

Safeguarding Service Users from Abuse or Harm Policy

Policy Statement

This policy is written to show how this care service protects its service users from abuse or harm in line with its legal requirements and best safeguarding practice guidance. It reflects in particular:

- Regulation 13: Safeguarding Service Users from Abuse and Improper Treatment of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014
- the statutory guidance for the Care Act 2014 (Chapter 14: Safeguarding), which describes the duties and responsibilities of local authorities and its partner organisations to protect adults with care and support needs from abuse, neglect and other sources of harm.

More specifically, it also reflects the [local safeguarding adults' authority] policies and procedures.

The service shares and is committed to the vision of the local safeguarding authority, which is to empower and protect adults who are at risk of abuse and neglect, as defined in legislation and statutory guidance.

The service understands that local safeguarding arrangements and developments follow a government strategy based on:

- empowerment — supporting people to make decisions and have a say in their care
- protection — support and representation for those in greatest need
- prevention — it is better to take action before harm occurs
- proportionality — safeguarding must be built on proportionality and a consideration of people's human rights
- partnership — local solutions through services working with their communities
- accountability — safeguarding practice and arrangements should be accountable and transparent.

The person(s) responsible for safeguarding in this care service, and who acts as a safeguarding champion is: _____.

Our service recognises that safeguarding involves a range of responses to different forms of abuse and potential sources of harm and the different contexts in which abuse occurs. Accordingly, this policy should be read and used in association with a suite of policies all designed to make sure that users are safe from abuse and the risks of their coming to harm are kept to the minimum and well managed.

Key related policies are:

- [Safeguarding Vulnerable Service Users from Financial Abuse, and Gifts and Legacies in Domiciliary Care](#)
- [Safeguarding from Bullying, Harassment, Exploitation and Other Forms of Social Abuse](#)
- [Safeguarding Service Users from Abuse and Harm: Rights, Risks and Restraint in Domiciliary Care \(England and Wales\)](#)
- Safeguarding Service Users from Abuse and Harm: Physical Interventions and Restraint
- [Keeping Staff Safe: Aggression Towards Staff and Appropriate Response](#)
- [Safeguarding: Persons Missing from Their Home](#)
- [Safeguarding Service Users Who Are at Significant Risk of Harm](#)
- [Safeguarding Service Users from the Harmful Actions and Behaviour of Peers and Social Contacts.](#)

[Add others that are relevant to the approach to safeguarding. For example, a domiciliary care agency providing services to children and families should have a separate Safeguarding Children Policy.]

The service develops its policies and procedures in line with local Safeguarding Adults Boards (SABs) recommendations and guidance, as found on its website together with relevant documentation for, eg raising alerts and staff training.

The local multi-agency Adults Safeguarding Board/Hub to which this care service relate as a partner organisation is: *[Add details including:]*

Title:

Address:

Telephone numbers:

Email:

Website:

Local Safeguarding Adults Service manager:

Key liason staff:

Policy aims

The central aim of this safeguarding policy is to set out for all relevant parties the:

- a. principles and values underlying this service's approach to the safeguarding of its service users
- b. ways in which the care service does this
- c. steps taken to avoid abuse/harm taking place
- d. actions taken to deal with abuse/harm if it occurs

- e. how it learns from incidents of abuse to prevent reoccurrence.

The agency works on the principle that it is the right of vulnerable service users to be kept safe from all forms of abuse/harm. Being and feeling safe will contribute a great deal to their wellbeing and quality of life. It therefore recognises that it must at all times protect its service users and identify and deal with specific instances of abuse/harm if they occur, following the required procedures and best practice guidance.

This service is always aiming for the very best quality of care and will not be satisfied with anything that falls short of this. It takes every possible action to prevent abuse/harm and associated risks and to deal with the issues as promptly and effectively as possible when they arise.

This agency seeks to work in line with local safeguarding adults' authority policies and procedures (or, in relation to services to children and families, to work in line with local safeguarding children authority policies and procedures) and guidance from the Care Quality Commission (CQC). It recognises the importance of government and national guidance and seeks to comply in all respects with current safeguarding legislation and regulations.

