

POLICY AND PROCEDURE



Solihull
Life
Opportunities

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Charity No. 1102297
England Company No.
5025939

Protection of Vulnerable Adults

Category: staff and volunteers

Introduction

Policy Statement

This policy accepts the principle that it is everyone's duty to protect vulnerable adults and to take appropriate action to enable the cause and consequences to be tackled.

Who is a "Vulnerable Adult"?

A person aged 18 and 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 serious exploitation.

Vulnerability does not imply that a person needs care or direction in every area of their lives or every situation.

For our purposes this would include:

- Our service users aged 18 and over
- Some carers and volunteers may also be vulnerable adults
- Services users, staff and volunteers under the age of 18 are covered by our Child Protection Policy where virtually the same rules and procedures apply

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Date policy issued: December 2004 Approved by: SoLO Board of Directors Date: December 04

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What is abuse?

There are many ways that adults can be hurt, injured or exploited. Some of the main types of abuse are:-

- Physical abuse – such as assault, physical restraint, self harm
- Financial abuse – such as misuse of someone’s money or property
- Neglect – such as not providing food, clothing or medical care
- Abandonment – such as desertion of people who cannot care for themselves
- Sexual abuse – such as harassment, teasing, touching people in a way they don’t like, or having sex with someone against their will
- Emotional abuse – such as threatening some or all of the above, bullying, ‘putting down’, taunting, name calling, etc.

What is the law?

Government policy is that **it is everyone’s duty to protect vulnerable adults and report it in accordance with Solihull Life Opportunities procedures.**

No information concerning possible abuse can be treated as confidential. Although, in all cases, the principles of data protection must apply, where an individual’s health and safety is at stake, you must take action on any suspicions of abuse.

Don’t assume someone else will be taking action.

Investigations are the responsibility of the Social Services and the police. SoLO’s response is to alert them to concerns or suspicions. We must act on such any concerns we have but our subsequent actions must be carried out in accordance with the law. It is **not** your duty or that of SoLO to investigate as we could contaminate the evidence.

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What are the possible outcomes of reporting suspected abuse?

Solihull Social Services, Health and Police all work together to combat abuse.

Social Services are there to provide support to service users, carers and service providers. They will make sure any suspicion of abuse is looked into by the most appropriate people.

It has to be recognised that some cases can be complex and take time. Therefore, we need to ensure that every concern is logged and more than one referral may be necessary before action is taken. **Project Managers** should be the initial point of contact for any concerns and a review mechanism will be put into place.

Sometimes

- Extra services will be put in place
- Police involvement which may lead to a court case

Staff or volunteers reporting abuse will be given appropriate support by Solihull Life Opportunities.

Training

Training for all staff is compulsory and training of volunteers is ideal and will be carried out as soon as possible.

We will seek assistance in the delivery of training from relevant, experienced professionals.

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How will abuse be evident?

Information about abuse can come from a variety of sources, e.g.

- Allegations made by another person
- A person saying or showing that they have been mis-treated.
- An admission from someone who says they are harming an adult
- Someone noticing signs and symptoms of abuse

Abuse could be:

- Happening already
- Have only just started
- About to happen

Signs of abuse can include:

- Changes in behaviour with no apparent cause
- Changes in appetite or sleep patterns
- Bruises or marks on the skin
- Changes in physical appearance
- Signs of neglect
- Signs of distress
- In appropriate or increased use of sexual language or actions
- Non-verbal attention seeking or withdrawal that is out of character

Abuse may be unintentional – it could be that someone is having difficulty coping with a stressful situation ,and needs help!

Vulnerable Adults Policy

PROCEDURES

Always take action – you cannot be over-careful!

What to do if

An adult wants to confide or discloses abuse to you:

DO

- Stay calm and listen carefully
- Be available
- Take it seriously
- Reassure the person
- Be supportive and sympathetic
- Let the person know that you will have to report this
- Bear in mind that the person may be subject to pressure and threats if they disclose abuse
- Negotiate getting help quickly
- Make a full record of what has been said, seen and heard as soon as possible
- Discuss with line manager/nominated person
- Use appropriate language or aids to facilitate communication

DON'T

- Jump to conclusions
- Make guesses or accuse anybody
- Try to force the person to disclose
- Make promises of confidentiality
- Delay seeking medical assistance
- Destroy evidence
- Contact the alleged abuser
- Presume that only one person has been abused
- Suppose that parents, carers, including colleagues are not part of the abuse
- Assume that because the person is disabled it is not true
- Keep worries or concerns to yourself
- **Examine the person**

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What to do if.....

You suspect that a person may be at risk but have no evidence of abuse:

DO

- Make written and dated notes of your observations
- Inform a senior member of your organisation of your concerns
- Record explanations given by parents, carers and other persons
- Build up a picture. Are there any significant changes in the person's life?
- Ensure the disabled person is supported

DON'T

- Jump to conclusions
- Make guesses or accuse anybody
- Try to force the person to disclose
- Ask leading questions
- Make promises you cannot keep
- Delay in seeking medical assistance
- Presume that only one person has been abused
- Suppose that parents and carers, including colleagues are not part of the abuse
- Assume that because the person is disabled it is not true

All suspicions and allegations of abuse should be taken seriously and responded to under local Adult Protection Procedures.

Use the following table to help you decide on the appropriate action

TYPE OF ABUSE	SERIOUS				EXTREMELY SERIOUS 5
	1 *	2 *	3	4	
Physical	Isolated incident of bruising	Lesions, cuts or grip-marks on a number of occasions	Assault requiring attendance at casualty or other medical treatment	Assault with weapon and/or leading to irreversible damage	Grievous bodily harm or attempted murder
Sexual	Non-contact abuse, including verbal harassment, teasing or watching pornography without consent	Sexual touch or masturbation without consent	Attempted penetration in a relationship without valid consent	Sex in a relationship characterised by authority, inequality or exploitation	Rape accompanied by violence or threat of violence
Psychological	Occasional teasing, taunts or verbal outbursts	Frequent or frightening verbal outbursts	Humiliation and threats on a regular basis	Threats of abandonment and intimidation	Vicious and personalised verbal attacks such as racial abuse
Financial	Petty cash "fiddled"	Personal belongings taken	Personal finances removed from person's control	Fraud relating to benefits, income, property or will	Fraud or theft to extent that person risks destitution
Neglect	Lack of care leads to discomfort or inconvenience, such as being left wet occasionally.	Lack of care to extent that bedsores or other medical complications develop.	On-going neglect with serious consequences, such as malnutrition or other illness	Failure to access life-saving services or medical care	Neglect of medication or psychological needs leading to fear for survival

- A number of Concerns in this area should be treated as extremely serious

For most issues arising in Column 1

- Report to CEO using the incident report () If the () immediately () safety

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- For issues arising in Columns 2 to 5**
- Telephone CEO or on-call person) cannot Immediately) of the adult) be
 - If not available telephone Social Services Emergency) assured) contact) social) Services
 - Duty Team (0121 605 6060) – for advice)
 - or
 - Call the emergency service in obvious situations) emergency services)

In all cases

- Always ensure the CEO is made aware of the situation as soon as possible
- Complete an incident report form

The CEO will ensure the staff and/or volunteers involved receive full support and de-briefing.