



Vulnerable Adults Policy

Approved by Board of Trustees on:

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Introduction

Paddington Development Trust (PDT) is committed to ensuring that vulnerable people who use our service are not abused and that working practices minimise the risk of such abuse. We will also ensure that that we take appropriate action on cases of adults at risk who are experiencing neglect or abandonment.

This document should be used in conjunction with: PDT Equality and Diversity Policy

Definitions

The word '**staff**' in this document covers paid staff, volunteers and trustees of PDT.

A 'Vulnerable adult', or 'an adult at risk', under the Care Act 2014 s42 is defined as someone who has needs for care and support, who is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect and as a result of their care needs - is unable to protect themselves (i.e. a person over the age of 18 years who is vulnerable by reason of old age, infirmity or disability which includes mental health difficulties or capacities). The main people assessed as vulnerable adults tend to be elders, those who suffer from mental health illness (including dementia), have a physical or sensory disability, a learning disability or suffer from incapacitating illness. Vulnerable adults are getting or may need help and services to live in the community or they may be living in residential care. They may be unable to take care of themselves and unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation by other people.

Why do we need Safeguarding Adults Policy?

All statutory authorities have guidelines for safeguarding adults from abuse. These guidelines make it clear that everyone has responsibility to report any suspicion of abuse and this applies to all PDT staff.

Abuse can take place in any setting, public or private. For example in a care home, the person's home or the home of a family or friend, in the street, on transport and at the place of work or voluntary placement.

What is abuse of a vulnerable adult?

Abuse is the violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or other people but it can also include neglect, abandonment or a failure to take action on an adult at risk who is self-neglecting.

Who is vulnerable?

All adults can be vulnerable given a certain situation. Paddington Development Trust in line with the Department of Health defines a vulnerable adult as anyone, 18 years or older who needs support services because of a mental or other disability, age or illness. He or she may not, or is

unable to take care of him or herself. They may as a result, be unable to protect themselves from others harming or exploiting them.

There are many different types of abuse which include:

Physical abuse is an act of physical violence against a person, such as hitting, slapping, pushing and kicking. Usually this type of treatment leaves marks or bruising on the person's skin, however there are other forms of physical abuse that do not appear as violent or leave marks e.g. being given too much medication, holding someone down, the person being strapped to chair against their will or being locked in a room etc.

Sexual abuse could mean obvious sexual violence such as rape and sexual assault. It could also mean more subtle behaviour such as someone being denied their sexual activity or being teased about their sexual characteristics etc.

Psychological abuse is any behaviour or spoken word that undermines the confidence and dignity of a person. This includes threats, isolation from social contact, humiliation, intimidation, swearing, shouting or unfair pressure to behave in a particular way etc.

Financial or material abuse includes the obvious behaviours such as stealing, fraud and exploitation. It could also mean pressure being exerted regarding wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, the misuse of a person's property or belongings or benefits etc.

Neglect or acts of omission covers everything that should be done as part of supporting someone but was not, resulting in disadvantage to the person. Examples include ignoring medical advice or physical care needs and failure to provide access to services such as education or social services. Neglect could also mean depriving the person of their basic needs; medication, nutrition and heating etc.

Discriminatory abuse refers to a person being harassed, humiliated, treated unfairly or undermined because of their disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age or ethnicity.

Institutional abuse occurs when routines in use mean that service users lose their independence and lifestyle to the needs of the service e.g.: lack of choice with meals, activities or times for getting up or going to bed.

Who might abuse a vulnerable adult?

Anyone may abuse a vulnerable adult. A member of staff or service or service manager, a professional e.g. doctor, a volunteer, a community group leader, another service user, the person's partner, relative or friend, a person doing an assessment e.g. social worker, a neighbour or stranger, a person who deliberately exploits vulnerable adults. Abuse in the form of neglect can also occur when an adult at risk has developed needs that have not been picked up by statutory agencies and the person is suffering from neglect.

Where might the abuse take place?

In a care home or other service, the person's own home or the home of a family member, in the street, pub or other public place, on transport etc. Abuse can take place anywhere!

How might I recognise abuse?

You might notice:

- bruises or marks
- changes in eating habits
- being fearful
- inappropriate touching
- uncharacteristic sexual behaviour
- any change in behaviour
- constant hunger
- poor hygiene
- running out of money
- possessions disappearing
- looking depressed and withdrawn
- low self-esteem

All PDT Staff have a duty to identify abuse and report it. This means that you may have to explain this to someone in the event that they ask you NOT to report it.

