

THE INTER FAITH NETWORK FOR THE UK

Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy

Introduction

The Inter Faith Network for the UK is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults, engaged in the breadth of its activities.

The purpose of this policy is to outline the duty and responsibility of staff, volunteers and trustees working on behalf of IFN in relation to the protection of vulnerable adults from abuse. A separate policy exists for safeguarding children and young people.

Adults have the right to be safe from harm and should be able to live free from fear of abuse, neglect and exploitation.

The key objectives of this policy are:

- To explain the responsibilities IFN, its staff, volunteers and trustees have in respect of vulnerable adult protection.
- To provide staff with an overview of vulnerable adult protection.
- To provide a clear procedure that will be implemented where vulnerable adult protection issues arise.

Members of the IFN's staff and volunteers may occasionally come into contact with vulnerable adults, such as at inter faith events sponsored by the IFN or to which IFN staff and volunteers have been invited but may also be unsolicited. This policy sets out what should happen if a disclosure occurs in that context or subsequent to it to a member of staff, volunteer or trustee.

If a member of believes that abuse may have taken place, is taking place or may take place they have a duty to share that with the appropriate person, as set out in the policy.

In all cases the IFN's staff, trustees and volunteers have a duty of care.

Context

For the purpose of this document 'adult' means a person aged 18 years or over¹.

Some adults are less able to protect themselves than others, and some have difficulty making their wishes and feelings known. This may make them vulnerable to abuse. The broad definition of a 'vulnerable adult' referred to in the 1997 Consultation Paper 'Who decides?' issued by the Lord Chancellor's Department, is a person:

¹ In the case of a vulnerable young adult in local authority care up to the age of 25 the Child Protection Policy should be consulted.

“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, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation”.

The first priority should always be to ensure the safety and protection of vulnerable adults. To this end it is the responsibility of all staff to act on any suspicion or evidence of abuse or neglect (see the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998) and to pass on their concerns to a responsible person/agency.

For purposes of ensuring consistent and widely understood terminology, these policy and procedures will use the phrase ‘Vulnerable Adults’ to identify those eligible for interventions within the procedures.

Legal framework

This guidance reflects the principles contained within the Human Rights Act 1998, the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

The Mental Capacity Act 2005, covering England and Wales, provides a statutory framework for people who lack capacity to make decisions for themselves, or who have capacity and want to make preparations for a time when they may lack capacity in the future. It sets out who can take decisions, in which situations, and how they should go about this.

The Human Rights Act 1998 gives legal effect in the UK to the fundamental rights and freedoms contained in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA) created a framework for whistle blowing across the private, public and voluntary sectors. The Act provides almost every individual in the workplace with protection from victimisation where they raise genuine concerns about malpractice in accordance with the Act’s provisions.

The role of staff, volunteers and trustees

All staff, volunteers and trustees working on behalf of IFN have a duty to promote the welfare and safety of vulnerable adults.

Staff, volunteers and trustees may receive disclosures of abuse and observe vulnerable adults who are at risk. This policy will enable staff/volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific adult protection issues.

What is abuse?

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

Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal or psychological, it may be an act of neglect or an omission to act, or it may occur when a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented, or cannot consent. Abuse can occur in any relationship and it may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it.

The Department of Health in its 'No Secrets' report suggests the following as the main types of abuse:-

- **Physical abuse-** including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions.
- **Sexual abuse-** including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not consented, or could not consent or was pressured into consenting.
- **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. This would also include incitement to religious or racial hatred, violence or acts of terror.
- **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.
- **Neglect and acts of omission-** 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 medication, adequate nutrition and heating.
- **Discriminatory abuse-** including racist, sexist, that based on a person's disability, age or sexuality and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

Where abuse may occur

Abuse may occur in person and it may also occur on-line. Because abuse occurs in the virtual world it is not to be deemed as less real for the abused person.

Procedure in the event of a disclosure

It is important that vulnerable adults are protected from abuse. All complaints, allegations or suspicions must be taken seriously.

This procedure must be followed whenever an allegation of abuse is made or when there is a suspicion that a vulnerable adult has been abused.

Promises of confidentiality should not be given as this may conflict with the need to ensure the safety and welfare of the individual.

A full record shall be made as soon as possible of the nature of the allegation and any other relevant information including using the ['Initial Cause for Concern Form', Appendix 1]. Members of staff, volunteers or trustees should not report their own thoughts or feelings in relation to the disclosure. Ensure the date, time and context of the disclosure is clearly recorded in the appropriate form.

This should include information in relation to the date, the time, the place where the alleged abuse happened, your name and the names of others present, the name of the complainant and, where different, the name of the adult who has allegedly been abused, the nature of the

alleged abuse, a description of any injuries observed, the account which has been given of the allegation.

Where members of staff, volunteers or trustees have concerns about another member of staff, volunteer or trustee

There may be times when a member of staff, volunteer or trustee has a concern about the behaviour of another member of staff, volunteer or trustee with regard to a vulnerable adult. This might occur, for example, when contact is kept with the vulnerable adult longer than expected after an event or involve an exchange of personal details. In such cases the issue should be raised with the Designated Safeguarding Officer or the Executive Director if it refers to that officer

Responding to an allegation

Any suspicion, allegation or incident of abuse must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Officer on that working day where possible.

