



VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Purpose of this statement

The existence of this statement does not imply that CARE volunteers are likely to abuse vulnerable adults. However, CARE volunteers and trustees have a duty of care towards all clients, including those who are vulnerable, and this policy makes that duty clear.

Definitions

- **Vulnerable adults**

A ‘vulnerable adult’ refers to any person aged 18 years or over who:

... ‘is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and who is or may be unable to take care of himself or herself, or unable to protect himself or herself against significant harm or exploitation.’

(Source: consultation paper ‘Who decides’ Lord Chancellor’s Department 1997. Quoted in guidance paper ‘No Secrets’, Dept of Health & Home Office, 2000)

- **Abuse in general**

‘Abuse is a violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by any other person or persons’

(Source: see above)

- **Types of abuse**

Abuse can take many different forms and can occur in many places and in any situation. Types of abuse include physical abuse, sexual abuse, financial abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, neglect and discriminatory abuse.

- **Rights of vulnerable adults**

CARE in East Grinstead and Lingfield recognises that a vulnerable adult can be at risk of mistreatment and abuse and that such mistreatment and abuse constitute a clear infringement of rights. In a case of abuse, a vulnerable adult has the right to request that no further action be taken.

Procedures

- **Taking action**

All allegations, suspicions or observations of abuse of a vulnerable adult will be treated seriously. All action taken under these guidelines will be carried out sensitively, taking account of the vulnerable adult's needs, including race, culture and ethnicity, age, gender, religion, disability and sexuality.

- **Responding to reports of abuse**

All volunteers and trustees have a duty to report any allegations or suspicions of abuse or potential abuse of a vulnerable adult to the Chairman.

If the vulnerable adult is in immediate danger or in need of urgent medical attention, action will be taken to ensure the vulnerable adult's immediate safety and well-being. This may include calling the appropriate emergency service.

It is important for the person to whom an allegation of abuse is made to:

- remain calm and try not to show shock or disbelief
- listen carefully
- reassure the person making the allegation
- explain that information will need to be shared with others

And not to:

- press the person for further details
- promise to keep secrets
- make promises which cannot be kept
- be judgemental
- break agreed confidentiality
- ask leading questions.

- **Recording allegations of abuse**

A written record of any allegation must be made and submitted to the Chairman who will decide if any further action needs to be taken. The report should include:

- the name and position (volunteer, trustee) of the person making the report
- the date, time and setting in which the allegation was made or the event witnessed
- the names of any other people present
- a record of what was said, using the individual's own words
- the date of the record and the signature of the person making the record.

A copy will be kept by the Chairman.

- **Further action by other agencies**

If information is passed to Social Services, they will make a decision as to whether the police need to be informed and if there is any need for a full investigation.

- **Disclosure**

Personal information may need to be disclosed in the best interests of the vulnerable adult. The following safeguards need to be observed:

- Information will only be shared on a need to know basis when this is in the best interests of the vulnerable adult
- Informed consent will be obtained wherever possible.

Policy review

The policy will be reviewed at the first meeting of the incoming Executive Committee after the Annual General Meeting each year. It will also be reviewed in response to changes in relevant legislation, contractual arrangements, good practice or in response to an identified failing in its effectiveness.

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