



Vulnerable Adults Statement

(To be read in conjunction with Warwickshire Inter-agency Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults (Adult Protection) Policy and Procedure)

1 Rationale

As a member of the Warwickshire Safeguarding Adults Board the Council is committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of vulnerable adults.

Warwickshire County Council has developed a multi-agency policy and procedure for the protection of vulnerable adults. Copies of these documents are held in the Council's Offices and are available to all staff by a link on the Council's website. The Council understands the importance of a multi-agency approach where issues of abuse are identified.

The countywide policy is formed in accordance with Government guidance 'No Secrets'. (Department of Health 2000).

Important Telephone Numbers

County Council Vulnerable Adults Single Referral Team: 01926 412080

Police: 01926 415000

For further information on protecting vulnerable adults visit:

www.warwickshire.gov.uk/safeguardingadults

2 Statement

2.1 Statement Users

This document is intended for the use and guidance of officers working for the Council and any partners who might work with us.

Council staff will, at all times, show respect and understanding for the rights, safety and welfare of vulnerable adults.

The Council is committed to working with the County Council to ensure staff receive training and information about working with vulnerable adults.

Statement Users should be familiar with the countywide policy and procedure guide. This contains invaluable information on:

- How to make a referral to the County Safeguarding Team
- Definitions of abuse
- The procedure for dealing with a referral.

2.2 Scope

This statement seeks to minimise the risk of the vulnerable adults with whom Council officers work and who may be experiencing abuse. It seeks to ensure that all staff can recognise the signs of potential abuse and are confident in taking appropriate steps to stop such abuse.

Generally Council officers work with people aged 16 and over who could be using a range of services at Elizabeth House, using our contact centre or area offices, applying to Registered Housing Provider for social housing, in receipt benefits or assistance with their financial arrangements or attending leisure facilities or involved in other activities. There is a separate policy on Child Protection and organisations we work with or contract services to will also have safeguarding policies in place where appropriate. This statement sets out recommendations for the protection and prevention of potential abuse for those over 18 years old.

2.3 Definition of a Vulnerable Adult

The Council has adopted the definition set out in the County wide policy and procedure. A vulnerable adult is defined as a person aged 18 or over:

“who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age, 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.” (No Secrets DoH 2000)

This may include:

- People with a learning disability
- People who experience mental ill health
- Disabled people
- Older people
- People who are experiencing short or long term illness

It is important to note that inclusion in one of the above groups does not necessarily mean that a person is vulnerable.

In some instances, a vulnerable adult may be someone who is experiencing domestic violence and is unable to protect him or herself by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness. It is also important to note that the perpetrator of the abuse could, in some circumstances, be regarded as vulnerable adult themselves, which will have implications for planning interventions.

2.4 Significant Harm

“Significant harm” means not only ill treatment, but also the impairment of, or an avoidable deterioration in, physical or mental health: and the impairment of physical, intellectual, emotional, social, or behavioural development.

2.5 Definitions of Abuse

Abuse is defined in the Department of Health document “No Secrets” (2000) as “a violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by any other person or persons”. Somebody may abuse or neglect a vulnerable person by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm.

Concerns may relate to physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, financial, or discriminatory abuse of a person:

Physical abuse – may involve touching or threatening to touch a person in a way that they have not agreed to, and which hurts them. It can include hitting, shaking, pushing and other things – including inappropriate sanctions.

Sexual Abuse – involves forcing or enticing a vulnerable person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the individual is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts, such as inappropriate

touching. Sexual abuse may include non-contact activities, such as exposure, watching sexual activities, or pornography, "talking dirty" or making inappropriate sexual suggestions.

Neglect and acts of omission - the failure to meet a person's basic physical and / or emotional needs. It may involve a failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect the vulnerable person from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, an individual's basic emotional needs.

Financial or material abuse – includes fraud, theft, exploitation, and misuse of an individual's property or benefits

Institutional abuse – repeated instances of poor care of individuals or groups of individuals through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of structures, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

Psychological abuse – including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation or contact, humiliation, verbal or racial abuse, isolation or withdrawal of services or supportive networks.

Discriminatory abuse – includes issues of harassment against people because of reasons such as race, gender, disability or sexuality.

Abuse can be systematic or a one-off incident. Abuse may be actual or it may be threatened – threatening to hit someone is abusive, as is actually hitting them.

The Council understands that staff potentially pose a risk to adults they work with. On a three yearly basis, an assessment of posts attracting a Disclosure and Barring Service (Standard or Enhanced) check will be undertaken to establish the whether it is appropriate to retain this safeguard. Initially all posts will be evaluated for attachment of DBS check, new posts will be assessed when created and posts that where responsibilities are adjusted, at the time of that change.

2.6 Policy Framework

The Council has a number of existing policies and procedures with which users of this document should be familiar, and which will help prevent abuse, and enable us to respond effectively if there are allegations of abuse.

