

## **AA Fellowship Safeguarding Policy**

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) Limited (GSB) is a charitable company, with registered charity number 226745.

The members of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) support each other in self-regulating groups (the AA Fellowship) which are autonomous from the GSB.

Whilst the purpose of the GSB is to serve the AA Fellowship, the Groups which make up the AA Fellowship are recognised by the Charity Commission as informal, autonomous affiliated groups which have no independent constitution.

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and Scottish Government have confirmed that AA members do not require DBS or Disclosure Scotland checks for 12th Stepping or Sponsoring, as they are members of self-regulating groups. As individuals, however, AA members should be aware of their duty of care to others and hence follow the law and best practice on safeguarding, when acting in AA's name.

### **The basic principle**

Everyone should recognise that all individuals, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.

AA affirms this principle in the context of its common welfare, primary purpose and anonymity.

The AA Traditions give general guidance to all those in understanding the duty of care owed by one AA member to another, as well as those they come into contact with, through the AA Fellowship.

### **Who the Policy protects?**

This Policy applies to the safeguarding of all AA members, GSB Trustees and General Service Office staff, and those they come into contact with when acting in AA's name, including minors.

## **Disseminating best practice**

It is important that all AA members, GSB Trustees and GSO staff understand and learn about safeguarding in order to ensure a safe environment for AA members, and those they come into contact with, when acting in AA's name.

New members should be given the newcomers pack which includes a safeguarding card.

The General Service Conference in conjunction with GSB has created an in-depth guidance for the entire Fellowship that is contained within the AAGB Structure Manual.

The GSB has recommended to the AA Fellowship that within the AA structure AA groups appoint Local AA Safeguarding Representatives who are able to provide a DBS certificate, and who can help signpost members to the appropriate agencies should the need arise.

The GSB also advises that a Local AA Safeguarding Rep, an AA member who holds a current DBS certificate or has appropriate Child Safety Training be consulted when a minor attends an AA meeting unaccompanied by an adult.

GSB has safeguarding guidelines for its volunteers on the GSB's National AA Helpdesk, the Chat Now Service and for the AA Fellowship's Telephone Helplines.

## **DBS Checks for members attending schools and prisons**

Schools, educational establishments, and prisons will carry out identification checks, and may ask AA volunteers to provide a DBS certificate. This includes any member who, in AA's name, attends a school, educational establishment, or prison or may have unsupervised contact with a minor or vulnerable adult.

It is the establishment's duty, and not that of the Fellowship, to ensure that the requisite DBS checks are completed. As a matter of best practice, any members acting in AA's name, should be willing to provide a DBS Certificate or sign up to the DBS Update Service for repeat checks, if requested.

If any Group Secretary or AA member is unsure whether any role undertaken in AA's name requires a criminal record check of any sort, they should consult the following governmental guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service>.

## **Reporting safeguarding concerns**

If any AA member, GSB Trustee or GSO staff member believes that the actions of an AA member, or someone in contact with the Fellowship, gives rise to a safeguarding concern within AA, they should consider taking the following action(s), as appropriate:

- Preserve any evidence.
- Report all concerns to a:
  - Trusted AA member and/or local AA Safeguarding Rep
  - Local Authority Adult Social Care team (about a vulnerable adult); and/or
  - Local Authority Children's Services team (about a minor)
- In an emergency, if there is immediate risk of abuse call 999
- If a crime has been, or may be committed report to the Police

If there is any doubt about whether a situation amounts to abuse, members of the Fellowship should ask the advice of their Local Authority Safeguarding Lead.

Any individual who has reported their concerns to the Local Authority Adult Social Care team, Children's Services team, Safeguarding Lead or the Police must follow the guidance and advice provided by that relevant authority contact.

[Where an incident has caused significant harm to an individual or is likely to bring either the GSB or the AA Fellowship as a whole into serious disrepute, then a serious incident report will be filed with the Charity Commission by the General Secretary of GSB. The General Secretary has the authority to act in all matters relating to the incident.]

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