

Policy Statement

This Policy enables the Committee to act appropriately where instances, or allegations of, abuse or neglect come to their attention.

Aston Clinton u3a (ACu3a) recognises that some people are potentially at risk of harm, abuse and/or neglect. This can take place in a person's home, in the home of a carer, family member or friend, and within any form of institution e.g. hospitals, residential care homes or when using social media or digital communications. It is also recognised that harm, abuse and neglect can be perpetrated by volunteers, other users of services, relatives, friends and neighbours. The reasons for harm, abuse or neglect occurring may not be fully understood and vary with each incident. Safeguarding includes incidents between members, concerns regarding harm, abuse or neglect that a member may be experiencing outside of ACu3a, health related issues or previous or pending criminal convictions.

ACu3a will neither condone nor tolerate any form of harm, abuse or neglect and believes that all people should be able and, where necessary enabled, to live in an environment which is safe.

In all situations ACu3a believes that everyone is entitled to:

- privacy
- be treated with dignity and respect
- lead an independent life and to be enabled to do so
- choose how they live their lives
- the protection of the law
- have their human and civil rights upheld regardless of age, gender, sexuality, impairment or disability, age, religious or cultural background

ACu3a will also follow the Principles contained within the Care Act 2014:

- **Empowerment** - focused on the individual making their own decision and gaining informed consent, where possible
- **Prevention** – seeking to take steps to prevent issues arising or escalating
- **Proportionality** -responding in a proportionate way to the issues being presented
- **Protection** - seeking to keep the membership safe and protection for those deemed to be at risk
- **Partnership** – liaising with National Office and reporting incidents to the relevant statutory bodies
- **Accountability** – accurate recording of incidents, reporting incidents, as required, to the relevant authorities

Where harm, abuse or neglect is suspected the committee will aim to respond to the situation in a way which is caring, effective and enabling. However, the committee has no statutory authority and it is not appropriate for it to take the lead role in any Safeguarding enquiry under Section 42 of the Care Act, but should refer this to the Advice and Volunteer Manager in National Office who will help decide whether to contact the appropriate local authority and/or the police.

Procedure

1. The Committee recognises it has a responsibility to ensure that its committee and convenors understand this Policy. It may be appropriate to discuss the policy during convenors' meetings.
1. Depending on the nature of the allegation and the identified risk, the Committee will support ACu3a members who are the alleged victims and the alleged perpetrators of any abuse as well as any volunteer who becomes aware of the abuse as long as this does not compromise any Safeguarding Enquiry or investigation into the allegation or place other adults at risk.
2. The Committee will make every effort to respect the confidentiality of any information that is disclosed under this Policy, and the information will be recorded and stored securely in accordance with GDPR 2018. However confidentiality is not absolute and information may have to be shared, on a 'need to know' basis only. This is to prevent danger to a person's life or health, danger to others, danger to the community or to prevent or to facilitate the investigation of a serious crime.

Action to be taken

- If the Committee becomes aware of possible or actual harm, abuse or neglect involving a member of ACu3a or in connection with an ACu3a activity, it will ensure the safety of the adult at risk is secured as a first priority.
- Any committee member who becomes aware of possible or actual abuse, should as soon as possible, record the details of the abuse using the SAP1 form. They will advise the rest of the committee and the steps to take will be discussed, and, if appropriate, the Third Age Trust who will provide further advice. No Committee member will act in isolation when dealing with a safeguarding concern.
- The Committee, having been advised of possible or actual harm, abuse or neglect, will ensure that the safety of the adult at risk is secured as a first priority, and the alleged perpetrator, if known, does not pose a threat to any other person. In deciding this the Committee must consider the risk to the individual member; risk to other members within ACu3a; reputational risk for ACu3a and the movement as a whole.

- The Committee, working with the Advice and Volunteer Manager at National Office when appropriate, will decide whether or not to refer the possible or actual abuse to the Local Authority and/or the Police. When a crime may have been committed, the Police must be contacted as soon as possible. In the case of low-level verbal abuse/bullying the Committee may decide to deal with this directly. If the decision is not to refer, the reasons must be recorded.
- As far as possible, the adult at risk's wishes will be respected as to whether or not to refer any concerns to the Local Authority as a Safeguarding Enquiry under section 42 Of the Care Act 2014. However, it may be necessary to override these wishes in the best interests of other adults at risk.
- Completed forms will be held by the Chair for a minimum of 2 years.
- Confidentiality will be adhered to at all times and the contents of the record will not be provided to any third parties except where this is required for legal purposes.

Version	Description of changes	Date
1.0	New Document	Sept 2025
2.0	Minor amendments	Oct 2025

Appendix 1

If someone discloses abuse to you:

Do:

- Stay calm and try not to show shock or disbelief
- Listen carefully to what they are saying
- Be sympathetic (I'm sorry that this has happened to you)
- Be aware of the possibility that medical evidence might be needed
- Tell the person that:
 - They did the right thing to tell you
 - You are treating the information seriously. It was not their fault
 - You are going to inform the appropriate person
 - You will take steps to protect and support them
- Record and report the disclosure in line with this Policy

Do Not:

- Press the person for more detail; this will be done at a later date
- Stop someone who is freely recalling significant events (Don't say 'hold on, we'll come back to that later'; they may not tell you or anybody else again)
- Do not promise to keep secrets; you cannot keep this kind of information to yourself
- Make promises you cannot keep (Such as 'This will never happen to you again')
- Contact the alleged abuser
- Be judgemental
- Pass on the information other than to those with a legitimate 'need to know' under this Policy

In Your record of the disclosure:

You should aim to:

- Note what people actually said, using their words and phrases
- Describe the circumstances in which the disclosure came about
- Note the setting and anyone else who was there at the time of the abuse or the disclosure
- Separate factual information from your own and others opinions
- Use pen or biro with black ink so that the report can be photocopied if needed

Be aware that your report may be required later as part of a legal action or disciplinary procedure.

Appendix 2 Key Definitions

Adult at risk:

Is any person, who is over 18 years of age and who has need for care and support, is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect, and as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or risk of it.

Abuse:

Is the “violation of a person’s human and civil rights by any other person(s). It may be a single or repeated act(s), physical, verbal, psychological, sexual, institutional, discriminatory or financial, an act of neglect or failure to act”.

Types of abuse:

1. *Physical abuse*- including assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate physical sanctions.
2. *Domestic violence*- including psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse; so called ‘honour’ based violence.
3. *Sexual abuse*- including rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting.
4. *Psychological abuse*- including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.
5. *Financial or material abuse*- including theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult’s financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.
6. *Modern slavery*- encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.
7. *Discriminatory abuse*- including forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment; because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.
8. *Organisational abuse*- including neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific or special care setting such as a hospital or care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one’s own home. This may range from one off incidents to on-going ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.
9. *Neglect and acts of omission*- including ignoring medical, emotional 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.
10. *Self -Neglect*- this covers a wide range of behaviours neglecting to care for one’s personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.