

## **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.

This policy should also be read in conjunction with the Mental Capacity Policy.

The safety and welfare of vulnerable adults is of the utmost importance. It is the duty of all staff and volunteers to protect vulnerable adults from abuse and to be alert to the possibility of abuse. Staff and volunteers should familiarise themselves with the relevant Local Authority's procedures on safeguarding vulnerable adults, in particular, the document "A Guide for Frontline Staff and Volunteers".

Some service users who may be additionally vulnerable are those who may have been in the looked after system and are now a care leaver and people who as a child have experienced child sexual exploitation.

### **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

Some service users who maybe additionally vulnerable include:

- those who may have been in the looked after system and are now a care leaver and have returned to live with family
- people who, as a child, experienced child sexual exploitation

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
- in the community

### 3. Recognition

The most common types of abuse are:

*Physical abuse*: this is usually the use of force to cause pain and injury. Signs might include burns, bruising, scratches or accidents that cannot be explained. Also included is the 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. This is particularly relevant for adults who have recently turned 18 and were previously considered to be at risk or were being sexually exploited.

*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 be informed.

### 5. Reporting procedures for cases of alleged/suspected abuse

- Only ask the person sufficient questions to establish what has happened e.g., 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 the 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 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 commencement of work or activity. If necessary, additional risk assessments will be conducted.

## **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 this policy.