



## **Organisational Policies and Procedures**

**Date of last revision: July 2017**

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## **Introduction to Policies and Procedures**

These policies and procedures are intended to ensure a consistent approach to the work of Link Age Southwark. They have all been updated and authorised by the Board of Trustees and are reviewed and revised regularly. The employee handbook contains additional policies and procedures relating to staff employment – if there is any uncertainty, the employee handbook takes precedence over these policies and procedures.

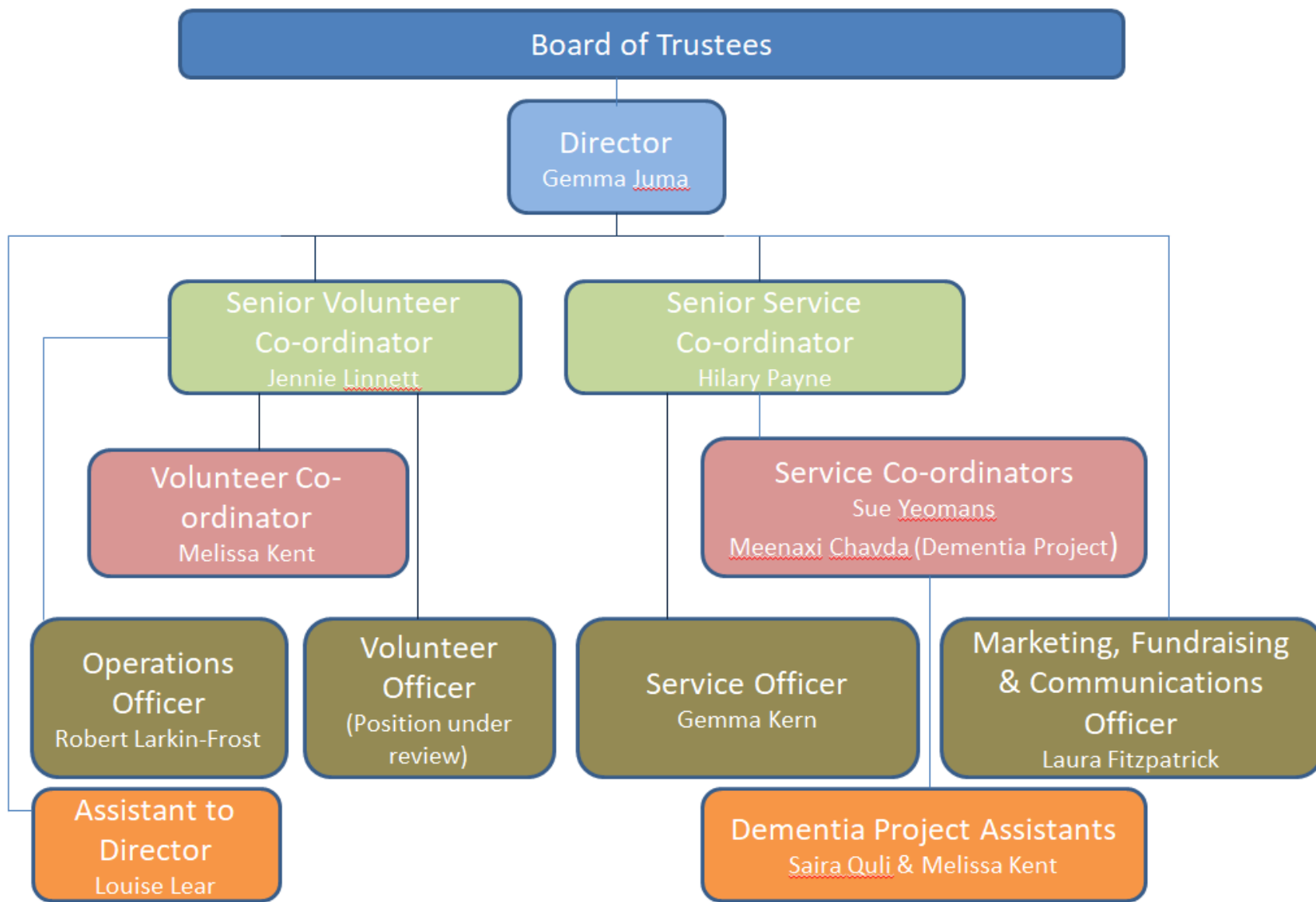
This document sets out Link Age Southwark's policies and procedures and acts as a point of reference and guidance for staff, volunteers and Trustees for how to deal with challenging issues as they arise. The policies and procedures which follow inform our volunteer handbook and are used as part of the volunteer, staff and trustee induction processes.

The safeguarding of vulnerable adults is vital in all we do as an organisation working with this user group. We take adult protection and equal opportunities very seriously and all staff and volunteers are required to adhere strictly to our Safeguarding and Equal Opportunities policies, which can be found in this document.

It is not possible to write policies and procedures to cover every single circumstance that might arise. Staff and volunteers may have to react to a set of circumstances not covered by these policies and procedures and at a time when it is not possible to ask for advice and guidance. On these occasions, staff or volunteers will need to draw on their previous experience and common sense to support their decision making. Where they have acted in good faith and can give good reasons for the decisions they have made, they can rely on the organisation to support them.

If you require clarification about how any of these policies and procedures relate to you and your work with Link Age Southwark, then please don't hesitate to contact the Director or any one of the Trustees.

**Gemma Juma**  
**Director**  
**July 2017**



## **1 Response to the death of a service user or volunteer**

1. The services we provide are based on relationships with our service users and volunteers. When a service user or volunteer dies, the allocated staff member allocated to the volunteer or service user will use their discretion as to how best to implement this policy. If the staff member is unable to do so as a result of absence from the office, another member of staff will become a named contact for the service user or volunteer's family or emergency contact in the interim.

2. The allocated member of staff will:

- Send a card or a note in another format, if appropriate, to the family member, or other noted emergency contact, to offer condolence.
- Ascertain details of funeral arrangements wherever possible.

3. Where the death is of a service user the Co-ordinator or named member of staff will:

- If applicable, advise the relevant volunteer(s) of the service user's death, by telephone, and thank them for their support of the service user.
- If applicable, advise group members and other relevant people (other volunteers, service users, group members, tutors etc.) of the service user's death.
- Give the volunteer and any other relevant people the funeral details, if it is not a private family affair.
- Close and archive the paper file, and update the database record.
- Ensure the service user's death is recorded in the next edition of the Link Age Southwark newsletter
- After the funeral, ensure that the main staff contact with the volunteer has a discussion with the volunteer about their needs. This should include advice on bereavement support and help, if appropriate.

4. Where the death is of a volunteer the Co-ordinator or named member of staff will:

- If applicable, advise relevant service users, preferably in person, of the volunteer's death and offer appropriate support where necessary
- If applicable, advise group members and other relevant people (other volunteers, service users, group members, tutors etc.) of the volunteer's death.
- Give relevant people the funeral details, if it is not a private family affair.
- Close and archive the paper file, and update the database record.
- If appropriate (i.e. if it is not a private family affair), arrange for a staff member to attend the funeral to support any service users or volunteers who may be attending, as well as to represent Link Age Southwark.

**Revised and approved by the Board of Trustees: July 2017**

**Review due by: July 2019**

## **2. Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest**

1. The trustees, staff and volunteers of Link Age Southwark are expected to:
  - a. Comply with Link Age Southwark's policies and procedures, as set out in the Employee Handbook and Policies and Procedures documents
  - b. Respect lines of accountability within Link Age Southwark
  - c. Maintain professional boundaries between themselves and with Link Age Southwark service users and volunteers
  - d. Adhere to and respect decision making processes within Link Age Southwark
  - e. Respect the multi-cultural and diverse environment of Link Age Southwark and the communities in which it works and show sensitivity to others.
  
2. No trustee, volunteer or staff member should put themselves in a position where their duty and personal interest conflict, or might conflict. A conflict of interest arises where an individual holds a financial or other interest or engages in any activity – paid or unpaid – which could have some adverse effect on Link Age Southwark's activities. Trustees should read the Charity Commission guidance on Conflicts of Interest, which sets out how they are expected to deal with conflicts of interest facing them or the Charity.
  
3. No trustee, volunteer or staff member shall have any financial interest in any contract, transaction or undertaking of Link Age Southwark, either personally or as a member of another organisation, or in any way whatsoever, unless it is expressly permitted by a decision of Link Age Southwark's Board of Trustees.
  
4. Any trustee or staff member having an interest in any arrangement between Link Age Southwark and another person or organisation must disclose that interest to the Charity Director of the Charity.
  
5. All existing staff and applicants for vacancies are required to declare a known relationship with any current staff member, trustee, or user.
  
