

## **Vulnerable Supporters Policy** **March 2019**



Woodcraft Folk  
Education for Social Change

This policy document should be used by all Woodcraft Folk staff and volunteers when fundraising directly with individuals.

It is designed to protect vulnerable individuals and to ensure Woodcraft Folk follows the Institute of Fundraising guidance around [Treating Donors Fairly](#) (2016).



The guidance in this policy should be used when discussing significant contributions (In excess of £5,000 or regular giving that would equal £5,000 over a 12 month period), and not regular membership contributions.

### **What is a vulnerable person?**

Woodcraft Folk recognise that some of the people we engage with through our fundraising activities will not always have the capacity to fully understand the nature of the donation they are being asked to make, or the consequences of making that donation.

An individual who finds it difficult to immediately make an informed decision about the choices offered to them is called a 'vulnerable person'.

A vulnerable person may\*:

- Have a diagnosed condition such as dementia
- Be experiencing temporary medical conditions
- Have experienced a recent bereavement
- Be inebriated or under the influence of intoxicating substances
- Be undiagnosed or have temporary mental health conditions
- Have learning difficulties
- Be on medication
- Experience language or communication difficulties

*\*This list is not exhaustive.*

### **Age as an indicator of vulnerability**

Age does not indicate whether a person is vulnerable or not. When communicating and fundraising with older people we will be mindful of the above indicators that may raise concerns that an individual could need additional support or be in a vulnerable circumstance. However, if a supporter is identified as being under the age of 16, then we will seek to communicate with them and their parent/guardian.

### **Our obligation to protect vulnerable people**

Woodcraft Folk has an obligation to protect vulnerable people and those in vulnerable circumstances. Whenever we suspect that someone we engage with is lacking capacity or is in vulnerable circumstances – we call them a 'vulnerable supporter' – for new supporters we will take steps to terminate the contact in a way which seeks to:

- protect that person
- protect their dignity
- note any desire they have expressed to support Woodcraft Folk

In the case of long-standing supporters who become vulnerable we may:

- put donation processing on hold
- discuss their ongoing support and agree review dates with them or a representative, this will help ensure they can recall their donation and still wish to be a supporter
- suggest they discuss their ongoing support with family and friends
- write asking the individual to confirm their ongoing contribution

## **Fundraising and vulnerable supporters**

If a fundraiser suspects that a person they are talking to may be vulnerable, they must end the conversation immediately. They should do this politely, without:

- making a request for a donation
- asking about the individual's capacity to make a decision or the existence of vulnerable circumstances

We know that it may be difficult in some situations for fundraisers to decide whether or not someone is in a vulnerable circumstance or lacks capacity, fundraisers should err on the side of caution.

This applies to all fundraising, by our direct employees and volunteers or through a third party or agency.

We believe everyone has the right to donate if they wish to and are able to do so. That's why we offer further support for people in vulnerable circumstances who want to make a decision about whether to make a donation.

Our policy is informed by the Institute of Fundraising's (IoF) code of fundraising practice and their guidance, [Treating Donors Fairly](#), which states:

*"Fundraisers OUGHT to take all reasonable steps to treat a donor fairly, enabling them to make an informed decision about any donation. This OUGHT to include taking into account the needs of any potential donor who may be in a vulnerable circumstance or require additional care and support to make an informed decision.*

*"Fundraisers OUGHT NOT to exploit the credulity, lack of knowledge, apparent need for care and support or vulnerable circumstance of any donor at any point in time."*

## **Our vulnerable supporters policy**

- Giving to charity should be a positive experience, whether someone is an existing or a new supporter
- Woodcraft Folk is compassionate towards its supporters and will never exploit vulnerability
- Woodcraft Folk will always do everything we can to assist supporters to make informed decisions about the support they choose to give. Additional support may

include: delaying acceptance of the gift to give the supporter further time to consider their donation; including a 'cooling off' period if the supporter changes their mind; or suggesting the supporter gets advice from family/friends.

- Woodcraft Folk fully comply with the Fundraising Regulator's Code of Fundraising Practice
- Woodcraft Folk allows supporters or those acting on their behalf to declare vulnerability
- Woodcraft Folk will not contact supporters with the aim of asking for an increase in their giving where the supporters' records indicate a declaration of vulnerability
- Regardless of whether a declaration has been made or not, Woodcraft Folk does not accept donations where it has reason to believe that a supporter may be experiencing vulnerable circumstances and that accepting the donation would be ethically wrong and/or harmful to the supporter
- Should a situation arise where Woodcraft Folk becomes aware that it has unknowingly accepted donations from an individual during a time that they were experiencing vulnerable circumstances, it will endeavour to return all donations accepted during this period
- Should Woodcraft Folk receive information regarding a supporter's vulnerability from a third party, it will not act on any request to alter the supporters' preferences unless the third party can provide evidence that they have the authority to act on behalf of the supporter
- Woodcraft Folk recognises that it may sometimes be difficult for fundraisers to assess the vulnerability of a supporter; in cases where a fundraiser is unsure, they must ask their manager for a second opinion and approval to accept any donation
- if you believe you have interacted with a vulnerable supporter and you are concerned about their welfare, you must follow the Woodcraft Folk's Vulnerable Adults policy

Woodcraft Folk will respond to an individual who needs additional care and support or who is in a vulnerable situation:

- Be patient and don't rush the conversation – it's better to have a longer conversation than cut this short and leave the person confused or agitated in any way.
- Ask if the person would prefer another method of communication e.g. offer to send information in the post or via email, so they have time to take in the information.
- Ask the person if they need to speak with anyone else before making a decision.
- Check their understanding of what they have agreed to – for example, ask them to repeat this information back to us.
- Agreeing a review date.

***For more information***

Debs McCahon, Director of Development (Joint Chief Executive) on [Deborah.mccahon@woodcraft.org.uk](mailto:Deborah.mccahon@woodcraft.org.uk) for more information or to discuss any concerns relatedly to vulnerable supporters.