

CHILD AND VULNERABLE PERSON POLICY

1. AIMS

The Society recognises that in its activities it has a responsibility towards others, especially any minor or vulnerable adult member (herein referred to as vulnerable individuals) to prevent any form of abuse. For the purposes of this Policy, the term minor is used to mean any member or visitor under the age of 18. The term 'vulnerable adult' is defined in Appendix A.

The aim of the Policy is:

- To assist members by setting out their responsibilities to safeguard vulnerable individuals.
- Provide guidance to members on adopting behaviour to protect vulnerable individuals and themselves under different circumstances that might arise in the Society.
- To have a process in place for reporting allegations or suspicions of abuse.

2. THE SOCIETY

The objectives of the Society are the cultivation and promotion of photography in order to advance the photographic skills of all members, and to provide a wider appreciation of photography within the local community. This is achieved by means of presentations, lectures, tuition, discussion, competition, exhibitions and any other means deemed suitable by the Committee.

The Society values all members, but recognises its particular responsibility to individual members who are vulnerable individuals. All members, especially vulnerable individuals, must be treated with respect and dignity, recognising any unique personal needs.

Adherence to the Policy is a condition of all grades of membership of the Society – a member's attention is drawn to the Policy on the joining form, along with other Society policies and rules. In the case of minors their parent or guardian must countersign the form as acceptance of the Policy. The Policy is available to view on the Society website and all new members are given a copy in their welcome pack. This Policy will be reviewed once a year by the Society Committee and will be made available to members at the AGM and on the Society website.

3. SOCIETY ACTIVITIES

- 3.1 Presentations, competitions and social evenings open to all members; held in the Solihull WI Hall. These meetings are the main Society activities. Meetings are low risk environments for vulnerable individuals. Society members, by rota, welcome members and visitors and identify any special personal needs - for example, the siting of wheelchairs.
- 3.2 Vulnerable individuals should not be allowed to operate, assemble & disassemble equipment or enter the kitchen.
- 3.3 Occasional outings for which members arrange their own transport. These involve small numbers meeting, usually in public places. Occasional workshops, sometimes at other clubs and societies, in which members work in small groups. Members are advised not to offer lifts to minors unless accompanied or authorised by a parent or guardian. Members should not work on their own with a minor or vulnerable adult. They should make sure they can be observed by others, and preferably that the parent, guardian or carer is present.
- 3.4 Photography of community events such as those organised by Solihull BID, etc. Members of the Society are sometimes invited by organisers of such events to take photographs. The Society encourages individual members to respond to such invitations as it supports the

community and also gives members wider photographic experiences. Community events may include ones in which vulnerable individuals are taking part. If members are photographing these events by invitation then it is the responsibility of the inviting organisation to get permission for the photography from parents, guardians or carers if required. Asking permission from all parents, guardians or carers may not be possible and it is sufficient to have notices at the event that photography has been arranged. These could give a contact point for people who do not want photographs taken at the event. The member dealing with the initial request should ask the organisers to ensure that such arrangements are in place. This should be done such that the request and reply are on record, for example by e-mail.

- 3.5 Mentoring requested by members who need help with aspects of their photography. Responding to this might involve visits to private homes. Informal mentoring is important to the Society so that more experienced members can pass on expertise to others if requested. Mentoring of vulnerable individuals is only allowed with the explicit agreement of their parent, guardian or carer, and should take place only if another adult, preferably the parent, guardian or carer, is present.
- 3.6 Internet discussion groups and photo-sharing. The Society has a Facebook page, and a Photo Gallery on the website, both of which members can elect to join. On the Facebook site members can post their pictures and also make comments or discuss with others. Both of these forums have at least two managers who control access and can remove material, should anything unacceptable be posted. Members are required to treat others with respect and politeness in their comments, even if their opinions differ.

4. DISCLOSURE

If a vulnerable individual were to disclose abuse to a Society member in the course of Society events or activities, then the Society member should take such a disclosure seriously and follow the procedures set out in Appendix B and Appendix C. A form for recording their actions is provided in Appendix D

If a member has any safeguarding concerns then they should contact a Committee member, providing them with the information outlined in Appendix D.

