

Working with Vulnerable Adults policy and practice

This policy is to be used in conjunction with The Making of Mashamshire Safeguarding Policy

Introduction

The Making of Mashamshire recognises that the protection and safety of vulnerable adults is everyone's responsibility. A vulnerable adult based on the Law Commission's definition is a person who:

'is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself against significant harm or exploitation'.

In clarifying this further, The Making of Mashamshire adopts the Department of Health's guidance that an 'adult' includes a person aged 18 years and over and people with learning difficulties, mental health problems, older people and people with a disability or impairment particularly when their situation is complicated by additional factors, such as physical frailty or chronic illness, sensory impairment, challenging behaviour, drug or alcohol problems, social or emotional problems, poverty or homelessness.

This policy, the related MOM policies (including Safeguarding) and the Code of Good Practice which follow, establishes the roles and responsibilities of paid or unpaid staff in relation to the protection of any vulnerable adults, with whom their work brings them into contact.

The welfare of the vulnerable adult is the paramount consideration. The approach The Making of Mashamshire will take is based on, and reflects, the principles of relevant legislation and guidance relating to the protection of vulnerable adults.

The Trustees

As outline in the Safeguarding Policy, the Trustees are responsible for the protection of vulnerable adults within The Making of Mashamshire. This will include ensuring the implementation and monitoring of this policy.

In relation to recruitment and selection of paid and unpaid staff who work with vulnerable adults, this will include an application form that states that criminal disclosures are to be made regardless of when they were committed or whether they were of major or minor consequence including spent convictions under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, and references taken which refer to candidates' suitability to work/have contact with vulnerable adults.

It is also the responsibility of the Trustees of The Making of Mashamshire, to ensure that all staff (paid and unpaid) for whom they are responsible are aware of and understand the importance of implementing this and related MOM policy and the Code of Good Practice

General Responsibilities

If vulnerable adults are to be truly protected it is essential that everyone working with vulnerable adults contributes to the work of those with direct responsibility for the protection of vulnerable adults. The procedures that follow recognise and are consistent with that objective and have been designed to complement Local Authority procedures. Remember that the overwhelming majority of vulnerable adults, whom you will come into contact with through your work, are likely to experience a perfectly safe and happy life.

Principles

It is recognised as well, that a percentage of the vulnerable adults that you may come into contact with will, through the nature of their experiences, demonstrate behaviours that might be indicators of abuse. However, many factors associated with disadvantage can also result in a vulnerable adult's behaviour being affected, thereby making the identification of abuse even more difficult. You are not expected to suddenly become expert in the protection of vulnerable adults nor are you expected to investigate abuse. You are, however, expected to be sensible, alert and to comply with these procedures.

In operating this policy, staff and volunteers must also be aware that, in order to protect vulnerable adults, in some circumstances it may well be necessary to share what might normally be regarded as confidential information.

The following principles will be adhered to:

- Information will only be shared on a need to know basis.
- Information will only be shared when it is in the best interests of the service users.
- Confidentiality must not be confused with secrecy.
- Informed consent should be obtained but if this is not possible and vulnerable adults are at risk it may be necessary to override it.

Remember, the first priority should always be to ensure the safety and protection of vulnerable adults and that it is the responsibility of all staff and volunteers to act on any suspicion or evidence of abuse or neglect in the way set out in this and related MOM Policy and Code of Good Practice

Outline of Procedures

More detail to be found in Safeguarding Policy

PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED BY STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS IF YOU THINK A VULNERABLE ADULT MAY BE AT RISK OF ABUSE, IS BEING, OR HAS BEEN, ABUSED EITHER BY:

- **a member of staff**
- **a member of their family**
- **any other person, including another vulnerable adult**

Staff or volunteers, who for any reason become concerned that a vulnerable adult may be at risk of abuse, is being, or has been abused must immediately report that concern to the Activity Lead or direct to the Project Manager who will instigate the MOM Safeguarding procedures as outlined in the Safeguarding Policy.