6. Failure to comply with the above may result in disciplinary action being taken which may lead to dismissal of the employee(s) or volunteers concerned or removal of a trustee from Link Age Southwark's Board.

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**Review due by: November 2018**

### **3. Complaints**

1. We welcome feedback about our services and in this guidance we set out the principles that apply to complaint handling and the steps to be taken, depending on who is the subject of the complaint.
2. Link Age Southwark consistently strives to provide the highest quality services which will not give any cause for complaint, but we recognise that from time to time difficulties may occur. The information pack given to new service users and volunteers includes Link Age Southwark's Complaints policy, which encourages service users or volunteers to use these procedures if they have any concerns. Link Age Southwark takes complaints seriously and will follow the procedures set out below.
3. The following principles will underpin Link Age Southwark's response to complaints:
  - i. All complaints will be taken seriously.
  - ii. We will acknowledge and attempt to resolve the complaint as quickly as possible without complicating the process. Complaints requiring consideration by Trustees may take longer to resolve than complaints that can be resolved by a staff member or by the Director of the Charity.
  - iii. Complaints can be general, about a service or about an individual. Where the complaint is about an individual, the procedure we follow will be slightly different, depending on whether the complaint is about a volunteer, a member of staff, the Director of the Charity or a Trustee.
  - iv. The organisation reserves the right not to spend time investigating vexatious complaints.
  - v. In order to preserve the confidentiality of the complainant and the person complained about, the discussion about the complaint will be confined to those directly relevant to the complaint and any investigation will be proportionate to the seriousness of the complaint.
  - vi. If there is any lack of clarity about who should be dealing with the complaint it should be directed to the Company Secretary. Any correspondence should be addressed as private and confidential.
4. The following pages explain how to make a complaint to us, and how the process works if you are the subject of a complaint.
5. Service users may also wish to use the London Borough of Southwark complaints procedure for users of the services of voluntary organisations. For a copy of this, you may contact Southwark Council on 020 7525 5000.

6. Link Age Southwark will record the number of complaints, their nature and outcome, along with lessons to be learned. This information will be sent to the London Borough of Southwark and reported annually to the Board of Trustees.

### **3.1 A guide for people wanting to make a complaint**

7. Link Age Southwark aims to provide high quality services. We welcome feedback and comments about our services. We will aim to resolve any complaint at an early stage and as informally as possible, but recognise this may not always be achievable.
8. Information about Link Age Southwark is given to new service users and volunteers in paper or electronic form. It contains information about how to make a complaint, including a stage by stage guide as to how we will manage a complaint.
9. Making a complaint will not prejudice the service offered by Link Age Southwark.
10. When making a complaint, it is advisable to give as much relevant detail as possible and suggest what redress or solution is sought.

### **Complaints about a Volunteer**

#### **Stage 1**

11. If your complaint is about a volunteer and you cannot discuss the problem with them directly, you should contact a Link Age Southwark coordinator or senior coordinator outlining your concerns. The coordinator or senior coordinator will attempt to resolve the issue to your satisfaction. If this is not possible, the complaint passes to stage 2.

#### **Stage 2**

12. The Director of the Charity will contact you in writing or in person acknowledging your complaint within 10 working days and will tell you how we intend to proceed. Our action might be to resolve the issue immediately, further investigate your complaint, contact other agencies or simply end the relationship with the volunteer.

#### **Stage 3**

13. If at any stage the complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction and you wish to appeal to the Trustees for further consideration, you can do so by telephoning the office and asking for the telephone number of the Company Secretary or by writing to:

The Company Secretary  
Link Age Southwark  
Dulwich Community Hospital  
East Dulwich Grove  
London SE22 8PT

Please mark the envelope PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL (complaint).



14. The Company Secretary will investigate your complaint, will review the actions taken and will discuss with the Chair of the Board what further steps might be taken to resolve the complaint. Every effort will be made to do this in the shortest time possible. The nature and complexity of the complaint and the availability of the Company Secretary may have an impact on the time taken to resolve the complaint.

### **Complaints about a member of staff other than the Director of the Charity**

#### **Stage 1**

15. If your complaint is about a member of staff, other than the Director of the Charity, and you cannot discuss the problem with them directly, you should write to or contact the Director of the Charity outlining your concerns. Any correspondence should be marked PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL. The Director of the Charity will contact you and attempt to resolve the issue to your satisfaction. If the complaint is serious or complex it may be necessary to carry out an investigation and this may delay resolution.

16. If the complaint is of a serious nature involving any breach of trust or confidentiality, Trustees will have to be informed and involved. In these circumstances, the complaint will automatically pass to stage 2.

17. The Confidentiality Policy contained within our policies and procedures outlines circumstances where Link Age Southwark's Duty of Care overrides the duty of confidentiality. Ultimately this in itself may be a cause for complaint and may involve a judgement being made as to the course of action to be followed.

#### **Stage 2**

18. The Director of the Charity will discuss the complaint with the Company Secretary. The Director of the Charity will write or contact you to give you information about the progress of your complaint. After due consideration we tell you what we intend to do. This could range from attempting to resolve the issue, further investigation of your complaint, an apology, referral to external agency or no action if the complaint is considered unjustified.

#### **Stage 3**

19. If at stage 2 the complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction and you wish to appeal to the Trustees for further consideration, you can do so by telephoning the office and asking for the telephone number of the Company Secretary or by writing to:

The Company Secretary  
Link Age Southwark  
Dulwich Community Hospital  
East Dulwich Grove  
London SE22 8PT

Please mark the envelope PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL (complaint).

20. The Company Secretary will investigate your complaint, will review the actions taken and will discuss with the Chair of the Board what further steps might be taken to resolve the

complaint. Every effort will be made to do this in the shortest time possible. The nature and complexity of the complaint and the availability of the Company Secretary may have an impact on the time taken to resolve the complaint.

### **Complaint about the Director of the Charity or a Trustee**

21. If your complaint is about the Director of the Charity or about a Trustee, you should contact the Company Secretary by telephoning the Link Age Southwark office and asking for the telephone number of the Company Secretary or by writing to:

The Company Secretary  
Link Age Southwark  
Dulwich Community Hospital  
East Dulwich Grove  
London SE22 8PT

Please mark the envelope PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL (complaint).

22. The Company Secretary will investigate your complaint, will review the actions taken and will discuss with the Chair of the Board what further steps might be taken to resolve the complaint. Every effort will be made to do this in the shortest time possible. The nature and complexity of the complaint and the availability of the Company Secretary may have an impact on the time taken to resolve the complaint.

23. It is also possible to use the London Borough of Southwark's complaints procedure for users of the services of voluntary organisations. For a copy of this you should contact Southwark Council on 020 7525 5000.

### **Complaint about a Service User**

24. If the complaint is about a service user and is made by another service user, a member of staff or a volunteer, action will follow the sequence described above. Such complaints should be reported initially to the Co-ordinator responsible for the relevant activity or at a higher level to the Director of the Charity or Company Secretary, as necessary.

## **3.2 A guide for people who are the subject of a complaint**

25. Regardless of where the complaint originated, it will be investigated as set out in the complaints policy. There will be an initial discussion to establish both sides of the complaint in order to clarify the situation, the validity of the complaint, and to invite each side to give their point of view.

26. If the matter is not resolved, any of the parties involved may refer it to the Director of the Charity who will meet with each party, but not necessarily at the same time, explaining that they may bring someone with them to the meeting for support.

27. Each side will state their case, and then be questioned by the Director of the Charity. Each may consult with the person they have brought with them. Mitigating circumstances must be listened to and taken into account, where relevant.

28. If the facts of the case question the continuation of service, each side will be informed of this in writing with the reasons within one week of the interview. They will be informed that any repetition of the behaviour which was the reason for the complaint will result in a termination of Link Age Southwark's relationship with the individual.

29. If further complaints are made the Director of the Charity will investigate the situation further and include further meetings or other actions as appropriate, in accordance with the policies set out in the Link Age Southwark staff handbook.

30. In the event of a volunteer's service being terminated by Link Age Southwark, the volunteer must be informed in writing, with specific reasons given. The reasons must have been made clear throughout the whole process, and written records of all discussions and correspondence kept.

31. Where a warning has been given, or services terminated, the volunteer has the right of appeal to the Chair of the Board of Trustees and two other members of the Board who will constitute an Appeals Panel. The appeal request must be made in writing within one week of the warning or termination notice. The Chair and other Board members will interview the appealing volunteer and the Link Age Southwark staff member. The volunteer may be accompanied by someone for support. The Link Age Southwark staff member may be accompanied by another member of staff. The Panel will also independently gather the necessary information and evidence. They will come to a decision within four weeks of the appeal being made, and will notify the volunteer and the staff member in writing, using the address the volunteer gave to Link Age Southwark. The Appeal Panel decision will be final.

32. Summary termination of service can only be authorised by the Chair of the Board of Trustees following the advice of the Director of the Charity. The following are offences which will result in summary dismissal:

- i. Theft of property belonging to Link Age Southwark, or any of its service users, volunteers or staff.
- ii. Acts of violence towards a member of staff, another volunteer, or a service user.
- iii. Malicious damage to property belonging to Link Age Southwark, its staff, its volunteers, or its service users.
- iv. Deliberate falsification of expenses claims.
- v. Disclosure of confidential information relating to Link Age Southwark, its staff, volunteers or service users.
- vi. Convictions for a criminal offence that undermines a volunteer's suitability for service with Link Age Southwark.
- vii. The provision of false information, or failure to disclose information relevant to his/her engagement as a volunteer involved with users of the service.
- viii. Sexual, racial, homophobic or other forms of harassment.

The above examples are illustrative and do not form an exhaustive list.

33. Appeal against summary dismissal may be made as above. The Appeals Panel should not consist of any person previously involved in other appeals made by the volunteer. The decision of the Appeals Panel is final.

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## 4. Confidentiality

1. The work of Link Age Southwark involves trustees, staff and volunteers having access to private and personal information about service users, their families and friends. All this information is regarded as confidential. Link Age Southwark is committed to maintaining high standards of confidentiality to protect all parties.
2. Trustees, staff and volunteers are not permitted to disclose to any person outside the organisation any confidential information received in the course of their work with Link Age Southwark. They must not disclose any confidential information to any other person involved in Link Age Southwark except in the best interests of the service user and his/her family and friends. Staff and volunteers are expected to clear with their line manager/ the appropriate staff member, whether it is appropriate to share information with any external individual or organisation.
3. Details which enable a service user to be identified will not be made public or passed to a third party (family member, friend, social worker, health worker, etc.) without the service user's informed consent, in writing if necessary. Informed consent requires the service user to receive an explanation of why information is to be passed on, what information will be included, with whom the information will be shared and the possible implications of sharing this information. It is a condition of the funding we receive from Southwark that we share the names and addresses of service users with them, when requested. We ask our service users permission to do this and if they refuse we will not pass those details on. Any user who has reservations about this should speak to a Coordinator or to the Director.
4. Information will usually only be shared if it is seen as necessary to safeguard the service user or will be of direct benefit to him/her. Such consent is valid only for the purpose for which it is given. If information is to be re-used in a different context, permission will be sought again. If a service user does not have capacity to give permission it will be sought from the carer, relative or advocate and only with consent from the Director or an officer of the Board of Trustees.
5. The rare exceptions to this rule are:

Where there is evidence that not sharing information could

- i. Endanger the service user's own life
- ii. Endanger other people including a Link Age Southwark volunteer or worker

Or where:

- iii. disclosure is required by law
- iv. the information is relevant to counselling or support being given to an individual to enable him or her to function more positively within the organisation, and only then if confidentiality is maintained by the person providing counselling or support

- v. the Director or Trustees consider it necessary to disclose information to a person or organisation with responsibility for the regulation or monitoring of the work of Link Age Southwark, including enforcement of the law
6. Trustees, staff and volunteers are required to return to their line manager or relevant Project Coordinator all documents and any other materials belonging to Link Age Southwark before the last day of their employment or involvement with Link Age Southwark. This includes information in electronic form.
7. On the rare occasions when a volunteer needs advice on whether or not to disclose something and it is out of normal office hours, then they should contact Southwark Social Services on the main Southwark Council number 020 7525 5000, and they will then be directed to an emergency out of hours number. The volunteer should inform Link Age Southwark of his/her concerns and any action taken at the earliest opportunity.

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## 5. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks

1. The Disclosure and Barring Service enables organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors to make safer recruitment decisions by identifying candidates who may be unsuitable for certain work, especially work involving children or vulnerable adults.
2. All staff, volunteers and trustees who have unsupervised contact with our service users or who undertake work regarded as 'regulated activity' by DBS are required by law to have an enhanced DBS check. Until this has been received, the person will not be able to work in an unsupervised environment with any service users. They will only be able to have contact with service users if they are supervised by a member of staff or a volunteer who has undergone an enhanced DBS check. Best practice then indicates that DBS checks should be renewed every 3 years.
3. Office volunteers can begin volunteering after an interview, and following receipt of their application form and two satisfactory references from people unrelated to them. They are not required to have a DBS check and therefore will not be asked to apply for one if their work is limited to the office and doesn't involve any unsupervised contact with service users.
4. Having a criminal record does not necessarily exclude someone from working or volunteering with Link Age Southwark. However, previous convictions must be declared to the Director or to the relevant volunteer co-ordinator, in confidence, at the point of application for the DBS check; this information is treated confidentially. Decisions on suitability take place after the DBS check results are obtained and are treated on a case-by-case basis, in conjunction with advice from the DBS service and CCPAS (The Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service) which processes all our DBS applications.
5. All staff, volunteers and members of the Board of Trustees are required to have some basic awareness training in safeguarding adults and all paid staff undergo specific safeguarding adults training.
6. All volunteers and trustees receive information about elder abuse and are actively encouraged to complete the e-learning safeguarding adults and children certificate created by Southwark Council. All staff and trustees need to be fully aware of their responsibilities and familiar with Social Services policy and procedures on safeguarding adults.
7. Link Age Southwark is obliged under law to refer someone to DBS if we:
  - i. dismiss them because they harmed someone
  - ii. dismiss them or remove them from working in [regulated activity](#) because they might have harmed someone
  - iii. were planning to dismiss them for either of these reasons, but they resigned first.
8. For more information on elder abuse see the Safeguarding Policy in this document.

9. This policy is to be used in conjunction with Link Age Southwark's wider Safeguarding policy and procedures.

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**Review due by: September 2018**



## 6. Data Protection and Access to Information

1. Link Age Southwark complies with the principles of good information handling set out in the Data Protection Act (1998). Link Age Southwark requires all information whether kept in electronic or paper form to be:
  - i. Fairly and lawfully processed.
  - ii. Processed for a specific purpose.
  - iii. Adequate, relevant, and not excessive.
  - iv. Accurate, and where necessary, kept up to date.
  - v. Kept no longer than necessary.
  - vi. Processed in line with the rights of the individual.
  - vii. Kept secure
  - viii. Not transferred to other countries without adequate protection <sup>1</sup>
2. Link Age Southwark processes data about its service users, trustees, volunteers and employees only in so far as it is necessary in managing its services. It does not disclose data to anyone other than its authorised employees, agents, contractors or advisers save as required by law or regulation, unless an individual expressly authorises disclosure of information about him/herself.
3. Link Age Southwark takes all reasonable steps to ensure that the data it processes is accurate and keeps it in a secure system, whether manual or computerised, to the best of its ability at all times. Link Age Southwark undertakes regular reviews of all of its activities, identifying potential weak spots and taking steps to mitigate the resultant risks.
4. Link Age Southwark complies fully with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Code of Practice regarding the correct handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of disclosure information.
5. Link Age Southwark service users, trustees, volunteers and employees whose personal data is kept on DHSCC's computerised database or in paper form have a right to see information that is held about them, and to require Link Age Southwark to correct it if it is wrong. Link Age Southwark may require this request to be in writing. Link Age Southwark will provide the information within the time limit of 40 days specified in the Act.
6. Link Age Southwark is asked by the London Borough of Southwark for details of our service users' names and addresses, as a condition of their funding. This is for the purpose of verifying our activity and for assessing the use of discretionary and Fair Access to Care services. From May 2010, we have sought the permission of each service user to do this. Any service user not consenting to this has the opportunity to withhold their consent and to have this information recorded on their notes and on the database.
7. Link Age Southwark staff and volunteers are required to safeguard data in paper and electronic files and to undertake the following:

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<sup>1</sup> Note that Link Age Southwark does not transfer data to other countries

- Maintain a 'clear desk policy' with all confidential information locked away at the end of the day;
  - Lock their workstations when leaving their desk;
  - Use a cross cut shredder to destroy protected data;
  - Store keys to cabinets containing personal data securely in the combination safe;
  - Lock away memory sticks when not in use;
  - Ensure security of personal data on computer systems through robust individual passwords which are regularly updated.
  -
8. Personal data relating to service users and volunteers is only retained for as long as its retention serves an essential purpose. Service user data is retained for two years after the last contact with the service user, unless there is a safeguarding issue known to Link Age Southwark staff which justifies retaining records longer. The names of volunteers who have not been able to volunteer with Link Age Southwark due to the nature of convictions revealed by the DBS check, will be kept for up to five years.
9. An up to date register of IT equipment is maintained, and any computer equipment containing personal data is securely destroyed in accordance with the law.

