

Sevenoaks Volunteer Transport Group

Safeguarding Policy

POLICY STATEMENT

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

The Trustees, Co-ordinator and volunteer drivers working for Sevenoaks Volunteer Transport Group (SVTG) are committed to a practice which protects vulnerable passengers from any form of abuse including physical, emotional and sexual harm.

As part of our duty of care, we endeavour to adopt safeguarding guidelines through:

- A code of conduct and behaviour policy
- Minimising opportunities for vulnerable people to suffer harm whilst in our care
- Sharing information and concerns with others who need to know (agencies or relatives, for example)
- Reviewing this policy at regular intervals to ensure best practice.

The intention is to create a safe and secure service for those passengers who may be feeling unwell, insecure, scared or in any way vulnerable, and to respect those persons' rights, welfare and safety whilst in our temporary care. We are aware that a passenger may feel 'vulnerable' as soon as the vehicle is in motion.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for SVTG is trained as our Designated Officer.

As part of their induction, all volunteer drivers undergo an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Criminal Record Check which is renewed every three years. As a further precondition to become a volunteer driver, each must arrange the submission of a written reference from an independent witness confirming their suitability to drive and that, to the best of their knowledge, there are no safeguarding concerns. In addition, each volunteer driver must sign that they have read, understood and will follow SVTG's Safeguarding Policy. Finally, they must confirm their willingness to attend the next annual safeguarding training session provided by SVTG.

RECOGNISING SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF ABUSE

It is SVTG policy that its Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is informed of any allegations or evidence of abuse on its passengers.

Types of abuse may include:

- Physical (hitting, slapping, punching, etc)
- Sexual (from rape to inappropriate touching)

- Psychological or emotional (belittling, intimidation, isolation)
- Neglect (withholding food or medication, denying medical needs)
- Financial or material (stealing fraud, misappropriation)
- Discriminatory abuse (racist, sexist, harassment)
- Institutional (regimented routines, unsafe practices)
- Self-neglect

NOTE: People who behave abusively come from all walks of life: they may be doctors, nurses, social workers, other volunteers or those in a position of trust. They may be relatives, friends, neighbours, fellow club members - or other passengers.

SHARING INFORMATION

An individual, whether passenger or volunteer driver, who has any concern about a safeguarding matter is listened to and taken seriously. Information sharing plays a critical role in safeguarding, both in prevention and detection. The individual must be informed that if they make a disclosure confidentiality cannot be guaranteed and that it may be necessary to pass the information on to the appropriate authorities.

Our passengers have a right to ask for and to know of any information which SVTG holds on themselves.

If a volunteer reports a safeguarding matter to the police when, for example, they witness an event which suggests someone is in immediate harm, they must also inform the DSL as soon as possible.

PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES

All members of SVTG need always be aware of their responsibility for safeguarding and for promoting the welfare of those who ask for our help with their transport needs.

Code of Conduct and Behaviour Policy

All members of SVTG, in whatever capacity, should be committed to treating SVTG passengers with respect and dignity, fairly and without prejudice, by:

- Protecting passengers from any abuse
- Always listening to what is being said
- Valuing each person and appreciating the contribution they make, whilst respecting their right to privacy
- Using appropriate language
- Not engaging in inappropriate touching
- Being aware that someone might misinterpret their actions, no matter

- how well intended
- Not drawing conclusions without checking first
- Not exaggerating nor trivialising abuse issues, nor making suggestive remarks even in fun.

REPORTING CONCERNS

If you think you or someone else is at immediate risk of harm or danger take yourself out of danger if you can, and call 999 immediately.

It is not SVTG's responsibility to investigate or deal with cases of alleged abuse: these should generally be passed on to the DSL in the form of a written record. The DSL is responsible for reporting concerns to social services. (However, there may be occasions when it would be more appropriate to report the matter to the Board of Trustees).

The following procedure should be followed:

1. Ensure that the person is out of immediate danger and that assistance (medical or police) is sought
2. Ask 'is this a safeguarding issue?'
3. If it is not a safeguarding issue and no referral is made to external authorities, a record should still be made and sent to SVTG management who would keep the record on file, listing actions taken or reasons for non-referral so that further monitoring is possible.
4. Referrals to statutory agencies should be made by the DSL, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
5. Any allegation made by a passenger must be passed as soon as possible to the DSL who may involve one or more other Trustees.

DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD FOR SVTG

Graham Lacey

Telephone 01732 742533

Mobile 07500663677

Email grum50@gmail.com

OTHER CONTACT NUMBERS

Social Care and Health at Kent Social Services

During the day and in office hours:

Concern about an adult: 03000 41 61 61 (text relay 18001 03000 41 61 61) or email social.services@kent.gov.uk.

Concern about a child: 03000 41 11 11 (text relay 18001 03000 41 11 11) or email social.services@kent.gov.uk.

Out of hours and in an emergency:

If you need to contact us outside of normal office hours, for example during the night, call **03000 41 91 91**.

If you think someone is in immediate danger call 999 for the emergency services.

NOTIFICATION DETAILS

On identifying a possible safeguarding incident:

- Never guarantee total confidentiality: safeguarding will take precedence over other issues
- Listen to the complainant more than question them
- Offer reassurance without making promises
- Take them seriously: do not interrupt them
- Accept what is said: do not investigate or question it
- Do not overreact
- Try to offer support, saying that you have to pass information on
- Explain what you need to do and whom you tell
- Record the discussion accurately using the individual's words – do not translate into your own words in case you misconstrue what was meant.

The DSL will take up the concern with relevant organisations. In his/her absence, notify the Chairman of the Trustees who will record the actions taken.

Once it has been determined that the incident is potentially a safeguarding one, complete a form *How to raise an adult safeguarding concern about yourself or someone else* from the download:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/adult-social-care/adult-safeguarding/how-to-raise-an-adult-safeguarding-concern-about-yourself-or-someone-else>

Among other things it will ask for the following details:

- The name and personal details of the alleged victim

- The date, time and place that you were advised of the incident
- The name, address and contact details of any witnesses
- If not yourself, the name, address and contact details of the person making the allegation
- The name, address, date of birth and contact details of the person alleged to be responsible
- Account including details of the alleged abuse
- Any physical injuries observed (cuts, bruises, etc)
- If related to neglect, the context and conditions (e.g. (state of home, clothing, etc) that have led to the need for possible safeguarding action

RECORD KEEPING

All safeguarding records, information and confidential notes should be kept in separate files by the DSL, who has sole access.

FOOTNOTE

No child or young person under the age of 18 years may be provided transport unless accompanied by a parent or guardian; and no child under 12, or less than 135 cm tall, is to be provided transport unless he or she is securely fastened in the correct child car seat.

This Policy was approved by the SVTG Trustees in October 2025

Date of next review October 2026