

Reviewed and Updated December 2016.

Protection of Vulnerable Adults Policy – digital:works

Policy Statement/Background

Digital:works as an organisation does not necessarily have regular service users and works almost exclusively with other organisations and institutions such as schools, youth services and voluntary organisations. However, it is the responsibility of digital:works to protect individuals from any identified form of abuse and work collaboratively with other agencies to prevent abuse to vulnerable adults.

We will always endeavour to work only with organisations who have active and up to date Protection of Vulnerable Adults policies and will be responsible for the welfare of their service users.

All allegations or suspicions of abuse in the defined categories will be reported.

All such allegations, including anonymous reports, will be treated seriously.

Training and Briefing

Digital:works staff and volunteers will be briefed on the Adult Protection and Prevention of Abuse policy before undertaking any direct work with clients. All staff and volunteers will also be required to have an up to date DBS check before undertaking work with digital:works.

Overview

This policy has been produced to safeguard and promote the well being of our adult service users. Through the implementation of this policy, digital:works aims to protect all our service users from abuse (and takes into account the relevant legislation and issues of consent) and to support the abused person.

Digital:works has a duty to protect vulnerable adults from abuse, to recognise abuse and to take appropriate action.

The policy refers to abuse of a physical, sexual, social, emotional or financial nature.

The purpose of this policy is to prevent, identify, report and correct any risk to clients and staff arising from abuse or neglect wherever they may arise.

Statutory Requirements

There is an increased awareness, within statutory services, the voluntary sector and the public domain, of the incidence of abuse against vulnerable people.

There should be in place robust procedures for responding to suspicion or evidence of abuse or neglect and to ensure the safety and protection of clients, in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1988 and the Department of Health guidance 'No secret's.

Good Practice

This policy includes information on the choices clients have for reporting abuse and issues about confidentiality. The use of advocates to represent clients' views is encouraged.

Potentially a wide range of people may identify or be made aware of an incident of abuse. These people could range from a volunteer, worker or management committee member. It is important that they liaise with the outside agency that is working with the client and pass on their concerns as soon as possible to the Chair of the Management Committee, who will make decisions on what action is to be taken.

All staff and volunteers have a duty to share all concerns about possible abuse and report all factual evidence accurately and clearly. Where staff or volunteers have feelings and suspicions these should also be reported but a clear distinction made between these and factual evidence.

All allegations or suspicions of abuse in the defined categories should be reported. All such allegations, including anonymous reports, should be treated seriously. Allegations must not be ignored when they originate from clients who may be regarded as lacking in understanding.

There are occasions when it may be difficult to identify who is the abuser and who is being abused. There may be circumstances when a service user is abuse by another service user.

Issues concerning consent to medical treatment or examination, or the involvement of the police will need to take account of advice on consent. The main instance in which staff may need to report an incident against the wishes of the service user will be where the allegation concerns another member of staff. The service user will need an explanation behind taking such action, in addition to support, which they should expect when they have made an allegation.

Risk and Consent

It should be recognised that the individual's consent is important in deciding whether to, or how to, conduct an investigation. In a number of cases, such consent may be a decisive factor, but digital:works will also have to make a judgement about pressures on the individual and potential risks to others in the light of the accusations.



Identification of Abuse

Staff will be trained to recognise the signs of abuse, for example:

- Physical – e.g. bruising
- Behavioural – e.g. showing fear, crying or appearing upset with certain people or situations.

Involvement

All staff and volunteers need to follow the reporting procedure developed by digital:works, which includes:

- Verbal and written report to the Management Committee in the reporting procedure. This should give reasons why abuse is suspected and what actions have been taken and will be taken.
- Time of Incident – including: time of discussion, time of reporting incident.
- Where severe abuse has occurred, contact an investigative agency as soon as possible e.g. the Police.

Definition of Vulnerable Adult

- The term vulnerable adult can apply to people with a wide range of problems and situations. The term 'vulnerable adult' refers to any person aged 18 years and 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 themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or serious exploitation'. (Law Commission (1995 pg 207)

- ***The term 'significant harm' refers to:***

'Ill treatment (including sexual abuse and forms of treatment that are not physical); the impairment of, or an avoidable deterioration in, physical or mental health; and the impairment of physical, emotional, social or behavioural development.' (Law Commission (1995) pg 207)

Definition of Abuse

Abuse is the mistreatment of a vulnerable adult, usually by someone who is known to him or her. It can take any of the following forms and in many situations will involve a combination of these abusive acts.

Physical Abuse

This includes violence resulting in bodily harm or mental distress. It includes assault, restrictions of the freedom of movement and in its most extreme form murder. Pushing, shaking, pinching, slapping, and punching. Force-feeding and the forced use of alcohol or drugs may also come into this category.

Sexual Abuse

This involves the individual being subjected to any sexual activity which is not of their own volition, or which they do not understand.

Psychological Abuse

This includes the provoking of fear, of violence or isolation, active inducement to use alcohol and or drugs or abuse of prescribed medication, name calling and the over-riding of the consent, wishes or choice of the individual.

Financial Abuse

This involves a theft or inappropriate use of money or objects belonging to an individual. It includes the withholding of money or inappropriate or unsanctioned use of a persons money or property, usually to the disadvantage of the adult to whom it belongs.