



SAFE GUARDING ADULTS POLICY – GROWING SUPPORT

Policy Statement

Everybody has the right to live their life free from violence, fear and abuse.
Everybody has the right to life in safety. The safety and welfare of vulnerable adults is therefore of the utmost importance.

It is the duty of all our staff & volunteers to protect each vulnerable adult from abuse and to be alert to the possibility of abuse. The vulnerable adult will be treated with dignity and respect at all times.

Growing Support is committed to ensuring that all staff and volunteers are aware of their responsibility to be alert to the possibility of abuse, and know what to do if they suspect abuse.

The Director, Dale Cranshaw is the Vulnerable Adult Lead within the organisation. The Vulnerable Adult Lead receives external training, updated 3 yearly or more frequently as required, and it is their responsibility to keep abreast of local authority guidelines in Bristol and South Gloucestershire. The Vulnerable Adult Lead is also responsible for updating this policy.

All staff and volunteers are made aware of this policy at their induction. Any changes to this policy are communicated to staff through internal training at whole team meetings.

Growing Support adheres to the central principle of protecting vulnerable adults from abuse, as per the Department of Health 'No Secrets' (March 2000) guidelines, such that the adult's right to protection from harm shall always be the overriding priority.

People accessing our services have the right to expect that all staff and volunteers will deal sensitively and sympathetically with their situation. Information is generally treated as confidential, and only shared with external agencies where this has been requested or agreed. However, if abuse is suspected, the need to safeguard the vulnerable adult overrules the right to confidentiality and information that has been given in confidence may in such instances be shared with the relevant authorities.

Growing Support supports good practice in the safe recruitment and ongoing monitoring of staff and volunteers through Disclosure and Barring Service Checks (formally CRBs).

Definitions

The term "vulnerable adult" is defined by Department of Health, 'No Secrets', March 2000 as:

“any person aged 18 or over who is, or may be, in need of community care services by reason of any disability, age or illness and who is, or may be, unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or serious exploitation.”

Vulnerable Adults include:

- Disabled people who have physical or sensory impairments
- People who have learning difficulties
- People who experience mental ill health, or have social or emotional problems and who may exhibit challenging behaviour
- Older people whose situation is complicated by additional factors
- People who live in care homes
- People with drug or alcohol problems
- People in extreme poverty
- Homeless people

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

Abuse can take place in a wide range of settings such as:

- The vulnerable adults' own home
- A day centre or care home
- A hospital
- The workplace or an educational institution

Recognition

The most common types of abuse are:

- **Physical abuse:** This is usually the use of force to cause pain and injury and signs might include burns, bruising, scratches, or accidents that cannot be explained. Also included is 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 or material abuse:** This is when a vulnerable adult is exploited for financial or material gain. Valuables or cash may 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 which the vulnerable adult has not or could not consent to or was pressurised or manipulated into. Signs can include changes in behaviour or physical discomfort.
- **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.

This is not an exhaustive list

Preventing Abuse

Growing Support is committed to preventing abuse before it happens and takes the following measures, as an organisation, to prevent abuse:

- Appropriate checks are carried out on all staff and volunteers prior to working with vulnerable adults.
- Staff and volunteers receive training to ensure they are able to recognise abuse and are therefore alert to potential signs and symptoms.
- The Vulnerable Adults Lead takes responsibility for ensuring the organisation follows up to date best practice around safeguarding adults and prevention of abuse.
- A culture of openness is promoted within the organisation and efforts are made to ensure staff and volunteers feel able to discuss concerns with their contact within Growing Support.

Action to be taken if you suspect abuse

Being made aware of abuse might make you feel very concerned and out of your depth. But it is the responsibility of all staff and volunteers to report suspected abuse. Doing nothing, ignoring what you've seen or heard and hoping you are wrong are not options. Here are some tips for how to handle the situation:

Do:

- Stay calm and try not to show if you are shocked
- Listen carefully, be sympathetic and reassure the person they have done the right thing in telling someone
- Tell the person that what they have told you will be taken seriously
- Tell the person you will do your best to support them. Clarify whether the abuse requires an urgent response.

Don't:

- Press for more details – this is the job of the investigation. Asking for more than is necessary could jeopardise future criminal proceedings
- Contact the alleged abuser
- Make promises you cannot keep
- Pass on information to anyone who doesn't have a legitimate need to know
- Make judgements

This is the procedure to follow when you suspect abuse:

- a. Ask the person just enough questions to establish what has happened and whether there is ongoing immediate danger.
 - b. Ensure the person is safe and supported. If there is immediate danger, or if the vulnerable adult is seriously injured, call the emergency services on 999.
 - c. Try not to touch things and don't clean anything up – you may be destroying evidence.
 - d. Inform your line manager or another senior manager and the Vulnerable Adult Lead as soon as possible.
 - e. Either you or your line manager must report the incident to the local authority. If you have been unable to inform a senior manager or the Vulnerable Adult Lead within 24 hours, you must report the incident yourself rather than delay further.
- o For **Bristol** call: **Care Direct - 0117 922 2700**
 - o For **South Gloucestershire** call: **01454 868007**

You will need to give the following information:

- o Why you're concerned
- o The vulnerable adult's name, age and address
- o If anyone lives with them
- o If they're getting help from any organisation
- o Who may be doing the abuse
 - Regardless of the local authority, if a crime is suspected the police must also be contacted by telephoning 101 (or in an emergency, 999).
 - As soon as possible, write up detailed notes (by hand) in chronological order (with dates and times of all key events, conversations and actions), including when and to whom the abuse was reported, the nature of the abuse reported, the alleged perpetrator's name (if reported to you), and the actions taken.

Documentation may be important as evidence in any later criminal proceedings.

You should share the notes with your line manager and/or with the Vulnerable Adult Lead. Ensure the notes are stored securely, in a locked cupboard until they can be passed onto the Vulnerable Adult Lead for safekeeping. The Vulnerable Adult Lead will file them securely in a separate Vulnerable Adult Incident File once passed onto them.

- Social services should provide you with an update following the report. If you have not heard from them within 10 working days, contact the local authority again. Update the notes to reflect all contact with social services.

Becoming aware of abuse and reporting it may be distressing for you. If you require support beyond supervision, explain this to your line manager or the volunteer coordinator who will advise and support you in accessing counselling services.