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**Review due by: September 2018**

## **7. Donations and Gifts**

Individual donations are a hugely valuable source of funding for Link Age Southwark's work and are recognised in our fundraising strategy. Many of our volunteers and service users, as well as their families and friends make donations to the charity in recognition of the importance of services we provide, most of which are free. Link Age Southwark is extremely grateful for these donations.

1. Donations can be made by sending a cheque payable to Link Age Southwark, or on-line through our website [www.linkagesouthwark.org](http://www.linkagesouthwark.org). We ask that cash is not sent through the post. Link Age Southwark is registered with the HMRC's Gift Aid scheme and asks donors who are eligible tax payers to sign a Gift Aid Declaration to increase the value of their donation at no extra cost to the donor.
2. Whether or not to make a donation is a matter of personal choice and we emphasise that there is no obligation to do so. All donors are sent a written communication of thanks within two weeks of receipt of their donation, with possible exceptions at busy times of the year, such as over the Christmas period, or if the donor requests anonymity.
3. Link Age Southwark asks its service users not to offer money to the volunteers who provide our face to face services as this may cause embarrassment. Volunteers do not expect payment for what they do and Link Age Southwark covers their expenses. Volunteers who are given a donation are required to hand it into the office where it will be recorded and paid into our general funds.

### **Gifts**

4. Link Age Southwark recognises that there are times, such as at Christmas or at Birthdays, when volunteers and service users may want to exchange gifts. This is a matter of individual choice. There should never be any expectation of a gift. In order to protect both volunteers and users from exploitation, we ask that gifts should be of a value of £10 or less and be notified to the Link Age Southwark office as soon as possible after they are offered/given. If either party is unsure about this or feels uncomfortable about the situation they are in, they should contact a member of Link Age Southwark staff.
5. Staff may accept personal gifts from users or volunteers with a value of £10 or less and must declare the gift to the Director. Details of gifts must be entered in the office record.

### **Wills and bequests**

6. Link Age Southwark is always grateful for bequests to the organisation. It is our policy that no bequests are made to individual staff members or volunteers. Staff and volunteers are required to inform the Director if a service user mentions the possibility of a personal bequest to them. The Director will contact the service user to explain Link Age Southwark's policy.

Staff and volunteers are not permitted to become involved in service users' wills in any way including by acting as a witness or executor.

**Revised and approved by the Board of Trustees: May 2017**

**Review due by: May 2019**

## **8. Environmental Protection**

Link Age Southwark's Board has formally committed the charity to being an environmentally responsible organisation.

All staff are expected to help the charity carry out its aim of being an environmentally responsible organisation in how they carry out their day to day duties.

### **Transport**

1. Link Age Southwark encourages cycling, walking and the use of public transport for staff, trustees and volunteers.
2. The age and physical mobility of many of our service users increases our reliance on the use of private cars and hired minibuses. Link Age Southwark accepts that this is inevitable and the provision of this service facilitates social contact, which is a fundamental part of our Mission.

### **Reducing, Reusing and Recycling**

3. We aim to minimise the use of resources for the purposes of environmental protection and good financial practice and work to *reduce, reuse and recycle* wherever possible in our day-to-day working.
4. Link Age Southwark seeks to buy re-used items in preference to new items where practical.
5. We try and minimise our paper usage. E-mails are used instead of post wherever possible, emails are not printed out unnecessarily and computer records, rather than paper files, are kept where possible. Payments are made by electronic transfer, as opposed to cheque, whenever possible.
6. Link Age Southwark aims to recycle the by-products of our operation. Bins are provided for recyclables and we recycle cartridges and old mobile phones. Any redundant office equipment is offered to other organisations or to Freecycle. Computer and other electronic equipment is recycled in accordance with WEEE Regulations.

**Revised and approved by the Board of Trustees: July 2017**

**Review due by: July 2019**

## 9. Equal Opportunities

1. Link Age Southwark is committed to the promotion and delivery of equal opportunities to its service users, volunteers and staff. We recognise that discrimination is unacceptable and Link Age Southwark's equal opportunities policy is of the utmost importance. Its implementation is the responsibility of all those involved in Link Age Southwark, including paid staff, volunteers and the Board of Trustees. All trustees, staff and volunteers are required to comply with the Link Age Southwark code of conduct which, amongst other things, requires them to comply with Link Age Southwark's equal opportunities policy.
2. The trustees and staff recognise their obligations under current legislation addressing discrimination on grounds of race, religion, sex, age, sexual orientation, disability or any other 'protected characteristic'.

### Employment practices

3. Employees are recruited and selected, promoted and trained on the basis of objective criteria. Recruitment procedures and terms of employment promote equality of opportunity regardless of an individual's gender, ethnic origin, marital status, disability, sexuality, age, responsibility for dependants, religious belief or any other protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. We have a clear equal opportunities procedure for all recruitment processes set out in our employee handbook.
4. Link Age Southwark recognises that sexual, racial and other forms of harassment are completely unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All personnel responsible for the recruitment, selection and promotion of staff are given information and/or training to enable them to minimise the risk of discrimination.
5. Occupational requirements which limit a post to a particular group will be identified, and made clear throughout the recruitment process. The occupational requirement must be essential for the post.
6. Personnel responsible for operating grievance and disciplinary procedures are given information and training to enable them to minimise the risk of discrimination.
7. We endeavour to use the most effective way of bringing job vacancies to the attention of potentially disadvantaged groups. All vacancy advertisements include a statement on equal opportunities.
8. It is standard practice to supply information in large print when requested - this is noted in advertisements

## **Involvement of volunteers**

9. Recruitment procedures and terms of deployment for volunteers promote equality of opportunity.
10. All volunteers are made aware of the support available to them from the staff and trustees when carrying out their responsibilities.
11. Link Age Southwark recognises that sexual, racial and other forms of harassment are unacceptable and is committed to tackling discriminatory behaviour.
12. All staff responsible for the selection and deployment of volunteers are given information and/or training to enable them to minimise the risk of discrimination and promote equality of opportunity through their work.
13. All Link Age Southwark volunteers are given a copy of the complaints procedure and encouraged to use this procedure if they feel they have been treated unfairly.

## **Terms and Conditions**

14. Link Age Southwark endeavours to ensure that volunteers, staff and members of the board are not discriminated against through the terms and conditions under which they are have been engaged. Furthermore, Link Age Southwark recognises that from time to time family and social circumstances may change and consequently that volunteers or staff may need to change their conditions of work. Link Age Southwark attempts, where circumstances and resources permit, to accommodate the needs of those volunteers and staff.

## **Support and training**

15. Volunteers and staff are entitled to support from the Board of Trustees.
16. Staff receive regular supervision from a named member of staff.
17. Volunteers are provided with regular opportunities for supervision.
18. Link Age Southwark recognises that training is an important factor in leading to job achievement and opportunity. Induction training is particularly important and will be made available to all volunteers, staff and members of the board. When other needs are identified, every effort is made to ensure that training is provided.

## **Service provision**

19. Link Age Southwark has criteria for referrals and service provision based on current circumstances. In processing referrals and providing or withdrawing services, everyone will be treated equally, irrespective of their gender, ethnic origin, marital status, disability,

sexuality, age, or religious belief, or any other characteristic protected under the Equality Act.

20. All employees and volunteers working with Link Age Southwark service users are given information and/or training to enable them to minimise the risk of discrimination through their work.

21. All Link Age Southwark service users are given information about the complaints procedure and encouraged to use this procedure if they feel they have been treated unfairly.

### **Monitoring practice**

22. The Board of Trustees is responsible for monitoring the application and effectiveness of this equal opportunities policy.

23. The Board of Trustees is responsible for ensuring that personnel policy and procedures are kept under review to ensure that they promote equal opportunities.

24. The Board of Trustees pursues all indications of a lapse or breach in practice through the agreed procedures of Link Age Southwark and if necessary take appropriate action to redress discrimination.

25. To ensure that this policy is operating effectively (and for no other reason) Link Age Southwark asks applicants for posts, volunteers and service users to complete monitoring forms giving ethnic origin, gender, age and disability.

### **Purchasing**

26. Link Age Southwark aims to ensure that the goods and services it offers are accessible to all groups. It does not knowingly receive or purchase goods and services from agencies which practise discrimination.

