

SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

Families United Network is committed to ensuring that vulnerable people who use our services are not abused and that working practices minimise the risk of such abuse. Employees, Trustees and volunteers of Families United Network have a duty to identify abuse and report it.

Definitions

Vulnerable adults are people who are over 18 years of age and are receiving, or may need, services to live in the community. Vulnerable adults may be unable to take care of themselves and unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation by other people.

Abuse can include physical, financial, material, sexual, psychological, discriminatory, emotional or neglect issues. Abuse can take place in any setting, such as in their own home, in someone else's home, in a residential setting, in a day centre or public building, at work, in a public place or in a hospital.

The person responsible for the abuse is often well known to the person being abused and can be a relative or friend, a paid or volunteer carer, another service user or a service provider.

Aim

Families United Network aim to provide services to vulnerable adults in a non-discriminatory and safe environment by employing and training employees and volunteers who practice in such an environment using methods and programmes that enable the individual to feel safe and develop and progress towards achieving their full potential.

Employees and Volunteers

All employees and volunteers working with vulnerable adults are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and therefore will have had to undertake and obtain appropriate DBS clearances, together with at least two references and have undertaken appropriate selection procedures and training.

It is the responsibility of Families United Network to ensure that all employees and all volunteers are aware of vulnerable adults' need for protection. They will be made aware of and understand Charity policies and procedures in relation to their work and will be given instruction on how to identify and report such incidents.

It is the responsibility of employees and volunteers to be familiar with the adult protection policies and procedures and to take appropriate action in line with the policies of Families United Network.

Policy Last Reviewed 10th February 2023

Reviewed by Board of Trustees

Next Review Date due: 10th February 2024

Adult Service Users

As part of the programmes of work undertaken whilst with Families United Network, all adult service users will be made aware of what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. They will also be made aware of the procedures and processes that are available to them to report such incidents of inappropriate or abusive behaviour and the processes that may follow from such reports.

Procedures

Any employees, member or volunteer who has observed or been made aware of potential or actual abuse should, in the first instance, immediately discuss with their Line Manager or named person. If they are not immediately available, then another appropriate representative of the organisation (eg Charity Manager or a Board Trustee) should be informed.

Any adult wishing to report any concerns should, in the first instance talk to a responsible member of the operational management team. If this is impossible or impractical, they should talk to a trusted member of their family or other responsible adult.

Relevant information, including times, dates, witnesses, person providing information, factual descriptions should be noted as soon as possible after the event and recorded on the appropriate paperwork by the named person.

If abuse is suspected, then a referral to Adult Social Services should be made and recorded.

Their help line number is:

Luton Borough
01582 276222
(office hours)
0300 3008123
(outside office hours).
Central Bedfordshire
0300 300 8122
Bedford Borough
01234 547659

The named person will discuss the concerns with parents/carers in a sensitive and tactful manner, unless the individual would be potentially at greater risk by doing this. In this case, further discussions should take place with social services or the police.

All those making a complaint or allegation or expressing concern, whether they are employees, volunteers, service users, parents, carers or members of the public should be reassured that they will be taken seriously, that their comments will usually be treated confidentially, but their concerns may be shared with the appropriate authorities if they or others are at significant risk.

What you **should not do** in any such situation is confront the suspected abuser, destroy any evidence, start to investigate the situation yourself, be judgemental, make promises you cannot keep or take the allegations lightly.

Confidentiality and Recording

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

Details that should be recorded are as follows:

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- The vulnerable adult's name, date of birth, home address and telephone number.
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- The nature of the allegation including dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, what is opinion and what is hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries and any indirect signs or behavioural changes
- Details of witnesses to the incident(s).
- The vulnerable adult's account of what happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Who has been contacted and what was said to them.

What Happens Next

What happens next will depend upon the wishes of the person and the seriousness of the situation. If the individual is in physical danger, then ensuring their safety is paramount.

In response to the referral, trained employees will carry out a careful and sensitive inquiry. Information and advice will be offered so that the adult and their family can make an informed choice as to what they want to happen next.

Complaints against employees or volunteers can result in three types of investigations, a criminal investigation, an adult protection investigation or a disciplinary/misconduct investigation. Once the allegations are received by any other agency, then the resulting process will follow their own Safeguarding Procedures.

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