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Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults Policy for The Fields Children's Centre

Equalities Statement:

The ethos of the Centre supports the development of self-respect and self esteem in all children, staff and the community it serves. We place a high value on diversity and treat every member of the Centre as an individual. In this respect, we aim to meet the needs of all, taking account of gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, sexual orientation, age, ability, disability and social circumstances.

Policy statement

- The welfare of the vulnerable adult is paramount.
- All adults, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to quickly and appropriately.
- All staff/volunteers working for the Centre have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate person.

Policy aims

The aim of this Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults Policy is to promote good practice and to ensure all staff/volunteers make an informed and confident response to specific vulnerable adult protection issues.

The following information aims to help all staff/volunteers to recognise abuse and know what to do should they be concerned that a vulnerable adult known to them is being, or has been abused.

Who is a vulnerable adult?

A vulnerable adult is any person aged 18 or over who is, or may be, in need of community care services because of disability, age or illness, and who:

- is or may be unable to take care of themselves, or
- is unable to protect themselves from significant harm or exploitation.

Vulnerable adults could include older people, people with a visual or hearing impairment, physical disability, learning disabilities or mental health problem and people living with HIV or AIDS.

What is abuse?

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

- It may consist of a single act or repeated acts.
- It may be planned or unplanned.
- It may be the result of deliberate intent, negligence or ignorance.
- It may happen when a vulnerable adult is persuaded to enter into a transaction to which they have not consented or cannot consent.

Abuse can take many forms:

- Physical abuse – for example, hitting, pushing, shaking, over medicating or otherwise causing physical harm.
- Sexual abuse – for example, unwanted touching, kissing or sexual activity. Or where the vulnerable adult cannot or does not give their consent.
- Psychological / emotional abuse - including verbal abuse, intimidation, isolation, humiliation, bullying or the use of threats.
- Financial abuse – theft, exploitation, the illegal or improper use of a person's money, property, pension book, bank account or other belongings.

- Neglect - the repeated deprivation of help that a vulnerable adult needs which, if withdrawn, will cause him or her to suffer.
- Discriminatory abuse - Including racist or sexist abuse, and abuse based on a person's disability and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

Where can abuse happen?

Abuse can take place in any setting:

- In their own home
- In someone else's home
- In a residential or nursing home
- In a day centre, adult education centre or other establishment
- In a hospital or GP surgery
- At work
- In a public place.

Who abuses?

The person responsible for the abuse is often well known to the adult being abused. They may be:

- A relative, friend or neighbour.
- A paid or volunteer carer.
- A professional worker.
- Another resident or service user.
- An occasional visitor or service provider.

What should you do?

- It is not the responsibility of anyone working for the Centre, either in a paid or unpaid capacity, to decide whether or not a vulnerable adult is being abused or that abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns.
- Talk to the person in a safe and private place.
- Listen sensitively but be careful not to ask leading questions. Try not to show you are shocked.
- Find out what the person wants and explain that you will discuss the situation with your Line or Senior Manager.
- Contact your Line/ Senior Manager who will refer the allegation to the social services department, who may involve the police.

What you should not do

- Do not confront the person you think is responsible for the abuse.
- Do not destroy any evidence.
- Do not start to investigate the situation.
- Do not be judgmental.
- Do not make any promises you cannot keep.
- Do not take the allegations lightly or dismiss them.

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only.

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

Information for social services or the police about suspected abuse

To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern, which should include the following:

- The vulnerable adults name and date of birth.

- The vulnerable adults home address and telephone number.
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
- Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- The vulnerable adult's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have any carers/relatives been contacted?
- If so, what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details.
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.

What will happen next?

What happens next will depend on the wishes of the person and the seriousness of the situation. If they are in physical danger, ensuring their safety will be most important.

In response to the referral, trained staff will carry out a careful and sensitive enquiry. Information and advice will be offered so that the person and their family can make an informed choice, care will be taken to support and protect them.

Where there is a complaint against a member of staff or volunteer there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation.
- An adult protection investigation.
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the police and an adult protection investigation may well influence a disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.