## **Volunteering with Houria**

### DBS certificate

DBS stands for Disclosure and Barring Service. Volunteers are required to have a valid, enhanced, clear DBS certificate in order to work directly with the Sisters.

Houria CIC would not exclude a person from volunteering because of a conviction unless this affected their role directly or the beneficiaries of the organisation would be put at undue risk by their presence in the network. Volunteers who lone work with our customers are required to

declare previous convictions and complete a DBS check before commencement of work. If at any time later Houria CIC becomes aware of a previous conviction or incident involving vulnerable adults or children their volunteer role would be temporarily suspended pending investigation and risk assessment.

If you already have a valid certificate from another organisation/role then you may use it for the Houria volunteer role. You will need to present the physical certificate to a member of the Houria volunteer coordinating team. If you do not have a DBS certificate then you can apply for one via Houria. We will provide you with the relevant information for this process.

Once you have started the process you will need to show us proof of application. DBS checks can take up to 8 weeks to come through, so once we have received your application you will be able to work with the Sisters in group settings but not in 1-2-1 settings.

### Safeguarding training

As a Houria volunteer you will need to attend our safeguarding training prior to working in direct contact with the Sisters. The safety and wellbeing of our community is crucial and Houria has a duty of care to ensure that everyone is protected from harm, abuse and neglect. The training will equip you with the knowledge and resources that you need in order to feel confident and able to engage and uplift our Sisters.

## Categories of Abuse

Abuse and neglect can take many forms. Organisations and individuals should not be constrained in their view of what constitutes abuse or neglect, and should always consider the circumstances of the individual case.

Abuse includes:

Physical abuse – including assault hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate physical sanctions.

Sexual abuse – including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting.

Psychological abuse – including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.

Discriminatory abuse – including discrimination on grounds of race, gender and gender identity, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

Modern slavery - the illegal exploitation of people for personal/ commercial gain. Victims are trapped in servitude that they were deceived or coerced into, and cannot leave.

Types of modern slavery:

- Human trafficking
- Forced labour
- Domestic servitude
- Sexual exploitation, such as escort work, prostitution and pornography
- Illegal adoption
- Debt bondage – being forced to work to pay off debts that realistically they never will be able to.

Possible indicators of modern slavery:

- Signs of physical or emotional abuse
- Appearing to be malnourished, unkempt or withdrawn



- Isolation from the community, seeming under the control or influence of others
- Living in dirty, cramped or overcrowded accommodation and or living and working at the same address
- Lack of personal effects or identification documents
- Always wearing the same clothes
- Avoidance of eye contact, appearing frightened or hesitant to talk to strangers
- Fear of law enforcers

Human trafficking – involves men, women and children being brought into a situation of exploitation through the use of violence, deception or coercion and forced to work against their will. People can be trafficked for many different forms of exploitation such as forced prostitution, forced labour, forced begging, and forced criminality, domestic servitude, forced marriage, forced organ removal. When children are trafficked, no violence, deception or coercion needs to be involved: simply bringing them into exploitative conditions constitutes trafficking.

Domestic Violence – officially classified as “any incident of threatening behaviors, violence or abuse between adults who are or have been in a relationship together, or between family members, regardless of gender or sexuality”. We think of domestic violence as hitting, slapping and beating, but it can also include emotional abuse as well as forced marriage and so-called “honour crimes”.

Female Genital Cutting / Mutilation (FGM) - FGM comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genital organs or any other injury to the female genital organs for nonmedical reasons. FGM is most often carried out on young girls aged between infancy and 15 years old. It is against the law in the UK and has been a criminal offence since 1985. It is a serious crime that carries a penalty of 14 years in prison.

Financial or material abuse – including theft, fraud, exploitation, coercion in relation to an adult’s financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Neglect and acts of omission – including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

Self-neglect – this covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one’s personal hygiene, health or surrounding and includes behaviour such as hoarding. It is important to consider capacity when self-neglect is suspected. Also consider how it may impact on other family members and whether this gives rise to a safeguarding concern.

Organisational abuse – including neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting like a hospital or care home, e.g. this may range from isolated incidents to continuing ill-treatment.

## **Houria CIC’s Focus**

Houria CIC provides a service and Sisterhood to women who are refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and/or survivors of slavery. More detailed information around the issues that may arise in someone who identifies as being a member of one of these groups can be found below.

These groups may have undergone many stressful experiences, including:

- imprisonment
- torture
- loss of property
- malnutrition
- physical assault
- extreme fear
- rape/sexual assault
- loss of livelihood
- the stress of living in camps or precarious situations
- the stress of being resettled.

Referring to refugees more specifically, it is common for refugees to suffer from many physical and psychological symptoms and disorders, partly because of the stressful experiences they endure. Assessing the variety of experiences, symptoms, and disorders that refugees suffer from is challenging. Furthermore, differences in language and culture can act as a barrier against treatment.

When refugees resettle to a host country, it is usually in a place that is not of their choosing. Refugees must adapt to a new place and language under uncertain circumstances and face uncertain futures. Re-establishing a home and identity, while trying to juggle the tasks of daily life is yet another challenging experience refugees must endure.

Refugees are at a higher risk than the general population for a variety of mental health disorders. Some studies show refugees are at 10 times the risk of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, chronic pain, and other physical complaints. Exposure to torture is the strongest instigator of PTSD among refugees.

Disillusionment, demoralization and depression often occur due to migration-associated losses, or later, when initial hopes and expectations of relocating are not realized. Events that evoke memories of past trauma and loss can contribute to the emergence of anxiety, depression, or PTSD.

Though mental health disorders like anxiety, depression, and PTSD are not uncommon, the way in which they sprout and manifest in refugees can be complicated and atypical. Symptoms and signs include (this is not designed to be used as a checklist):

- Inability to sleep and nightmares
- Social withdrawal/unwillingness to interact:
- Angry or violent outbursts;
- Drug or alcohol abuse

## References and Guides

Houria CIC will fulfil their responsibilities as laid out in the following policies and guides:

- [Bristol City Council Safeguarding Adults Policy](#)
- [Bristol City Council Information Sharing Protocol for safeguarding](#)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE 2013)
- The Children Act 1989
- Children and Families Act 2014
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989
- The Care Act 2014
- The Care and Support Statutory Guidance
- Prevent
- [Individuals at risk of being drawn into serious and organised crime – a Prevent guide](#)
- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
- General Data Protection Regulations 2018/Data Protection Act 2018