**Lowestoft Time Bank**

**Policy for the protection of vulnerable people**

**Lowestoft Time Bank** (LTB) has a legal and moral responsibility to provide a duty of care to all vulnerable persons through implementing procedures to safeguard their well-being and protect them from harm.

*Aim:*

To define the practice and procedures for employees and volunteers, in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of vulnerable people. It is aimed at protecting both the individual and the member of staff.

***Objectives:***

Under the legislation Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) we have a responsibility:

* To ensure that all employees and volunteers working with vulnerable people are carefully selected, understand and accept responsibility for the safety of those individuals in their care.
* To ensure that the vulnerable persons welfare is of paramount importance when undertaking any activities.
* To respond swiftly and appropriately to all suspicions or allegations of abuse, and to ensure confidential information is restricted to the appropriate individuals within LTB and appropriate external agencies.

Although not directly relevant to our organisation, the Protection of Children Act 1999 (POCA) and List 99 legislation is available to view on request and will be covered as part of employees induction.

*Who do we mean by vulnerable persons?*

"Children” up to the age of 16 or young people aged 16-18 who have a physical, mental or chronic illness/disability.

"Vulnerable adult", is now defined as anyone receiving specific support (ie medical care). This means that any adult is considered vulnerable at the point of receiving these, and is not necessarily considered 'vulnerable' at other times

***What do we mean by abuse?***

**Physical abuse**  
Examples include: Slapping, pushing, kicking, rough handling, twisting of limbs/ extremities, misuse of medication, or inappropriate sanctions or restraint.  
  
**Sexual abuse**  
Examples include: Rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not consented, could not consent or was pressured into consenting.  Non-contact abuse such as voyeurism, involvement in pornography.  
  
**Psychological / Emotional abuse**  
Examples include: verbal assault or intimidation, emotional abuse, deprivation of contact verbal abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, humiliation or blaming, overriding of consent, choices or wishes, felling worthless, frightened or unloved.  
**NB:** Psychological/emotional abuse will usually occur in conjunction with other forms of abuse.  
  
**Financial abuse**  
Examples include: theft, fraud, exploitation, and pressure in connections with wills, property, possessions or benefits.  
  
**Neglect and acts of omission**  
Examples include: ignoring 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**  
This abuse is usually motivated by discriminatory and oppressive attitudes towards race gender, culture background, religion physical and/ or sensory impairment, sexual orientation and age.  
  
**Institutional abuse, neglect and poor practice**  
This may take the form of isolated incidents of poor or unsatisfactory professional practice at one end of the spectrum, through to persuasive ill treatment or gross misconduct.

*Level of checks:*

There are various levels of checks which can be undertaken with the Disclosure and Barring Service to determine the type of check required. LTB will consult direct with DBS guidelines.

*Recruitment:*

All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure unsuitable individuals are prevented from having any involvement with LTB.

***Selection:***

* All new volunteers/staff who work with vulnerable people shall complete an application form.
* Before commencing employment/voluntary work, staff/volunteers will be asked to attend an interview with the project leaders. The level and formality of the interview will depend on the role and work involved.
* All new staff/volunteers will be required to provide two references.
* Employee/volunteer recruitment procedures will include a Disclosure and Barring Service/ DBS check, at the appropriate level, for all personnel with access to vulnerable people and should always include self-declaration and the use of references. This will include all members of the management/executive committee. All prospective employees/volunteers should be ‘interviewed’, for volunteers this need not be a formal interview.

We will ensure that all employees/volunteers have appropriate qualifications and training.

Any Disclosure that causes concern will be assessed to establish the level of risk the subject poses to service users, colleagues, the general public and/or our organisation. A number of questions will be asked:

* Does the offence relate directly to work with vulnerable people?
* What is the seriousness of the offence[s] and the circumstances surrounding it?
* How long is it since the offence was committed?
* Does the subject have a pattern of offending?
* Has the subject’s situation changed since the offence occurred?
* What is the subject’s explanation of the offence?
* Did the subject declare the offence prior to the Disclosure?
* If all these questions are not answered satisfactorily then the prospective employee/volunteer will not be allowed to join the organisation.

All new employees/volunteers will go through a probation and induction process, including relevant training. Ongoing training and supervision will ensure all employees/volunteers are adequately supported.

Any concerns about an employee/volunteer should be passed on to the Designated person, deputy or member of the management committee.

*Creating a Safe and Caring Environment:*

* Risk Assessments should be undertaken prior to any offsite visits or new types of activities.
* Employees/volunteers working with vulnerable people should be appropriately trained and qualified to ensure the safe provision of services, use of equipment, activities undertaken, etc.
* Employees/volunteers working with vulnerable people should carefully plan activity sessions with the care and safety of individuals as their main concern including the use of activities at an appropriate age/ability level.
* Wherever possible we will encourage an ‘open environment’ e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and discouraging the keeping of secrets. This especially includes employees/volunteers should being alone with vulnerable people at any time. When this is unavoidable, it should be done with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge of the organisation.
* Employees/volunteers must treat all with respect.
* Employees/volunteers must not make racist, sexist or any other remarks which upset or humiliate
* Employees/volunteers must take care to avoid showing any favouritism.