They will discuss your concerns with you to clarify their cause and obtain all the known relevant information. Contact will then be made with the North Yorkshire County Council Adult Social Care Team) stating that it concerns vulnerable adult protection.

Should the concern relate to the Project Manager you should contact the Chair of Trustees, or if to the Chair you should contact another Trustee and the Project Manager.

PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED IF A VULNERABLE ADULT TELLS YOU THAT THEY ARE BEING, OR HAVE BEEN, ABUSED:

Vulnerable adults will occasionally disclose abuse to an individual they have come to feel they can trust. This happens for many reasons but the important thing to remember is that if they do tell you, they are doing so in the hope that you will act to stop it happening, even if they ask you not to do anything with the information.

Vulnerable adults may feel as if they are betraying someone they are close to and whom they love. It is not unusual for a vulnerable adult to love the abuser but want the abuse to stop, especially when that person is a family member or carer. Equally, it may be someone they fear e.g, a person whom they perceive to be able to influence decisions concerning their future. Either way, it takes great courage for a vulnerable adult to talk about abuse and your response can be crucial.

It is important to remember too, that it can be more difficult for some vulnerable adults to tell than for others. Vulnerable adults who have experienced prejudice and discrimination through racism may well believe that people from other ethnic groups or backgrounds don't really care about them. They may have little reason

to trust those they see as authority figures and may wonder whether you will be any different.

Vulnerable adults with a disability will have to overcome barriers before disclosing abuse. They may well rely on the abuser for their daily care and have no knowledge of alternative sources.

If a vulnerable adult discloses abuse to you in the course of your work it is important to react appropriately.

Do:

Do NOT:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remain calm and receptive• Listen without interrupting• Only ask questions of clarification if you are unclear what the vulnerable adult is saying• Make it clear you take them seriously• Acknowledge their courage in telling you• Tell them they are not responsible for the abuse• Check what they have said to you with them to ensure your understanding is right <p>Let them know you will do what you can to help them and, where possible, get their consent before you inform your Manager and other services who can help (eg NYCC). **Disclosure from a vulnerable adult must be reported to your manager with or without consent.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allow your shock or distaste to show• Probe for more information/ask other questions• Make assumptions/judgements or speculate• 'Defame' anyone• Make negative comments about the alleged abuser or anyone• Make promises you cannot keep• Agree to keep the information secret
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It is essential that everything possible is done to protect the vulnerable adults who place their trust in us. If a vulnerable adult tells you that they are being, or have been, abused you must:

1. make an immediate record of what the vulnerable adult has said, using their own words
2. follow the instructions for reporting as set out in the MOM Safeguarding Procedure (contact Project Manager)
3. Tell them that you will have to inform your Manager and that if appropriate, the NYCC Adult Social Care team will also have to be informed.

Vulnerable Adults Code of Good Practice

This Code has been developed to provide you with advice that not only will help to protect vulnerable adults, but will also help you and your colleagues identify any practices which could be mistakenly interpreted and perhaps lead to false allegations of abuse. It is important that at all times firm appropriate boundaries must be adhered to. Politeness and helpfulness in your volunteer capacity is a good thing, over familiarity is not.

Good practice will also protect The Making of Mashamshire through reducing the possibility of anyone using their role to gain access to vulnerable adults, in order to abuse.

If in doubt, consider how an action or activity may be perceived as opposed to how it is intended.

Wherever possible, you should be guided by the following advice:-

- don't engage in or allow any sexually provocative games involving or observed by vulnerable adults, whether based on talking or touching
- never make suggestive remarks or discriminatory comments to a vulnerable adult
- don't engage in or tolerate any bullying of a vulnerable adult, either by vulnerable adults or other people
- don't engage in or tolerate inappropriate physical activity involving vulnerable adults
- respect all vulnerable adults, regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, disability or sexual identity
- never trivialise abuse
- never let allegations by a vulnerable adult go unreported, including any made against you

The Making of Mashamshire recognises that our activities can involve occasional one to one contact with vulnerable adults as an Oral Interviewer. It is particularly relevant to be always mindful of appropriate boundaries and follow the MOM Oral Interview guidelines and training you will have received.