



SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY

1. Introduction

The aim of the Cedar Foundation's Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy is to ensure that all our service users, who are vulnerable people, are protected from abuse and to ensure that those who have been abused receive support and protection from further abuse. The Policy sets out the steps to be taken by all Cedar staff and volunteers when abuse is disclosed, identified, suspected or alleged. An accompanying practice guidance (TCF/G42) provides valuable help in defining abuse, recognising and understanding how abuse can occur and reducing the risk of abuse happening. This procedure, guidance and policy have been produced following guidance received by Local Area Safeguarding Partnership (LASP) of which Cedar is a member and with reference to the Standards & Guidance for Good Practice in Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults (Volunteer Now 2010)

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy is overseen by The Cedar Foundation's Safeguarding Manager. The Safeguarding Manager is the person who is responsible for acting as a source of advice on vulnerable adult matters, for co-ordinating action within the organisation and for ensuring that liaison takes place with Health & Social Care Trusts and other agencies in suspected and actual cases of vulnerable adult abuse.

The Safeguarding Manager for the Cedar Foundation is the Deputy Chief Executive who can be contacted at Head Office: 028 90666188. In their absence, the Head of the relevant Service will deputise in this role.

This policy is reviewed annually and will be updated pending legislative or policy change.

2. Policy Statement and Principles

The Cedar Foundation aims to ensure that all our service users, who are vulnerable people, are protected from abuse and to ensure that those who have been abused receive support and protection from further abuse. The principles of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adult Policy are to:

- actively promote the empowerment and well-being of vulnerable adults through the services we provide;
- act in a way which supports the rights of the individual to lead an individual life based on self determination and personal choice;
- recognise people who are unable to take their own decisions and/or to protect themselves, their assets and bodily integrity;
- recognise that the right of self determination can involve risk and ensure that such risk is recognised and understood by all concerned and minimised whenever possible; and

- ensure that when the right to an independent lifestyle and choice is at risk that the individual concerned receives appropriate help, including advice, protection and support from relevant agencies.

3. Definitions

3.1 Vulnerable Adults

A vulnerable adult is any person aged 18 years or over who is, or may be unable to take care of him or herself or who is unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation. This may be because he or she has a mental health problem, a disability, a sensory impairment, is old and frail, or has some form of illness. Because of his or her vulnerability, the individual may be in receipt of a care service in his or her own home, in the community, or be resident in a residential care home, nursing home, or other institutional setting. (DHSSPS 2009)

3.2 Abuse

The current definition of abuse is derived from regional guidance issued by the Management Executive, Department of Health & Social Services, in 1996, which states that abuse is:

‘The physical, psychological, emotional, financial or sexual maltreatment, or neglect of a vulnerable adult by another person. The abuse may be a single act or repeated over a period of time. It may take one form or a multiple of forms. The lack of appropriate action can also be a form of abuse. Abuse can occur in a relationship where there is an expectation of trust and can be perpetrated by a person/persons, in breach of that trust, who have influence over the life of a dependant, whether they be formal or informal carers, staff or family members or others. It can also occur outside such a relationship’.

Abuse may occur when a vulnerable adult:

- Is in training or employment environments
- Lives alone, with a relative or others
- Attends nursing, residential or day care settings
- Is in hospital or custodial situations
- Is receiving support services in their own home
- Is in other places previously assumed safe
- Is in public places

A consensus has emerged identifying the following main different forms of abuse:

- **Physical Abuse** – such as hitting, slapping, rough handling, misuse of medication or 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 or name calling.
- **Financial or Material Abuse** – such as theft of money / possessions, misuse of someone’s benefits or 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 gender, age, disability, sexual orientation etc.
- **Institutional Abuse** – abuse or poor practice throughout an organisation.

Any or all types of abuse may be perpetrated as a result of deliberate intent, negligence or ignorance.

4. Preventing Abuse of Vulnerable Adults

While it is not possible to prevent all abuse, there are a number of steps those working or volunteering in Cedar can take to reduce the risk of abuse occurring. They should:

- (i) know what abuse is;
- (ii) understand how it can happen;
- (iii) be alert to indicators of potential abuse situations;
- (iv) know the procedures for reporting concerns and poor practice; and
- (v) provide appropriate support through good assessment and care planning.

At a **Service Provider Level** likely situations for abuse can be reduced through the following.

- Employing rigorous recruitment practices that include ACCESS (NI) checking for all service delivery staff and volunteers as appropriate.
- Informing staff and volunteers of this policy at induction.
- Requiring all service delivery staff to undertake mandatory Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults training, which is updated as required.
- Providing all service delivery staff with a guidance leaflet (TCF/G42) which provides practical guidance for staff on:
 - The types of abuse;
 - Recognising abuse; and
 - Reporting suspected or alleged abuse.
- Encouraging staff and volunteers to be vigilant and report all concerns.
- Instructing service delivery staff / volunteers on how they can best design out sole access to vulnerable adults within their job or voluntary role.
- Promoting a culture of openness and transparency.
- Ensuring advocacy and representation from the User Forum.
- Having clear service standards and policies and procedures.
- Ensuring service users have access to the Complaints Procedure.
- Having an effective risk assessment process.
- Having an effective quality management system.

At a **Practitioner Level** likely situations for abuse of vulnerable adults can be reduced and Cedar staff and volunteers protected from false accusations by making sure that everyone is aware that as a general rule they should not:

- Spend excessive amounts of time with vulnerable adults away from others;
- Transport vulnerable adults in their car on journeys, without the permission of their Head of Service ; and
- Take vulnerable adults into their home.