**Revised and approved by the Board of Trustees: September 2016**

**Review due by: September 2018**



## **10. Financial Controls**

### **Purchasing/Placing Orders/ Authorising Expenditure**

1. The Director may authorise expenditure within the budget.
2. Authorisation limits for expenditure outside the budget where the bottom line is not affected are as follows:
  - By the Director alone, up to £499;
  - By the Director plus the Chair or Treasurer, up to £2499;
  - By the Finance Committee, over £2,500.
3. The authorisation of any expenditure beyond the budgeted amount which cannot be covered by underspends in other budget heads as in 2 must be referred to the Treasurer or Chair and reported to the Finance Committee.
4. No member of staff has the authority to authorise or agree expenditure on items that are not part of planned expenditure, unless this has been discussed and agreed with the Director. If a situation arises where there is a need for urgent and unplanned expenditure and the Director is not available the Treasurer, Chair, or Deputy Chair or other authorised signatory can be contacted to authorise the expenditure.

### **Invoices and Expense Claims for Payment**

5. All invoices must be initialled and dated by the Director, or an approved Deputy, before the Accountant can make payment. The purpose of each invoice must be clearly marked.
6. Invoices must be presented for payment within one month of receipt and normally within the quarter within which the charge was incurred. Invoices presented out of time may not be paid.
7. Staff and volunteer expense claims must be submitted at least quarterly and normally within the quarter for which the expenditure was incurred. Expense claims out of time may be rejected.
8. All volunteer expense claims must be countersigned and dated by the relevant Project Co-ordinator before passing to the Accountant for payment.
9. All staff expenses claims must be initialled and dated by the Director before the Accountant can make payment.
10. Notwithstanding the provisions of 2.2 and 2.3, expenses incurred within the last two weeks of each quarter may be carried forward to the next quarter.
11. It is the responsibility of the Director and staff to ensure that all paid staff, casual staff and volunteers are aware of these procedures.

12. In order to simplify the processing of claims, the Accountant will provide staff with an appropriate claim form for regular items of expenditure.

### **Online Banking**

13. Bank account signatories from among the Trustees will be set up to use online banking as online authorisers.

14. For transactions within budget which the Director can authorise (see part 1 of the Financial Controls), a paper trail is retained in the office. Once payment has been authorised by the Director, the Accountant sets up the payment with the bank; alerts the named Trustee authorisers; and any one of those named Trustee authorisers can authorise payments.

15. For amounts out of budget that require authorisation by the Director plus the Treasurer or Chair (under £2500), or by the Finance Committee (over £2500), once payment has been authorised, the Accountant sets up the payment with the bank as at present; alerts the named authorisers and specifies that correct authorisation has been given in accordance with these financial controls; and any one of the named Trustee authorisers can authorise the bank to make payment.

### **Debit Cards**

16. Debit Cards may be held by the Director, the Chair, the Treasurer and the Chair of the Fundraising Group.

17. For online use of the Debit card, when transactions are within budget and can be authorised by the Director (see part 1 of the Financial Controls), a paper trail is retained in the office and payment is made.

18. Any expenditure made on a Debit Card should be notified to the Accountant as soon as possible.

### **Cheques**

19. The cheque books are held by the Director or Accountant. Cheques are normally generated weekly.

20. All cheques require two authorised signatures. The Director is authorised to be a signatory up to £5000. For amounts above £5000, two Trustees' signatures are required.

21. When planning to request an order which will require a cheque to go with it, staff should allow ten working days from the initial request to the Director to receipt of a signed cheque, although every effort will be made to process the cheque in a shorter time.

### **Cash Received**

22. All cash received must be entered in the post in book, then put in an envelope with the date, amount and source marked upon it and placed in the safe as soon as possible.

### **Postage**

23. E-mail is the preferred method of communication, but hard copies should be available to provide a record for files.

24. Post should be sent second class wherever possible, including all mailings.

**Revised and approved by the Board of Trustees: July 2017**

**Next review due by: July 2019**

## **11. Health and Safety**

1. Link Age Southwark takes seriously its obligations and responsibilities under health and safety legislation. We recognise our duty of care to service users, volunteers and staff and aim to provide healthy and safe working and service delivery conditions for all and to provide training and information where it is required.
2. The overall responsibility for health and safety lies with a named member of the Board of Trustees (the Company Secretary – please contact the office for their name and contact details). Day to day responsibility for ensuring this policy is put into practice is delegated to the Director.
3. All employees, volunteers and service users have a responsibility within their role for the maintenance of a healthy and safe environment, complying with agreed procedures and reporting all health and safety concerns to an appropriate person.
4. Risk assessments of all aspects of Link Age Southwark’s work will be undertaken by appropriate persons. They will be reviewed annually or whenever the work activity changes.
5. We recognise that much of the charity’s work takes place in service users’ homes and in property managed by other organisations. In such circumstances we will take all measures open to us to implement our health and safety policy.
6. We offer training in awareness and practice in health and safety on induction of staff and volunteers. Procedures are reviewed regularly and training is identified, arranged and monitored by the Director.
7. We will bring findings of risk assessments and all incidents relating to health and safety to the attention of the Board of Trustees who will also review policy and practice annually.
8. All work shall be carried out in accordance with relevant legislation and regulations and within Link Age Southwark procedures.
9. This policy applies to all aspects of the charity’s work and covers the offices, venues for group activities, service users’ homes, and when travelling in vehicles, by public transport or on foot.
10. When new equipment, projects or practices are introduced we will review the health and safety implications and amend policies to take the changes into account.

### **Dissemination of information**

11. Link Age Southwark ensures that all staff and volunteers are aware of and understand its Health and Safety Policy and Procedures. A copy of the Policy and Procedure is available in the office and on our website. All new staff and volunteers are given a copy of

the Health and Safety Policy and Procedure at their induction and receive appropriate instruction on its implementation.

12. The Health and Safety Law poster is displayed in the general office at Dulwich Community Hospital, East Dulwich Grove. Health and safety advice is available from the Director.

### **Training**

13. Any health and safety training needed will be provided free of charge to staff, volunteers and trustees.

14. All health and safety training is recorded on the individual staff member's or volunteer's personnel file.

### **Employer's liability insurance**

15. Details of Link Age Southwark's employer's liability insurance are on display in the Link Age Southwark office and can be obtained by calling the office.

### **Risk assessments**

16. Risk assessments are carried out on all aspects of the charity's activities as follows:

17. The Project Coordinator undertakes a risk assessment of a service user's home as part of the initial assessment visit before agreeing to provide a service or arranging for a volunteer to visit. The risk assessment will include other people who live in or visit the house frequently, wherever known, and pets. Where the service user has requested help with gardening, the risk assessment includes the garden.

18. A staff member checks that a risk assessment has been done for any venue to be used for a social or fundraising activity organised by Link Age Southwark.

19. Where hazards are identified, efforts are made to eliminate or minimise them. Link Age Southwark does not provide a service unless hazards are reduced to an acceptable level.

20. All risk assessments are updated when there are changes in the nature of the work or in the personnel undertaking the work. The written conclusions of all risk assessments are kept electronically where all staff have access to them.

### **Medical**

21. Any required medical examination or health check of a staff member which is related to their job description is provided without charge to the individual e.g. Eye examination for users of display screen equipment.

22. All staff must ensure the Director is aware of any health condition which may in any way affect the efficient performance of their duties.

23. Immediate suspension and disciplinary action is taken if a staff member or volunteer is found to be incapable of performing his/her duties due to the influence of alcohol or other non-prescribed drugs.

### **First aid**

24. A first aid box is kept in the kitchen. Trained first aiders are listed on the signs around the Hospital.

25. If any staff member, volunteer or service user becomes ill whilst engaged in the charity's activities and requires medical attention, arrangements will be made to call the emergency services.

26. All accidents which take place during Link Age Southwark activities must be reported in the accident report book kept in office kitchen with the first aid kit.

### **Infection control**

27. In all situations there is a potential risk of infection and this may be increased when work is carried out in people's homes. Most healthy people are not at a great risk of infection, although older people are known to be at greater risk than others and this should be taken into account. Where the risk is known e.g. someone has 'flu', obvious precautions can be taken. However, unless there are symptoms, many people will not be aware they are harboring an infection.

28. Link Age Southwark employees, volunteers and service users may be potential spreaders and receivers of infection. Sensible precautions such as frequent hand washing should be taken when faced with known situations which have an increased risk of bacterial/viral infection.

29. The following general practices are recommended. Employees should discuss any issues arising with their line manager and volunteers with their Project Coordinator. Any action taken must comply with Link Age Southwark's Confidentiality Policy.

- i. Do not take part in activities if you are unwell and always let the office know if this is the case.
- ii. Inform your line manager or relevant staff member if you have, or have been in contact with, an infectious illness.
- iii. Cover any cuts or abrasions.
- iv. Always let your line manager or relevant staff member know if a service user either has an infection or is vulnerable to infection through social contact. You must let the service user know that you will be passing on this information prior to doing so, and as a requirement of providing a service.

