

## Safeguarding Vulnerable Children and Adults Policy and Procedures

### 1. Aim of this Policy

The aim of this policy is to outline the practice and procedures for staff and volunteers to contribute to preventing abuse of children and vulnerable adults, raise awareness and provide a clear framework for action when abuse is suspected.

The policy covers all staff and volunteers who come into contact at events and meetings with children and those who may be considered vulnerable adults. The Support Group considers it the duty of staff and volunteers to protect from abuse children and vulnerable adults with whom they come into contact.

### 2. Introduction

- 2.1 We are involved in providing services for a wide range of people. Some of these people are children and 'vulnerable adults.'
- 2.2 This policy refers to all children or vulnerable adults regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or religion.
- 2.3 This policy is based on 'No Secrets', the national guidance on developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse (Department of Health, 2000)
- 2.4 We have obligations to strive to protect vulnerable adults who may be believed to be abused or at risk of abuse or neglect.
- 2.5 The policy and procedures have been developed to assist staff and volunteers in acting on reported or suspected abuse.

### 3. Definitions

- 3.1 No Secrets defines a vulnerable adult as:

***'A person (over 18) 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 him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.'***

\* Disability includes sensory impairment, physical impairment, learning difficulties etc.

"Staff" are members of the Rubinstein-Taybi Syndrome Support Group management committee (though are all unpaid).

"Volunteers" are others who assist unpaid at events and meetings.

"The Support Group" is the Rubinstein Taybi Syndrome Support Group.

- 3.2 No Secrets defines abuse as follows:

***'Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons.'***

### 4. Categories of Abuse

- 4.1 No Secrets recognises six categories of abuse:

1. physical abuse, including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions;

2. 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;

3. psychological abuse, including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks;

4. 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;
5. 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, adequate nutrition and heating; and
6. discriminatory abuse, including racist, sexist, that based on a person's disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

## **5. Responsibilities of Staff and Volunteers**

- 5.1 Staff and volunteers have a responsibility to be aware and alert to signs that all is not well with a child or vulnerable person. However, they are not responsible for diagnosing, investigating or providing a therapeutic response to abuse. In addition, not all concerns relate to abuse, there may well be other explanations. It is important to keep an open mind and consider what is known about the vulnerable person and his or her circumstances. No action should be taken without discussion with a member of the Support Group management committee.

## **6. Disclosure of Abuse**

- 6.1 If a vulnerable person discloses that they are being abused or any service user discloses that they are involved in abuse of a vulnerable person, action should continue as in Section 8. All action must proceed urgently and without delay.

## **7. Suspicion of Abuse**

- 7.1 There may be circumstances when a volunteer or member of staff suspects that a child or vulnerable adult is being abused or neglected.
- 7.2 It is vital that any anyone who suspects a vulnerable adult is being neglected or abused discusses the situation immediately with a member of the management team. Action should continue as in Section 9.

## **8. Action on Disclosure of Abuse**

- 8.1 There should always be the opportunity to discuss welfare concerns with and seek advice from colleagues, and other agencies, but:
  - Never delay emergency action to protect a child or vulnerable adult
  - Always record in writing concerns about a child's or vulnerable adult's welfare, whether or not further action is taken
  - Always record in writing discussions about a child's or vulnerable adult's welfare.
  - At the close of discussion, always reach clear and explicit recorded agreement about who will be taking what action, or that no further action will be taken.
- 8.2 At all times action must proceed urgently.
- 8.3 A staff member or volunteer informed of abuse should remind the service user that they cannot guarantee confidentiality where a vulnerable person is at risk of abuse or further abuse.
- 8.4 All action taken following a disclosure of abuse should be decided by the management team.
- 8.5 In circumstances where a service user declines to disclose, despite some work having been done towards disclosing, it may be necessary to report the alleged abuse without the service user's agreement. In these circumstances, a service user must be notified in advance of the decision to report to social services.
- 8.7 Any staff member may report a disclosure of abuse to social services irrespective of the opinion of other staff.
- 8.8 It is important for staff and volunteers to make written records of any incidents or concerns that they have as soon as possible and if appropriate to include sketches of sites and sizes of injuries. It is also important to make a record of conversations with the vulnerable person using the same language the vulnerable person used, especially names used for body parts or sexual acts.

8.9 Full written records must be maintained of all disclosures and actions following disclosure.

## **9. Action on Suspicion of Abuse**

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9.2 At all times action must proceed urgently.

9.3 All action taken following suspicion of abuse should be discussed in advance with a member of the management committee.

9.4 It should be considered in all cases of suspected abuse whether issues relevant to different cultures and lifestyles have any bearing on the matter.

9.5 As an organisation, the Support Group welcomes the fact that people and lifestyles are diverse and does not make judgements about the acceptability or otherwise of lifestyles. However it is important that this philosophy does not stand in the way of the organisation's responsibility to protect vulnerable people from harm.

9.6 Any staff member may report a suspicion of abuse to social services irrespective of the opinion of other staff.

9.7 It is important for staff and volunteers to make written records of any incidents or concerns that they have as soon as possible and if appropriate to include sketches of sites and sizes of injuries. It is also important to make a record of conversations with the vulnerable person using the same language the vulnerable person used especially names used for body parts or sexual acts.

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## **10 Making a Referral**

10.1 Social services departments have been designated as the lead agencies with responsibility for co-ordinating a response to allegations or concerns of abuse.

10.2 If it is decided appropriate to report an allegation or suspicion of abuse, a member of the Support Group management committee will inform the Social Services department of the local authority covering the area in which, as far as it can be ascertained, the individual concerned lives. Our service users are located nationwide and may include non-members whose details are not on our records.

10.3 Managers should work within the following timescales for reporting allegations or suspicions of abuse:

- Immediate if the vulnerable person is at risk of serious physical harm, or a serious criminal act has taken place, and evidence will need to be kept safe. **Remember, if it's an emergency, dial 999;**
- Within 24 Hours if it relates to a specific incident which is, or may be still going on, or may happen again;
- Within 7 Days if it is a more general concern, which does not indicate immediate harm.

**11 Support to Staff and Volunteers**

11.1 We will support staff and volunteers in these circumstances. If social services need further involvement from staff or volunteers following a report of abuse, a member of the management committee will discuss with the social services department the nature of their needs and how they might be met.

**12 Allegation of Abuse Made Against a Staff Member or Volunteer**

12.1 Staff and volunteers may be subject to abuse allegations. We will offer support in these circumstances, but will also assist social services in their investigation

**13 Preventing Abuse by Staff and Volunteers**

13.1 Children and vulnerable adults attending our meetings and events must be accompanied by at least one parent or carer who will be responsible for their welfare. Our activities are not generally of a nature that involves staff and volunteers being alone with children and/or vulnerable adults other than those within their own family. However, all members of staff, volunteers and bought-in services will be carefully vetted and selected with the aim of providing a safe environment in which service users can enjoy our activities.

13.2 It may be very hard for staff to report a concern about a colleague to a line manager but, as with all the other difficulties people will come across, the safety and protection of a vulnerable person must be the priority in any decision that is made.

Signed:

Position:

Date:

Review Date: