

## Introduction

Safeguarding vulnerable adults is a matter of priority for Ready 2 Shine. Vulnerable adults are Ready 2 Shine customers and use Ready 2 Shine services. This document sets out Ready 2 Shine's policy with regard to adult safeguarding and what is expected from staff. Everybody has a responsibility for the safety of vulnerable adults and in accordance with relevant legislation, Ready 2 Shine, as a team which has contacts with vulnerable adults across its services, has both a moral and legal obligation to ensure proper procedures are in place for their safeguarding. The purpose of this policy is to help protect the vulnerable adults we come into contact with and to ensure that the team are aware of issues that can cause them harm and how to respond to concerns relating to the possibility of a vulnerable adult suffering harm.

## VULNERABLE ADULTS SAFEGUARDING POLICY STATEMENT

The scope of this policy:

This Safeguarding Policy is intended to cover all services of Ready 2 Shine where there is the potential for direct or indirect contact with vulnerable adults. The team at Ready 2 Shine, sub contractors who may carry out work for Ready 2 Shine, and relevant staff of organisations attending sessions run by Ready 2 Shine, should all be committed to practices which protect vulnerable adults from harm.

What is a vulnerable adult?

A vulnerable adult is any person aged 18 or over who is, or may be, unable to take care of him or herself against significant harm or exploitation. This may be because he or she has a mental health problem, a disability, a sensory impairment, is old or frail, or has some form of illness. Because of his or her vulnerability, the individual may be in receipt of a care service in his or her own home, in the community or be resident in a residential care home, nursing home or other setting

Values and principles underpinning this policy

- Access to information and knowledge – all vulnerable adults will have access to information that they can understand to make an informed choice, including signposting to expert knowledge and advocacy, as required.
- Choice – all vulnerable adults will have the opportunity to select independently from a range of options based on clear and accurate information.
- Confidentiality – all vulnerable adults will know that information about them is managed appropriately and there is a clear understanding of confidentiality and its limits among the team.
- Consent – all vulnerable adults have the right to be supported to make their own decisions and to give or withhold their consent to an activity or service. Consent is a clear indication of a willingness to participate in an activity or to accept a service. It may be signalled verbally, by gesture, by willing participation or in writing. No one can give, or withhold, consent on behalf of another adult unless special provision for particular purposes has been made for this, usually by law.

- Dignity and respect – all vulnerable adults will be accorded the same respect and dignity as any other adult, by recognising their uniqueness and personal needs.
- Equality and diversity – all vulnerable adults will be treated equally and their background and culture will be valued and respected.
- Fulfilment – all vulnerable adults will be invited to engage in activities and offered services that enable them to fulfil their ability and potential.
- Independence – all vulnerable adults will have as much control as possible over their lives whilst being safeguarded against unreasonable risks.
- Privacy – all vulnerable adults will be free from unnecessary intrusion into their affairs; and there will be a balance between the individual's own safety and the safety of others.
- Safety – all vulnerable adults will feel safe, and live without fear of violence, neglect or abuse in any form.
- Support – all vulnerable adults will be supported to report any form of abuse.

#### Ready 2 Shine roles and responsibilities

Ready 2 Shine team has ultimate responsibility for ensuring compliance with this policy. They are also responsible for ensuring that they undertake the relevant training.

#### Participant roles and responsibilities

Participants have a duty to adhere to the Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy and to notify their Safeguarding Officer on any matters regarding safeguarding vulnerable adults.

### **PROVISION OF SERVICES**

The following areas of activity are especially relevant in the services provided by Ready 2 Shine

- The promotion of awareness and sensitivity in relation to vulnerable adults safeguarding issues.
- Reporting arrangements (and the waiving of confidentiality) in relation to any 'disclosure', or any apparently well-founded 'concern' in respect of an allegation of relevant misbehaviour.
- The arrangements under which Ready 2 Shine liaises with, and reports to, social services and other appropriate external authorities.

### **WHAT IS ABUSE OF VULNERABLE ADULTS?**

What constitutes abuse?