- v. Should the service user refuse permission to pass on this information the service must be withdrawn without disclosure. Employees must tell their line manager, and volunteers their Project Coordinator, of the withdrawal of the service whilst respecting the user's confidentiality.
- vi. If the user gives permission for disclosure then a plan of action must be discussed with the person in the office to whom you are responsible.

30. If, during your work with Link Age Southwark, you come into contact with infection or suspect that you have, we recommend that you seek information and advice from your General Practitioner.

### **Fire**

31. Fire safety information is prominently displayed in the offices. This includes details of evacuation procedures and fire fighting equipment and its location. Fire fighting equipment is checked at the appropriate intervals, and the fire alarm is tested weekly by the landlords who also organise an unannounced fire drill at least once a year.

32. In the event of any fire, all staff, volunteers and trustees are asked to vacate the premises and call 999. We do not expect anyone to tackle a fire unless trained to do so.

33. Staff and visitors are not permitted to smoke in the offices and staff may not smoke in service users' homes. All Link Age Southwark's group activities are non-smoking.

### **Electrical equipment**

34. Link Age Southwark complies with the electricity at work regulations 1989. All electrical equipment is inspected and tested (PAT testing) by a qualified electrician once a year, organised by NHS Property Services. All faulty electrical equipment is clearly identified and removed from the work area pending repair or disposal.

### **Office equipment and machinery**

35. All machinery and equipment is maintained and repaired by authorised contractors.

### **Protective clothing**

36. Link Age Southwark complies with the Personal Protective Equipment Regulations of 1992 and provides all necessary clothing and equipment to staff without charge, which must be correctly used and maintained and returned to Link Age Southwark at the end of employment.

### **Identity badges**

37. All staff and volunteers are issued with identity badges which they are required to carry when visiting service users. The identity badge includes the name of the charity and its

telephone number, the name and photograph of the staff member or volunteer, and the date of issue.

38. A procedure is in place to control the issue and recall of ID badges. Clear and appropriate ways of identifying staff and volunteers are agreed with service users who have particular communication needs.

### **Personal safety**

39. Staff and volunteers frequently work alone, usually in the home of a service user, although staff sometimes work alone in the offices. Staff and volunteers also travel around the area alone in the course of their duties. All staff and volunteers are given guidance on maintaining personal safety whilst working alone as part of their induction. Staff members are required to check in and out of the office before and after a home visit.

### **Pets**

40. Staff are not permitted to bring pets with them to work. Volunteers are not permitted to take pets to service users' homes or to group activities without the express permission of the service users concerned. Service users' pets will be included in risk assessments and volunteers will be informed of the existence of the pet and any associated risks before visiting a service user.

**Revised and approved by the Board of Trustees: January 2017**

**Next review due by: January 2018**



## **12. Referrals and Service Provision**

1. Link Age Southwark welcomes referrals of people who are aged 60 years and over. We work across the London Borough Southwark in close partnership with the other members of the Consortium of Older People's Services in Southwark (COPSINS). We share a single referral process for befriending with Blackfriars Settlement and Time and Talents, who also provide befriending and social interaction services to older people.

2. We accept referrals of older people who:

- i. Are lonely and/or isolated, or at risk of becoming so; and/or
- ii. Want more contact with other people in the local community; and
- iii. Are living independently in their own homes, including in sheltered accommodation.

We have specialist services for people with mild-moderate dementia who are living independently.

3. Referrals are accepted from health and social care professionals, family, friends, neighbours, local services and from older people themselves. Referrers are requested, wherever possible, to download a referral from our website and e-mail it to [info@linkagesouthwark.org](mailto:info@linkagesouthwark.org). Alternatively, referrals can be made by telephone, post or e-mail. Referrers should:

- i. Obtain the older person's consent before making a referral to Link Age Southwark
- ii. Refer people who meet the criteria set out above
- iii. Include all relevant information, including any risks associated with the person referred.

### **Assessment of people referred to Link Age Southwark**

4. A referred person is immediately added to a referrals list on our database. We aim to contact the person referred within two weeks of receiving the referral to agree a date to carry out an assessment in the person's own home. The purpose of the assessment is to identify the most appropriate Link Age Southwark service(s) for the person and to confirm that the person referred is able to benefit from the services we provide. We also inform the older person about other opportunities or services which they might benefit from.

5. Link Age Southwark aims to carry out the assessment within six weeks of the date the referral is received.

### **Provision of services**

6. The Link Age Southwark staff member will inform the referred person within ten working days of the assessment whether or not we are able to provide the service required. We are only able to provide a service when an appropriate volunteer, or a place in an

appropriate group, is available. If the service is not available immediately the staff member will explain the position and add the person to a waiting list or refer them to another appropriate organisation, if one exists. In these circumstances, and if the person making the referral has explicitly requested to be informed about the outcome of the referral, the staff member will, at the same time, inform them, in line with the older person's confidentiality and data protection rights..

### Withdrawal of services

7. Link Age Southwark reserves the right to withdraw services from a service user at its discretion. If services are withdrawn, Link Age Southwark will inform the service user of its reasons in writing. The following list, though not exhaustive, gives examples of reasons for withdrawal of services:

- Threatened or actual physical violence
- Sexual harassment or assault
- Persistent verbal abuse
- Racist, sexist or homophobic abuse
- Persistent unreasonable behaviour
- Serious health and safety risk

8. A service user may at any time decide that he or she no longer wishes to receive services from Link Age Southwark and may be re-referred in the future if his/her circumstances change.

### Targets for service delivery

9. Once a new referral is received, it will be discussed and assigned to a Services staff member at a fortnightly referral meeting. The targets for service delivery are:

<b>Within two weeks of receipt of a referral:</b>	<b>Within six weeks of receipt of a referral:</b>
Initial contact made with the person	Assessment held with the person
	Referrer told of outcome of the assessment, if they have specifically requested this information, or if a service cannot be provided.
	Person added to our database and to any waiting list, if necessary, if a service is to be provided

10. At the matching meeting following the assessment, the Coordinator will discuss with colleagues the outcome of the assessment and where appropriate, a suitable volunteer or group place will be sought. Where the referral is better suited to a different service, the Coordinator will signpost the person being referred to the appropriate agencies.

11. For our befriending service, once a suitable volunteer has been identified and has agreed to take on the role, the Link Age Southwark services staff member will arrange a

mutually convenient time to introduce the volunteer and new service user in person. If attending a group, the Link Age Southwark staff member will arrange the first attendance of this as appropriate.

**Revised and approved by the Board of Trustees: March 2017**

**Next revision due by: March 2019**

## 13. Safeguarding Adults

1. As a charity that works extensively with older people, many of whom are vulnerable, all staff and volunteers need to be alert to the fact that some older people experience abuse. Staff and volunteers need to be familiar with the approach the Local Authority takes to safeguard adults and understand the Local Authority's advice about actions to be taken when there is a suspicion that abuse is taking place.
2. More detailed information is available at <https://safeguarding.southwark.gov.uk> and at [www.ccpas.co.uk](http://www.ccpas.co.uk), and is available to Trustees and volunteers from Link Age Southwark staff at any time.
3. CCPAS is an independent expert safeguarding charity which advises Link Age Southwark on its safeguarding policies and practice and reviews and approves our policies and procedures.
4. Link Age Southwark's designated Safeguarding Officer is the Director, Gemma Juma.

### Statement of intent

5. The staff and volunteers of Link Age Southwark are committed to working in a way that protects vulnerable adults from harm. We accept our responsibilities to safeguard the wellbeing of all those with whom we work.
6. We will raise awareness of abuse through training and signposting and will follow recommended practice in dealing with situations where abuse is suspected or is identified.

### Southwark Safeguarding Adults Policy

7. This policy applies to all adults but in this instance we make reference to service users of the charity, who are over the age of 60. Volunteers and staff may become aware of safeguarding issues regarding people of other ages within a service user's family; where these arise the same guidance will apply. Link Age Southwark's induction for all volunteers details types and examples of abuse and some signs of abuse to look out for.

### Definitions of Abuse

8. This section considers the different types and patterns of abuse and neglect and the different circumstances in which they may take place. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list but an illustrative guide as to the sort of behaviour which could give rise to a safeguarding concern.

- **Physical abuse** – including assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate physical sanctions.
- **Domestic violence** – including psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse; so called 'honour' based violence.
- **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.

- **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.
- **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 the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.
- **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.
- **Discriminatory abuse** – including forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment; because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.
- **Organisational abuse** – including neglect and poor care practice within an Institution or specific 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 practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.
- **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.
- **Self-neglect** – this covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one’s personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.

Incidents of abuse may be one-off or multiple, and affect one person or more.

