

awen productions community interest company
inspiring media for social change

Protection of vulnerable adults policy statement

A vulnerable adult is:

A person over the age of 18 years who:

- is or may be in need of care by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and who
- is or may be unable to take care of himself or herself
- is unable to protect himself or herself against significant harm or serious exploitation.

'Harm' here means ill-treatment (including sexual abuse and forms of ill treatment that are not physical); the impairment of, or an avoidable deterioration in, physical or mental health; and the impairment of physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development.

Abuse is when a person or persons have caused harm, or may be likely to do so, to the physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, financial or material well being of a vulnerable adult.

The following list is not exhaustive:

- **Physical abuse** includes the use of unnecessary force – hitting, slapping, pushing, pulling, pinching, kicking, misuse of medication, inappropriate physical restraint, forced feeding.
- **Sexual abuse** includes rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not consented, or could not consent or was pressured into consenting. Sexual abuse does not necessarily involve contact - it could include indecent exposure, harassment (physical or verbal), exposure to pornography and the use of pornography.
- **Emotional/psychological abuse** includes shouting, screaming, intimidation, humiliation, threats of harm or abandonment, denial of the expression of choice and opinion, denial of privacy and dignity; deprivation of contact either by letter or social contact, controlling - denial of freedom to associate with others outside of the place of residence, isolation or withdrawal from services or support networks.
- **Financial or material abuse** includes theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property or benefits.
- **Neglect and acts of omission** includes medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, assessed social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

Also:

- abuse may be a deliberate act or may be the result of a failure to act appropriately
- an individual may experience one or more of the above abuses at the same time
- this may be within a continuing relationship or a professional service context
- abuse may be carried out by other service users or by people who have deliberately formed a relationship with a vulnerable person in order to exploit them
- an individual may have experienced a history of intimidation and victimisation.

Abuse is not acceptable and may often be a criminal offence. People who may be at greater risk of abuse because of their age or the nature of their disability should be enabled to take part in Awen's activities in an environment that is free from prejudice and safe from abuse. To this end facilitators will all have an enhanced Criminal Record Bureau check every three years.

As such they are entitled to:

- privacy
- be treated with dignity
- be supported to lead an independent life
- be able to choose how they lead their lives
- the protection of the law
- have their rights upheld regardless of ethnic origin, sexuality, impairment or disability, age, religion or cultural background.

Our aim is to prevent abuse occurring wherever possible and to deal with it appropriately and effectively if it does occur. All allegations of suspected abuse must be taken seriously regardless of the source of the information. We will respond promptly to allegations and where there is any doubt about the person's immediate health and safety or that of other vulnerable individuals, appropriate professional colleagues from Cornwall Adult Social Care Services or the Police will be informed.

Staff, facilitators, trustees and volunteers have a 'duty of care' to act in the best interests of the allegedly abused person. They shall receive in-house training with regard to this policy and the Awen protection of vulnerable adults procedure '**if a vulnerable adult confides any abuse to you**' attached. Training opportunities in adult protection provided by external agencies and partner organisations (e.g. 'No secrets') will also be made available to staff, facilitators, trustees and volunteers.

Where the allegedly abused person is clearly able to make choices, they must be advised of the options available to them and their wishes respected, unless, exceptionally, a statutory responsibility to intervene arises. Where a vulnerable adult is unable to make a decision due to mental impairment, Awen will need to review their position in respect of the law to see what further action can be taken.

Where intervention is necessary, action should be pursued in a way that causes the least disruption to the allegedly abused person's way of life and should be aimed at preventing the risk of abuse recurring. Every effort will be made to support the vulnerable adult and their carer. This will be undertaken in an open and honest atmosphere. The vulnerable adult's consent to involve their carers will be obtained where possible. Where it is not possible to obtain the vulnerable person's consent it may be necessary to consult with appropriate professional colleagues from Cornwall Adult Social Care Services.

Carers may need help and support in their own right after hearing about the alleged abuse. Carers of vulnerable adults may themselves be vulnerable and come within the terms of this policy and procedure. In some cases the carer may be the alleged abuser. While each case must be dealt with in as sympathetic way as possible, the protection of the person who is alleged to have been abused is paramount. Advice will be taken from appropriate professional colleagues from Cornwall Adult Social Care Services and/or the Police, depending on the specific need and circumstances.

Nominated primary contact **Barbara Santi**
telephone number: 01736 810 819
mobile: 0781 210 1388

Protection of vulnerable adults

If a vulnerable adult confides any abuse to you

Do:

- listen carefully and ensure the person knows that you are taking what he or she says seriously
- stay calm
- show sympathy and concern, reassure the person that he or she is doing the right thing in telling you
- explain what you're going to do next to support and protect them and that information will need to be shared with Phil, Sarah or the nominated trustee who will decide on what action will be taken – thus absolute confidentiality can not be guaranteed
- write a factual and chronological account of what you have heard and learnt
- report to a member of Awen Productions

If the person seems in any immediate danger or in need of urgent treatment, their safety should be ensured. Emergency services should be called if necessary

Do Not:

- appear shocked, horrified, disgusted or angry
- make judgements other than to show concern
- give sweeping assurances e.g. don't say 'he won't be allowed to come near you again'
- confront or contact the alleged perpetrator
- press the individual for details;
- promise to keep secrets
- contaminate or remove forensic evidence such as blood, semen and saliva, which may be used in court. If first aid is required, this should be administered for bleeding and shock only.

Where people have difficulty in articulating what has/is happening to them because of the nature and severity of their disability, they may do so in other ways including changes in their behaviour. Awen should always be alert to the need to communicate with sensitivity.

Contacting Adult Care and Support

Between the hours of **8am-8pm Monday-Friday, and 9am-4pm Saturdays** you can contact Adult Care and Support on **0300 1234 131**.

Emergency contact number

Outside the office hours above, please telephone the Out-of-Hours Service on **01208 251300**, Fax 01208 251512. These numbers are to be used for emergencies only.

What is Adult Care and Support?

Adult Care and Support is part of Cornwall Council, and its Corporate Director is Kim Carey, who is based at Adult Care and Support Headquarters, Old County Hall, Truro, +44(0)1872 323610.

Police contact is: Enquiries **08452 777 444** Emergencies **999**