

St. Joseph's House for Adult Deaf and Deafblind.

Protection of Vulnerable Adults

Practice Guidance for Staff

September 2008

Practice Guidance for all Staff

This guidance is for all staff and volunteers working in St. Joseph's House who come into contact with vulnerable adults.

What does a 'Vulnerable Adult' mean?

A 'vulnerable adult' is defined as any person aged 18 or over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

'Community Care Services' is defined as all care services provided in any setting or context.

- The Term 'Vulnerable Adult' may include:
- People with a learning disability
- People with a physical disability
- People with a sensory impairment
- People with mental ill health
- People with dementia
- People who are frail due to age or other factors
- People with acquired brain injury
- People with a drug or alcohol problem
- People with certain types of physical illness

What is meant by 'Abuse'

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. The main types of abuse are:

- **Physical abuse:** such as hitting, slapping, rough handling, misuse of medication, misuse of restraint.
- **Sexual abuse:** making someone carry out a sexual act they have not or cannot consent to.
- **Psychological abuse:** such as use of threats, humiliation, name calling.
- **Financial or material abuse:** such as theft of money/possessions, misuse of someone's benefits, denying someone access to their money.
- **Neglect and acts of omission:** such as not meeting a person's basic care needs.
- **Discriminatory abuse:** Any form of abuse based on discrimination because of a person's race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation etc.
- **Institutional abuse:** abuse or poor practice throughout an organisation. Abuse may be perpetrated as the result of deliberate intent, negligence or ignorance.

Who may be the Abuser?

Vulnerable adults may be abused by anyone including:

- Relatives and family members
- Professional staff, managers and paid care workers
- Volunteers
- Other service users
- Neighbours
- Friends and associates
- People who deliberately exploit vulnerable people and strangers

In what Circumstances may Abuse occur?

Abuse can take place anywhere including when a vulnerable adult:

- Lives alone
- Lives with a relative
- Lives or is staying in a nursing or residential home
- Attends a day care establishment
- Is admitted to hospital
- Is in a custodial situation
- Is out in a public place

Be Vigilant

- If you have any concerns discuss them with your line manager.
- You may see or hear something happen.
- A vulnerable adult may disclose an allegation to you.
- A colleague, family member or somebody else may tell you something.
- You may notice injuries or physical signs that cause you concern.
- You may notice either the victim or perpetrator behaving in a certain way that alerts you that something may be wrong.

Signs of Possible Abuse

The following is meant as guide and is not intended to be exhaustive.

- **Physical:** Fractures, bruising, burns, pain, marks, recoiling from contact.
- **Sexual:** Genital irritation, S.T.I's, offensive language, recoiling contact, persistent sexually inappropriate behaviour.
- **Psychological:** Withdrawn, overly compliant, compulsive behaviour, reduction in skills.
- **Financial:** Insufficient funds, over protection over money/possessions, unpaid bills/debts, lack of amenities.
- **Neglect:** Pain/discomfort, overly hungry/thirsty, unkempt, deterioration in health, behaviour changes.
- **Discriminatory Abuse:** rejection of services, seen to be not conforming or being uncooperative, unexplained injuries/falls.
- **Institutional Abuse:** lack of personal clothing/possessions, no care plan, frequent hospital admissions.

What should you do if you suspect Abuse?

DO

- Remain calm
- Ensure that no one is in immediate danger
- Call for emergency services if urgent medical/Garda help required
- Report your concerns to your manager without delay
- Record all the facts

DON'T

- Promise to keep secrets
- Be judgmental or over react
- Challenge the alleged abuser
- Attempt to investigate yourself
- Do anything that could disturb any possible evidence, do not tidy up or encourage the person to wash/bathe
- Discourage anyone from reporting concerns
- Leave details of your concerns on a voicemail

CIDP Policies and Procedures

The CIDP has developed a set of policies and procedures based on the Constitution and the National Quality Standards for Residential Settings for Older People in Ireland. These include:

- The Protection of Vulnerable Adults Framework
- The Protection of Vulnerable Adults Policy
- The Protection of Vulnerable Adults Reporting and Investigation Procedures
- Whistleblowing Policy

These are all available on CIDP's website at www.cidp.ie

Remember

The main focus of the Framework and Policies is about ensuring people using our services are safe, protected and free from abuse and neglect. For staff working in CIDP services there are also a number of documents concerned with staff welfare and rights. These include:

- The Trust in Care Policy
- The Dignity at Work Policy for the Health Services
- CIDP Employment Policies and Procedures Manual