

## **SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The aim of TST (South West) CIC's Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy is to ensure that all our clients 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 TST (South West) CIC's staff and volunteers when abuse is disclosed, identified, suspected or alleged. An accompanying practice guidance provides valuable help in defining abuse, recognising and understanding how abuse can occur and reducing the risk of abuse happening.

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

### **POLICY STATEMENT AND PRINCIPLES**

TST (South West) CIC's aims to ensure that all our clients 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;
- Ensure that when the right to an independent lifestyle and choice is at risk that the individual concerned received appropriate help including advice, protection and support from relevant agencies.

### **DEFINITIONS**

#### **Vulnerable Adults**

A vulnerable adult is any person aged 18 years or over who is, or may be, unable to take care of themselves or who is unable to protect themselves 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.

#### **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 or 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 relatives 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 bare needs.
- **Discriminatory Abuse** – any form of abuse based on discrimination because of a person’s gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, race etc.
- **Institutional Abuse** – abuse through poor practice throughout an organisation.

Any or all types of abuse may be perpetrated because of deliberate intent, negligence or ignorance.

## PREVENTING ABUSE OF VULNERABLE ADULTS

The designated safeguarding lead for TST is Mr Osbourne Glover. In his absence any concerns are to be reported to any member of the Senior management Team.

There are several steps those working or volunteering with TST (South West) CIC can take to reduce the risk of abuse occurring. They should:

1. Know what abuse is
2. Understand how it can happen
3. Be alert to indicators of potential abuse situations
4. Know the procedures for reporting concerns and poor practice
5. 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
- Informing staff and volunteers of this policy at induction
- Requiring all staff to undertake mandatory Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults training

- Encouraging staff and volunteers to be vigilant and report all concerns
- Promoting a culture of openness and transparency
- Having clear service standards and policies and procedures
- Ensuring clients 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 TST (South West) CIC staff and volunteers protected from false accusations by making sure that everyone is aware that as a 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 the management
- Take vulnerable adults into their home.

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

- Permission must be sought from the vulnerable adult or their representative for the use of images
- Avoid using the vulnerable adults' 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 the risk of inappropriate use
- Images from some sport activities where the risk of misuse of these inappropriate images is high must be avoided.

TST (South West) CIC 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
- Do this of a personal nature for vulnerable adults that they can do for themselves

### **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 the 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 and information in order to identify behaviour which constitutes abuse
- Is offered an appropriate means of victim support

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

In normal circumstances, observing the principle of confidentiality will mean that information is only passed on to others with the consent of the client. However, where there is concern about abuse, the client needs to be made aware that information must be shared with statutory agencies 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.

## **PROCEDURE FOR RESPONDING TO REPORTS AND INCIDENTS OF ABUSE OR ALLEGED ABUSE**

The primary role of the person who first suspects abuse or is told if it is to report it to the designated safeguarding lead or a senior manager. It is important that everyone at TST (South West) CIC is aware that the person who first encounters the case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether 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 several distinct stages – alerting, referring, screening, planning the investigation, investigating, making decisions, monitoring and review.

TST (South West) CIC will be responsible for alerting and referring cases of abuse to statutory authorities. Further stages in the process will be undertaken by statutory authorities with TST (South West) CIC 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.

Only the basic facts of the suspected abuse or grounds for suspicion should be clarified at this stage. The TST (South West) CIC representative 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 Officer is responsible for ensuring that concerns are referred to the appropriate authorities. This contact should be made within the same working day by telephone and should be confirmed in writing within 2 working days.

## **GUIDANCE FOR ANYONE SUSPECTING ABUSE**

**Do**

- Remain calm
- Ensure no-one is in immediate danger
- Call for emergency services if urgent help is needed
- Report all concerns to your line manager
- Record all the facts

**Don't**

- Promise to keep secrets
- Be judgemental or overreact
- Challenge the alleged abuser
- Investigate the matter 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 voicemail

POLICY REVIEWED                      September 2019

NEXT REVIEW                              September 2020



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