Passing on information: Information must be passed on because:

- all PDT staff have a responsibility to our service users
- all PDT service users have the right to be safe
- there might be information you may not be aware of
- abuse may have a lasting effect
- to prevent future harm
- the abuser may go on to abuse other people

Role of Chief Executive and Designated Person

Whilst all staff must work co-operatively, a co coordinating responsibility rests with the Chief Executive or in his/her absence a designated person. The duties of the Chief Executive or the Designated Person are:-

- To ensure that all staff are aware of the requirement to report any suspicion of abuse to the secretary or designated person.
- To report all cases of suspected abuse towards a vulnerable adult to Social Care or to the police.

Role of PDT Staff and volunteers

- When a vulnerable adult discloses abuse to any member of staff or when a member of staff is concerned about the health and well-being of an adult at risk who is suffering neglect, the member of staff must act quickly.
- You must inform the vulnerable adult that it will be necessary to share the information with someone else in order that further harm is prevented.
- Keeping this confidential when a member of staff has been informed or has become aware of an alleged abusive situation is not an option.
- You can only promise to act in what you know to be in the best interests of the vulnerable adult, and that you will keep them informed of what is happening.
- Listen carefully to what the vulnerable adult is saying.
- Take seriously that the vulnerable adult is saying.
- Do not ask detailed questions or press the vulnerable adult for more information as this will prejudice any investigation.
- Do not make judgments or say anything about the alleged abuser.
- Write down carefully what the vulnerable adult states as soon as possible including date, time, location in the Vulnerable Adults Abuse record book and sign and date your report.
- Any information shared with PDT is confidential and will not be discussed with anyone not directly involved in the investigation.
- Keep the vulnerable adult informed of any actions you are preparing to take.
- Make sure the vulnerable adult is safe and supported whilst under your supervision.
- Inform the Chief Executive or Designated Person of the disclosure at the earliest opportunity. They will make a referral to either Social Care Services or the Police.

Westminster Social Services

Safeguarding helpline: 020 7641 2176

Tel: 020 7641 6000 (out-of-office-hours)

Email: adultsocialcare@westminster.gov.uk

To tell Westminster about any concerns you have (known as 'raising a Safeguarding Alert') you can ring them on the above numbers or complete and send [this alert form](#) to them.

Remember – it is too easy to think that 'It's none of our business'. Adult protection often involves gathering information from a variety of sources to build up a picture of the service user's situation. You may hold a vital piece of evidence. Remember that when you take on the responsibility to be a member of staff or volunteer you are implicitly and explicitly agreeing to act in a service users' best interest.

Support to volunteers and staff

The volunteers and staff reporting incidents of suspected or potential abuse may find that the victim and/or the other responsible adult concerned are upset or angry. The Chief Executive or designated person will support you. Other support may take the form of support provided by work colleagues or support or counselling provided by an outside body if required.

Volunteers and staff themselves may also be the subject of an allegation of abuse. While support will be offered, PDT will ensure that Social Services are given all assistance to pursue any investigation. Suspension and/or discipline may be implemented.

Suspect of abuse by a member of PDT staff

Where a member of staff is suspected of abuse the following action should be taken:

- The Chief Executive should interview the member of staff with a witness present
- The Chief Executive should make arrangements for interviewing the suspected victim. This should be done with a PDT staff member and a support for the victim present. PDT will ensure that provision is made where the vulnerable adult has a need for an interpreter, communication aids or other facilitation. This includes meeting the communication needs of deaf/blind people or where there are communication problems due to difficulties in understanding e.g. the person has a learning disability or dementia.
- Issues regarding physical access to buildings will be addressed.
- The purpose of the meeting is not to investigate but to establish whether there are grounds for the allegation.
- The procedures set out above should then be followed.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is crucial to all our work and relationships and the PDT confidentiality policy should be adhered to except that the welfare of vulnerable adults is paramount and takes precedence over it. Do not keep concerns relating to potential abuse of vulnerable adults to yourself.

Confidentiality must NOT be maintained if the withholding of information will prejudice the welfare of the adult.

If you have any questions relating to Safeguarding Adults you can talk to your line manager. If they cannot answer your questions immediately they will seek advice and get back to you. You can also refer to the Westminster City Council's (WCC) copy of Safeguarding Adults Multi Agency policy and procedures document which is available from PDT or can be downloaded from the WCC website.