The agency recognises that service users who lack mental capacity are particularly exposed to abuse/harm and exploitation. It is accordingly mindful of the need to follow the principles and practice guidance that has accompanied the Mental Capacity Act 2005. These apply particularly to investigations of possible abuse/harm in which it is important to seek means of ascertaining the experiences and views of any victim or indeed alleged perpetrator who might lack capacity, eg through the services of independent advocates.

The service recognises that anyone who might need the help of an independent advocate when engaged in safeguarding enquiries and plans is entitled to one (as legislated for by the Care Act 2014). It will always support a person to have advocacy help where required in line with its (separate) advocacy policy.

Defining Abuse

The agency works to definitions of abuse that have been developed nationally and included in the Care Act 2014 statutory guidance and which will most likely have been adopted locally. It recognises that abuse/harm of care home service users may take many forms including:

- a. actual physical abuse/harm
- b. social abuse, including bullying, cyberbullying, harassment and personal exploitation
- c. social isolation/scapegoating/ostracism/stigmatisation
- d. financial or material exploitation/abuse/harm
- e. psychological or emotional abuse/harm
- f. sexual abuse/harm/exploitation
- g. neglect and acts of omission
- h. discriminatory abuse/harm
- i. self-harm, including self-neglect

- j. inhuman or degrading treatment
- k. inappropriate or excessive restraint and restrictions on movement and activities
- l. organisational abuse/harm.

It also recognises that a domiciliary care service could operate in contexts in which domestic abuse and violence occurs or could occur and where vulnerable people are victims of modern day slavery. In these circumstances, the agency is mindful that one or more of the above forms of abuse might be found and the appropriate actions will need to be taken in response.

Note:

Descriptions and examples of these different forms of abuse can be found in the [Safeguarding: Developing Sound Practice](#) topic. The scope of local authority statutory safeguarding responsibilities includes modern slavery and forced marriage as forms of abuse that would need to be addressed by the care service if it has evidence that any service user was experiencing these forms of abuse.

Identifying Abusers — Those Who Harm People at Risk

The agency accepts that abuse/harm can be committed by a range of possible people. It therefore accepts its responsibility to protect its service users from possible abuse from all sources, which include:

- a. the staff and management of the care service
- b. volunteers working in the care service
- c. visiting health and social care practitioners and other official visitors
- d. service users' relatives and friends
- e. people who have contact with service users while they are temporarily outside
- f. neighbours, people on their social network or living in the community at large.

The Role and Accountability of Staff in Relation to Abuse

The agency insists that all its staff have a responsibility to:

- a. provide service users with the best possible care
- b. desist from any abusive/harmful action in relation to service users
- c. report anything they witness which is or might be abusive/harmful
- d. co-operate in every possible way in any investigation into alleged abuse
- e. participate in training activities relating to abuse/harm and protection from harm.

The agency requires its managers to take responsibility for:

- a. developing the systems and structures within which it is possible to deliver the

best possible care

- b. encouraging a culture and ethos that is hostile to any sort of abuse/harm
- c. producing and regularly revising the policies and procedures to prevent and deal with abuse/harm
- d. operating personnel policies which identify, appropriately deal with and, if necessary, exclude from practice potential or actual abusers
- e. providing training for staff in all aspects of safeguarding, abuse/harm and protection
- f. investigating any evidence of abuse/harm speedily and sympathetically
- g. implementing improvements to procedures if an investigation into abuse/harm reveals deficiencies in the way in which the service operates
- h. collaborating with all other relevant agencies in combating abuse/harm and improving the safeguarding and protection of service users
- i. liaising with the relevant safeguarding adults/children authority teams and following their guidance and instructions where applicable, including the issues arising from multi-agency involvement
- j. notifying the Care Quality Commission of all instances of abuse, alleged or suspected abuse, using CQC's online reporting procedures.

