



## Guidance Note for Projects - Protecting Vulnerable Adults and Children

Paths for All want to ensure that everyone can engage in its activities safely. We are committed to equal opportunities and aim to treat everyone with dignity and respect, and will not discriminate on grounds of age, ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, disability or beliefs.

We have therefore produced this guidance note for all our activities to ensure that there are processes and procedures in place to safeguard 'adults at risk' and children. This guidance note should provide information and support for projects, training courses, walking coordinators, volunteers and Walk Leaders on the procedures that need to be in place to safeguard 'adults at risk' and children.

The Walking Inclusion Model below shows our commitment to inclusion through Walking for Health.



Inclusion model modified with permission from SDS. © Paths for All 2015

### Who are adults at risk?

The Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 defines Adults at Risk, through a three-point test, as adults, aged 16 years or over, who:

1. Are unable to safeguard their own well-being, property, rights or other interests;
2. Are at risk of harm; and
3. Because they are affected by disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity, are more vulnerable to being harmed than adults who are not so affected.

Whilst in Scottish law a 'child' is generally defined as under 16 years of age, for the purposes of this guidance, Section 97 of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 a 'child' is defined as an individual aged under 18 years.

## What should you do?

While many of our activities are open to everyone and are not specifically for 'adults at risk' or children, there will be times when 'adults at risk' or children join our groups. Additionally, many targeted walking groups and some training courses are specifically for young people or 'adults at risk' and so it is essential to have the policies and procedures in place to keep everyone safe.

- **Be familiar with your organisation's Adult and Children Protection Policies or Procedures and ensure that any walking activities comply with these procedures.**
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers working closely with participants on these projects are aware of your procedures for safeguarding vulnerable people.
- Unless trained staffs are available to do so, staff and volunteers cannot provide specialist or personal care and support to adults with additional support needs or who are unable to care independently for themselves. For example, helping someone to go to the toilet (as opposed to telling them where the toilet is) or giving someone their medication (as opposed to reminding them to do so) is classed as personal care and to do such tasks a person usually needs to be registered to undertake such activities and vetted by Disclosure Scotland (see below). In situations where you think either a person needs personal care (eg their dementia is such that the person does not respond to requests or guidance from the walk leader) or a volunteer is straying into areas of regulated work, you should seek immediate advice and act upon this.
- Ensure that carers or support workers and where appropriate professional staff making referrals are aware of your policies and procedures for Protecting Adults and any limitations of the support you can provide to vulnerable people. It may be that a carer or support worker will be able to support the vulnerable person to attend the walking group.
- We want volunteers involved in walking groups to feel confident in their role, therefore if a volunteer is concerned about someone's ability to be involved in the group they should speak to the coordinator who will assess the situation and work with carers and health professionals where appropriate to achieve a solution which will ensure everyone can take part in a safe and enjoyable way.
- If a child or young person would like to get involved in any activity they must be accompanied by a parent or guardian or someone nominated by the parent who is acting in loco parentis unless other policies or procedures are in place to support this.

- Consider PVG requirements for your staff and volunteers (more information below)

## **Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme**

### **About PVG**

- The PVG Scheme is a membership scheme for people undertaking regulated work with children and/or protected adults to join.
- Disclosure Scotland who are the Executive Agency of the Scottish Government to deliver accurate and responsive disclosure services, collects and assesses information about people doing regulated work and decides who should be barred from working with children and/or protected adults.

The PVG Act defines regulated work by reference to:

- the activities that a person does;
- the establishments in which a person works;
- the position that they hold; or
- the people for whom they have day to day supervision or management responsibility.

There are two types of regulated work:

- regulated work with children; and
- regulated work with adults.

Every project is different and the decision to undertake a PVG Scheme Record disclosure rests with a project's managing organisation. Paths for All have used the self-assessment tool which suggests that a Community Health Walk or Community Path Group which is open to the general public does not meet the criteria of regulated work according to the self-assessment tool. The reason for this is based on the exception that working with protected adults is incidental to the work being done – the walks are offering a service targeted at the public in general which protected adults might use as opposed to a service specifically targeted at protected adults. This does however suggest that targeted walks which are specifically for 'adults at risk' may require PVG checks for both staff and volunteers.

We would recommend that any further queries relating to the PVG scheme, the requirement for checks or the process involved should be directed to Disclosure Scotland on 0870 609 6006 or visit their website: [www.disclosurescotland.co.uk](http://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk)

## **Concerns about abuse or potential abuse**

Cases of abuse are thankfully rare; however everyone has a responsibility to raise any concerns about abuse. It is not your responsibility to investigate or intervene in suspected cases of abuse or ill treatment, but it **is** your responsibility to refer such cases to the appropriate authorities, and to recognise that as organisers and leaders of activities in a position of trust, we may be made aware of signs of abuse, or even to have it disclosed to us.

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