The Council's employment policies set out clear expectations about staff conduct at work, and the procedures in place to raise and manage any concerns about performance. They also include robust recruitment procedures, which stress the importance of selecting staff who have the right skills, abilities and attitudes, have good references, and, where appropriate, have been through a Criminal Records Bureau and Vetting and Barring checks. Where staff work constantly and directly with vulnerable adults an enhanced checking may be required.

3 Procedure

The procedure set out below provides a framework for Council staff to act where they suspect vulnerable adult abuse. Each Head of Service (assisted by the Housing and Communities Manager) will take responsibility for raising awareness of this statement with their staff and addressing training issues which arise.

Everybody who works with vulnerable adults should be able to recognise and know how to act upon indicators that their safety or welfare may be at risk.

The abuse may come to light in a number of ways:

- Sometimes, people may not tell us directly, but their behaviour may change or indicate that something is wrong.

- Allegations of abuse may be made by “third parties” – not the person directly involved. These need to be treated just as seriously.
- Statement users may see or hear things and suspect that abuse is taking place. It is very important that responsible action is taken. The situation is likely to persist, rather than simply “go away”.

People may talk openly about what is happening, but sometimes people are anxious to preserve as much confidentiality as possible, and may choose whom they tell very carefully.

3.1 Procedure for reporting suspected abuse

An allegation may be:

- Against a member of the Council’s staff
- A person who does not work for the Council

It is of greatest importance that any member of staff who receives allegations or reports of abuse, do not keep these to themselves.

Any member of staff who suspects that a vulnerable adult has been abused in any way must immediately report this to their line manager or, in their absence, their Head of Service or the Housing and Communities Manager.

It may also be appropriate for staff to use the Council’s ‘Whistle Blowing’ procedure.

If the allegation is against an officer in the Council’s employment:

- Once information of the allegation has been clarified the Head of Service will consult with Human Resources
- As well as the Council’s internal policies and procedures the Department of Health’s ‘Protection of Vulnerable Adults Scheme’ will underpin how we act to address allegations.

If the allegation is against a person who does not work for the Council:

- Once information of the allegation has been clarified a referral will be made in accordance with **Warwickshire County Council’s Safeguarding Adults Alerter’s Guide**.
- As well as the Council’s internal procedures the Department of Health’s ‘Protection of Vulnerable Adults Scheme’ will underpin how we act to address allegations.

If a referral is made to the County Council in order to safeguard a vulnerable adult the Housing and Communities Manager (or in their absence the Head of Enterprise, Housing and Revenues) should be informed.

3.2 What to do if your unable to make a referral to the Safeguarding Adults Team

Where the Adult Safeguarding alerts/referrals threshold for intervention is contested or in situations where there are concerns about agency adult safeguarding case management the escalation process should be initiated by the referring officer. This process is detailed in the Warwickshire Safeguarding Adults Escalation Process. Currently this document is in draft form and is likely to become live from summer 2013.

3.3 Protection

Sitting alongside the requirement to report is an obligation to protect.

If the abuse is going on at the moment and the adult is at risk of immediate harm, Council officers will have to consider whether there is any way you can step in to stop it without risking harm to yourself? If so, do so. If not, get help from a senior member of staff if possible, or if

necessary, the police. If the person needs urgent medical attention, get immediate help from a doctor, or call an ambulance.

3.4 Multi Agency Protocol for Sharing Information and Joint Risk Assessing Vulnerable Tenants and Housing Applicants

A Multi Agency Protocol for Sharing Information and Joint Risk Assessing Vulnerable Tenants and Housing Applicants is currently under development and in due course this document will provide the template for sharing information on vulnerable adults who do not reach the threshold for a Safeguarding Adults referral to be accepted. Currently this document is in draft form and is likely to become live from summer 2013.

3.5 Suspected Abuse

Sometimes staff may suspect abuse is going on, even if no one has told them directly. It is important that staff should never keep such suspicions to themselves.

When reporting suspected abuse, staff will explain what makes them think someone is being abused, and detail the evidence they have.

If a third party tells them that they suspect someone is being abused, they should listen sensitively and reassure them that they will do something. They will explain that they will need to report the suspicions to a senior officer.

If a person tells a member of staff of abuse they will listen sensitively but not ask for a detailed account. When talking to the person it is important that staff listen but do not ask leading questions, give opinions or strong reactions as these tend not to be helpful.

It is important to keep a written record and report suspicions to an appropriate senior officer.

3.6 Confidentiality

Some people may seek to tell staff, in confidence, that they have been abused. Statement users must understand that it is not possible to give people absolute guarantees of confidentiality because that could put staff in the untenable position of being unable to protect the person.

It is good practice to resist being drawn into secretive and collusive relationships with people. It is especially important for vulnerable people who may have been abused that the destructive element of secrecy is not reinforced. It is essential that a relationship is built up between a service user and staff such that service users feel that they can trust staff to do the best thing if they say they have suffered abuse.

Staff should not offer the person a guarantee of confidentiality, but reassure them that the information given will be used in their best interests and tell the person what may happen next.

3.7 Recording

The member of staff must write down what the person has said, including any signs and symptoms of abuse, as soon as possible. The report must be signed and dated and given to their senior officer. A log of any allegations will be maintained in the relevant service area and reported to the Housing and Communities Manager or the Head of Service.