Recruitment Practices

The agency takes great care in the recruitment of staff, carries out all possible checks on recruits to ensure that they are of a high standard and co-operates in all initiatives regarding the sharing of information on care workers who are found to be unsuitable to work with people at risk. The agency ensures that new employees employed in regulated activity have been checked against the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) criminal records and barred lists in line with the current requirements. (See the [Safe Staff Recruitment and Selection Policy](#).)

Preventing Abuse from Occurring

The agency is committed to taking all possible steps to prevent abuse or harm of service users from occurring, including:

- a. setting out and making widely known the procedures for responding to suspicions or evidence of abuse/harm
- b. operating personnel policies which ensure that all potential staff in regulated activity are rigorously checked, by the taking up of references and clearance through DBS criminal records and barred list checks, with equivalent checks for staff employed from overseas
- c. incorporating material relevant to abuse/harm into staff training at all levels
- d. maintaining vigilance concerning the possibility of abuse/harm of service users from whatever source
- e. encouraging among staff, service users and all other stakeholders a climate of openness and awareness that makes it possible to pass on concerns about behaviour that might be abusive or that might lead to abuse/harm

- f. maintaining robust procedures for regulating any contact that care workers need to have with service users' property, money or financial affairs
- g. communicating concerns to the local Adults' Safeguarding Board or, where applicable, Safeguarding Children Board
- h. helping service users as far as possible to avoid or control situations or relationships that would make them vulnerable to abuse/harm.

Identifying Actual or Possible Abuse

The agency aims to identify any instances of actual or possible abuse/harm involving our service users by all possible means including:

- a. fostering an open and trusting communication structure so that staff, service users and others feel able to discuss their concerns with someone authorised to take action
- b. ensuring that all staff and service users know whom they may turn to for advice and action if they become aware or suspect that abuse/harm is occurring
- c. encouraging staff to recognise that a commitment to the highest possible standards of care must, when necessary, overrule loyalty to colleagues individually or corporately
- d. making it clear to staff that failing to report incidents or suspicions of abuse is itself abusive and may lead to disciplinary or criminal proceedings
- e. operating systems of management, supervision, internal inspection and quality control that have the potential to reveal abuse/harm where it exists.

Procedures for when Abuse Has Occurred or is Alleged to Have Occurred

If abuse/harm is clearly occurring or is alleged to have occurred, the agency takes swift action to limit the damage to service users and to deal with the abuse, as follows.

Initial procedures

1. A staff member who witnesses a situation in which a service user is in actual or imminent danger must use their judgment as to the best way to stop what is happening without further damage to anyone involved including themselves, either by immediately intervening personally or by summoning help.
2. Any staff to whom actual or suspected abuse/harm is reported — usually the manager or a senior staff member — must immediately take any further action necessary to provide protection, support or additional care to a service user who has been harmed.
3. The manager will discuss with the known or suspected abused/harmed person what actions they consider to be appropriate. In some circumstances, the person might not wish any action to be taken or agree to a referral being made on their behalf (though this would not apply to children).
4. In such cases, the manager will consider whether there are reasons for

overriding the person's wishes, eg because it is in the public interest and to prevent further harm or because the harmed individual is a child. This could include seeking advice on the correct action to take on an anonymous basis from the Safeguarding Adults' Authority or Safeguarding Children Authority.