Contact details are available on the Society website.

5. PHOTOGRAPHY and MEDIA

The business of the Society is to encourage photography and to help its members improve their skills. However, issues can arise from the photography of vulnerable individuals.

- 5.1 No photographs may be taken of vulnerable individuals who are undressed or inappropriately clothed for the activity taking place.
- 5.2 If a vulnerable individual is a member of the Society then written permission must be gained from their parent/guardian or carer if photographs of them as the subject or model are to be taken.

Separate written permission has to be sought if such photographs of vulnerable individuals as the subject are to be published in any form, for example on the website, on social media, e-mailed to others, or used in competition.

However, if a vulnerable individual were to appear peripherally in photographs taken as part of a Society activity then permission would be held to have been given when the parent, guardian or carer countersigns the form on joining the Society. (Section 2.)

- 5.3 No individual under the age of 18 should be allowed to view or take images that may be considered suggestive or indecent in nature. Although the taking or viewing of such images at normal society meetings is unlikely the possibility should be considered and appropriate

action(s) taken. Such actions could include the exclusion of those under 18 from attending that meeting, or an insistence that their parent/guardian is in attendance for the entire event. The same could be the case for vulnerable adults and so their carer may also be required to be in attendance for the entire event.

- 5.4 No personal details of a member of the Society such as their email address, postal address or telephone number, must be revealed without permission. In the case of a vulnerable individual this permission should be given by the parent, guardian or carer. Committee members need details such as the Society membership list, and permission for these to be shared as necessary with any member of the committee is held to have been given when signing the admission form.
- 5.5 When taking photographs or video recordings at an event that involves vulnerable individuals it is good practice to ask the permission of the organisers or persons in charge and for the photographer to be able to identify themselves if requested during the course of the event. It is noted that there are no legal restrictions on photographing people in public places, and it often may not be practicable to ask permission.

If Society members have been invited to photograph an event, Society policy is set out in Section 3.4

- 5.6 Mobile and on-line communication. There are many ways for people to communicate. It is recommended that Society members should not communicate with a vulnerable individual by text or on-line, unless in a general communication to all members, or to avoid immediate risk to the vulnerable individual. When using phone or e-mail they should communicate with the Parent, Guardian or Carer, rather than having direct contact with the vulnerable individual.

APPENDIX A

Definition of “Vulnerable Adult”

A vulnerable adult is a person aged 18 or over who “is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation”.

Some people are always vulnerable, such as those mentioned above who are in need of community care services, but any person may be vulnerable at times. This Policy could therefore be relevant to the treatment of any Society member.

APPENDIX B

Child abuse, and the appropriate response to disclosure of abuse by a minor to a member of the Society in the context of Society activities:

B.1 Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to prevent harm.

B.2 Abuse can be broadly defined as;

- Physical Abuse. This may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.
- Emotional Abuse. This is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child’s emotional development.
- Sexual Abuse. This type of abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.
- Neglect. This is the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment to the child’s health and development.

B.3 PROCEDURE IN THE EVENT OF A DISCLOSURE

B3.1 It is important that children are protected from abuse. All complaints, allegations or suspicions must be taken seriously.

B3.2 This procedure must be followed whenever an allegation is made that a child has been abused or when there is a suspicion that a child has been abused.

B3.3 Promises of confidentiality must not be given as this may conflict with the need to ensure the safety and welfare of the child.

B3.4 If the complainant is the child, questions must be kept to the minimum necessary to understand what is being alleged and leading questions must be avoided. The use of leading questions can cause problems for the subsequent investigation and any court proceedings.

B3.5 A full record shall be made as soon as possible of the nature of the allegation and any other relevant information. The outline form in Appendix D shows what information should be given/obtained.

B.4 RESPONDING TO AN ALLEGATION

B4.1 Any suspicion, allegation or incident of abuse must be reported to a Committee member.

