

SAFEGUARDING OF VULNERABLE ADULTS AND PROTECTION FROM ABUSE

Scope

This policy applies to all Pathways staff and must be adhered to at all times. All trainees, volunteers and temporary workers are considered 'staff' for the purpose of this document. The purpose of the document is to ensure that all Pathways staff members understand their responsibility to report any abuse or suspected abuse of vulnerable adults and that management understand their responsibility to provide support to employees in such circumstances.

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any another person. Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may occur as a result of a failure to undertake action or appropriate care tasks. It may be an act of neglect or omission or may occur where a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which they have not consented or cannot consent. Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to or exploitation of the individual

Background

The government issued a guidance document in March 2000 called 'No Secrets' which is concerned with developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse. Relevant areas of legislation include:

- The Care Act 2014 which imposes a duty on local authorities that adults at risk are able to live their lives safely, free from abuse and neglect. It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, while at the same time making sure that the adult's wellbeing is promoted; Pathways has a duty to co-operate with the local authority and report concerns.
- The Children and Families Act 2014 which provides for greater protection for vulnerable children through changes to the safeguarding and child protection system and services for children and families. Although Pathways does not work directly with children, many of our clients have regular contact with children, or have been convicted of offences against children which places staff in a unique position to be privy to potential safeguarding concerns.

Policy

Vulnerable adults for reason of age, illness, disability or social circumstances will be respected with regards to privacy, dignity, independence and choice.

Vulnerable adults should be able to freely determine their own lives, make their own choices and take risks except when they are mentally incapable of doing so.

Legally there is a presumption of capacity unless the adult demonstrates otherwise. If someone has a mental health issue or difficulty this does not mean they don't have the capacity to understand. If the vulnerable adult has the capacity to understand abuse/exploitation and does not want to report it, Pathways must respect their wishes whilst also complying with our duty to report the matter through the relevant channels.

All Pathways staff undergo a relevant checks from the Disclosure Barring Service to ensure they are not a risk to any of our clients. Front-line staff undergo enhanced checks including Barred Lists as required by funders. We ensure all measures are taken to prevent staff from abusing our clients in any way. If staff suspect a client is being abused by another member of staff, including lone-workers, the Line Manager must be made aware immediately. Please also see the Whistle-blowing policy.

It is possible that information may come to light around safeguarding concerns for vulnerable adults and children who do not access Pathways' services. Pathways staff are expected to follow the same guidance detailed below and refer cases as necessary.

All abuse will be dealt with in accordance with the Kent and Medway Multi-Agency Adults Public Protection Policy, Protocols and Practitioner Guidance and where the abuse of a child is suspected, the Kent and Medway Safeguarding Children Procedures 2017.

See https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/11574/multi-agency-safeguarding-adults-policies-protocols-and-guidance-kent-and-medway.pdf for the Adults' guidance.

See <http://www.proceduresonline.com/kentandmedway/chapters/contents.html> for the Childrens' guidance.

Types of Abuse

- **Physical Abuse:** Inflicting of pain, injury, physical harm i.e. hitting pushing or rough handling, causing bruising, withdrawal, unexplained falls, minor injuries, misuse of medication, inappropriate sanctions, including deprivation of food.
- **Psychological/Emotional:** Insults, bullying, threatening, humiliation and ridicule, threats of punishment or exclusion from appropriate social skills, educational development training.
- **Sexual:** Any sexual act performed without the consent of the vulnerable adult or has been forced into rape, sexual assault or harassment, non-contact abuse, e.g. voyeurism or pornography.
- **Financial:** Misuse of vulnerable adults finances including theft, fraud or extortion of material assets, misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits, pressure in connection with wills property or inheritance.
- **Neglect:** Vulnerable adult does not get the care needed, including ignoring medical or physical care needs. Neglect of accommodation, heating, lighting etc and professional neglect.
- **Discrimination:** Treating someone differently due to race, colour, ethnic origin, gender, sexuality etc.
- **Abusive regimes:** staff using master keys without due cause, breaches of clients' confidentiality, restrictive practices in the use of communal facilities.

The above should not be considered an exclusive or exhaustive list of the types of abuse which can be experienced by vulnerable adults.

- Pathways Management have a responsibility to monitor all allegations of abuse and complaints to assess and highlight potential problems and abuse to clients. Senior Management will notify the Executive Director where necessary of any concerns relating to the safety of staff and clients.
- Quarterly reports to the Board of Trustees are made outlining any safeguarding concerns and referrals made by Senior Management.
- The Head of Services is the Responsible Safeguarding Lead for Pathways to Independence Ltd.