*Roles and Responsibilities of employees/volunteers:*

* Safety of participants and employees/volunteers is of prime consideration at all times.
* All accidents involving anyone should be recorded in the organisation’s accident book immediately or as soon as practicably possible.
* Employees/volunteers are responsible for familiarising themselves with building/facility safety issues, such as, fire procedures, location of emergency exits, location of emergency telephones and first aid equipment.
* Employees/volunteers are responsible for reporting suspected cases of abuse to the appropriate individuals and/or agencies.
* Employees/volunteers will be expected to keep an attendance register for all organised sessions.
* Employees/volunteers should ensure that their activities start and end on time.
* Employees/volunteers are expected to promote, demonstrate and incorporate the values of fair play, trust and ethics throughout their activities.
* Employees/volunteer should ensure that they are adequately insured, to protect against claims of negligence, through their organisation or their own personal insurance if acting as a self employed agent.

### Admission Procedures:

A register of names, addresses, next of kin and contact addresses and telephone numbers for emergencies will be kept.

Carers where appropriate will be given a copy of a written statement which specifies the action which will be taken in the event of a vulnerable person becoming ill or being injured and which indicates that any information which suggests that a vulnerable person has been abused will be passed on to the Social Services Department and/or the police.

### Designated Person:

Carers/family members will have a ‘named person’ to whom they may report any worries or concerns. This person will normally be the designated person or deputy.

*Responding to Signs of Abuse:*

It is not the responsibility of employees/volunteers to deal with suspected abuse but it is their responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate person. It is important that all employees/volunteers should be aware of their responsibilities if abuse is suspected.

***Supervision:***

* Regular feedback and support will be given by LTB regarding new laws, policies and procedures relating to vulnerable persons.
* LTBwill endeavour to ensure that all those working with vulnerable people are aware of this policy and are able and willing to work to these guidelines.

***Policy on the secure handling, storage and retention of disclosure information:***

* Disclosures will only be requested when necessary and relevant to a particular role and the information provided on a disclosure certificate will only be used for recruitment purposes.
* LTBwill ensure that an individual’s consent is given before seeking a disclosure.
* Disclosure information will only be shared with those authorised by the committee to see it.
* Where additional information is provided to LTB and not to the disclosure applicant, which may adversely affect their application, LTB reserves the right not to disclose the information but will inform the applicant of its existence.
* All information pertaining to the staff member/volunteer including disclosure information will be kept for the period of their employment/volunteering and then for a further 3 year period.
* No image or photocopy of the disclosure will be made however the following details will be retained:
  + Date of issue of disclosure.
  + Name of subject.
  + Disclosure type.
  + Role for which disclosure was requested.
  + Unique reference number of disclosure.
  + Decision as to whether or not employee/volunteer was suitable for the role.
* Disclosure information will be destroyed by either incineration or shredding.

LTB will ensure that all those with access to disclosure information are aware of this policy and have received relevant training and support.

LTB will undertake to make a copy of this policy available to all potential volunteers/staff that wish to undertake a role that requires a disclosure.

***Protecting Staff/Volunteers from abuse***

Staff and volunteers are openly discouraged from accepting gifts in whatever form from service users or well-wishers of the organisation. Should any staff member receive any such item they must report it to their appropriate line manager.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

***What to do if you suspect abuse or risk of abuse:***

The Company will treat all such disclosures in a confidential and sensitive manner. The identity of the individual making the allegation may be kept confidential so long as it does not hinder or frustrate any investigation. However, the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and the individual making the disclosure may need to provide a statement as part of the evidence required.

***Procedures for Making a Disclosure***

On receipt of a complaint of malpractice, the member of staff who receives and takes note of the complaint, must pass this information as soon as is reasonably possible, to the appropriate designated investigating officer as follows:

* Complaints of malpractice will be investigated by the appropriate Director unless the complaint is against the Director or is in any way related to the actions of the Director. In such cases, the complaint should be passed to the Chief Executive for referral.
* In the case of a complaint, which is any way connected with but not against the Director, the Chief Executive will nominate a Senior Manager to act as the alternative investigating officer.
* Complaints against the Chief Executive should be passed to the Chair who will nominate an appropriate investigating officer.
* The complainant has the right to bypass the line management structure and take their complaint direct to the Chair. The Chair has the right to refer the complaint back to management if he/she feels that the management without any conflict of interest can more appropriately investigate the complaint.

If there is evidence of criminal activity then the investigating officer should inform the police. The Company will ensure that any internal investigation does not hinder a formal police investigation.

***Timescales***

Due to the varied nature of these sorts of reports which may involve internal investigators and / or the police, it is not possible to lay down precise timescales for such investigations. The investigating officer should ensure that the investigations are undertaken as quickly as possible without affecting the quality and depth of those investigations.

***Contact and responsibility:***

Allegations and complaints should be made to the one of the following staff members:

Time Bank Broker