B.5 RESPONDING APPROPRIATELY TO A CHILD MAKING AN ALLEGATION OF

ABUSE

- Listen to the child.
- Stay calm.
- Responsibility for making enquiries and investigating allegations rests with children's social services along with other relevant agencies.
- Listen carefully to what is said.
- Find an appropriate early opportunity to explain that it is likely that the information will need to be shared with others – do not promise to keep secrets.
- Tell the child that the matter will only be disclosed to those who need to know about it.
- If the child can understand the significance and consequences of making a referral to social services she/he must be asked his or her view.
- Regardless of the child's view it remains the responsibility of the member to take whatever action is required to ensure the safety of that child.
- Allow the child to continue at her/his own pace.
- Ask questions for clarification only, and at all times avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer.
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you.
- Tell them what you will do next, and with whom the information will be shared.
- Record in writing what was said, using the child's own words as soon as possible – note the date, time, any names mentioned, to whom the information was given and ensure that the record is signed and dated. Also record what the member said.
- There is a form that can be used to record any allegation provided in Appendix D.
- It is important to remember that the person who first encounters a case of alleged abuse is not responsible for deciding whether abuse has occurred. That is a task for the professional child protection agencies, following a referral from the designated child protection officer.

B.6 SUSPECTED ABUSE

B6.1 Abuse of a child may be suspected by a member of the Society in the context of contact through the Society, without disclosure from the child. If this were to occur then such suspicions and the evidence for these should be reported to a Committee member who will raise the matter with the Society Secretary, President and Vice-President.

B.7 THE ROLE OF KEY INDIVIDUAL AGENCIES

B7.1 Social Services

The Children's Act 1989 gives Local Authority Social Services the primary responsibility for the care and protection of abused children and children at risk of abuse. It is their statutory duty to ensure that there is an investigation in cases of suspected abuse or significant harm, to take action to protect the child and to promote the welfare of the child.

Social Services also convene Child Protection conferences and manage the children who are subject to a child protection plan.

In the event of any disclosure or complaint by a child, the Society's Safeguarding Officer will contact Solihull Social Services Department www.solihull.gov.uk/health

APPENDIX C

Abuse of a vulnerable adult, and the appropriate response to disclosure of abuse by a vulnerable adult to a member of the Society in the context of Society activities, or to strong suspicions of such abuse :

The Care Act 2014 imposes a duty on Local Authorities to set up Safeguarding Adults Boards. These have a duty to assess the risk to any adult referred to them.

C.1 Categories of Abuse

The main forms of abuse of vulnerable adults are:

- Physical abuse including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions
- Sexual abuse including rape and sexual assault or acts to which the vulnerable adult has not consented, or could not consent or was pressurised 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 withdrawal from services or supportive networks
- Financial or material abuse, including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits
- Neglect or acts of omission, including medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating
- Discriminatory abuse, including racist, sexist, that is based on a person's disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment

C.2 If any such abuse were to be suspected by a member of the Society in the context of their membership, or were to be disclosed to a member during Society activities, the procedure to be followed is the same as for abuse of a minor, and is set out in Sections B3 and B4. The Safeguarding Policy Form in Appendix D can be used for vulnerable adults as well as children.

Any suspicion, allegation or incident of abuse in the context of Society membership must be reported to a Committee member in the first instance. They will then raise the issue with the Society Secretary, President and Vice President at the earliest opportunity.

Suspicious of abuse can be reported online www.solihull.gov.uk/health

APPENDIX D - Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy Form

An 'Initial cause for concern' form, which must be taken to a Committee member as soon as possible, preferably within 24 – 48 hrs. This person must then raise the matter with the Society Secretary and pass on any serious cause for concern to Social Services Department within the same time scale.

Date

Time

Name of individual cause for concern is about

Age (if known)

Address (if known)

Describe your concern and action taken

Observations to support cause for concern

Description and location of any visible marks, bruising etc

Name of alleged abuser, relationship with child (if known)

Name of person completing form: Signature:

Date:

Name of Society Safeguarding Officer Signature:

Date:

Name of Social Services Officer Signature:

Date: