



## **Safeguarding Adults Policy**

Disability Support recognises that a vast proportion of our service users are defined as 'Vulnerable Adults' and that we have a duty to safeguard them from harm or the risk of harm. This can sometimes extend to volunteers or students on placement within Disability Support.

This policy sets out Disability Support's approach to protecting vulnerable adults and to ensure that staff and volunteers are aware of the potential abuse, how to identify such instances and the course of action which should be followed to ensure the well-being of vulnerable adults who are in receipt of our services.

## **Aims & Objectives**

- Disability Support will meet its social, moral and legal responsibilities to protect and safeguard the welfare of vulnerable adults with whom we work.
- All reasonable measures will be taken to ensure that the risks of harm to individuals are minimised.
- Where there are concerns about vulnerable people's welfare, all the appropriate actions to address the concerns will be taken, working in partnership with other agencies.

## **Definition of Vulnerable Adult**

For the purpose of this policy, a vulnerable adult is anyone aged 18 years or over who has a dependency on others or requires assistance in the conduct of their affairs.

This may include someone who:

- Receives care or support to live independently in their own home or a care home
- Receives assistance from Social Services
- Has a substantial learning, sensory or physical disability
- Has physical or mental health problems, including addiction to alcohol or drugs
- Has a substantial reduction in physical or mental capacity due to advanced age or illness.

Where the person is under the age of 18 years, the Safeguarding Children policy applies.

## Defining Abuse

Abuse is a violation of the individual's human and civil rights by any other person/s. It may be real or potential infliction of physical or psychological harm, injury or pain that is a result of:

- A non-accidental act or conduct
- A non-accidental failure to act when there is a duty to act
- Deprivation of services or treatment, which are necessary to the service user's health and safety by someone who has a duty to provide or ensure the provision of such services or treatment. The perpetrator of abuse can be anyone – a family member, another service user, a member of staff, a friend or a stranger. Abuse can take place in various forms including physical, sexual, emotional, financial, psychological, and neglectful.

## Signs and Symptoms of Abuse

It is vital to recognise abuse as early as possible and to take effective action. Set out below are possible signs and symptoms, which may help alert you to the fact that abuse may be taking place.

### **Physical Abuse**

- Any injury not fully explained by the history given
- Self-inflicted injury
- Unexplained bruises in well covered areas of the body e.g. arms, legs, back etc
- Bruises in various stages of healing, clusters forming regular patterns, reflecting the shape of an article or finger marks
- Unexplained burns, including immersion, carpet, cigarette, rope or electrical appliance burns
- Unexplained fractures to any part of the body, especially if in various stages of healing, multiple or spinal injuries
- Lack of personal care, inadequate or inappropriate clothing
- Untreated medical problems
- Unexplained urinary/faecal incontinence
- A history of frequent changing of GP's or reluctance against GP consultation or visits

### **Psychological Abuse**

- Unexplained fear, avoiding eye contact, flinching on approach
- Loss of appetite or over-eating
- Emotional withdrawal, low self esteem
- Sleep disturbance
- Threats or intimidation, bullying or shouting
- Threats to abandon person or 'put them away'
- Punitive approach to bodily functions or incontinence
- Locking the person in at home or in a car

## **Sexual Abuse**

- Unusual difficulty in walking and sitting
- Torn, stained or bloody underclothing
- Pain, bruising or bleeding in the rectal or genital area
- Sexually transmitted disease or pregnancy in a person who is unable to consent
- Bruises or bite marks on the body
- Significant change in sexual behaviour, language or outlook

## **Financial Abuse**

- Unusual or inappropriate bank activity
- A power of attorney obtained when the person is unable to comprehend
- Recent changes of deeds or title of house
- Person lacks belongings or services which they can clearly afford
- Recent acquaintances expressing sudden or disproportionate friendship
- Carer seems unusually focussed on financial questions (this would not necessarily apply when queries are made relating to benefits or fairer charging)
- Withholding money
- Person managing the financial affairs is evasive or uncooperative

## **Neglect**

- Malnutrition – rapid or continuous weight loss, insufficient supply of food on the premises, complaints of hunger
- Inadequate heating or lighting
- Poor physical appearance e.g. unkempt hair, poor hygiene, unclean nails etc
- Poor condition of clothing e.g. unclean, wet, creased etc
- Failure to give prescribed medication
- Failure to ensure appropriate privacy and dignity
- Preventing access to hearing aids, glasses or other aids for daily living

Please note these examples are not an exhaustive list and any other instances may also create suspicions. At times, you may not have any suspicions, but a vulnerable adult may disclose the information to you. Remember you have a professional and moral duty to report any suspected or reported abuse of a vulnerable adult and the correct procedure should be followed.