The Designated Safeguarding Officer, or in their absence the Executive Director, shall telephone and report the matter to the appropriate local adult social services duty social worker. A written record of the date and time of the report shall be made and the report must include the name and position of the person to whom the matter is reported. The telephone report must be confirmed in writing to the relevant local authority adult social services department within 24 hours.

If the Designated Safeguarding Officer, or Executive Director, is unable to establish the relevant local authority disclosures shall be reported to the Local Safeguarding Adults Board (LSAB) in which the IFN's officers are situated and take advice from them.

Responding appropriately to an allegation of abuse

In the event of an incident or disclosure:

DO

- Make sure the individual is safe
- Assess whether emergency services are required and if needed call them
- Listen
- Offer support and reassurance
- Ascertain and establish the basic facts
- Make careful notes and obtain agreement on them
- Ensure notation of dates, time and persons present are correct and agreed
- Take all necessary precautions to preserve forensic evidence
- Follow correct procedure
- Explain areas of confidentiality; immediately speak to the Designated Safeguarding Officer for support and guidance
- Explain the procedure to the individual making the allegation
- Remember the need for ongoing support.

DO NOT

- Confront the alleged abuser
- Be judgmental or voice your own opinion

- Be dismissive of the concern
- Investigate or interview beyond that which is necessary to establish the basic facts
- Disturb or destroy possible forensic evidence
- Consult with persons not directly involved with the situation
- Ask leading questions
- Assume Information
- Make promises
- Ignore the allegation
- Elaborate in your notes
- Panic

It is important to remember that the person who first encounters a case of alleged abuse is not responsible for deciding whether abuse has occurred. This is a task for the professional adult protection agencies, following a referral from the designated Vulnerable Adult Protection Officer.

Confidentiality

Vulnerable adult protection raises issues of confidentiality which should be clearly understood by all.

Staff, volunteers and trustees have a professional responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of vulnerable adults with other professionals, particularly investigative agencies and adult social services.

Clear boundaries of confidentiality will be communicated to all.

All personal information regarding a vulnerable adult will be kept confidential in line with data protection legislation. All written records will be kept in a secure area for a specific time as identified in data protection guidelines. Records will only record details required in the initial contact form.

If an adult confides in a member of staff and requests that the information is kept secret, it is important that the member of staff tells the adult sensitively that he or she has a responsibility to refer cases of alleged abuse to the appropriate agencies.

Within that context, the adult should, however, be assured that the matter will be disclosed only to people who need to know about it.

Where possible, consent should be obtained from the adult before sharing personal information with third parties. In some circumstances obtaining consent may be neither possible nor desirable as the safety and welfare of the vulnerable adult is the priority.

Where a disclosure has been made, staff should let the adult know the position regarding their role and what action they will have to take as a result.

Staff should assure the adult that they will keep them informed of any action to be taken and why. The adults' involvement in the process of sharing information should be fully considered and their wishes and feelings taken into account.

This policy needs to be read in conjunction with other relevant policies of IFN.

The role of key individual agencies

Adult Social Services

The Department of Health's 'No secrets' guidance document requires that authorities develop a local framework within which all responsible agencies work together to ensure a coherent policy for the protection of vulnerable adults at risk of abuse.

All local authorities have a Safeguarding Adults Board, which oversees multi-agency work aimed at protecting and safeguarding vulnerable adults. It is normal practice for the board to comprise of people from partner organisations who have the ability to influence decision making and resource allocation within their organisation.

The Police

The Police play a vital role in Safeguarding Adults with cases involving alleged criminal acts. It becomes the responsibility of the police to investigate allegations of crime by preserving and gathering evidence. Where a crime is identified, the police will be the lead agency and they will direct investigations in line with legal and other procedural protocols.

Role of designated vulnerable adult protection officer

The role of the designated officer is to deal with all instances involving adult protection that arise within IFN. They will respond to all vulnerable adult protection concerns and enquiries. The designated Safeguarding Officer for IFN is the Assistant Director, David Hampshire. Should you have any suspicions or concerns relating to Adult Safeguarding you can contact him on 020 7730 0410 or at david.hampshire@interfaith.org.uk or write to to at 2 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH marking the envelope or e-mail: Strictly Confidential. . If the concern relates to the Designated Safeguarding Officer the Executive Director should be contacted by writing to 2 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0DH, marking the item Strictly Confidential, and the correspondence will be forwarded to them.

Role of line manager

The role of the line manager is to support the member of staff, trustee or volunteer involved with the incident and to ensure the correct procedures are followed.

The line manager could, if agreed with the staff member dealing with the incident, make contact with the designated Adult Protection Officer in the first instance.

The line manager should ensure that all staff within their team are familiar with IFN's vulnerable adult protection procedures and ensure that all staff undertake training, where appropriate.

The IFN also has a duty of care to its staff and volunteers. If members of staff or volunteers are traumatised by a disclosure they will be signposted to the appropriate support.

Training

Training will be provided, as appropriate, to ensure that staff are aware of this policy. For employed members of staff this will involve an annual briefing and will form part of the induction of trustees and volunteers as appropriate. Specialist training will be provided for the member of staff with vulnerable adult protection responsibilities and they will be expected to have an enhanced DBS certificate. A record of training will be kept centrally.

Complaints procedure

This policy needs to be read in conjunction with other policies of IFN.

Recruitment procedure

IFN operates procedures that take account of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of vulnerable adults, including arrangements for appropriate checks on new staff, volunteers and trustees, where applicable.

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