

VULNERABLE ADULTS' POLICY & PROCEDURES

WEST AREA PROJECT

For adults with learning difficulties

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1 Our commitment to safeguarding

The West Area Project (WAP) works with adults with care needs and their carers. It has a responsibility to protect people's health, wellbeing, and human rights by enabling our members to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.

However, WAP also recognises that the vulnerable adults they work with experience widespread health inequalities which they believe it is their duty to tackle through promoting healthy eating and encouraging activities which enhance a person's mental and physical health.

2 The project safeguarding lead and updating this policy.

The project safeguarding lead is the WAP Manager, Yvonne Pearson, who can be reached on **0115 905 6060** or wapnottm@hotmail.co.uk. If the Manager is on leave or unable the Day Centre Manager Tez McDowall can be contacted on 07944 051796

If there are any Safeguarding issues concerning the WAP Manager people should contact the Safeguarding lead on the Board of Trustees – Russell Jays on 07718 603641 or Russell.jays@gmail.com

The West Area Project is committed to reviewing this policy annually at the AGM. During the year any safeguarding incidents, general incidents and accidents which arise at WAP will be reviewed (anonymously) at the following Board meeting with a view to learning lessons and/or revising our policy. This policy was revised and approved at WAP Board meeting of 16/1/25

3 Who does this policy cover?

West Area Project is involved in providing services for adults with learning disabilities and autism who are defined as 'vulnerable adults.'

This policy is based on The Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998, 'No Secrets' (Department of Health, 2000), the Equality Act 2010 and The Care Act (2014) with accompanying guidance.

The charity has obligations to strive to protect vulnerable adults who it may believe to be abused or at risk of abuse or neglect.

The policy and procedures have been developed to assist staff, trainees, students on placement and volunteers in acting on reported or suspected abuse.

4 Definition of a vulnerable adult

The adult safeguarding duties apply to a person over 18, who:

- has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and;
- Is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
- as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of, abuse or neglect.

No Secrets defines abuse as:

'Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons.'

5 What is abuse and neglect?

The Care Act 2014 provides the following categories of abuse and neglect:

- **Physical abuse**, including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions.
- **Domestic violence** includes psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse by partners or family members. This also includes so called 'honour-based' violence; female genital mutilation and forced marriage.
- **Sexual abuse**, including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts such as intimate touching to which the vulnerable adult has not consented, or could not consent or was pressured into consenting.

Sexual Exploitation comes under sexual abuse as it is the abuse of a position of vulnerability, power or trust for sexual purposes. This can include threats or profiting financially, socially or politically from sexual exploitation of another.

- **Psychological abuse**, including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.
- **Financial or material abuse**, including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits;.
- **Modern slavery** such as human trafficking, forced labour, domestic servitude, sexual exploitation or debt bondage where the person is forced to pay off debts that realistically they never will be able to.
- **Discriminatory abuse**, including racist, sexist, that based on a person's disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment. Or unusual treatment based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race religion and belief, sex or sexual orientation (known as protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010
- **Institutional or organisational abuse** is the failure of an organisation to provide appropriate person centre services or care.
- **Neglect and acts of omission by others**, including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medical care, adequate nourishment and heating.

- **Self neglect** where an individual neglects their own needs such as hygiene, clothing or feeding or failure to look after medical conditions.

6 What to do as soon as concerns come to light:

It is vital that anyone who suspects a vulnerable adult is being neglected or abused, or the person reports abuse, that the volunteer/worker ensures that person is taken to a **place of safety** which will normally be a room in the project (such as the office.)

Once the person is safe and settled, the worker/volunteer should calmly and sensitively find out about what those concerns may be. It is important that the worker/volunteer does not probe at depth or try to 'investigate', or 'take evidence'

Their only role, at this stage, is to establish that there is potential safeguarding issue and any immediate health issues are managed.

Once these basic details have been received, they should be recorded and immediately discussed with the Project Manager/Safeguarding lead (or the deputy acting in their place) who will either guide them through the next steps or take further action.

