



## POLICY FOR THE PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE ADULTS

### 1. INTRODUCTION

1. **West View Advice & Resource Centre Limited** is committed to ensuring people's individual rights and freedoms are protected and promoted through eliminating neglect, abuse, exploitation, harassment and discrimination.
2. In order to achieve this, **West View Advice & Resource Centre Limited** has devised this policy to clarify acceptable and non-acceptable levels of care. Consequently, this policy explains what amounts to abuse and who it aims to protect.
3. This policy needs to be shared with and understood by all volunteers/staff/members joining the organisation.

### 2. STATEMENT OF INTENT

The abuse of vulnerable adults constitutes a clear infringement of their rights and freedoms as citizens. This policy aims to protect vulnerable adults who are at risk of all forms of abuse. We wish to ensure that vulnerable adults receive a safe, sound and supportive service by identifying, investigating, and preventing such abuse.

**West View Advice & Resource Centre Limited** is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all members of our community.

- It is every adult's right to live in safety and to be free from abuse or fear of abuse from others.
- It is every adult's right to live an independent life based on self-determination and personal choice.
- An independent life style may involve risk for vulnerable adults.
- When a situation arises in which a vulnerable adult reports abuse, or an adult is thought to be at risk of abuse, we will react quickly in a co-ordinated manner to help them to overcome these difficulties.
- We recognise that people are discriminated against on the basis of many factors including age, gender, disability, race, culture and sexuality.
- We are committed to working with vulnerable adults in a positive manner that values them as individuals.
- Moreover, the rights of carers should be considered.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

**"Vulnerable adult"** describes a person who is an adult (aged 18 or over), **and** who is in receipt of, or may be in need of, community care services because of frailty, learning difficulties, physical disability or mental health problems, **and** who is or may be

unable to take care of himself or herself or take steps to protect himself or herself from significant harm or exploitation.

**"Harm"** in relation to vulnerable adults refers to the concept of "significant harm" introduced in the Children Act 1989. "Harm" is understood to include not only ill treatment (including sexual abuse and forms of ill treatment which are not physical), 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.

**"Abuse"** is a violation of individual human and civil rights by any other person(s). This definition of abuse includes singular and repeated acts or mistakes. Abuse may occur when a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she had not consented, never could consent to, or whose consent was deemed invalid due to a lack of real understanding of the issue they were consenting to.

1. Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subject to it.
2. Physical abuse includes hitting, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate touching or punishment.
3. Sexual abuse includes rape and sexual assault or sexual acts of touching of intimate places to which the vulnerable adult has not or could not consent to and/or was pressurised into consenting to.
4. Psychological abuse includes emotional abuse, obvious or implied threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, compulsion, inappropriate language, verbal or racial abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive and/or spiritual networks, withdrawal of or failure to provide opportunities and choice including choice of gender of carer.
5. Financial or material abuse includes theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in relation to wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits. It also includes damage or threats of damage to property.
6. Discriminatory abuse includes racist opinions, sexist opinions, or opinions based on an individual's disability, or other forms of harassment, taunts or similar treatment.

**Neglect or acts of omission** include actions that are inappropriate whether intentionally or unintentionally. These may include ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational and leisure services, the withholding of the necessities of life such as medication, adequate and appropriate nutrition, information, clothing, comfort, and a safe and secure environment.

#### **Possible Signs of Neglect include:**

- An individual having low weight and appearing hungry.
- Soreness and chafing to areas of the skin owing to poor personal hygiene.
- Deterioration of the condition of the skin around pressure areas.
- Changes in behaviour and/or interaction with staff and other service users.
- Loss of interest in activities.

Some people may incur bruising relatively frequently because of conditions affecting their mobility, balance and co-ordination, etc. Such bruising is likely to be in areas such as their shins, knees, arms, hands, feet or elbows or, if the individual fell on their face, then one could expect a damaged forehead, nose or lip. However, there are warning signs which can indicate that an injury has occurred non-accidentally.

Physical characteristics of Non-accidental Injury include:

- Large red patches on the skin consistent with hand slapping.
- Marks made by an object.
- Pinch, scratch or grab marks.
- Grip marks which could indicate that a person has been inappropriately shaken, incorrectly restrained or forcibly moved.
- Bloodshot/bruised eyes.
- Bruising to breasts, buttocks, the lower abdomen, thighs, genitalia or the rectal areas could be an indicator of sexual abuse.

Sometimes bruising will be confined to grip marks where a person has been held so sexual abuse can take place.

#### **4. WHO CAN ABUSE?**

4.1 The abuser might be anyone including family members, professional staff, paid care workers, volunteers, fellow service users, or neighbours, friends and associates of the abused person.

#### **5. ADDRESSING AN ALLEGATION OF ABUSE**

1. Every member of **West View Advice & Resource Centre Limited** is responsible for recognising and reporting an allegation of abuse.
2. An allegation of abuse must be treated seriously regardless of the source of the information. It is important for everyone to immediately pass on information or concerns to:

The Manager or in their Absence a Board Director

Val Evens  
**West View Advice &  
Resource Centre Limited**  
The Community Centre  
Miers Avenue  
Hartlepool  
TS24 9JQ

4. The incident should be fully recorded and detailed with precise facts using an ***Incident Report Form***. The form should identify facts, not opinions, and give an objective and clear account of what is alleged to have happened. On completion the form should be signed and dated. The time the form was filled in should also be included.
5. Where a criminal offence is suspected, the Police must be informed immediately.
6. Families and carers of vulnerable adults should be informed of the incident immediately, if it is safe to do so.

7. It is important that service users are aware of the appropriate procedures at all times, and that they are enabled to express their own fears/concerns/points of view.
8. The victim should be referred to their GP or the Accident and Emergency Department of the nearest hospital for a medical examination.

### **Useful Contacts**

Hartlepool Police	01429 221151
Social Services Hartlepool	01429 266522
Duty Team	01429 523390 Adult / 284284 Child
Out of Hours Duty Team	08702 402994
Hartlepool Civic Centre	01429 266522
NHS Direct Advice Line	111

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**West View Advice & Resource Centre Limited**

**Incident Report Form**

Name of person concerned:

Address:

Age:

Any special factors:

Brief description of the alleged incident/ of why concern is being expressed:

Possible signs/symptoms suggesting the incident occurred:

To whom has the incident been reported (Manager, Social Services, Police, etc.):

Any other action taken: