

5. SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY

1. Introduction

This policy is about safeguarding vulnerable adults. **For child safeguarding please refer to the separate Welcare policy on Safeguarding and Child Protection.** The safety and welfare of vulnerable adults is of the utmost importance. It is the duty of all our staff & volunteers to protect each vulnerable adult from abuse and to be alert to the possibility of abuse. Staff and volunteers should familiarise themselves with their Local Authority's procedures on safeguarding vulnerable adults, in particular, the document "A Guide for Frontline Staff and Volunteers".

2. Definitions

Vulnerable adults are people over 18, who are in need of care and unable to protect themselves because of:

- A mental or learning disability.
- A physical disability.
- Age or illness.

People who abuse;

- Are often well known to their victims but can be strangers.
- Might be a relative, partner, son or daughter, friend or neighbour, a paid or voluntary worker, or a health or social care worker.
- Could be another vulnerable adult or service user.
- May not realise they are abusing and can sometimes act out of character and abuse because of the stress of caring.

Abuse can take place in a wide range of settings such as:

- The vulnerable adult's own home.
- A Welcare centre.
- A day centre.
- A children's centre.
- A hospital.
- The workplace.
- Educational institutions.

Young carers may be involved in the care of a vulnerable adult. In such circumstances staff should also have regard to the policy on Safeguarding and Child Protection. *Young carers* are children and young persons under 18 who provide or intend to provide care, assistance or support to another family member. They carry out on a regular basis significant or substantial caring tasks and assume a level of responsibility which would usually be associated with an adult. The person receiving care is often a parent but can be a sibling, grandparent, or other relative who is disabled, has some chronic illness, mental health problem or other condition connected with a need for care, support or supervision.

3. Recognition

The most common types of abuse are:

Physical abuse: this is usually the use of force to cause pain and injury and signs might include burns, bruising, scratches, or accidents that cannot be explained. Also included is misuse of medication or forcing someone, for example, to stay in a care home against their wishes.

Neglect: this is when a vulnerable adult does not have their basic needs met, such as adequate food or warmth or help with personal hygiene. Signs might include deteriorating health, appearance or mood.

Financial abuse: this is when a vulnerable adult is exploited for financial gain. Often valuables will go missing or there may be a change in financial circumstances that cannot be explained.

Sexual abuse: this includes rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not or could not consent, or was pressurised or manipulated. Signs can include changes in behaviour or physical discomfort.

Psychological abuse: this might be emotional abuse such as threats of harm or abandonment, enforced isolation, blaming or controlling behaviour, or verbal and racial insults. Signs may be fear, confusion or disturbed sleep.

Discriminatory abuse: this includes any sort of abuse based on a vulnerable adult's race, gender or impairment such as their mental or physical health.

Institutional abuse: this is poor professional practice, including neglect, and can take the form of isolated incidents right through to ill treatment or gross misconduct.

4. Action to be taken

It is the responsibility of all staff to report abuse.

- If the vulnerable adult is in danger, first ensure they are safe and if immediate help is needed, call the emergency services on 999.
- If abuse is discovered or suspected, the abuse must in all cases be reported at the earliest opportunity to Adult Social Care.

Then follow the detailed reporting procedure set out below. Action will then be taken to ensure the vulnerable adult is protected in the future. Staff who abuse will be dealt with through Welcare's disciplinary procedures. Where appropriate the police will always be informed.

5. Reporting procedures for cases of alleged/suspected abuse

- Only ask the person sufficient questions to establish what has happened i.e. accident or possible abuse.
- Inform your Line Manager or other senior member of staff at the earliest opportunity

- If danger exists, ensure the person and any other vulnerable adults are protected.
- If the person is seriously injured seek immediate medical treatment. Immediately report the incident to your line manager and adhere to existing policies e.g. Health and Safety and to the relevant Local Authority's Adult Protection Procedures.
- Be careful not to destroy or contaminate evidence.
- As soon as possible detailed notes should be made including when and to whom in your Local Authority's Adult Social Care Department the abuse has been reported. Documentation is vital as evidence might be required for criminal proceedings at a later date.
- If the suspected abuser is a member of staff, the matter will be dealt with through Welcare's disciplinary procedure. The police could be involved and the member of staff could be suspended pending an investigation.

6. Confidentiality

People have the right to expect that all staff and volunteers will deal sensitively and sympathetically with their situation. It is important that information remains confidential and that information should only be shared on a "need to know" basis.

7. Safe Recruitment Procedures

Welcare's recruitment policy stipulates that all paid staff will have to complete an application form, detailing past work history and references. Individuals are then interviewed and references requested. Only on receipt of satisfactory references will a formal offer of employment be made.

All staff and volunteers working directly and having regular, sustained contact with vulnerable adults are required to have an enhanced check through the Disclosure and Barring Service before any commencement of work or activity.

Copies of all returned DBS checks and documentation pertaining to any vulnerable adult issues will be kept confidentially and securely locked within the Welcare's central office.

8. Board Level Responsibility

In line with policy and good practice, the Chair of the Services Committee shall provide the lead at Board level on all safeguarding matters. This responsibility shall include ensuring that the safeguarding policies are fully implemented, understood, adhered to and monitored throughout the organisation. In providing this overview, the Chair shall be prepared to challenge and hold to account staff on any aspect of the safeguarding policy.