

PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE ADULTS

Information for Volunteers

As an organisation, Link 6 & RWB deals on a daily basis with vulnerable adults.

It is important that our clients are not abused and also that our volunteers are not accused of abuse.

It is the duty of a volunteer to report any suspicion of abuse to the relevant person at Link 6 & RWB.

We also encourage our volunteers to be aware of the risk of being accused of abuse, and offer some suggestions as to how to stay safe.

What is abuse?

Abuse is something that is done to another person and that harms them in some way. It may be a single act or continue over a period of time and can be either deliberate or accidental.

Abuse can take several forms and may include one or more of the following:

- **Physical abuse:** Causing someone physical harm, for example by hitting, pushing or kicking them, misusing medication, causing someone to be burnt or scalded, controlling what someone eats, restraining someone inappropriately or depriving them of liberty.
- **Sexual abuse:** Sexual acts to which a person has not or cannot give their consent or which they have been pressurised into. For example rape, inappropriate touching or use of sexualised language.
- **Psychological abuse:** Causing someone mental and emotional distress by using threats, humiliation, control, intimidation, harassment, verbal abuse or depriving them of contact with other people.
- **Financial abuse:** Taking money, goods or property without permission. This can include theft, fraud, exploitation or putting pressure on someone to make a will, transfer the ownership of property or carry out other financial transactions.
- **Neglect:** Failure to provide access to services to meet a person's health, social care or educational needs or withholding the necessities of life such as medication, food and heating.

What is a vulnerable adult?

A vulnerable adult is someone who is over 18 and may be:

- in need of community care services because of a disability, age or illness, and
- is unable to take care of him or herself, or
- is unable to stop someone else from harming or exploiting them.

A vulnerable adult may be someone with a learning disability, mental health needs, a physical or sensory impairment or may be elderly and frail.

Types of abuse:-

- Physical
- Sexual
- Psychological
- Financial
- Neglect
- Discriminatory
- Institutional

- **Discriminatory abuse:** Treating someone in a less favourable way and causing them harm, because of their age, gender, sexuality, disability, ethnic origin or religion
- **Institutional abuse:** Services that fail to recognise the rights of service users and offer a poor quality of care or which condone ways of working which cause harm to vulnerable people.

What do you do if you suspect that one of our clients is being abused?

You should immediately discuss this confidentially with the Secretary of the Management Committee who will then ensure that the matter is dealt with by Wiltshire Council Safeguarding Adults Team.

How to prevent yourself from being accused of abuse

Whilst the majority of what we do for our clients is unlikely to land us on the wrong side of an investigation, we are sometimes asked to carry out jobs that could put us under the spotlight, particularly when dealing with money.

For your own safety...

DO ask for receipts for all goods purchased for a client. If you are going shopping, ask the client to sign to say how much money they have given you up front.

NEVER accept a personal payment from a client for doing a job.

ALL donations should be placed in the envelope by the client.

DO NOT get money out of a cash machine or use a client's debit or credit card on their behalf. Clients should **NEVER** give you their PIN as that will compromise their bank security.

ALL jobs must be booked via the LINK 6 & RWB co-ordinator. Our volunteers **DO NOT** do **PRIVATE** jobs.

ALWAYS discuss with a member of the Management Committee any awkward situation you may have found yourself in, no matter how trivial.

Who abuses vulnerable adults?

Anyone can abuse a vulnerable person. This includes:

- partners
- relatives
- friends and neighbours
- other users of a service
- someone paid to provide a health or social care service
- volunteers
- strangers

Most abusers are people already known to the vulnerable adult but some people will deliberately exploit or harm individuals who they see as easy targets.

Where can abuse take place?

Abuse can take place anywhere. This includes:

- A person's own home
- A friend or relative's home
- A hospital
- A care home
- A day service
- An educational establishment
- A public place

REMEMBER – if it does not feel right to you, it probably does not look right to somebody else!

Wiltshire Council has a confidential Social Care Help Desk

Tel: **0300 456 0111**

Monday – Thursday - 08:30 – 17:20 Friday - 08:30 – 16:20