

## **HANDS Help A Neighbour in Distress Scheme**

### **Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy & Procedure**

*(Updated December 2017)*

#### **Policy**

HANDS is committed to supporting the right of vulnerable adults to be protected from abuse, to ensure that working practices minimise the risk of abuse and that staff and volunteers work together, in line with HANDS' Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy.

Living a life that is free from harm and abuse is a fundamental right of every person. All of us need to act as good neighbours in looking out for one another and in seeking to prevent the isolation which can lead to abusive situations and put adults at risk of harm.

HANDS is committed to working with the main statutory agencies – local councils, the police and NHS organizations – in dealing with suspected or actual cases of abuse.

#### **Definition**

The definition of a vulnerable adult is a person of 18 years or over who is in need of community care due to a mental health problem, learning disability, physical disability, age or illness and, as a result, may be unable to protect him/herself from significant harm or exploitation.

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person(s) or group of people. Abuse may be single or repeated acts. It can be:

- Physical: this is the use of force which results in bodily injury, pain or impairment.
- Psychological and emotional: this is behavior that has a harmful effect on the person's emotional health or any form of mental cruelty that results in mental distress, the denial of basic human and civil rights such as self-expression, privacy and dignity.
- Financial and material: this is the use of a person's property, assets, income, funds or any other resources without their informed consent or authorization. It includes theft, fraud, exploitation and the misuse or misappropriation of property, possession or benefits.
- Sexual: such as forcing a person to take part in any sexual activity without his or her informed consent.
- Discriminatory: including racist or sexist remarks or comments based on a person's disability, age or illness.
- Neglect and acts of omission: including ignoring medical or physical care needs. These can be deliberate or unintentional, amounting to abuse by a carer or self-neglect by the vulnerable person.
- Institutional: the collective failure of an organization to provide an appropriate and professional service to vulnerable people.

#### **How Might We Notice Abuse?**

Concern about or evidence of abuse can come to us through:

- a direct disclosure by the vulnerable adult.
- a complaint or expression of concern by a volunteer, another service user, a carer, a member of the public or a relative.
- an observation of the behaviour of the vulnerable adult by the volunteer.

## **Safeguarding Procedure**

If you think abuse of a client has or may have occurred act immediately

- make sure the person is safe.
- if a serious crime has taken place or there is a need for an immediate police response to protect the adult at risk, dial 999.
- get medical assistance if it is needed.
- deal with immediate needs and ensure the person is, as far as possible, central to the decision-making process.
- if an adult experiencing abuse speaks about this to you, assure them you are taking them seriously, get a clear and factual picture of the concern and say that you need to report the abuse. Do not be judgemental and try to keep an open mind.
- record in writing details of any abuse, whether witnessed, suspected or alleged and report immediately to HANDS' Co-ordinator.
- the Co-ordinator will immediately refer the report to the Trustees via the Chair or the Hon Secretary, who will call an emergency meeting at which a minimum of three Trustees should be present. The volunteer reporting the suspected abuse and the Co-ordinator should also attend.
- the Trustees will decide whether to i) arrange for the HANDS Client Assessor and the volunteer to visit the person where abuse is suspected to clarify the situation before referring to the local authority OR ii) immediately refer details of the alleged abuse to the Council's Access Team on 020 8891 7971 or [adultsocialservices@richmond.gov.uk](mailto:adultsocialservices@richmond.gov.uk) .
- when the matter is referred, a VAMA (Vulnerable Adult Multi-Agency Panel) Referral Form should be completed and emailed to [referrals.vulnerableadultmultiagencypanel@richmond.gov.uk](mailto:referrals.vulnerableadultmultiagencypanel@richmond.gov.uk)

## **Allegation of Abuse Made Against a Staff Member or Volunteer**

Staff and volunteers may be subject to abuse allegations. HANDS will offer support in these circumstances, Social Services will be assisted in their investigation and a disciplinary procedure may be implemented.

## **Our Commitment**

To support vulnerable adults who are experiencing or are at risk from abuse HANDS is committed to:

- identifying the abuse of vulnerable adults where it is occurring.
- responding effectively to any circumstances giving grounds for concern or where formal complaints are expressed.
- regularly monitoring and evaluating how our policies, procedures and practices for protecting vulnerable adults are working.
- making sure our policies, procedures and practices stay up to date with good practice and the law in relation to safeguarding vulnerable adults.
- ensuring our procedures are in line with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Procedures

## **Prevention and Confidentiality**

HANDS staff and volunteers will all have Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks taken out and have two references provided before they have direct contact with vulnerable adults. They will be required to familiarize themselves with HANDS Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy & Procedure and will be given a copy for reference.

HANDS will work with vulnerable adults in a way that meets all the aspects of confidentiality in our different policies, but where abuse to a vulnerable person is alleged, suspected, reported or concerns are raised, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Procedure must be followed. The confidentiality of the vulnerable person will be respected wherever possible and their consent obtained to share information. The vulnerable person should be made aware that HANDS cannot ignore issues around abuse and that steps will be taken to deal with them in as sensitive a manner as possible. The welfare of the individual is paramount.