

**A Guide and Code of  
Conduct for Working with  
under18s and Vulnerable Adults**



## Introduction and Purpose

This document is for use by those working directly with or managing others working directly with under18s and vulnerable adults.

The following points apply when working with under18s and vulnerable adults to safeguard not only the welfare of this group, but also the staff and volunteers that work and/or volunteer with them.

This document will be reviewed regularly, to ensure it is updated in line with new legislation. Use this Guide and Code of Conduct in conjunction with the Liberal Democrat Safeguarding Policy

## Definitions

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children's Act 1989) and young people are defined as a person generally from 14 to 17 years of age (as defined by the Department of Health). For the purposes of this document, these groups are referred to collectively as under18s.

The legal definition of a vulnerable adult is: 'an adult who is in receipt of a 'regulated activity' in relation to vulnerable adults'. 'Regulated activities' include assistance with healthcare, personal care and assistance with a person's own affairs, such as managing cash and paying bills (sections 65 and 66 of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012).

A more generic definition is that a vulnerable adult can be defined as someone aged 18 or over who is, or may be, in need of community services due to age, illness or a mental or physical disability and who is, or may be, unable to take care of himself/herself, or unable to protect himself/herself against significant harm or exploitation (definition from the Department of Health 2002).

You should consider both the legal and generic definitions when considering whether you are dealing with a vulnerable adult, although if there is conflict the legal definition shall take priority.

## General points to note

- Party members, employees and volunteers are expected to actively contribute to an organisational culture where inappropriate behaviour is not tolerated.
- A copy of the Members' Code of Conduct is available on the Party website here: <https://beta.libdems.org.uk/code-of-conduct>
- Party members, employees and volunteers who are also elected officials or regulated by any external body by virtue of their profession, vocation or any voluntary role should also take into account the codes of conduct and regulatory rules applicable to them in these capacities.

## Working directly with Under18s and Vulnerable Adults

This code of conduct aims to assist you in providing appropriate support for under18s and vulnerable adults when you are working directly with them.

- Always act in a professional manner at all times.
- Treat all under18s and vulnerable adults, regardless of race, disability, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation, equally and with respect and dignity.
- Always put the welfare of any under18 or vulnerable adult first.
- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with under18s or vulnerable adults away from (out of sight) others. Work should be undertaken in an open environment avoiding private or unobserved situations.
- Encourage open communication, wherever possible.
- It is not appropriate for party members, employees and volunteers to have a physically or emotionally intimate relationship with either a vulnerable adult or any under18. Particular attention is drawn to the provisions of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 which creates a criminal offence of abuse of “a position of trust”.
- Ensure that if any form of physical touching is required, it should be provided openly and kept to a minimum. Consent should be obtained wherever possible.
- Situations where it may not be possible to obtain consent include where the under18 or vulnerable adult is unconscious or otherwise incapacitated (e.g. if they have fainted or are under the influence of alcohol or other drugs), they are in need of urgent medical assistance which requires physical intervention (e.g. if they have suffered an allergic reaction), or where there is a risk of harm to themselves or others without physical intervention (e.g. if they are in possession of a weapon or making threats and physical restraint is necessary).
- Never give alcohol or other drugs, cigarettes, or e-cigarettes to any under18 or any vulnerable adult or encourage or appear to encourage any 18 or vulnerable adult to take such gifts from others or use such substances.
- Do not give under18s or vulnerable adults your personal details such as home or mobile phone number, home address, or internet (IP) address or communicate on a personal basis via social networking sites, for example, Facebook, Twitter etc. If there is a need for contact details to be shared consider using the official channels.
- Parental consent must be obtained for activities involving under18s.
- Written consent to take and use images of under18s and vulnerable adults should be obtained prior to the taking of photographs and/or video footage. Parents/carers of under18s and either the vulnerable adult (if they are capable of giving consent) or the carer of that vulnerable adult (if they are not) should be made aware of when, where and how the images may be used to give their informed consent.
- If, as part of that work, an under18 or vulnerable adult discloses to you alleged inappropriate behaviour from another person (whether an adult or other under18) then please refer to the Liberal Democrat Safeguarding Policy for guidance on how to report it.
- Positively support a “whistle-blowing” culture where any concerns about inappropriate behaviour are reported and dealt with in a timely manner.

