

# Ware Town Council

## Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedure

This Policy was approved by the Council on 23 March 2015

This Policy will be reviewed by one year after last review – reviewed 12.03.18

## **1 Statement**

- 1.1 Ware Town Council considers it the duty of staff, councillors and volunteers to protect vulnerable adults with whom they come into contact from abuse.

## **2 Introduction**

- 2.1 Ware Town Council is involved in providing services for a wide range of people. Some of these people are likely to be 'vulnerable adults.'
- 2.3 Ware Town Council has obligations to strive to protect vulnerable adults who it may believe to be abused or at risk of abuse or neglect.
- 2.4 The policy and procedures have been developed to assist staff, councillors and volunteers in acting on reported or suspected abuse.
- 2.5 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.

### **Who is a vulnerable adult?**

A vulnerable adult is any person aged 18 or over who is or may be in need of community care services because of disability, age or illness, and who:

- is or may be unable to take care of themselves, or
- is unable to protect themselves from significant harm or exploitation.

Vulnerable adults could include older people, people with a visual or hearing impairment, physical disability, learning disabilities or mental health problem and people living with HIV or AIDS.

### **What is abuse?**

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons.

- It may consist of a single act or repeated acts.
- It may be planned or unplanned.
- It may be the result of deliberate intent, negligence or ignorance.
- It may happen when a vulnerable adult is persuaded to enter into a transaction to which they have not consented or cannot consent.

### **Abuse can take many forms:**

- Physical abuse – for example, hitting, pushing, shaking, over medicating or otherwise causing physical harm
- Sexual abuse – for example, unwanted touching, kissing or sexual activity. Or where the vulnerable adult cannot or does not give their consent
- Psychological / emotional abuse - including verbal abuse, intimidation, isolation, humiliation, bullying or the use of threats.
- Financial abuse – theft, exploitation, the illegal or improper use of a person's money, property, pension book, bank account or other belongings.
- Neglect - the repeated deprivation of help that a vulnerable adult needs which, if withdrawn, will cause him or her to suffer.
- Discriminatory abuse - Including racist or sexist abuse, and abuse based on a person's disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

### **Where can abuse happen?**

Abuse can take place in any setting:

- In their own home
- In someone else's home
- In a residential or nursing home
- In a day centre, adult education centre or other establishment
- In a hospital or GP surgery
- At work
- In a public place.

### **Who abuses?**

The person responsible for the abuse is often well known to the adult being abused. They may be:

- A relative, friend or neighbour
- A paid or volunteer carer
- A professional worker
- Another resident or service user
- An occasional visitor or service provider

## **5 Responsibilities of Staff, Councillors and Volunteers**

- 5.1 Paid staff, councillors 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 Town Clerk.

## **6 Disclosure of Abuse**

- 6.1 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 Section 8. All action must proceed urgently and without delay.

## **7 Suspicion of Abuse**

- 7.1 There may be circumstances when a volunteer, councillor or member of staff suspects that a vulnerable adult is being abused or neglected.
- 7.2 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 Section 9.

## **8 Action on Disclosure of Abuse**

- 8.1 There should always be the opportunity to discuss welfare concerns with and seek advice from colleagues, managers and other agencies, but:
- Never delay emergency action to protect a vulnerable adult
  - Always record in writing concerns about a vulnerable adult's welfare, whether or not further action is taken
  - Always record in writing discussions about a vulnerable adult's welfare.
  - 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.
- 8.2 At all times action must proceed urgently.
- 8.3 A staff member, councillor or volunteer informed of abuse should remind the service user that Ware Town Council cannot guarantee confidentiality where a vulnerable person is at risk of abuse or further abuse.
- 8.4 Volunteers should consult with the staff member co-ordinating their service before taking any action.
- 8.5 Additionally, all action taken following a disclosure of abuse should be discussed in advance with the Town Clerk.
- 8.6 In circumstances where a service user declines to disclose, despite some work having been done towards disclosing, it may be necessary to report the alleged abuse without the service user's agreement. In

these circumstances, a service user must be notified in advance of the decision to report to social services.

- 8.7 Any staff member or councillor may report a disclosure of abuse to social services irrespective of the opinion of other staff.
- 8.8 It is important for staff, councillors 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.
- 8.9 Full written records must be maintained of all disclosures and actions following disclosure.

## **9 Action on Suspicion of Abuse**

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  - 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.
- 9.2 At all times action must proceed urgently.
- 9.3 Volunteers should consult with the staff member co-ordinating their service before taking any action.
- 9.4 Additionally, all action taken following suspicion of abuse should be discussed in advance with the Town Clerk.
- 9.5 In all cases of suspected abuse the manager and staff member should discuss whether issues relevant to different cultures and lifestyles have any bearing on the matter.
- 9.6 As an organisation Ware Town Council 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.

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- 9.8 It is important for staff, councillors 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.
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## **10 Making a Referral**

- 10.1 Social services departments have been designated as the lead agencies with responsibility for co-ordinating a response to allegations or concerns of abuse.
- 10.2 Each of Ware Town Council'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.
- 10.3 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.

## **11 Support to Staff, Councillors and Volunteers**

- 11.1 Ware Town Council will support staff, councillors and volunteers in these circumstances. If the social services department need further involvement from staff or volunteers following a report of abuse, the Town Clerk will discuss with the social services department the nature of their needs and how they might be met.

## **12 Allegation of Abuse Made Against a Staff Member, Councillor or Volunteer**

- 12.1 Staff, councillors and volunteers may be subject to abuse allegations. Ware Town Council will offer support in these circumstances, but the social services department will be assisted in their investigation and the disciplinary procedure may be implemented.

## **13 Confidentiality**

- 13.1 Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated according to Data Protection requirements. Information will be stored securely in locked storage with limited access to designated people only. Any electronic data concerning the case will be password protected.

## **14 Preventing Abuse by Staff, Councillors and Volunteers**

- 14.1 It is important that any staff, councillors or volunteers who are likely to be working alone with vulnerable people are thoroughly vetted before being employed. At Ware Town Council this means as well as references being checked there will also be a requirement for offences to be declared and a Disclosure & Barring Service check undertaken.
- 14.2 It should be noted that having a criminal record does not prevent someone from being recruited as a staff member or volunteer or elected as a councillor in all circumstances. Staff should seek the advice of their manager in cases of doubt.
- 14.3 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.

## **15. Contacts**

Hertfordshire County Council Adult Social Services – to report a concern	0300 123 4042
Police Safeguarding Adults from Abuse Team	101 (or in an emergency 999)