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. Many incidents of abuse are criminal acts. The abuse of vulnerable adults is defined as: 'The physical, psychological, emotional, financial or sexual maltreatment or neglect of a vulnerable adult by another person'. It may be a single act or repeated over a period of time, and may take one form or multiple forms. The lack of appropriate action can also be a form of abuse. It can occur in a relationship where there is an expectation of trust and can be perpetrated by a person or persons, in breach of that trust, who have influence over the life of a dependant, whether they be formal or informal carers, staff, family members or others. It can also occur outside such a relationship. Abuse can be either deliberate or the result of ignorance, or caused by a lack of

training, knowledge or understanding. Often if a person is being abused in one way, they are also being abused in other ways. Abuse can take many forms including the following: Physical abuse Hitting, slapping, pushing, burning, giving a person medicine that may harm them, restraining or disciplining a person in an inappropriate way. 14 Northern Ireland Ready 2 Shine - Equality Unit Possible signs - fractures, bruising, burns, pain, marks, not wanting to be touched. Psychological abuse This includes emotional abuse, verbal abuse, humiliation, bullying and the use of threats. Possible signs - being withdrawn, too eager to do everything they are asked, showing compulsive behaviour, not being able to do things they used to, not being able to concentrate or focus. Financial or material abuse Misusing or stealing the person's property, possessions or benefits, cheating them, using them for financial gain, putting pressure on them about wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions. Possible signs - having unusual difficulty with finances, not having enough money, being too protective of money and things they own, not paying bills, not having normal home comforts.

Where might abuse occur? Abuse can happen anywhere:

- In the person's own home.
- At a carer's home.
- Within day care, residential care, nursing care or other institutional settings.
- At work or in educational settings.
- In rented accommodation or commercial premises.
- In public places.

Who can abuse?

An abuser can be anyone who has contact with the vulnerable person - it could be a partner, spouse, child, relative, friend, informal carer, a healthcare, social care or other worker, a peer or, less commonly, a stranger. Domestic/familial abuse - The abuse of a vulnerable adult by a family member such as a partner, son, daughter, sibling. Professional abuse - The misuse of power and abuse of trust by professionals, the failure of professionals to act on suspected abuse/crimes, poor care practice or neglect in services, resource shortfalls or service pressures that lead to service failure and culpability as a result of poor management systems.

Possible signs of professional abuse include:

- Entering into inappropriate relationships with a vulnerable adult.
- Failure to refer disclosure of abuse.
- Poor, ill-informed or outmoded care practice/s.
- Failure to support a vulnerable adult to access health care/ treatment.
- Denying a vulnerable adult access to professional support and services such as advocacy.
- Inappropriate responses to challenging behaviours. 16 Northern Ireland Ready 2 Shine - Equality Unit
- Failure to whistleblow on issues when internal procedures to highlight issues are exhausted.

Peer abuse - The abuse of one vulnerable adult by another vulnerable adult within a care setting. This can occur in group or communal settings, such as day care centres, clubs, residential care homes, nursing homes or other institutional settings. Stranger abuse - A vulnerable adult may be

abused by someone who they do not know, such as a stranger, a member of the public or a person who deliberately targets vulnerable people.

## CONCERNS AND DISCLOSURES

### How to deal with a concern

When there are concerns or where a disclosure or allegation is made people often feel anxious about passing on the information to anyone else. Concerned individuals may ask themselves, 'What if I'm wrong?' and this may hold them back from taking action. It is important for staff to know that they are neither responsible for deciding whether abuse has occurred or not; nor are they responsible for conducting any investigations (this is the role of the appropriate authorities). However, they do need to pass on any concerns they have through the Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding reporting procedures. It is crucial that staff members do not attempt to deal with the situation alone.

### How can you be alerted to signs of abuse or neglect?

There are a variety of ways that you could be alerted that a vulnerable adult is suffering harm:

- A vulnerable adult may tell you.
- Someone else may tell you of their concerns or something that causes you concern.
- A vulnerable adult may show some signs of physical injury for which there does not appear to be a satisfactory or credible explanation.
- A vulnerable adult's demeanour/behaviour may lead you to suspect abuse or neglect.
- The behaviour of a person close to the vulnerable adult makes you feel uncomfortable (this may include another staff member, peer or family member).
- Through general good neighbourliness and social guardianship. Being alert to potential abuse plays a major role in ensuring that vulnerable adults are safeguarded and it is important that all concerns about possible abuse are reported.

### What if a vulnerable adult discloses abuse?

In cases where a vulnerable adult discloses abuse to a staff member they should react appropriately, according to the following guidelines:

#### Do

- Stay calm.
- Listen and hear.
- Express concern and sympathy about what has happened.
- Reassure the person – tell the person that s/he did the right thing in telling you.
- Let the person know that the information will be taken seriously and give information about what will happen next.
- If urgent medical/police help is required, call the emergency services. 19 Northern Ireland Ready 2 Shine - Equality Unit
- Ensure the safety of the person.

- Record in writing using the Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Report form, date and sign your report, and give it to your Safeguarding Officer at the earliest possible time.
- Act without delay.

#### Do not

- Stop someone disclosing to you.
- Promise to keep secrets.
- Press the person for more details or make them repeat the story.
- Gossip about the disclosure or pass on the information to anyone who does not have a legitimate need to know.
- Contact the alleged abuser.
- Attempt to investigate yourself.
- Leave details of your concerns on a voicemail or by email.
- Delay.

