



DadsHouse

Safeguarding & Vulnerable Adults Policy

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Statement

DadsHouse considers it the duty of staff and volunteers to protect vulnerable adults with whom they come into contact from abuse.

Introduction

DadsHouse is involved in providing services for a wide range of people. Some of these people are likely to be 'vulnerable adults.'

This policy is based on No Secrets, the national guidance on developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse (Department of Health, 2000)

The charity has obligations to strive to protect vulnerable adults who it may believe to be abused or at risk of abuse or neglect.

The policy and procedures have been developed to assist staff and volunteers in acting on reported or suspected abuse.

Depending upon the nature of particular services or the requirements of particular funders or partner agencies, the policy and procedures may be supplemented by local procedures.

Definitions

"No Secrets" recognises six categories of abuse:

1. Physical abuse, including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions

2. 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;
3. 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;
4. 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;
5. 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; and
6. Discriminatory abuse, including racist, sexist, that based on a person's disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs, or similar treatment.

Responsibility of Staff and Volunteers

All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to be aware and alert to signs that all is not well with a vulnerable person. However, they are not responsible for diagnosing, investigating, or providing a therapeutic response to abuse. In addition, not all concerns relate to abuse, there may well be other explanations. It is important to keep an open mind and consider what is known about the vulnerable person and his or her circumstances. No action should be taken without discussion with the Director.

Disclosure of Abuse

If a vulnerable person discloses that they are being abused or any service user discloses that they are involved in abuse of a vulnerable person, action should continue as in 'Action on Disclosure of Abuse', below. All action must proceed urgently and without delay.

Suspicion of Abuse

There may be circumstances when a volunteer or member of staff suspects that a vulnerable adult is being abused or neglected.

It is vital that any anyone who suspects a vulnerable adult is being neglected or abused discusses the situation immediately with his or her line manager or another member of the management team. Action should continue as in 'Action on Suspicion of Abuse', below.

Action on Suspicion of Abuse

There should always be the opportunity to discuss welfare concerns and seek advice from colleagues, managers, and other agencies, but:

- Never delay emergency action to protect a vulnerable adult or child
- Always record in writing concerns about a vulnerable person's welfare, whether or not further action is taken
- Always record in writing discussions about a vulnerable person.
- At the close of discussion, always reach clear and explicit recorded agreement about who will be taking what action, or that no further action will be taken.

At all times action must proceed urgently.

Additionally, all action taken following suspicion of abuse should be discussed in advance with a member of the management team.

In all cases of suspected abuse the team member (Trustee, Staff or Volunteer) should discuss whether issues relevant to different cultures and lifestyles have any bearing on the matter.

As an organisation Dad's House welcomes the fact that people and lifestyles are diverse and does not make judgements about the acceptability or otherwise of lifestyles. However, it is important that this philosophy does not stand in the way of the organisation's responsibility to protect vulnerable people from harm.

Any team member may report a suspicion of abuse to social services irrespective of the opinion of other members of the team.

It is important for staff and volunteers to make written records of any incidents or concerns that they have as soon as possible and if appropriate to include sketches of sites and sizes of injuries. It is also important to make a record of conversations with the vulnerable person using the same language the vulnerable person used especially names used for body parts or sexual acts.

Full written records must be maintained of all disclosures and actions following disclosure.

Making a Referral

Social services departments have been designated as the lead agencies with responsibility for co-ordinating a response to allegations or concerns of abuse.

Each of the charity's managers has the responsibility of informing the relevant social services department of concerns over the abuse or neglect of vulnerable adults. Detailed referral arrangements may differ between localities and, therefore, managers should ensure that they have up-to-date referral information for their locality.

Managers should work within the following timescales for reporting allegations or suspicions of abuse:

- Immediate if the vulnerable person is at risk of serious physical harm, or a serious criminal act has taken place, and evidence will need to be kept safe
- Within 24 Hours if it relates to a specific incident which is, or may be still going on, or may happen again
- Within 7 Days if it is a more general concern, which does not indicate immediate harm.

Support to Staff and Volunteers

Dad's House will support staff and volunteers in these circumstances. If the social services department need further involvement from staff or

volunteers following a report of abuse, a member of the management team will discuss with the social services department the nature of their needs and how they might be met.

Allegation of Abuse Made Against a Member of Staff, Volunteer, or Service User

Trustees, staff, volunteers, and service users may be subject to abuse allegations. The Charity will offer support in these circumstances, but the social services department will be assisted in their investigation and the disciplinary procedure may be implemented. A factual written record should be kept of any incidents or concerns. It is sensible for any notes to be written down promptly.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is central to the work of Dad's House, and the attention of all staff and volunteers is drawn to the Confidentiality Policy.

Preventing Abuse by Staff and Volunteers

It is important that any member of the DadsHouse team (Trustee, staff, volunteer) who are likely to be working alone with vulnerable people or any service users, are thoroughly vetted before being employed. At Dad's House this means as well as references being checked there will also be a requirement for offences to be declared and a Criminal Records Bureau check undertaken.

It should be noted that having a criminal record does not prevent someone from being recruited as a staff member or volunteer in all circumstances. Staff should seek the advice of their manager in cases of doubt.

It may be very hard for a worker to report a concern about a colleague to a line manager but, as with all the other difficulties people will come across, the safety and protection of a vulnerable person must be the priority in any decision that is made.



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