#### **If abuse is suspected**

9. If there is an emergency situation or someone is in immediate danger then the emergency services must be contacted. No staff or volunteer should, under any circumstances, put themselves at risk. Contact Link Age Southwark as soon as possible after contacting the emergency services.
10. If abuse is suspected but there is no immediate emergency and it is during office hours, volunteers/staff must contact a staff member or the Charity Director on 0208 299 2623. If the Charity Director or a member of staff cannot be contacted then please contact Southwark Council on 020 7525 1921 or 020 7525 5000 out of office hours.
11. The reasons for concern should be recorded as soon as possible along with detail of what action was taken. Verbal communication must be recorded, word for word as far as possible, along with any other factual information.

#### **What happens next (see appendix 2)**

12. Our organisation follows the policy and procedures of Southwark Social Services, which will take the lead in any investigation.

## **Confidentiality and information sharing**

13. An older person may disclose information about their circumstances that causes concern to a volunteer or staff member. It is always advisable to discuss these concerns with the person concerned and request permission to share this information within the organisation.
14. A service user may preface a disclosure by requesting confidentiality. It is unwise to promise to maintain confidentiality as this cannot be guaranteed. If something is disclosed about a situation where an individual is being abused or if they are abusing another person, you may have to act in a way that contradicts the undertaking of confidentiality you have given, even if the abused individual withholds their consent.
15. The situation must be discussed with the person concerned; if consent is withheld then a judgement has to be made at an organisational level, not by an individual, as to whether disclosure is in their interests.
16. The principle of proportionality is important and is a legal requirement i.e. that the action taken should be in proportion to the severity of the circumstance. For further detailed information please contact staff in the office, who will liaise with CCPAS, which is an independent charity providing professional advice, support, training and resources relating to safeguarding vulnerable adults.
17. In the past, it has been a condition of the funding we receive from Southwark Council that we share the names and addresses of service users with them. We ask our service users' permission to do this, and if they refuse we will not pass their details on.

## **Disclosure and Disbarring Service (DBS) checks**

18. All new staff, volunteers, and trustees will have a DBS check and until this has been received the person will not be able to work unsupervised with any service users. Link Age Southwark aims to renew DBS checks every 3 years, in line with best practice recommendations. In some situations, office volunteers do not require a DBS check and the volunteer coordinators will always advise on this, drawing on advice from CCPAS.
19. Service user volunteers will have enhanced DBS checks if they are in one-to-one situations with other users, including if they are befriending or providing transport help. Volunteers in group settings may require only a standard DBS check, if another volunteer with an enhanced check will be in attendance at the group.
20. For more information on DBS checks, please refer to the DBS Policy in this policies and procedures document.

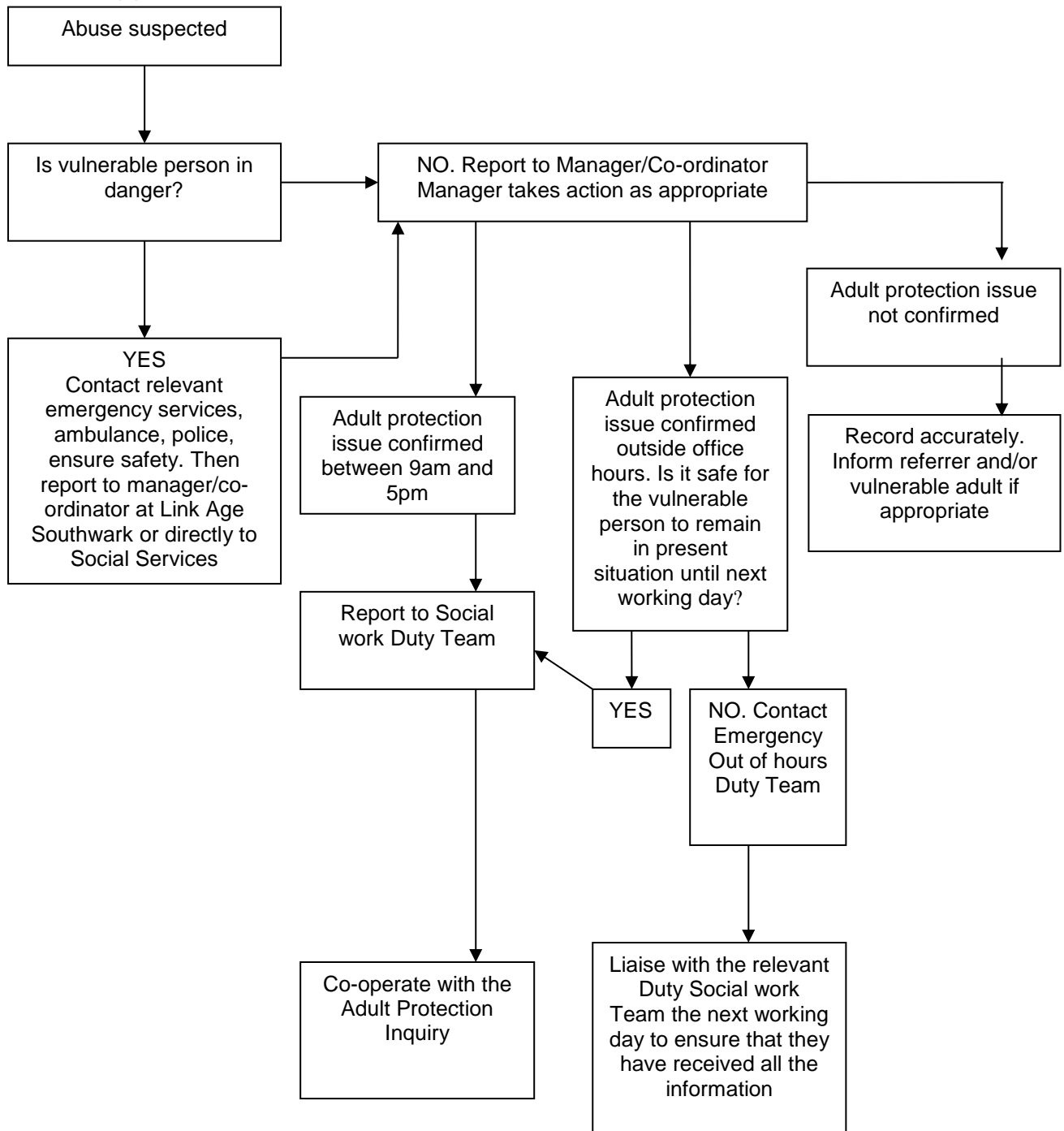
## **Training in safeguarding adults**

21. All staff, volunteers and members of the Board of Trustees are required to have some basic awareness training in safeguarding adults. Training is provided at the Link Age Southwark volunteer induction, which is compulsory for all new volunteers and is also open to existing volunteers. In addition, safeguarding training is offered to all staff, trustees and volunteers on an annual basis.

22. All paid staff will undergo safeguarding training. All staff and members of the Board of Trustees need to be fully aware of their responsibilities and be familiar with policy and procedures on safeguarding adults.

### Safeguarding Adults Flowchart

#### What happens next?



Revised and approved by CCPAS and by the Board of Trustees in March 2017  
Next review due by March 2018.

## **14. Smoking and Alcohol**

1. Link Age Southwark staff and volunteers are not permitted to smoke when they are involved with Link Age Southwark activities. Staff and volunteers may not smoke at any time when working with a service user, including outside or in public places.
2. Volunteers will be advised if a service user with whom they are matched is a smoker and may choose not to work with that person. If the volunteer decides she or he does not wish to work with a smoker, this will in no way affect his or her further involvement with the charity.
3. Link Age Southwark staff and volunteers are not permitted to drink alcohol while working or volunteering for the charity
4. Volunteers who drive for Link Age Southwark must not be under the influence of drugs or alcohol when engaged in activities as a volunteer driver.

**Revised and approved by the Board of Trustees: July 2017**

**Next review due by: July 2019**



## **15. Staff Recruitment and Selection**

1. Link Age Southwark strives to follow best practice in recruiting staff. Our equal opportunities policy is at the forefront of our recruitment practice. Link Age Southwark works hard to ensure that employees or trustees making selection and recruitment decisions will not discriminate, whether consciously or unconsciously, in making these decisions.
2. This policy relates to all aspects of staff recruitment from vacancy to the completion of the probationary period. The policy is implemented in full for any appointment of over three months' duration.
3. The recruitment process complies with Link Age Southwark's Confidentiality and Equal Opportunities Policies.

### **Advertising**

4. Link Age Southwark will adopt a consistent non-discriminatory approach to the advertising of vacancies and will not confine its recruitment to areas or media sources which provide only, or mainly, applicants from a particular group.

### **Selection**

5. Short listing and interviewing is usually carried out by a selection panel of not less than two members, normally including the Director or at least one trustee. At the beginning of each recruitment process the Director briefs the selection panel on required practice during the process.
6. Interview questions will be related to the requirements of the job and will not be of a discriminatory nature.

