

Adults at Risk Safeguarding Policy

Introduction

The Harbour Project for Refugees and Asylum Seekers, Swindon (hereafter: The Harbour Project) is committed to ensuring that vulnerable people are not abused and that working practices minimise the risk of abuse.

Living a life that is free from harm and abuse is a fundamental right of every person. All of us need to act as good neighbours and citizens in looking out for one another and seeking to prevent the isolation which can easily lead to abusive situations and put adults at risk of harm.

The Harbour Project is committed to working with the main statutory agencies – Local Councils, the Police and the NHS and other local voluntary organisations to promote safer communities, prevent harm and abuse and to deal with suspected or actual cases of abuse. Our procedures aim to make sure that the safety, needs and interests of adults at risk are always respected and upheld. This includes upholding their human rights.

All staff and volunteers have a duty of care, in all settings and roles within the Drop in and are the frontline in preventing harm or abuse from occurring and also empowering the person at risk to take action where concerns arise.

Who is an 'adult at risk'?

An 'adult at risk' is someone who is 18 years or over who may be in need of community care due to a mental health problem, learning disability, physical disability, age or illness. At The Harbour Project, we recognise that many of our visitors are experiencing trauma (often unofficially undiagnosed) as a result of what they have been through, both in their country of origin and on their journey to safety. They may be socially isolated, unsure of the UK protocols and norms, fearful of authority (and therefore more likely to acquiesce or be submissive as a result). They are also statistically more likely to be poor and at risk of financial abuse, therefore making them a likely target for radicalisation and exploitation. They may also lack appropriate levels of English to communicate their needs clearly. As a consequence, they may find it difficult to protect themselves from abuse and/or radicalisation.

Types of Abuse

There are different types of abuse, including:

- **Physical Abuse** – this is 'the use of force which results in pain or injury or a change in a person's natural physical state'. Physical abuse can also be 'the non-accidental infliction of physical force that results in bodily injury, pain or impairment'.
- **Sexual Abuse** – examples of sexual abuse include the direct or indirect involvement of the adult at risk in sexual activity or relationships which they do not want or have not consented to.

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- **Emotional and psychological Abuse** – this is the behaviour that has a harmful effect on the person's emotional health and development, or any form of mental cruelty that results in mental distress, the denial of basic human and civil rights such as self-expression, privacy and dignity.
- **Institutional Abuse** – institutional abuse is the mistreatment or neglect of an adult at risk by a regime, or individuals within settings and services, that adults at risk live in or use. Such abuse violates the person's dignity, resulting in lack of respect for their human rights.
- **Discrimination** – discriminatory abuse exist when values, beliefs or culture result in a misuse of power that denies opportunities to some groups or individuals.
- **Financial and material Abuse** – this is the use of a person's property, assets, income, funds or any other resources without their informed consent or authorisation. It includes theft, fraud, exploitation and the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

What to do if an adult experiencing abuse tells you about it

If an adult experiencing abuse or neglect speaks to you about this, assure them that you are taking them seriously. Listen carefully to what they are saying, stay calm and get a clear and factual picture of the concern.

Be honest and avoid making assurances that you may not be able to keep, for example, complete confidentiality. Be clear and say that you need to report the abuse. Do not be judgemental and try to keep an open mind.

Do not keep concerns relating to potential abuse of vulnerable adults to yourself. Confidentiality may **NOT** be maintained if the withholding of information will prejudice the welfare of the adult.

All staff, professionals and volunteers of any service involved with adults at risk should inform the **Project Manager** if they are concerned that an adult has been abused or may be at risk of harm.

If you hear about an incident of abuse from a third party (this is when someone else tells you about what they have heard or seen happen to a vulnerable adult at risk), encourage them to report it themselves or help them to report the facts of what they know.

Allegations against a staff member

If the alleged abuser is a staff member or a volunteer, the investigation will follow the [ACAS Code of Practice for disciplinary and grievance procedures](#) (March 2015).

Abuse of service users is an act of gross misconduct and may also be a criminal offence.

All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to report staff actions which are abusive/exploitative of service users or which are unethical.

