



Safeguarding Policy

The overarching principle of these practice guidelines and procedures is that the first priority should always be to ensure the safety and protection of adults at risk.

Who is the policy for?

This policy is designed for anyone working with, or concerned about, the care or wellbeing of adults at risk. All volunteers working with adults at risk have a duty to protect them and should make themselves fully aware of this policy and the guidelines within it. All allegations of abuse of an adult at risk must be treated seriously. All action taken under these guidelines must be carried out sensitively, taking account of the individual needs of the adult at risk including race, culture and ethnicity, age, gender, religion, disability and sexuality.

Who is an adult at risk?

'a person aged 18 years or 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 him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or serious exploitation'

Who Decides? Lord Chancellor's Department 1997

Adults at risk of abuse include people with a wide range of disabilities and circumstances; sometimes it is difficult to establish if a person might be considered an 'adult at risk' who is covered by these procedures. In considering whether these procedures should be used, it should be assumed that an individual is covered by these procedures, unless and until information suggests this is not the case.

An adult at risk is a person who is unable, or less able, to protect themselves from harm, neglect or abuse that arises as a result of the action or inaction of others.

The definition of adult at risk may apply broadly within health care. Levels of independence and well-being may be temporarily or permanently affected by health related conditions. A person's health condition may reduce the choice and control they have, their ability to make decisions or to protect themselves from harm and exploitation.

An adult at risk may therefore be a person who:

- is frail due to ill health, physical disability or cognitive impairment
- has a learning disability

- has a physical disability and/or a sensory impairment
- has mental health needs including dementia or a personality disorder
- has a long-term illness/condition
- misuses substances or alcohol
- is a carer such as a family member/friend who may be at risk because of their caring role
- is unable to demonstrate the capacity to make a relevant decision and is in need of care and support

The term 'adult abuse' is subject to wide interpretation and definition. 'No Secrets' provides the following definition:

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

SNN recognises that an adult at risk:

- can be at risk of mistreatment and abuse and that such mistreatment and abuse constitutes a clear infringement of rights
- has the right to request that no further action be taken

Categories of abuse

Abuse can take many different forms and can occur in many places and in any situation. Types of abuse can be:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Financial abuse
- Emotional or Psychological abuse
- Neglect
- Discriminatory abuse.

These are not mutually exclusive and many situations will involve a combination of different types of abuse.

Who abuses?

The abuser is usually well known to the person being abused. They may be:

- A partner, child or relative
- A friend or neighbour
- A paid or volunteer care worker
- A health or social worker or other professional
- The person they care for
- Another adult at risk

Raising an alert

All volunteers have a duty to report any allegations or suspicions of abuse and potential abuse of an adult at risk, to the Safeguarding Officer or their deputy.

If the adult at risk is in immediate danger or in need of urgent medical attention, action must be taken to ensure their immediate safety and wellbeing. This may include calling the appropriate emergency service.

In all cases the Safeguarding Officer must contact West Sussex County Council Adult Social Care Services on 01243 642555.

The following checklist provides guidance for volunteers relating to responding, reporting and recording an alert:

Responding

It is important for the volunteer to:

- Remain calm and try not to show shock or disbelief
- Listen carefully
- Reassure the person
- Explain that you will need to share the information and with whom it will be shared.

Do not:

- Press the person for further details
- Promise to keep secrets
- Make promises that you cannot keep
- Be judgemental
- Break the confidentiality shared between the adult at risk, yourself and the Safeguarding Officer
- Ask leading questions

Reporting

All allegations and/or suspicions must be reported to the Safeguarding Officer immediately. It is then the responsibility of the Safeguarding Officer to contact WSCC Adult Social Care Services to report their concerns.

Remember, **do not:**

- Attempt to contact the alleged 'abuser' or alleged 'victim'
- Talk to any else about the information shared with you
- Tamper with or move any potential evidence.

Recording

Accurate and detailed recording is essential. The volunteer will need to write a report and this should include:

- Their name
- Date, time and setting in which the allegation was made or event witnessed
- Names of others present
- Record of what was said using individuals own words
- Their signature and the date

- A copy of this will be kept by the Safeguarding Officer.

Once the information is passed to WSCC Adult Social Care Services, they will make a decision on whether the Police need to be informed and if there is a need for a full investigation.

Confidentiality

Personal information may need to be disclosed in the best interests of the adult at risk. The following safeguards, therefore, need to be observed:

Information will only be shared on a need to know basis when it is in the best interests of the adult at risk

Informed consent should be obtained wherever possible

It is inappropriate for volunteers to give assurances of absolute confidentiality in cases where there are concerns about abuse

Adults at risk and their carers should be advised why, and with whom, information will be shared.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed at the first meeting of the incoming Management Committee each year. It will also be reviewed in response to changes in relevant legislation, contractual arrangements, good practice or in response to an identified failing in its effectiveness.

Date adopted and approved by the SNN Management Committee.

12th June 2014