

FISH Volunteer Centre

SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

AIM OF THIS POLICY

The aim of this policy is to outline the practice and procedures for paid staff and volunteers of FISH Volunteer Centre to contribute to the prevention of abuse of vulnerable adults through raising awareness and providing a clear framework for action when abuse is suspected.

It is aimed at protecting the vulnerable adult and the worker, recognising the risks involved in lone working.

The policy covers all staff and areas of work with specific guidance for projects regularly in contact with vulnerable adults.

INTRODUCTION

The abuse of vulnerable adults is very common. People find it hard to understand why anyone would want to abuse an older person, someone with a physical disability or learning disability, or someone who is unwell. But someone suffering some mental and/or physical frailty is the perfect victim: they can't defend themselves, they can't get away, and even if they are able to communicate they're probably not believed. Abuse does not have to be deliberate, malicious or planned either. It sometimes happens that people are trying to do their best but don't really know what is the right thing to do.

The 'Multi Agency Codes of Practice for the Protection of Vulnerable Adults in Oxfordshire' are not just about identifying abusers and punishing them, although this will happen when it's appropriate. The most important aim is to *promote the wellbeing, security and safety of vulnerable people consistent with his or her rights, capacity and personal responsibility, and prevent abuse occurring wherever possible.*

In most cases, this can only happen by making sure people get the care and help they need when they need it, and making sure that the people that care for them get the support and help they need as well. Perhaps most importantly, it's about listening and letting people know how they can help themselves.

However, it is not always possible to make things better or change things to how we feel they should be. In a proportion of cases a vulnerable person may remain in an abusive situation with the full knowledge of those responsible for their care and support because there are no clear solutions.

Once a person reaches the age of 18 in this country they are legally an adult regardless of any disability or impairment they may have. Because of this in most cases it is the vulnerable adult who must decide what happens. However, the people and organisations caring for them must do everything they can to identify and prevent abuse happening wherever possible.

WHO ARE VULNERABLE ADULTS?

A vulnerable adult may be anybody over the age of 18 who is getting, or may be entitled to care and/or support from Social Services. This may include:

- People with a mental health problem or mental illness (including dementia);
- People with a physical disability;
- People with drug and alcohol related problems;
- People with a sensory impairment;
- People with a learning disability;
- People who have a physical illness;
- People who have an acquired brain injury;
- People who are frail and/or are experiencing a temporary illness.

Who may be:

- Living in their own home;
- In hospital;
- In residential care and/or nursing home;
- Attending a day centre;
- Attending a social club;
- Without a permanent home (the above lists are not intended to be exhaustive)

WHAT IS ABUSE?

Abuse includes all forms of harm and mistreatment. It may include:

- **Physical abuse**, including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, misuse of restraint, or inappropriate sanctions;
- **Sexual abuse**, including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not consented, or could not consent or was pressured into consenting;
- **Psychological abuse**, including verbal abuse, emotional abuse, threats, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks;
- **Financial or material abuse**, including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits;

- **Neglect and acts of omission**, including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, food and drink and heating;
- **Discriminatory abuse**, including racist or sexist remarks or comments based on a person's impairment, disability, age or illness, or other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment;
- **Institutional abuse** involves the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to vulnerable people. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour that amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and stereotyping. It includes a failure to ensure the necessary safeguards are in place to protect vulnerable adults and maintain good standards of care in accordance with individual needs, including training of staff and volunteers, supervision and management, record keeping and liaising with other providers of care.

SPOTTING THE SIGNS OF ABUSE

It is the responsibility of all individuals having a responsibility for the care, treatment and support of vulnerable adults to be alert to the possibility of vulnerable adult abuse and be aware of the signs and indicators of abuse.

Concerns may arise as a result of a single incident, allegation or disclosure; or they may arise as a result of an accumulation of indicators and/or signs. The responsibility to report any suspicion, allegation or disclosure of an incident rests with the individual who identifies the concern regardless of their place within the organisation or their employing agency.

No abuse is acceptable and some abuse is a criminal offence and must be reported to the Police as soon as possible.

What might cause concern?

- You might see and/or hear something happen;
 - Someone being bullied or intimidated
 - Someone being made to feel frightened or unhappy
 - Someone in a situation of unnecessary risk
- The vulnerable adult might tell you
- Somebody might tell you something or say something that gives cause for concern, eg.
 - A colleague
 - Family member
 - Member of the public
- There might be physical signs or unexplained or unusual injuries
 - Bruises
 - Slap marks

- Black eyes
 - Bleeding
 - Burns
 - Cigarette marks
 - Torn, stained or bloodstained clothes
- The person might say things or behave in a way that causes you concerns
 - The person may seem unhappy or distressed
 - The person may appear frightened, anxious or agitated without identifiable cause, or in relation to certain people
 - Sleeping problems
 - Constant visits to the toilet without a medical reason
 - Other unexplained changes in how the person behaves
 - You may not know. It is enough that you are worried.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities of FISH Volunteer Centre

- To ensure that staff and volunteers are aware of the adult protection policy and are adequately trained.
- To notify the appropriate agencies if abuse is identified or suspected
- To support and where possible, secure the safety of individuals and ensure that all referrals to services have full information in relation to identified risk and vulnerability
- To DBS check volunteers and employees that have access to or work with Vulnerable Adults, where appropriate

Responsibilities of FISH Volunteer Centre Employees and Volunteers

- To be familiar with the adult protection policy and procedures
- To take appropriate action in line with the policies of FISH Volunteer Centre
- To promote the principles and good practice to other voluntary organisations
- To declare any existing or subsequent convictions. Failure to do so will be regarded as gross misconduct, possibly resulting in dismissal

Support for those who report Abuse

All those making a complaint or allegation or expressing concern, whether they be staff, service users, carers or members of the general public should be reassured that:

- They will be taken seriously
- Their comments will usually be treated confidentially, but their concerns may be shared if they or others are a significant risk
- If service users, they will be given immediate protection from the risk of reprisals or intimidation
- If staff, they will be given support and afforded protection if necessary in line with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

The Vulnerable Adult has the right:

- To be made aware of this policy if and when necessary
- To have alleged incidents recognised and taken seriously
- To receive fair and respectful treatment throughout
- To be involved in any process as appropriate
- To receive information about the outcome

GOOD PRACTICE

A. Recruitment of Staff and Volunteers

FISH Volunteer Centre should follow its recruitment procedures and policies, including:

1. Completion of a FISH Volunteer Centre Application Form
2. Check references thoroughly
3. Request a Disclosure and Barring Service check, when appropriate
4. Assess the risk in relation to the nature of the role and of information in the application form and DBS check
5. All staff and volunteers have a duty to declare any existing or subsequent convictions. Failure to do so will be regarded as gross misconduct, possibly resulting in dismissal.

B. Training

- Familiarisation with all FISH Volunteer Centre policies during induction
- Access to the Oxfordshire Multi-Agency Codes of Practice for the Protection of all Vulnerable Adults from Abuse, Exploitation and Mistreatment reference guide provided by Oxfordshire County Council, which covers all aspects of Adult Protection.
- Further training, dependent on nature of role; for example,
 1. Risk Assessment and Management
 2. Types of Abuse and recognising signs of abuse
 3. Keeping appropriate records
 4. Listening skills

C. Management and Supervision

It is FISH Volunteer Centre's responsibility to clarify with the worker/volunteer their roles and responsibilities regarding their relationships with vulnerable adults with whom they may be in contact. Regular supervision for staff and volunteers will monitor the work and offer the opportunity to raise any issues

RECORDING AND PRESERVING EVIDENCE

It is the responsibility of all individuals having a responsibility for the care, treatment and support of vulnerable adults to ensure that any concerns they

have about the welfare of a vulnerable adult are recorded and that any evidence indicating that abuse is occurring or has happened is retained.

How is evidence preserved?

In most circumstances, it is not necessary to do anything except record the events that have given rise for concern; however, there may be occasions when it is important to follow certain rules:

- Ensure written records (notes, letters, bank statements, medication records) are kept in a safe place
- Make a written record of messages (answer-phone, etc.) to ensure they are not lost. Include the date and time and sign them
- In cases of physical or sexual assault encourage the person not to wash, bathe or shower where you think they might have a medical examination
- Where the abuse has involved oral sex encourage the person not to drink until they have been seen by the police or forensic doctor
- Don't tidy up, wash clothes, bedding or other items.