Safeguarding Principles: Act and record

There should always be the opportunity to discuss welfare concerns with and seek advice from colleagues, managers and other agencies, but:

- Never delay emergency action to protect a vulnerable adult.
- Always record in writing concerns about a vulnerable adult's welfare, whether further action is taken or not. This will be recorded in the daily logging notes along with any completed incident forms.
- As an organisation, the West Area project welcomes the fact that people and lifestyles are diverse and does not make judgements about the acceptability or otherwise of lifestyles. However, it is important that this philosophy does not stand in the way of the organisation's responsibility to protect vulnerable people from harm.

Duties of the Safeguarding lead

The Safeguarding lead will explain their role to the vulnerable adult along with their duty to disclose any suspected or actual abuse to the authorities. They will try to establish what the service users wishes are and what outcome they are seeking but may need to reinforce to them that they had a statutory duty to report.

At the close of discussion, the Safeguarding lead will clearly explain to the member, in language they can understand what course of action which will be taken and when.

This action may involve seeking advice from the Nottingham City Local Authority safeguarding lead on **0115 876 3330** or raising the matter with involved family/carers, care staff or support workers to find out their perspective.

Social services departments have been designated as the lead agencies with responsibility for co-ordinating a response to allegations or concerns of abuse.

Following any action, all workers have the responsibility of ensuring that the daily logging notes are kept updated.

It is our duty to report concerns

All staff, trainees, /students and volunteers at the West Area Project have a responsibility to be aware and alert to signs that all is not well with a vulnerable person.

They have a duty to report concerns urgently and without delay.

However, they are not responsible for diagnosing, investigating, or providing a therapeutic response to abuse. In addition, not all concerns relate to abuse, there may well be other explanations. It is important to keep an open mind and consider what is known about the vulnerable person and their circumstances. No action should be taken without discussion with the Project Manager/Safeguarding lead.

As an organisation, the West Area project welcomes the fact that people and lifestyles are diverse and does not make judgements about the acceptability or otherwise of lifestyles. However, it is important that this philosophy does not stand in the way of the organisation's responsibility to protect vulnerable people from harm.

Support to Staff/Trainees/Placement students and Volunteers

The West Area Project also has a duty to support its staff /trainees/students and volunteers involved in any safeguarding situations. If the social services department need further involvement from staff or volunteers following a report of abuse, the Project Manager will discuss with the social services department the nature of their needs and how they might be met.

Allegation of abuse made about or by a staff Member/trainee/student or volunteer

It will undoubtedly be very hard for a worker to report a concern about a colleague to the Project Manager but, as with all the other difficulties people will come across, the safety and protection of a vulnerable person must be the priority in any action that is made.

Workers paid or unpaid may become subject to abuse allegations. The Charity will offer support in these circumstances, but the social services department will always be assisted in their investigation. There is no place in WAP for workers/students and volunteers who abuse our members, or each other and our disciplinary procedure will always be implemented.

In cases where the concern relates to the behaviour of the Project Manager, the workers must approach the Safeguarding lead on the Board.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is central to the work of West Area Project. All staff and volunteers will be trained about confidentiality in their induction and will be expected to abide by this policy.

7 **Training and vetting for staff, volunteers and students.**

All staff, volunteers and students will be given an induction which involves training in such matters as safeguarding, confidentiality, equality and the aims and objectives of the WAP service.

Any staff /trainees/students or volunteers who are working at WAP will be vetted through the taking of references and where practical, DBS checks.

At West Area Project there are very few situations where a worker/volunteer or student is working alone except in the case of community outreach work which is only undertaken by the project manager.

Most of our day centre work takes place in groups, which is within sight of other workers. Although at WAP we do not undertake 'regulated activities' (which are regulated under the CQC), we will always check references and ask for Criminal Record Bureau checks.

This policy was revised and approved at WAP Board meeting 16/1/25