If serious abuse has taken place, the Police and Warwickshire County Council will be informed. The following will help where staff are asked to record information:

- It is important that the allegation is recorded.

- If an allegation of abuse is made, always keep detailed notes of when and where this took place, with dates, times, decisions made, action taken and the people involved/present.
- This information may be required by the police or social services if they decide to investigate, or by the Council if an internal investigation is conducted.
- Do not destroy anything that might be evidence, especially if serious abuse (such as sexual assault) is alleged. This might involve you in advising the person involved not to change their clothes or shower before they have been seen by police.
- If social services are informed and decide to investigate formally, they will lead this process.
- The information available should be reviewed, and any decisions taken about how to protect the individual concerned, and proceed with the investigation. All those involved should be kept as informed as possible, without compromising the investigation.
- A plan will be adopted and implemented to ensure that the person alleging abuse is supported adequately throughout this time.

3.8 What if someone accuses you, as a member of staff, of abusing them?

- Staff should not get into a discussion about it. The conversation should be ended as quickly and politely as they can.
- Staff should inform a senior officer immediately of the allegations made against them.

3.9 Prevention of Abuse

Disclosure and Barring checks will be necessary for a number of posts. This enables staff to take steps to minimise the risk of such abuse taking place, by identifying who have previously been involved activities likely to place vulnerable adults at risk. For each of the posts subject to these Disclosure and Barring checks a risk assessment will be completed to establish and manage the level of risk presented by the roles responsibilities.

Line managers carrying out these risk assessments should familiarise themselves with this document and the need to be aware of possible **indicators** of abuse.

3.10 Indicators of Abuse

Abuse may be indicated through many physical, emotional, psychological or behavioural changes, some possible indicators of abuse are noted below:

Physical Abuse includes: hitting, pushing, unapproved restraint, physical intimidation. Indicators of physical abuse include:

- Injuries inconsistent with the account of how they happened
- Lack of explanation of how the injuries occurred
- Injuries inconsistent with the lifestyle of the victim
- Clusters of injuries
- History of unexplained falls/ minor injuries
- Subdued personality – especially in presence of potential abuser
- Over or under use of medication – excessive repeat prescriptions
- Malnutrition/ self neglect

Emotional Abuse includes intimidation by shouting/ screaming, humiliation, denial of choices or opinions...

Indicators of emotional abuse include:

- Air of silence around alleged perpetrator
- General lack of consideration for the needs of others

- Not being able / allowed to express their opinion
- Being locked in / out of accommodation
- Alteration of psychological state – e.g. withdrawn or fearful/ anxious
- Insomnia
- Low self esteem
- Change in appearance – including weight loss / gain
- Tearful, agitated, paranoid
- Resigned, confused, ambivalent about own needs and wants
- Refusal to integrate / join in

Sexual abuse includes: indecent exposure, inappropriate comments and suggestions, touching, penetration...

Indicators of sexual abuse include:

- Person appears withdrawn
- Overt sexual behaviour/ language
- Disturbed sleep
- Unexplained difficulties in sitting/ walking
- Self harm
- Unexplained behaviour changes
- Reluctance to be alone with certain individuals
- Urinary infections
- Injuries (bruising/ bleeding) on upper thighs/ around genital area
- Fear of physical assistance with self care/ other personal activities

Neglect includes not looking after someone's basic needs, denying food or warmth, failure to protect them from harm

Indicators of neglect include:

- Poor self care and personal hygiene
- Withholding of food, clothing
- Failing to meet religious or cultural needs

Financial/ material abuse includes: theft, use of money or personal possessions without permission...

Indicators of financial/ material abuse include:

- Sudden lack of money, especially after just receiving benefits/ wages
- Sudden inability to pay bills
- Reluctance to spend
- Disparity between income and living standards
- Unusual interest in person's finance by another individual

The presence or absence of indicators does not mean that abuse definitely does or does not exist. They are indicators only, and care must be taken not to rely upon them entirely. Each

case must be treated individually. However, staff may find that reference to these indicators helps them recognise, prevent, and respond appropriately to potential abuse.

4 Records

A report form will be completed for all reported issues and filed securely and confidentially. The records will be held for 6 years following the last action upon the report.

5 Statement Responsibility

All staff have individual responsibility to comply with this statement.

The Housing and Communities Manager will review the statement and procedures in consultation with Heads of Service, Human Resources and Health and Safety colleagues.

6 Statement Review Date

This statement will be reviewed for relevance and effectiveness every 12 months.

7 Further Reading

If additional information is required the Warwickshire County Council website have a number of documents and web pages devoted to Safeguarding Adults, accessed at:

www.warwickshire.gov.uk/safeguardingadults

The District Council operates (from Spring 2013) in accordance with the Warwickshire Victim Centred Anti-social Behaviour Model aimed at ensuring vulnerable victims are placed at the centre of efforts to tackle ASB.

Appendix:

Warwickshire County Council – 'Alerter's Guide'