What evidence should be recorded?

It is important that all relevant information is recorded, including what was seen, heard and why actions occurred. Records should be signed and dated. All physical signs or injuries should be recorded using a body map or hand drawing. The vulnerable person, if injured, should be seen by a qualified medical practitioner. Anything said should be written down, including who said it and their relationship to the vulnerable person and their contact details – any questions asked should be recorded and all information should be signed and dated. Any details the vulnerable person wants to be recorded should be included. Any messages (answerphone) should be recorded and dated. All records should be signed and dated and kept in a safe place.

REPORTING CONCERNS

People have the right to expect that information shared with a member of staff or volunteer should be treated as confidential. However, it should be made clear that where the staff member/volunteer has a reason to be concerned for the welfare of the vulnerable person and/or others, they have to share the information with someone who is in a position to take action or responsibility. The vulnerable person should be told with whom the information is to be shared, but that his/her views and wishes will be taken into account when doing this. Any such views or wishes expressed by the vulnerable adult should be recorded and reported by the staff member/volunteer, along with their concerns. It is important that a note is made of who has been informed and what they have been told. All concerns should be followed up in writing. Where concerns relate to a probable or possible serious criminal offence, e.g. sexual and/or physical assault, and/or the person is believed to be at immediate and serious risk, they should be reported immediately. Where concerns arise as a result of a disclosure of worrying information, from

whatever source, including a DBS check, they should be reported within three working days. Where concerns arise as a result of the accumulation of indicators and/or signs of abuse, they should be reported within the normal process of supervision and/or within seven days, whichever is the sooner.

Who should be told of concerns?

Who should be told will depend on the role and status of the staff member/volunteer within the department or organisation. In most cases, it should be the FISH Volunteer Centre Manager or her deputy. However, in some cases, this might not be appropriate (e.g. where there is a concern about that person) or possible. If this is the case, you should contact one of the following:

- The Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Trustees of FISH Volunteer Centre
- The National Care Standards Commission
- A responsible medical officer (e.g. the person's GP, and/or consultant)
- The vulnerable person's Social and Community Services Care Manager or Social Worker, or, in an out-of-hours emergency, the Social and Community Services Emergency Duty Team
- The Police, unless the vulnerable adult (who should always be asked), specifically says that they should not be contacted, in which case the decision will rest with a member of the Social and Community Services Care team.

TIMESCALES

- All records should be made as soon as possible after an event and stored in a safe place
- All concerns relating to a serious criminal offence – e.g. rape and/or sexual assault must be reported as soon as possible.
- All cases in which there is reason to believe that a vulnerable adult is at immediate risk of being a victim of a serious criminal offence or serious harm must be reported immediately.
- All concerns arising as a result of any allegation or disclosure, DBS or otherwise, must be reported within 3 working days.
- Concerns arising as a result of the accumulation of indicators/signs of abuse should be reported within the normal process of supervision or within 7 days, whichever is the sooner.

ACCESS TO AN INDEPENDENT PERSON

Any vulnerable adult who comes into contact with FISH Volunteer Centre staff or volunteers regularly, should be given information on their right to talk with

an independent person and their name and address and contact arrangements. This could be part of the normal registration process.

WHISTLE-BLOWING

If, in addition to, or instead of, your need to raise concerns relating to individual vulnerable adults, you wish to raise concerns about the service provision of FISH Volunteer Centre or about the conduct of its trustees, employees or volunteers, you may do so in accordance with the FISH Volunteer Centre 'whistle-blowing' policy, a copy of which may be obtained from the FISH Volunteer Centre office.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS OR HELPLINES

Social and Health Care Team 0845 050 7666

Action on Elder Abuse Response Line 0808 808 8141

Action on Elder Abuse runs the UK's only national, freephone, helpline for anyone concerned in any way about the abuse of older people.

Approved by the Trustee Board of FISH Volunteer Centre on

25th April 2019. To be reviewed in two years.