

The Snowflake Trust

Operating the Snowflake Night Shelter

Vulnerable Adults Policy

▪ **Definition of Abuse**

Abuse is anything that harms another person mentally or physically. It can take any of the following forms:

- Neglect
- Discrimination on the basis of race, religious or political belief, gender or age
- Intimidation or threats
- Hitting and pushing
- Locking in a confined space
- Groping and other forms of sexual harassment
- Swearing and shouting

▪ **Vulnerable Adults**

The statutory definition of vulnerable adults is set out in the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups Act 2006. That Act as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 does not define homeless adults *per se* as Vulnerable Persons. Moreover that Act does not define a shelter which only provides, food, washing and sleeping facilities as constituting a "regulated activity". In consequence there is not a statutory requirement for persons supervising the services of the Snowflake Winter Night Shelter (WNS) to be certificated by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) which has taken over the duties of the Criminal Research Bureau (CRB).

The Snowflake Trustees, however, consider that most homeless persons are vulnerable and appropriate safeguarding measures should be undertaken to minimise risks to them whilst in the Snowflake WNS. As a minimum, this

means that the Project Supervisor will be subject to a DBS check, and all Volunteers subject to a reference before allocation to duties.

Whilst the paramount consideration is protection of the Guests, it should also be borne in mind that the Snowflake Staff, the Volunteers and the Communities providing their premises and other resources to the Snowflake Shelter, include adults who need protection.

- **Protection Framework**

This policy is to be read in combination with the Snowflake Trust's Rules, Health and Safety Policy, Violence Policy and Alcohol and Controlled Drugs Policy as these constitute the framework within which Guests, Staff and Volunteers are protected from abuse.

- **Inherent Vulnerability of Guests**

All Staff and Volunteers must start from the understanding that all Guests are likely to have experienced systematic abuse in their daily lives. For many of them the intuitive response is to return abuse with abuse. Others try to insulate themselves from abuse by resorting to alcohol and controlled drugs. Staff and Volunteers must appreciate that the Snowflake Policies which ban Guests from swearing and drinking alcohol and using controlled drugs may have the immediate consequence of making those guests feel more vulnerable. **To counter these reflexes the ethos of the Snowflake Shelter must be welcoming and calming at all times but particularly on reception of guests.**

- **The Need for Firm Management**

Staff and Volunteers have also to ensure that as they maintain a calming and welcoming ambiance, they ensure that the operation of Snowflake Shelter does not become lax and thus lead to situations in which violence and other forms of abuse emerge. Experience shows that such laxity can lead to a total break down and thus closure of a shelter to the detriment of the

Guests and the Volunteers. Thus all Staff and Volunteers must be fully appraised of the entirety of the Snowflake Policies and Procedures and apply them consistently.

- **Specific Safeguarding Measures**

The Snowflake Trust has from its date of incorporation undertaken research to ensure that its Trustees and Volunteers do not have a record which compromises their competence to work with vulnerable adults. All Staff and Trustees are subject to appropriate levels of enquiry via the Disclosure & Barring Service. All Volunteers provide a reference prior to being allocated to duties.

- **Safeguarding Officers**

The Company Secretary, who is also a Snowflake Trustee, is the Trust's Safeguarding Officer ensuring that all Staff and Volunteers working with the charity are subject to appropriate checks.

- **Selection of Staff - DBS Checks**

All Staff appointments shall be subject to an appropriate level of DBS check.

- **Staff Recruitment and Training**

Trustees will exercise proper care in making these Staff appointments to ensure that each of them has the attitudes and skills to ensure the safety of vulnerable adults. In addition the Trustees will support these employees with the appropriate resourcing and training to ensure their suitability to work with vulnerable persons and to enhance their abilities to transfer these skills to the Venue Coordinators and their volunteers.

- **Recording & Reporting of Abuses**

Volunteers will be required to advise the Project Supervisor and/or Venue

Coordinator of any actual or suspected cases of abuse for placing appropriate notes in the log book.

Should a blatant or serious abuse be observed, the Project Supervisor is to be immediately advised so that a timely decision may be as to whether to report the incident to the Sussex Police.

- **Exclusions**

Reference should be made to the accompanying Warning & Banning Policy.

- **Serious Withdrawal Symptoms**

It is recognised that the sudden interruption of imbibing alcohol or taking of controlled drugs can result in serious withdrawal symptoms. Training is provided for the Project Supervisor and all Volunteers of the symptoms of such trauma and instructed to call for Ambulance assistance when they witness them in a Guest. It is recognised that paramedics may supervise a staged detoxification in these cases which may necessitate the Guest who is experiencing "cold turkey" taking a measured amount of alcohol or a substitute controlled drug such methadone whilst in the Snowflake Shelter.

- **On-going Shelter for Guests who suffer serious withdrawal Symptoms**

Having regard to the need to be rigorous in ensuring compliance with the Alcohol and Controlled Drugs Policy, the Snowflake Shelter will require any Guest who suffers a serious withdrawal trauma as a consequence of that Policy, to be subject to a De-Toxification Programme supervised by Substance Misuse Service before re-admission to the Snowflake Shelter. Readmission shall be at the discretion of the Project Manager.

Date: August 2019