



SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULT POLICY

1. Policy Statement

A vulnerable Adult “is any person 18 years of age or over who may be in need of community care services, by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and who is or may be unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against harm or serious exploitation”. Bhos will endeavour to ensure vulnerable adults in their care are not abused and to bring to the attention of the Statutory Authorities any report of abuse within the company.

2. Vulnerable Adults may: -

- Be physically or mentally frail
- Suffer from a mental illness, including dementia
- Have a physical or sensory disability
- Have Learning Difficulties
- Have a severe physical illness
- Have acquired brain injury

The Company recognises that they:

- Can be at risk of mistreatment and abuse and that such mistreatment and abuse constitutes a clear infringement of Human Rights.
- Have the right to request that no further action be taken.

3. Definition of Abuse

Adult Abuse is a violation of individuals human and civil rights by any other person or persons.

Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal or psychological, it may be an act of neglect or an omission to act, or it may occur when a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented or cannot consent. Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it.

4. Categories of Abuse

Abuse can be:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional or Psychological
- Through Neglect
- Through Discrimination

N.B: many situations will contain a combination of different kinds of abuse.

WHO MIGHT ABUSE?

- Family
- Relatives
- Partners
- Professional Staff
- Care Workers
- Volunteers
- Other Vulnerable Adults
- Neighbours
- Friends
- Associates / Criminal Elements / Strangers

WHERE ABUSE MIGHT OCCUR

Abuse can take place in any situation, for example:

- At home/residence whether living alone or with others
- Within residential/Day Care Settings
- In Hospital
- In custodial situations
- Where support services are provided
- Public places
- At rehearsals
- In theatres
- Dressing rooms

5. Duty to Respond

All Bhos members have a duty to report any allegations or suspicions of abuse or potential abuse to the Safeguarding Officer.

5.1 Safety

If the vulnerable adult is in immediate danger, or in need of urgent medical attention, action must be taken to ensure their immediate safety and well-being. This may include calling the appropriate emergency services. In cases of serious crimes, the Police should be called immediately. In cases of physical or sexual abuse care should be taken to preserve evidence.

5.2 Response

The way a Safeguarding Officer responds to the vulnerable adult is important. They should listen carefully, not ask questions, give clear information about what they will do next and, as far as they know, what will happen next.

5.3 Recording

The Safeguarding Officer will ensure that a signed copy of the allegation is made as soon as possible. This will include an accurate detailed record of what was said to the them by the vulnerable adult, any significant conversations and what was observed.

5.4 Preserving Evidence

The first concern is the immediate well-being of the victim. However, the preservation of evidence is also of vital importance especially where there is police involvement (i.e. suspected physical or sexual abuse). In the short time before the police arrive what is done/not done can make a vital difference.

6. How will the Safeguarding Officer act?

The Safeguarding Officer may be made aware of possible abuse by:

- Verbal Disclosure by victim or perpetrator
- Through your own observations
- By third party reports

They must:

Remain calm, do not show shock/disbelief and listen carefully to what is said.

Demonstrate sympathy acknowledge regret and concern.

Reassure the victim.

Tell the victim they have done the right thing to alert them to the problem and that they are treating it seriously – and let them know abuse is not their fault.

Any investigation will be conducted sensitively with their full involvement wherever possible. Bhos will take steps to support and where necessary protect them in the future.

Information will only be shared with The Safeguarding Officer, not other Bhos member.

The Safeguarding Officer may have to ask open-ended questions to establish the cause of something they have observed, e.g. "That's a nasty bruise, how did that happen?"

The Safeguarding Officer must not:

- Press for more detail – avoid extra stress and repetition
- Promise to keep secrets
- Make promises you are unable to keep
- Be judgemental
- Break confidentiality agreed between them
- Stop someone freely telling their story
- Contact the alleged abuser or alleged victim
- Disclose to other Bhos members

They must:

- Allow the victim to share whatever is important to them
- Take urgent action to protect from immediate danger
- Avoid "investigation" or making comment about what has happened
- Act in accordance with the vulnerable adult's wishes where possible
- Support and reassure throughout
- Be aware of possible forensic evidence
- Report to the Chairman at the earliest opportunity

7. Recording Process

The Safeguarding Officer will guide the Bhos committee and employees through this process, some basics to remember are:

- Consider the confidentiality issues
- Consider risks to complainant/others/employees
- Record day, date, time, setting those present, witnesses
- Use the persons own words
- Record facts not opinions
- Write legibly, the report may be used in legal proceedings
- Keep a copy in a safe and secure place for future reference
- Communicate and act quickly

The Safeguarding Officer will inform the appropriate authorities. Where the allegation involves a Bhos member, employee, contractor or volunteer, the Chairman must be informed immediately. A full report of the safeguarding alert and the steps taken will be forwarded to the Chairman with immediate effect.