## Managers or those responsible for working with under18s or vulnerable adults

Managers should apply all of the above rules for those working directly with under18s and vulnerable adults as listed above, ensure all their staff or volunteers are aware of these rules and the related policies and also ensure the following:

- Supervision of under18s and vulnerable adults by a designated adult.
- That the designated adult should have Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Certificate if there is an expectation of a substantial amount of 121 working.
- Completion of a risk assessment of a venue or activity involving under18s/vulnerable adults and plans for eventualities.
- Organisation of separate accommodation for female and male under18s, if there is a need for overnight accommodation.
- Supervision by a designated adult, if a delivery route or canvassing is being completed by under18s or vulnerable adults. Two way contact details should be provided (paying attention to the rules about sharing of personal information), and clearly marked route maps should be provided. Unsafe areas should not be allocated to under18s or vulnerable adults.

## Safeguarding at Party events (including where under18s and/or vulnerable adults are present)

- Party staff, members and volunteers regularly run events which under18s and/or vulnerable adults may attend.
- These events vary from large scale multi-focal events (e.g. federal, national and regional conferences) to small events (e.g. post-canvassing meet-ups) and they can be purely social, political or both. The approach to safeguarding should be tailored to the nature and size of the event. There may be events where it is appropriate to provide safeguarding to all attendees, regardless of their age and vulnerable status (for example, events where alcohol is provided and it is possible attendees judgment may be impaired as a result).
- Where there is a concern about safeguarding, a safeguarding officer or officers present at the event should be identified to attendees before or at the start of the event. This can be done by announcement or in written material advertising the event, whether in hard copy or online.
- It should be made clear that attendees can approach the safeguarding officer during or after the event, and that if they do not feel comfortable approaching the safeguarding officers identified at the event they can instead approach their local party chair or the Lead Safeguarding Officer (regardless of whether their local party chair or the Lead Safeguarding Officer were present at the event).
- If alcohol is available at any event this should never be provided to under18s and ID checks should be undertaken where someone looks under 25 or you are otherwise concerned that a person seeking alcohol may not be 18 or over. Anyone caught serving alcohol to under18s or under18s seeking to acquire alcohol by deceit would be considered to be breaching the Members' Code of Conduct.

## Further Guidance

- Anyone who works closely and regularly with under18s must obtain a Disclosure and Barring Service Certificate (DBS), previously called a CRB check. Anyone with convictions for sex and violent offences cannot work in any capacity with under18s.

- If you, or a member of your staff or a regular volunteer, or your local party, AO, SAO or other party body, is or is likely to be working with under18s on a regular basis please confirm whether the person or people involved have a valid DBS certificate. If not, please do not undertake the activity until you have reviewed the guidance [here](#) or contacted the Safeguarding Officer to find out whether and how to get a DBS certificate.

## If you suspect abuse has occurred

Please contact the following:

- **Police:** If you think a crime is being committed or has very recently been committed and urgent intervention is required please call 999. Otherwise, to report a past crime please either call the police non-emergency line on 101 or call your local police station, details of which can generally be found at <https://www.police.uk/pu/contact-the-police/>. The police can also offer advice regarding safety at home and in the community and may refer people who have experienced violence, abuse or crimes to the Victim Support helpline - 0845 303 0900.
- The local area **Social Services team** (safeguarding team): there are generally (but not always) separate teams for under18s and vulnerable adults. This information can be found on the local council's website. Key people to contact within the team include: Director of children services and Head of safeguarding and Director of social Services.
- **Lead Safeguarding Officer** - When submitting a report to the relevant authorities such as the police or social services, a written record of the date and time of the report shall be made. The report must include the name and position of the person to whom the matter is reported. The telephone report must be confirmed in writing to the relevant local authority Social Services department within 24 hours. For more details see Safeguarding Policy. The Lead Safeguarding Officer for the liberal Democrats is the Head of People and Pastoral Office. Contact details: [people@liberaldemocrats.org.uk](mailto:people@liberaldemocrats.org.uk) or telephone 07471 143 559