## **Guidelines for Working with Vulnerable Adults**

As a worker it is essential that you conduct yourself in a professional manner. You should:

- Treat all vulnerable groups with respect and dignity
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance at all times
- Ensure that if any form of physical touching is required, it is provided openly (except for those involved in providing personal care)
- Be an excellent role model
- Never allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- Challenge the use of inappropriate language or behaviour
- Avoid making comments even jokingly, that could be construed as sexually provocative
- Avoid buying gifts
- Declare all gifts received to the Services/Office Manager. Where gifts are being given for no apparent reason these should be declined. You can suggest that a donation is made to the organisation instead. Remember any allegations made against you, which are backed up with inappropriate and unprofessional behaviour will not appear above suspicion.

## **Whistleblowing**

Whistleblowing is an important aspect of safeguarding whereby all workers are encouraged to share genuine concerns regarding a colleague's behaviour in confidence, with a manager.

There may be situations where a worker has genuine concerns about the conduct of a colleague towards a vulnerable adult. All workers of Disability Support have the right and responsibility to raise such concerns and will receive appropriate support to do so. It may be that the behaviour causing concern is bad practice rather than abuse, which will require immediate rectification.

## **Disability Support's Responsibilities**

We are committed towards employing staff who are considered suitable to work with vulnerable groups by:

- Ensuring satisfactory references are obtained
- Checking ID
- Checking new staff are ISA registered through the Vetting and Barring Scheme
- Arranging training in Disability Equality and Safeguarding
- Ensuring staff are aware of and have access to Disability Support's policies and procedures
- Alerting ISA of any relevant safeguarding concerns
- Instantly terminating contracts of employment where staff have been barred from working with vulnerable groups

## Reporting Abuse Procedure

Every form of abuse is serious and must be dealt with in the appropriate way. This means reporting your suspicions or information to a manager. Under no circumstances is an individual to being investigative procedures without informing a manager and following the correct procedures.

When abuse has been brought to your attention, you should remain calm and receptive to the information given. You should listen carefully and be understanding and reassuring. However, you should advise that you are unable to keep the information given confidential – at no point should you offer to keep it to yourself or make any other promises. The person should be allowed to speak uninterrupted and give their account in their own words. It is important not to stop them if they are freely recalling significant events.

It is important to gather as much factual information as possible without asking any leading questions. Do not ask any questions beyond seeking clarification. This will be done during any subsequent investigation – doing so now may make essential information inadmissible. It is essential that you do not disturb any evidence e.g. clothing.

Notes should be created containing a word for word record of the disclosure. These should not include assumptions or opinions of others. Dates, places and names should be included wherever possible. These should be signed and dated by the staff member and the client.

Any such allegations or suspicions should be discussed with the Services/Office Manager as soon as possible. The Manager will collate the details of the allegation or suspicion and refer the matter to the appropriate statutory authorities.

Should any allegations directly involve a staff member of volunteer, the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) and / or police authority will be immediately contacted.

From time to time there may be plausible reasons for the abuse e.g a carer may be struggling to provide the necessary care and may need additional support. Unfortunately, however, this is not always the case!

## The Roles of Social Services and other Agencies

The lead responsibility for the protection of vulnerable adults lies with Social Services. The Social Services area where the vulnerable person lives will deal with all the processes involved in an investigation once the matter has been reported to them.

Under the Vetting and Barring Scheme, all employers are legally required to refer employees to the ISA (Independent Safeguarding Authority), who harm or pose a risk of harm, to enable the ISA to reassess their registration. The ISA will gather information from various bodies to reassess. If this new data indicates that a person may pose a risk to children or vulnerable adults, their details will be removed from the register, which will prevent them from working with vulnerable groups. It is essential to pass this information onto ISA even in cases where the abuse hasn't been proved, or allegations have been withdrawn. This is so that ISA can keep a record of all instances, which will allow them to identify any patterns, which may become apparent.

Repeated reporting may instigate a further investigation by ISA, which may lead to the worker being barred from such work. Any staff members barred from working with vulnerable groups will be instantly dismissed in accordance with the regulations outlined in their contracts of employment.