

Adur Council for Voluntary Service Policy on safeguarding vulnerable adults

1. AIM OF THIS POLICY

The aim of this policy is to outline the practice and procedures for staff and volunteers in Adur CVS to contribute to preventing abuse of vulnerable adults, raise awareness and provide a clear framework for action when abuse is suspected.

The Policy is also designed to protect the vulnerable adult, the worker or the volunteer by recognising the risks involved in lone working.

The policy covers all staff and volunteers whose role involves regular contact with service users who may be considered vulnerable adults.

2. DEFINITION OF VULNERABLE

Vulnerable adults are defined (**under the Protection of Vulnerable Adults Regulations 2002**) as people aged 18 or over who are receiving any one the following services:

- Accommodation, nursing or personal care
- Medical care provided by the NHS or other independent agencies
- Social services
- Services provided for people with:
 - learning difficulties or a physical disability
 - physical or mental illness (temporary or chronic), including drug or alcohol addiction
 - reduced physical or mental capacity

and who are dependent on others or who need assistance to perform basic physical functions; who are severely impaired in their ability to communicate, or who are unable to protect themselves from assault, abuse or neglect.

2.1. DEFINITION OF ABUSE

“Abuse is the harming of an individual, usually by someone who is in a position of power, trust or authority over that individual. The harm may be physical, psychological or emotional or it may be directed at exploiting the vulnerability of the victim in more subtle ways (*for example, through denying access to people who can come to their aid, or through misuse or misappropriation of his or her financial resources*). The threat or use of punishment is also a form of abuse. In many cases, it is a criminal offence”

Centre for Policy on Ageing (1996)

3. RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1. Responsibilities of Adur CVS

- To ensure staff and volunteers are aware of and are adequately trained to implement the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy
- To notify the appropriate agencies if abuse is identified or suspected
- To support, and where possible, secure the safety of individuals and ensure that all referrals to services have full information regarding identified risk and vulnerability
- To work with West Sussex County Council Social Services Department and other partners to implement the policy

3.2. Responsibilities of Adur CVS staff and volunteers

- To be familiar with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy and procedures
- To take appropriate action in line with the policy
- To take appropriate action to promote the principles and good practice within Adur's voluntary sector

3.3. Statement of vulnerable adults' rights

In dealing with incidents of abuse or potential abuse, vulnerable adults have the following rights, which should be respected. The right to:

- live without fear of abuse from their families, carers, professionals, volunteers or service users
- be safe and receive adequate care and protection. This includes protection from all forms of violence including physical punishment, intimidation, belittling, lack of respect, harassment, and sexual assault
- be involved in decision-making that affects them, and to be supported in making their own decisions about how they wish to proceed in the event of abuse, and in whom they wish to confide. Their wishes should only be overridden if considered necessary in the interests of their own safety or the safety of others
- report abuse and be taken seriously, including the right to involve the police if a crime has been committed
- make informed choices about intimate relationships without being exposed to exploitation or sexual abuse
- be free from discrimination because of their ethnic origin, culture or religion, gender or sexuality, age, disability or mental health
- bring a formal complaint under ACVS complaints procedure if they are not satisfied with the initial investigation regarding abuse
- be kept informed at all stages of the process, should ACVS take action as a result of an allegation of abuse

3.4. Statement of staff members' and volunteers' rights

In dealing with incidents of abuse or potential abuse, staff members and volunteers have the following rights, which should be respected. The right to:

- Raise concern with their line manager if they feel vulnerable to allegations of abuse of a vulnerable adult
- Full information about any allegation of abuse made against them and be kept informed at all stages of the process should ECVS take action
- Report any incident or situation which they feel could result in an allegation of abuse against them or a colleague
- Support from managers and colleagues if an allegation of abuse involving a vulnerable adult is brought against them
- Request alternative working arrangements if the behaviour of a vulnerable adult causes concern, or during an investigation of alleged abuse
- Be accompanied by an independent advocate during interviews and meetings related to an allegation of abuse of a vulnerable adult

3.5. Support for those who report abuse

Adur CVS will ensure that anyone who makes a complaint, or expresses a concern regarding abuse of a vulnerable adult, whether they are an ACSV staff member, volunteer, service user, carer or a member of the general public:

- Will be taken seriously
- Their comments will be treated confidentially, but their concerns may be shared if they or others are at significant risk
- They will be given protection from the risk of reprisals or intimidation
- Staff members and volunteers will be given support and if necessary, afforded protection in line with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998

4. IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY

Adur CVS will take steps to implement its policy to protect vulnerable adults and will review the policy every three years to ensure that it reflects legal requirements and good practice developments. In particular, we will ensure that:

a. Recruitment of staff and volunteers

All applicants for employment with Adur CVS are asked to declare unspent convictions. They are also told that if the role will involve contact with vulnerable adults, a CRB check will be a condition of employment. When the work role will involve contact with vulnerable adults, employment application forms will include a requirement to disclose any allegations or criminal action of abuse against a vulnerable adult. Failure to disclose information will be regarded as gross misconduct

ACVS volunteers whose role will involve regular one-to-one contact with potentially vulnerable adults will be required to agree to a CRB check before beginning their role .

The action that is taken in response to declarations of convictions or allegations will be at the discretion of the Chief Officer in consultation with Trustees, bearing in mind the information, nature of the role, and the wider circumstances.

b. Training

During induction into Adur CVS, all appropriate staff and volunteers will be made aware of our policies and procedures, including the SVA policy

c. Management and supervision

It is the line manager's responsibility to clarify with the worker or volunteer their roles and responsibilities regarding their relationships with vulnerable adults with whom they may be in contact and any additional support or training needs they may have. Regular supervision for staff and volunteers will monitor the work and offer the opportunity to raise any issues.

d. Record keeping

Concerns raised about suspected abuse of a vulnerable adult, will be recorded and stored in accordance with confidentiality, Data Protection guidelines and similar good practice guidance, by the line manager. Records must include: the nature of the concern, date, time, any specific action taken or referral made. Where incidents or allegations involve investigative actions, the Chief Officer will store detailed records.

e. Allegations and investigations

All complaints, allegations or concerns should be made through the agreed Adur CVS complaints policy (except that where appropriate the complaint may be made on behalf of the vulnerable adult by a family member, carer, member of a voluntary group or other nominated advocate or representative) Where on investigation, a complaint or allegation is upheld against a staff member or volunteer, ECVS disciplinary procedures will apply. If a criminal act against a vulnerable person is suspected, it may be necessary to involve the police in taking further actions. At this stage, both the vulnerable adult and the other party will be informed and made fully aware of their rights and any support available to them.

5. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- The Police Act 1997 (Enhanced Criminal Record Certificates)
- Protection of Vulnerable Adults - Regulations 2002

**Adur Council for Voluntary Service
October 2008**