### **Training**

7. All staff and trustees involved in any part of the recruitment process should be prepared or trained appropriately for their role. The Director is fully trained on all aspects of the recruitment process, including the implementation of equal opportunities best practice.

### **Job description and person specification**

8. Job descriptions and person specifications will reflect accurately the skills and qualifications required for the work to be undertaken.

### **Disclosure and Barring Service disclosures**

9. We undertake DBS checks for all posts where this is a requirement. A criminal record does not necessarily prevent an applicant from being appointed to a post with Link Age Southwark. The decision depends on the nature of the post and the circumstances and nature of the applicant's offence(s).

### **Application forms**

10. All recruitment uses standard application forms.

**References**

11. References are obtained before a final offer of employment is made.

**Induction and probationary period**

12. All staff are subject to a three month probationary period and have an individual induction programme. The Director is subject to a six month probationary period.

**Revised and approved by the Board of Trustees: March 2017**

**Next review due by: March 2019**

## **16. Staff Support and personal development**

1. The charity recognises that our most valuable asset in achieving our aims and objectives is our staff and we are committed to their development and support. The Director reports to the Chair of the Board of Trustees on staff support and training matters.

### **Support**

2. Link Age Southwark has a small staff team who offer each other informal peer support. Staff are supported formally through individual supervision sessions and annual appraisal with their line manager. Weekly team meetings are held to co-ordinate work. Supervision enables the Director to monitor standards and identify training and personal development needs.

### **Personal Development**

3. Staff are encouraged to take responsibility for their own personal development, with support from the Director. They are encouraged to attend appropriate training to support their roles and their ongoing development, as well as to identify other ways of meeting their learning and development needs – including through mentoring, shadowing, on-the-job training and through sharing skills within the organisation and within the Consortium of Older People's Services in Southwark (COPSINS). The Director agrees learning and development needs and plans with staff individually at supervision sessions and collectively at team meetings. All proposed training courses must be approved by the Director.

4. More information is contained in the Link Age Southwark Employee Handbook.

**Revised and approved by the Board of Trustees: March 2017**

**Next review due by: March 2019**

## **17. Volunteer Recruitment and Support**

1. Volunteers are at the core of Link Age Southwark's work providing face to face services for local isolated older people. Without sufficient committed volunteers the charity would not exist. Link Age Southwark is committed to a continuous programme of volunteer recruitment and the provision of on-going support. Link Age Southwark makes every effort to meet the needs of its volunteers, alongside those of its service users.

### **Publicity and information**

2. Link Age Southwark uses a wide variety of media to display and distribute information about volunteering opportunities with the aim of reaching all sections of the community. This includes posters and leaflets in local shops, libraries, leisure centres and places of worship; advertisements and articles in local publications; talks to local groups and information on local and national websites, together with a presence at local community events.

### **Recruitment and selection of volunteers**

3. All potential volunteers complete a short application form, providing basic personal details, and complete an equal opportunities monitoring form. Two character references are taken up and all volunteers must complete a satisfactory DBS check, administered and paid for by Link Age Southwark. Volunteers must attend an induction session within three months of commencing volunteering.

### **Code of Conduct**

4. All volunteers are required to comply with Link Age Southwark's Code of Conduct and to follow policies and procedures, which include confidentiality, equal opportunities and health and safety. Breach of the Code of Conduct may lead to dismissal.

### **Safety and security**

5. All volunteers are required to comply with the charity's health and safety policies and procedures. Staff will undertake risk assessments of all activities before volunteers are asked to carry them out. Insurance covers volunteers against injury, loss or third party claims whilst involved in the charity's activities. Volunteers are given identity cards and asked to carry them whenever engaged on Link Age Southwark activities.

### **Expenses**

6. All volunteers may claim travel and other expenses incurred in the course of their volunteering. Meal expenses, up to a maximum of £5, can be claimed by anyone volunteering five (or more) hours in any one day.

### **Induction and training**

7. All volunteers are given an explanation of their role by a Co-ordinator and are offered relevant training.

### **Support**

8. Volunteers are encouraged to contact the Volunteer or Project Coordinators with any concerns and to be in regular contact with the office. Volunteers receive a regular newsletter and are invited to informal meetings – ‘Volunteer Get Togethers’ and to training and to share experiences in a social setting and with talks on subjects relevant to their volunteering.

### **Students and Young People**

9. Subject to proper supervision, Link Age Southwark encourages the involvement of young people as volunteers in support of its work, in ways appropriate to their age and experience.

10. We welcome offers of volunteers under eighteen from schools as part of a structured programme and at supervised fundraising or other supervised events. In the context of structured programmes in schools, students should be fourteen years minimum and supervised by staff of the school. We also welcome volunteers under the age of 18 to work as administrative volunteer.

11. Our Child Protection Policy applies to students and young people volunteering with us. Child Protection Guidance is offered to all staff in our employee handbook.

### **Consultation and feedback**

12. Volunteers are encouraged to feedback comments, criticisms and suggestions about the charity’s work. Annual feedback forms are sent out and volunteers are also encouraged to report back informally to staff and trustees. The Volunteer Coordinators seek volunteers’ suggestions for training and informal gatherings for volunteers to discuss ways of developing their work are organised.

**Revised and approved by the Board of Trustees: January 2016**

**Next review due by: January 2018**

## 18. Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is the process by which an individual raises a concern about a perceived past, current or future wrongdoing in an organisation.

Link Age Southwark works with vulnerable people and is in receipt of public funds. We are committed to maintaining high standards of openness, accountability, honesty, probity and transparency. In line with this commitment, the Charity encourages employees and volunteers with serious concerns about any aspect of the Charity's work to come forward and voice those concerns. This policy makes it clear that such concerns can be raised without fear of reprisal and reflects the requirements of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

Staff members and volunteers are made aware of their responsibility to report malpractice, neglect or abuse and are informed there are procedures to enable them to do this without fear of being treated less favourably as a result.

The following list, though not exhaustive, indicates a range of activities Link Age Southwark expects staff and volunteers to report:

- i. The improper use of charitable funds
- ii. A criminal offence
- iii. Failure to comply with a legal obligation, for example compliance with the Data Protection Act)
- iv. Actions which endanger the health and safety of an individual
- v. Poor quality of care, abuse or neglect
- vi. Significant breaches of our policies and procedures
- vii. Actions which are intended to conceal or profit from any of the above
- viii. Improper or unethical conduct

Link Age Southwark encourages staff and volunteers to report incidents at the earliest stage, even if they are unsure whether or not they have witnessed misconduct. The charity *Public Concern at Work* (PCAW) ([www.pcaw.co.uk](http://www.pcaw.co.uk)) 020 7404 6609 offers advice to individuals on what should be reported and gives advice and support.

Concerns should be raised with the Director or Company Secretary, who will treat the matter in complete confidence. If you are not satisfied with the response, the matter can be raised with the appropriate body – PCAW can advise in this regard.

If a report is found to be untrue and it is discovered through the investigation that it was reported falsely with malicious intent, the person making the report may be subject to the disciplinary procedure.

**Revised and approved by the Board of Trustees: May 2017**

**Next review due by: May 2019**

## **19. Child Protection Policy**

Link Age Southwark fully recognises its responsibilities for child protection. Staff and Trustees have an individual and collective responsibility to ensure the health, safety and welfare of children and young people who engage with us as volunteers.

We recognise that the welfare of any child is paramount and we are committed to safeguarding children involved with the charity from harm. The rights, wishes and feelings of children and young people will be respected and listened to.

We know that being a young person makes them vulnerable to abuse by adults. If any staff member, Trustee, volunteer or young person/child has any concerns about the conduct of any member of the organisation, this should be raised in the first instance with the Director or Company Secretary, who are Link Age Southwark's designated child protection contacts.

Our policy applies to all staff, volunteers, Trustees and visitors to our premises.

At all times, we will:

- \* Ensure safe practice in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with vulnerable people (please refer to our Safeguarding and DBS policies).
- \* Raise awareness of child protection issues within the charity to enable our young volunteers to feel safe.
- \* Establish a safe environment in which the young volunteers can develop, thrive and reach their potential (guidance is contained in our Employee Handbook)
- \* Report incidents to the school or work experience team with whom Link Age Southwark is working in relation to the young volunteer.

We will additionally ensure that no child is treated less favourably than others; that all children, without exception, will be protected from abuse; and all concerns and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously by Trustees, staff and volunteers and responded to appropriately. Whenever required, advice will be taken from the Local Authority Safeguarding Board, or from the work experience placement organisation/ the school attended by the child.

**Approved by the Board of Trustees: January 2016**

**Next review due by: May 2017**