

ELDER VOICE

**Protection of Vulnerable Adults
Policy, Guidance and Procedure**

POLICY

1. **ELDER VOICE'S** mission through the delivery of services addressing isolation and loneliness is to improve the lives of older people. Anyone working for Elder Voice or acting on our behalf is required not only to treat those who use our services with appropriate dignity and respect, but also to take on a monitoring role to actively check on their safety and well-being. **Elder Voice's policy places safeguarding the welfare of our service users above any other issue.**

2. There is no single Law which covers all aspects of care of vulnerable adults, but (a) many forms of abuse can be viewed as criminal acts and are properly handled by the Police and (b) providers of managed care are governed by a regulatory framework which includes compliance obligations, monitoring agencies and the ability to report individuals to the agency that can 'bar' people from working with vulnerable adults.

GUIDANCE

What to do if you have any concerns

- a) Remember that you are never on your own. You are acting on behalf of Elder Voice , and you have support in the safeguarding of our service users.
- b) Gather your facts. Note down the issues of concern, maintain confidentiality.
- c) Discuss the situation with your Manager or with a Board Member and agree on a course of action, OR, if you believe you have reasonable cause for concern, complete the PoVA Form attached and pass that on to the relevant person.
- d) Elder Voice believes that failure to take action is more serious than raising a false alarm.

Inter-Agency co-operation

The most significant lesson drawn from the traumatic experiences of those who have suffered the worst abuses, is that agencies and organisations were often involved and could have intervened to prevent harm but all had assumed that that the situation somehow fell outside their remit and that someone else would take responsibility for the case. This risk has been addressed through the establishment of collaborative networks, local partnership forums and the like, and where relevant, Elder Voice Management are encouraged to ensure they have effective links with those in their region.

The second lesson is that, having filled in a Form, someone involved in a case can believe that their duties are complete whereas that form may disappear into a bureaucratic system while the abuse continues. In ensuring that the Elder Voice primary concern is for the welfare of our service user is maintained, anyone working for Elder Voice should not be satisfied unless / until concerns are properly investigated and appropriate action taken. Any member of the Elder Voice workforce reporting concerns of abuse will be notified of outcomes, within the framework of data protection regulations.

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

Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal or psychological, it may be an act of neglect or an omission to act, or it may occur when a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial transaction or sexual situation to which he or she has not consented, or cannot consent.

Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it.

Intervention will partly be determined by the environment or the context in which the abuse has occurred. Managed care settings are subject to regulatory controls set out in legislation and relevant guidance, however abusive situations may still occur.

Personal and family relationships within the home may be complex and difficult to assess and intervene in, but Elder Voice always places the welfare of the vulnerable adult above any other concern.

Assessment of the environment, or context, is relevant, because exploitation, deception, misuse of authority, intimidation or coercion may render a vulnerable adult incapable of making his or her own decisions.

An initial rejection of help should not always be taken at face value.

The seriousness or extent of abuse is often not clear when anxiety is first expressed. It is important, therefore, when considering the appropriateness of intervention, to approach reports of incidents or allegations with an open mind - but if in doubt, ensure you pass on your concerns to a relevant manager.

Examples of abuse include:

physical abuse, including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions;

sexual abuse, including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not consented, or could not consent or was pressured into consenting;

psychological abuse, including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks;

financial or material abuse, including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits;

neglect and acts of omission, including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating; and

discriminatory abuse, including racist, sexist, that based on a person's disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

Any or all of these types of abuse may be perpetrated as the result of deliberate intent, negligence or ignorance. You should always be mindful that ignorance is not an excuse, and concerns must be passed on – even if there is no malicious intent, abuse has to be stopped.

Criminal Offences

Some instances of abuse will constitute a **criminal offence**.

In this respect vulnerable adults are entitled to the protection of the law in the same way as any other member of the public. When complaints about alleged abuse suggest that a criminal offence may have been committed it is imperative that reference should be made to the police as a matter of urgency. Your Manager or Board Member can advise of this.

Criminal investigation by the police takes priority over all other lines of enquiry.

Elder Voice

Neglect and poor professional practice also need to be taken into account. This may take the form of isolated incidents of poor or unsatisfactory professional practice, at one end of the spectrum, through to pervasive ill treatment or gross misconduct at the other.

Repeated instances of poor care may be an indication of more serious problems and this is sometimes referred to as **institutional abuse**.

Who may be the abuser?

Vulnerable adult(s) may be abused by a wide range of people including relatives and family members, your colleagues, professional staff, paid care workers, volunteers, other service users, neighbours, friends and associates, people who deliberately exploit vulnerable people and strangers. There is often particular concern when abuse is perpetrated by someone in a position of power or authority who uses his or her position to the detriment of the health, safety, welfare and general wellbeing of a vulnerable person.

Studies of abuse cases show that colleagues have been reluctant to raise queries about the behaviour of people they regard as their friends, or people who occupy a position of authority. If it is found that you have had good cause to be concerned, but you took no action, for any reason, then you may be subjected to appropriate disciplinary or criminal action, and worse, you may have to live with the knowledge that you could have helped to stop abuse but did not do so.

Corporate Partnership Working

Much of our work is carried out in partnership with other organisations, and Elder Voice delivers services to people who are within the remit of another organisation, and therefore the suspicion of neglect or other kinds of abuse may be handled within the proper procedures of the relevant organisation – but the fact that it does so should never stop any member of Elder Voice workforce from maintaining a close interest in the progress, and ensuring a satisfactory outcome of any matter of concern in this domain within the framework of data protection regulations.

In entering into contractual relationships with other organisations, or in building working relationships, it is good practice to ensure that we have access to the relevant procedures of that organisation and that members of Elder Voice workforce are able to find their way to the office-holder who will be able to act on any concern raised.

If a complaint is made to Elder Voice about someone within our workforce by someone on behalf of a corporate partner organisation, it is likely that this third party organisation will want to ensure that the suspected perpetrator is moved to a position where there is no further opportunity to commit the alleged abuse.

Elder Voice will co-operate with all such requests, which will then be handled in accordance with the Procedure set out below.

PROCEDURE

a) Anyone acting for or on behalf of Elder Voice can register a concern about suspicion of abuse of a vulnerable adult at any time by completing the attached PoVA Form. Once completed the Form must be forwarded to the immediate Manager or Board Member. The PoVA Form should be used even if the suspicion is reported by a third party.

Report of suspicion of PoVA case

Name of person making this report:

Name:

Position within Elder Voice

Address:

Name of the adult

Their address:

How do you know this person

What is the nature of your concern

Can you point to any specific evidence to support your concern? (if so what is that?)

Are there any other people who may have knowledge of this matter (Names, with contact details if possible)

Signed Dated

Complaint given to

..... Dated

This policy was
Updated at meeting
30th November 2022