Staff must also follow specific guidance on photographs and videos as follows:

- Permission must be sought from the vulnerable adult or their Trust representative for the use of images.
- Avoid using a vulnerable adult's name and image together unless explicit permission has been sought from the individual or their representative and that information provided with the image does not compromise the safeguarding of the vulnerable adult.

- Images of vulnerable adults in suitable dress should only be used to reduce risk of inappropriate use.
- Images from some sport activities such as swimming, gymnastics and athletics where the risk of misuse of these inappropriate images is high must be avoided.

Where occasions arise where it is unavoidable that these things do happen, e.g. where staff are supporting vulnerable adults in one to one services such as Job Support, Floating Support, Outlook or Transitions, this should only occur with the full knowledge of the Head of Service and where a risk assessment has been completed.

Cedar makes it clear to staff and volunteers they should never:

- allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form;
- make sexually suggestive comments to vulnerable adults;
- engage in sexually provocative activity;
- engage in rough physical activity;
- let allegations a vulnerable adult makes go unchallenged or unrecorded; and
- do things of a personal nature for vulnerable adults that they can do for themselves.

5. Respect for the Individual

When abuse has been disclosed, reported or observed, it is important that the alleged victim:

- is treated with dignity;
- is involved as an equal in investigation and kept fully informed on a regular basis;
- has the right to be believed when they report abuse of themselves and others unless there is direct and unequivocal evidence to the contrary;
- has the right to appropriate education/information in order to identify behaviour which constitutes abuse; and
- is offered an appropriate means of victim support including for example agreements with other providers to offer alternative services or ensuring victims can access other support services such as counselling or legal advice.

6. Confidentiality

In normal circumstances observing the principle of confidentiality will mean that information is only passed on to others with the consent of the service user. However, where there is concern about abuse, the service user needs to be made aware that information has to be shared with statutory agencies in order to protect them and also to potentially protect others or investigate an alleged or suspected criminal offence even if they are not happy for this to happen.

7. Procedure for responding to reports and incidents of abuse or alleged abuse

The procedure for staff and volunteers reporting abuse is controlled within an ISO 9001:2008 system and this section of the policy should be read in conjunction with TCF/G006 Adverse Incident Policy

The primary role of the person who first suspects abuse or is told of it is to **report it** to a senior manager. It is important that everyone in Cedar is aware that the person who first encounters the case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether

or not the abuse has occurred. That is the task for the professional agencies following a referral to them.

The process for dealing with an allegation of abuse or suspicion of abuse of a vulnerable adult goes through a number of distinct stages. The following have been identified: alerting, referring, screening, planning the investigation, investigating, making decisions, monitoring and review.

Cedar will be responsible for alerting and referring cases of abuse to statutory authorities. (Designated Officers for Vulnerable Adults have been appointed within Trusts). Further stages in the process will be undertaken by statutory authorities with Cedar making input into the investigation process as appropriate.

Alerting

Everyone working with vulnerable adults has a duty to report suspected, alleged or confirmed incidences of abuse. If the allegation relates to an employee, the employee's line manager should be alerted. If the allegations relate to a line manager, the matter should be reported to a more senior manager. (It should be noted that Cedar's Whistle Blowing Policy provides safeguards and protection for staff).

Someone providing assistance to the vulnerable adult at this stage will need to obtain as much information as possible pertaining to the allegation or suspicion of abuse, particularly if a criminal offence has been committed. Only the basic facts of the suspected abuse or grounds for suspicion should be clarified at this stage. The person should avoid asking leading questions and should not discuss the allegation with the victim or the alleged perpetrator. They should be clear that their role is primarily supportive rather than investigative.

On receiving an alert of an allegation or suspicion of abuse, the line manager should check that the vulnerable adult's immediate needs are being met, i.e. that they are in no more immediate danger and that medical assistance, if deemed necessary has been sought.

Referring

The Safeguarding Manager / nominated deputy for Cedar is responsible for ensuring that concerns are referred to the appropriate Vulnerable Adult Designated Officer within Trusts and, as appropriate, RQIA. In addition, the Safeguarding Manager / nominated deputy will make a referral to NISCC where staff are subject to allegations of abuse. This contact should be made within the same working day (where evening refer to out of hours) by telephone in the first instance and should be confirmed in writing within 2 working days.

The Safeguarding Manager / nominated deputy will ensure that any appropriate means of victim support is put in place.

Practice Guidance for anyone suspecting abuse

Do

- Remain Calm
- Ensure no-one is in immediate danger
- Call for emergency service if urgent medical/police help is needed
- Report concerns to your line manager
- Record all the facts

Don't

- Promise to keep secrets
- Be judgemental or overreact
- Challenge the alleged abuser
- Investigate yourself
- Do anything that could disturb evidence – do not tidy up or encourage the person to bathe
- Discourage anyone from reporting concerns
- Leave details of your concerns on a voice mail

Cedar has a range of Staff policies and procedures which support its Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy through ensuring staff are aware of what is considered appropriate behaviour and what is expected of them. These are designed to ensure that staff who are in a position of trust do not abuse that trust and also to provide protection to staff against unjustified allegations of misconduct. These include:

- Cedar's Recruitment & Selection Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Code of Conduct including gifts and hospitality policy

Furthermore, this policy does not operate independently of other Cedar policies and procedures. Policies and procedures such as Complaints and Disciplinary should be implemented concurrently in order to secure the protection of vulnerable adults.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy Review:

Cedar reviews all Adverse Incidents through a quarterly Management Review Process and any cases of abuse will be reviewed through this process and a change in policy or procedures will be undertaken if such action is required.