

# Working with Vulnerable Adults

## A guide for Personal Assistants

As a Personal Assistant (PA) you will be working with people who are defined by law to be 'vulnerable adults'. What this means is that because of disability or age, they are recognised to be more likely than other people to be the victim of abuse of one form or another.

As a PA, you might know this person better than a lot of people, so you have an important role in protecting the person you work with from abuse. This is what is called *Safeguarding* and it means that:

- You should be aware of the risks that exist
- You should be able to recognise when someone is being subject to abuse
- You should know what to do if you suspect that abuse is happening.

Please read through this information, and keep it to hand, so you know what to do.

One thing always applies though:

**If you are in any doubt, contact either Phoenix or Bath & NE Somerset Social Services.**

### Safeguarding Procedure

#### **1 You think abuse has or may have occurred. Act immediately.**

Make sure the person is safe.

Inform your line manager immediately.

Contact the police if it is thought a crime has just been committed.

Record details of the allegation.



#### **2 Bringing the concern to the attention of Your Manager who in turn will contact Sirona Care and Health, EDT or the Police.**

Your manager discusses the concerns with a senior manager or trustee or contacts the local authority referral agency or the police straight away.



#### **3 Sirona Care and Health or AWP will coordinate an investigation.**

If necessary they will hold a strategy discussion or meeting to decide what action to take next.

They might decide to call the police.

You might need to give a statement to Sirona or the police.

Social services or the police will decide what to do next.

## The Procedure in Detail

SAFEGUARDING IS EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS - Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone. If we have concerns that someone is being abused our loyalty to the vulnerable person comes before anything else – our group, other service users, our colleagues and the person's friends and family.

DOING NOTHING IS NOT AN OPTION - If we know or suspect that a vulnerable adult is being abused, we will do something about it and ensure our work is properly recorded.

### What is a vulnerable person?

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The definition of a vulnerable adult is a person over the age of 18 years who:

- Is or may be in need of / eligible for Community Care Services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness
- OR is unable to protect him / herself from significant harm or exploitation

A vulnerable person may fall into any one of the following groups: older and frail people; people with a mental health need, a learning difficulty, a physical impairment, a sensory impairment; people who are substance or alcohol dependent; or family carers providing assistance to another vulnerable adult.

### What is abuse?

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It is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other persons(s) or group of people. Abuse may be single or repeated acts. It can be:

- **Physical:** for example, hitting, slapping, burning, pushing, restraining or giving the wrong medication.
- **Psychological** and emotional: for example, shouting, swearing, frightening, blaming, ignoring or humiliating a person, threats of harm or abandonment, intimidation, verbal abuse.
- **Financial:** including the illegal or unauthorised use of a person's property, money, pension book or other valuables, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance.
- **Sexual:** such as forcing a person to take part in any sexual activity without his or her informed consent – this can occur in any relationship.
- **Discriminatory:** including racist or sexist remarks or comments based on a person's disability, age or illness, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment. This also includes stopping someone from being involved in religious or cultural activity, services or support networks;
- **Institutional:** the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to vulnerable people. This includes a failure to ensure the necessary safeguards are in place to protect vulnerable adults and maintain good standards of care in accordance with individual needs, including training of staff, supervision and management, record keeping and liaising with other providers of care.
- **Neglect and acts of omission:** including ignoring medical or physical care needs. These can be deliberate or unintentional, amounting to abuse by a carer or self-neglect by the vulnerable person: for example, where a person is deprived of food, heat, clothing, comfort or essential medication, or failing to provide access to appropriate health or social care services.

## **If you think abuse has or may have occurred. Act immediately.**

It is the responsibility of the person first becoming aware of a situation where there may be a vulnerable adult subject to, or at risk of, abuse to take action.

### **How Might We Notice Abuse?**

Concerns about or evidence of abuse can come to us through:

1. A direct disclosure by the vulnerable adult.
2. A complaint or expression of concern by another member of staff, a volunteer, another service user, a carer, a member of the public or relative.
3. An observation of the behaviour of the vulnerable adult by the volunteer, member of staff or carer.

### **Make Safe**

- Deal with the immediate needs of the person. This may mean taking reasonable steps to ensure the adult is in no immediate danger and seeking medical treatment if required as a matter of urgency.
- Do NOT discuss the allegation of abuse with the alleged perpetrator.
- Do NOT disturb or destroy articles that could be used in evidence. Where an assault of some kind is suspected do not wash or bathe the person unless this is associated with first aid treatment necessary to prevent further harm.
- If the allegation is about a staff member or volunteer of any organisation, ensure that the allegation is properly managed. This may include suspending the member(s) of staff or volunteer. The staff member or volunteer is also entitled to support at this stage. Please refer to the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

### **Inform**

- Tell Phoenix SW or the Social Worker if the individual has one.
- Alternatively you can call the Sirona ASIST Team on 01225 396000 where you will be put through to the Duty Social Worker.
- Outside normal office hours, or on weekends or Bank Holidays, contact should be made with the Emergency Duty Team – Tel: 01454 615165.
- Contact the police if you think a crime has just been committed.

### **Record**

Try and record details of the allegation as soon as possible somewhere that can be kept secure. Include:

- a. What you are concerned about: including the date and time of the incident, what the vulnerable adult said about the abuse and how it occurred or what has been reported to you.
- b. The appearance and behaviour of the victim.
- c. Any injuries observed.

### **Useful Contacts**

Phoenix SW Ltd – 07871 305192

Sirona Care and Health Community Interest Company - Tel: 01225 396000. This Service is responsible for taking safeguarding alert / referral information.

Out of Hours – Emergency Duty Team - Tel: 01454 615165 operating outside usual office hours.

Out of Hours On Call Director via St. Martin's Switchboard - Tel: 01225 832382.

B&NES Emergency Medical Service (BEMS) Out of Hours Service - Tel: 03000 339933 (6pm - 8am).

Police - Tel: 0845 4567000. Specify it is a safeguarding issue (999 in an emergency).

Care Quality Commission - Tel: 03000 616161.