#### Checking out

There may need to be some initial 'checking out' with the vulnerable adult who has disclosed information to you in order to ensure his/her safety, for example, if a member notices a bruise on a vulnerable adult's arm, it would be appropriate to ask, 'I see you have a bruise on your arm. How did that happen?' However, be careful not to start investigating. It is important that a member understand the clear distinction between 'checking out' and investigating. Members should not begin to investigate alleged or suspected abuse by asking questions that relate to the detail, or circumstances of the alleged abuse, beyond initial listening, expressing concern and checking out.

#### How to react and what to do

There is not one simple set of rules to follow in responding to these situations, but in general: It is important that members are aware that the first person who has concerns or encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred, (this is the role of the appropriate authorities). However, members, participants and others do have a duty of care to report any suspicions they may have with regard to the abuse of a vulnerable adult to allow appropriate action to be taken.

## **PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RECORDING**

### Reporting and recording

All members should write their concerns down as soon as possible and inform the local authorities. Where a service is within a care home then the concern should be reported to the manager of the home also, or the deputy in their absence. A written email should follow a verbal discussion. We recommend that 'if in doubt, report it'. There may be emergency situations where it is appropriate to contact social services or seek medical attention immediately. Whatever the circumstances of the concern, disclosure, allegation or suspicion, it is vital that the staff member records the details and reports to their Safeguarding Officer (or deputy) without delay. Not every report results in a full investigation. Individual reports are accumulated to build a picture about a particular situation. It

may be that a report by a Ready 2 Shine member may provide the necessary or decisive final piece of information.

Concerns about a vulnerable adult - responding to allegations or concerns about a member of staff, a contractor or other third party person: The following procedures should be followed in each situation:

- Take the allegation or concern seriously. Always refer if you have a concern, do not investigate yourself, or do nothing.
- If it is an emergency contact social services or medical assistance immediately.
- Complete a Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding report by writing down the disclosure as soon as possible, giving all the details that you are aware of.
- Forward the report to social services.

Response to a vulnerable adult making an allegation of abuse The following points are a guide to help you respond appropriately:

- Listen carefully to what the person is telling you.
- Find an appropriate early opportunity to explain that it is very likely that what they are telling you will need to be shared with others.
- Ask questions for clarification only - never ask leading questions that suggest a particular answer.
- Reassure the person that they have done the right thing in telling you.
- Tell them what you will do next and with whom the information they have given you will be shared.
- Complete a Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Report by writing down what has been said as soon as possible, giving all the details that you are aware of and what was said using the vulnerable adult's own words.
- Forward the report to social services as soon as possible, either by hand in a sealed envelope marked 'Confidential', or by a secure email with a 'read receipt' option.

## **CODE OF BEHAVIOUR**

Team members of Ready 2 Shine must not lone work with vulnerable adults without a valid DBS. Where it is deemed that the work is of a highly sensitive or risk nature then both team members must attend to safeguard the vulnerable person but also Ready 2 Shine.

Ready 2 Shine team will encounter vulnerable adults in a range of situations and in a range of locations including offices, colleges, homes and other settings. It is not practical within this policy to provide definitive guidance that will cover all situations, however the principles set out below should be applied in all situations.

- Staff should not spend excessive amounts of time alone with vulnerable adults away from others.
- Staff should not take a vulnerable adult to his/her own home.
- Staff should not take a vulnerable adult alone on car journey, unless this forms part of the core activities. If it is unavoidable or necessary, these kinds of behaviours should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of a manager and where an appropriate record is maintained.

Unacceptable behaviours are those that should always be avoided in the interests of the safety of vulnerable adults and staff. For example a staff member should never:

- Abuse, neglect, or harm / place at risk of harm vulnerable adults whether by omission or commission.
- Engage in rough physical games with vulnerable adults, including horseplay.
- Engage in sexually provocative games with vulnerable adults e.g. spin the bottle, strip poker.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to or about a vulnerable adult.
- Form inappropriate relationships with vulnerable adults.
- Gossip about personal details of vulnerable adults and their families.
- Make/accept loans or gifts of money from vulnerable adults.

### **GUIDELINES FOR SHARING INFORMATION**

Confidentiality and information sharing

Confidentiality must be maintained for all concerned.

Information will be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only e.g. Safeguarding Officers, social services, the vulnerable adult, courts and relevant staff.

Recorded information will be stored in a secure place in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure) and Ready 2 Shine members must be registered with the ICO

If enquiries arise from the public or any branch of the media, staff must not make any comments regarding the situation and all queries are referred to the Information Department.