The Harbour Project promote ways to encourage the reporting of concerns, including letting visitors know how to report concerns to outside organisations such as the Police or other statutory bodies.

Any allegation against a member of staff or a volunteer must be reported to the designated officer (Project Manager) immediately.

What to do if you suspect abuse

Everyone with a duty of care to an adult at risk should:

- Act to protect the adult at risk.
- Deal with immediate needs and ensure the person is, as far as possible, central to the decision making process.
- Report the abuse to an appropriate person or service (Project manager)
- If a crime has or may have been committed, contact the police to discuss or report it.
- Record the events [here](#) (see also the Appendix at the end)

A concern may be a direct disclosure by the adult at risk, or a concern raised by staff or volunteers, others using the service, a carer or member of the public, or an observation of the behaviour of the adult at risk, or the behaviour of another.

How to make a report of suspected abuse

All concerns of abuse or neglect of a vulnerable adult at risk can be discussed in confidence with Doug Bale, Adult Safeguarding Manager: dbale@swindon.gov.uk

Tel: 01793 463555 (work hours), 01793 436699 (emergency out of hours)

E-mail: adultsafeguarding@swindon.gov.uk

However, if a serious crime has taken place or there is a need for an immediate police response to protect the adult at risk, consider dialling 999.

Staff and volunteer recruitment

We take up references for all posts (staff, trustees and volunteers) prior to appointment. We use Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) checks to help us assess suitability for working with vulnerable adults.

We provide an Induction programme for new staff, trustees and volunteers to enable everyone to undertake their roles safely and confidently, as well as ongoing training as appropriate to the role and professional development of the individual and our organisation.

We regularly review our recruitment procedures in response to changes in legislation and systems external to our organisation.

Confidentiality

There is nothing in legislation that prevents the sensible sharing of relevant information to prevent harm to an individual or to assist in the prevention or detection of crime. Confidentiality is crucial to all of our relationships. Confidentiality may not be maintained if the withholding of information will prejudice the welfare of vulnerable adult

Personal Information on all people (staff, volunteers, trustees and Harbour Visitors) is kept securely and is not shared unless there is reason to do so. All staff, trustees and volunteers understand that any personal information that they learn about a Harbour Visitor in the course of their work should not be discussed outside the organisation, until and unless it is necessary to share with designated agencies. Information will be shared on a 'need-to-know' basis only.

It is important that only those who need to know particular safeguarding information actually know, to avoid rumour and gossip that could have a detrimental impact upon the Visitor.

Communication

We will communicate this Policy to all staff, volunteers, and trustees. For our Visitors (depending upon language ability), we will use appropriate methods to get the essence across.

We support and encourage all Visitors, volunteers and staff to speak up and contact the Safeguarding Officer (or Deputy) where this is:

- A *concern* (a worry, issue or doubt about practice or treatment of a Visitor or colleague, or their circumstances), or
- A *disclosure* (information about a person at risk of or suffering from significant harm) or
- An *allegation* (the possibility that a volunteer, staff member, trustee could cause harm a child or young person at the Harbour.

Staff or volunteers can report things that aren't right, illegal or neglectful, putting someones health and safety in danger or covering up wrongdoing.

We would prefer people to use internal processes whenever possible to make a report as above, but this does not prevent them from making a report or referral to Statutory Agencies such as the Police or Social Services, in their own right as a private individual. We also support our staff or volunteers to raise concerns or to disclose

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information which they believe shows malpractice (whistle-blowing – disclosure in the public interest).

Accountability

Our appointed Safeguarding Officer is the Chair of Trustees, David Rowlands and is supported by Nan Bains as deputy, who will be available to all staff, volunteers and Harbour Visitors to speak to if they have concerns, issues or complaints regarding the safety, well-being or conduct of Harbour Visitors, volunteers or staff.

David Rowlands can be contacted on david47rowlands@gmail.com

Nan Bains can be contacted on nan.bains@harbourproject.org.uk or on 01793 611682.

The Safeguarding Officer and Deputy will have access to appropriate training to support them in these roles. They will liaise with appropriate local and national agencies, maintain Safeguarding Policies and records, keep confidentiality, adhere and promote this policy within The Harbour, and support individuals in the event that they come to any harm.