5. Any adult "victim" whom it is thought might lack mental capacity to give their consent for the abuse/harm to be reported will be assessed for their capacity to decide and a "best interests" decision will be taken in line with Mental Capacity Act procedures.
6. Once a person has consented to further action being taken, or for someone unable to give their consent, it has been decided that it is in their best interests to do so, the senior staff member or manager (or whoever has authority at the time) will then alert the local Safeguarding Adults' Authority or Safeguarding Children Authority and follow its procedures and guidance from that point on. This will usually involve a strategy meeting and an action plan to be implemented from the strategy meeting.
7. The specific procedures to be followed and referral forms are those available on the local SAB website.
8. In some instances, the registered manager/person responsible for safeguarding might need to report the matter directly to the police and take guidance from them on the measures to be taken.
9. The registered manager must take steps to ensure that there is no further risk of the victim being abused/harmed by the alleged or suspected perpetrator.
10. The registered manager must ensure that the needs of the alleged victim of the abuse/harm for any special or additional care, support or protection or for checks on health or wellbeing are met at the outset and subsequently throughout the proceedings.
11. If the alleged abuser is a staff member and there is sufficient evidence that abuse/harm has or might have occurred, the manager will suspend the person from duty pending the outcome of a disciplinary investigation. The manager will receive guidance on the steps to be taken following the local safeguarding adults/children authority strategy meeting, which will be held following the reporting of the abuse or suspected abuse/harm.
12. If the evidence is insufficiently strong to warrant suspension, the staff member against whom the allegation has been made will be instructed not to have further unsupervised contact with any service users until the matter is resolved.
13. However, it should be noted that in the event of a referral being made to the police because a criminal offence might have been committed the police investigation will take precedence and no action should be taken that might jeopardise its enquiries, which might contaminate the evidence it is seeking and collecting.

Investigating alleged abuse

Investigations are based on a person-centred approach in which the wellbeing of the victim or alleged victim is the central focus of all the activities involved. In many cases, an investigation will be carried out or led by a member of an external agency in line with the action plan determined by the initial strategy meeting convened by the local SAB or Safeguarding Children Authority. If a staff member is expected to carry out an investigation, the following guidance should be followed.

1. An appointed investigating officer will usually consult the person who may have been abused/harmed to hear their account of what has occurred and their views about what action should be taken, involving the service user's relatives, friends or representatives if that is appropriate and in line with the wishes of the service user.
2. The investigating officer is expected to take into account in his or her conducting of the investigation:
 - a. the fears and sensitivity of the abused/harmed person
 - b. any risks of intimidation or reprisals
 - c. the need to protect and support witnesses
 - d. any confidentiality or data protection issues
 - e. the possible involvement of other agencies, including the police, local safeguarding team and the CQC
 - f. the obligation to keep the abused/harmed person and in specific instances the alleged perpetrator informed on the progress of the investigation.
3. The investigating officer will assure the person who may have been abused/harmed that they will be taken seriously, that the comments will as far as possible be treated confidentially, that they will be protected from reprisals and intimidation, and that they will be kept informed of actions taken and of the outcome.
4. The investigating officer will consider if the service user needs independent help or representation, including the services of an independent advocate, in presenting their evidence and, in conjunction with the registered manager if necessary, will arrange for the appropriate help or support to be made available.
5. If the abused/harmed person expressly states a wish that no further action should be taken, the investigating officer will consider whether:
 - a. a danger to others exists from not investigating further
 - b. in the light of that assessment it is possible to follow the person's wishes
 - c. in any case precautionary measures should be taken to protect others from the possibility of abuse from the same source.

The person will be informed of what is to happen.

6. If it is decided that an investigation should proceed, the investigating officer will, as discreetly and confidentially as possible, look into all aspects of the situation.
7. The investigation will include interviewing the staff involved in the incident or circumstances up to that point, hearing and assessing evidence from any others who might be in a position to supply information, exploring every other possible source of evidence, maintaining appropriate contact with any other agencies involved, and if necessary seeking expert advice on any technical aspects of the situation which are outside the knowledge or expertise available within the organisation.
8. Any staff from whom evidence is taken will be assured that they will be dealt

with in a fair and equitable manner and informed of their employment, legal and procedural rights.

9. The alleged victim of the abuse/harm, and where appropriate their relatives, friends or representatives, will at all times be kept as fully informed as possible of what is happening regarding the suspected abuse/harm.
10. The investigation will be carried out as quickly as possible and the findings presented to the local safeguarding adults/children strategy group, which will then decide what further action to take, eg that a safeguarding plan should be developed and implemented.

