

October 2010

PEOPLE AND WORK UNIT

WORKING WITH VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY

(this document forms part of the People and Work Unit Employment and project pack)

STATEMENT OF GENERAL POLICY

- The People and Work Unit promotes best practice throughout its organisation and recognises that the protection of vulnerable adults is the responsibility of everyone involved in the Unit's work, including volunteers and learners
- The aim of this policy is to contribute to the prevention of abuse of vulnerable adults through raising the awareness of staff, volunteers and learners and to provide a clear framework for action when abuse is suspected
- This policy recognises the need to protect the vulnerable adult and the worker, acknowledging the risks involved in lone working
- The welfare of the vulnerable adult, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religious belief or sexual orientation, is the paramount consideration.

THE VULNERABLE ADULT

Definition

- A vulnerable adult (aged over 18) is defined as: someone 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'*. Law Commission Report (1997)

ABUSE

Definition

- *'Abuse is the harming of another individual, usually by someone who is in a position of power, trust or authority over that individual. The harm may be physical, psychological or emotional or it may be directed at exploiting the vulnerability of the victim in more subtle ways (for example, through denying access to people who can come to the aid of the victim, or through misuse or misappropriation of his or her financial resources). The threat or use of punishment is also a form of abuse... in many cases it is a criminal offence'*. Centre for Policy on Ageing (1996)

Multiple forms of abuse can occur to one person or to more than one person at a time, so it is essential to look beyond any single incident for potential patterns of abuse and harm. Abuse can occur as a result of deliberate intent and targeting, or negligence and/or ignorance.

PROCEDURES

- The selection process for staff, volunteers and learners will involve an enhanced criminal record check for all those who may work with vulnerable groups
- All staff and volunteers must declare any existing or subsequent convictions. Failure to do so will be regarded as gross misconduct
- Staff and volunteers will be made aware of the vulnerable adult protection policy and be adequately trained in recognising types of abuse and the appropriate procedures to follow. Additional training and guidance will be provided in identifying and eliminating any practices which could be mistakenly interpreted and perhaps lead to a false allegation of abuse
- Staff and volunteers will be expected to develop their listening skills and keep appropriate records
- Everyone working with vulnerable adults should contribute to the work of those who have direct responsibility for them, should support these individuals and ensure that all referrals to relevant services provide full information as to vulnerability and risk
- Everyone should be aware that, in order to protect vulnerable adults, in some circumstances it will be necessary to share what normally might be deemed confidential information, so;
 - a. information should be shared only on a need to know basis
 - b. information will be shared only when it is in the best interests of the vulnerable adult
 - c. confidentiality must not be confused with secrecy
 - d. informed consent should be obtained but if this is not possible and other vulnerable adults are at risk it may be necessary to override it
- It is the responsibility of everyone to act on any suspicion or evidence of abuse or neglect.

SUPPORT FOR THOSE WHO REPORT ABUSE

Staff, volunteers and learners who report abuse or express concern should know that:

- they will be taken seriously
- their concerns will be treated confidentially, but may be shared with others if there seems to be a significant risk (see 4 above)
- there will be no intimidation or reprisal
- they will be afforded protection if necessary in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998

RIGHTS OF THE VULNERABLE ADULT

- To be aware of this policy
- To have alleged incidents recognised and taken seriously
- To receive respect and fairness throughout
- To be involved in the process as appropriate
- To receive information about the outcome

Relevant policy documents:

**Code of Conduct: Employment of People with Criminal Records: Health and Safety:
Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures: Child Protection: Equal Opportunities:
Human Rights: Data Protection**