Following the investigation

1. If it seems from the investigation that on the balance of probabilities abuse/harm did indeed take place, the manager will, if the abuser is a staff member, initiate and carry through proceedings according to the agency's disciplinary policy or, if the abuser is not a member of staff, take action to involve other responsible bodies.
2. If abuse/harm is proved against a care staff member, the manager will initiate appropriate action, which most likely will be dismissal and referral to the DBS to prevent them from being employed further in regulated activity.
3. Other employment sanctions could apply depending on whether there might have been mitigating or extenuating circumstances. In some cases, retraining could be appropriate.
4. The service user or representatives will be informed of the outcome of the investigation and any further action and will be consulted about whether any redress or apology would be appropriate and helpful to them in line with the service's duty of candour.
5. The manager will take appropriate steps to inform the DBS for possible inclusion of the person on its barring lists as someone who is unsuitable to work again in regulated activity with at risk adults and/or children.
6. At all stages of the process, a careful record will be kept of all actions taken, paying particular attention to the sensitivity of the abused/harmed person.
7. Where relevant to the resolution of the situation, a plan will be drawn up to address the issues with the alleged or known perpetrator(s), particularly if they will be continuing to form part of the victim's life, directly or indirectly. (See also the policies on: [Safeguarding from Bullying, Harassment, Exploitation and Other Forms of Social Abuse](#), and [Safeguarding Service Users from the Harmful Actions and Behaviour of Peers and Social Contacts](#).)

Planning further action

At the end of an incident involving possible or actual abuse/harm, managers should review what has happened with a view to assessing whether the agency or its management has been in any way culpable, ineffective or negligent, learning lessons for the way the agency should operate in the future, and passing on any appropriate information to other agencies.

If necessary, the agency's policies, procedures and training arrangements should be modified in response to any material that has emerged from the incident or the investigation. The agency might carry this out with advice and guidance from the local Safeguarding Adults' Authority or Safeguarding Children Authority.

Contacts and sources of assistance

List here the names and contact details of the following (which might need to be adapted to local requirements).

1. The local Adults' Safeguarding Authority (including emergency contact telephone numbers)
2. The Care Quality Commission
3. The police (including Adult Protection Team details if known)
4. Advocacy and victim support services which might be needed
5. Any medical practitioners who might be needed
6. Other relevant statutory/voluntary organisations that could be of help

Record Keeping

The agency ensures that all details associated with allegations of abuse/harm are recorded clearly and accurately. The records are kept securely and the agency's rules on confidentiality are carefully followed. Reports are made as required to the CQC and other safeguarding agencies involved.

Referrals to DBS Barred Lists

The agency always complies with its legal requirement to refer a care worker, where it has evidence that the staff member in question has been guilty of misconduct by harming or putting at risk of harm a service user or other person at risk, during the course of their work, to the DBS barred lists following the procedures issued by the DBS.

Related Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the several other policies of the agency that relate to safeguarding of service users. They include the policies on complaints, physical restraint, the management of service users' money and financial affairs, recruitment, induction, staff development and training, staff supervision and importantly whistleblowing. The policy on mental capacity will also be relevant in some circumstances.

Training

All staff receive training in recognising abuse or harm and carrying out their responsibilities under this policy as part of their induction programme and further training in line with their training needs as identified from their supervision and appraisals and policy developments and changes. The training is updated on a regular scheduled basis at least annually.

All training, including induction training, is in line with the guidance and standards produced by the relevant social and healthcare workforce development organisations and the local safeguarding authority training policies and guidance.

Examples of a Safeguarding Training Strategy (to be amended as required by individual circumstances and local requirements).

1. Staff new to care work must achieve Standard 10: Safeguarding Adults and Standard 11: Safeguarding Children to achieve the Care Certificate. Other new staff will have a baseline training level, which is at least the equivalent of the Care Certificate Standards 10 and 11 from previous or current induction training.
2. All staff receive training to ensure that they are familiar with local Safeguarding Adults' Boards policies and procedures.
3. All staff following induction are expected to proceed to at least a Foundation Level 2 award and a Multi-agency (Level 3) training in safeguarding.
4. Managers and staff responsible for safeguarding are required to receive Specialist Safeguarding Training (Level 4) and, where appropriate, to their roles and responsibilities, achieve the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Leaders Development Programme (Level 5).

Signed: B A Williams

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