

Community Action Hampshire – trading as Action Hampshire and Action Portsmouth

SAFEGUARDING ADULTS POLICY

All references to Action Hampshire in this document should be deemed to cover and include Action Portsmouth.

Introduction

Action Hampshire believes that everyone has a duty to protect vulnerable adults. This policy sets out the procedure that will be followed to ensure that action is taken quickly when abuse is suspected and that good practice is in place to prevent abuse.

Abuse of a vulnerable person may consist of a single act or repeated acts over time. It may be physical, psychological, or an act of neglect, or occur where a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which they have not, or cannot, give consent. Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in harm to, or exploitation of, the individual.

All local authorities are required by legislation which protects vulnerable adults and children to have in place a procedure for reviewing allegations and reports of abuse. There must be a published process for investigating such reports. It is important that all staff are aware of this local procedure. Activity carried out under the vulnerable adults procedure is usually led by Social Services and will involve other agencies like the police and health service representatives.

Types of abuse

Whilst it is acknowledged that abuse or multiple abuse may take different forms, a consensus has built up around determining abuse in the following ways:

- Physical abuse, including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions.
- Sexual abuse, including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable person has not, or could not, consent and/or was pressured into consenting psychological abuse, including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, verbal or racial abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.
- Financial or material abuse, including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property, inheritance, or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.
- Neglect and acts of omission, including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, and the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

- Emotional abuse, this includes activity which makes people feel worthless, unloved or not good enough, ignoring their privacy and dignity and teasing, shouting or threatening.

The overarching principle of abuse prevention is that the first priority should always be to ensure the safety and protection of vulnerable people and that it is the responsibility of all staff to act on any suspicion or evidence of abuse or neglect.

Responding to an allegation of abuse

It is important that when a person makes an allegation of abuse they are taken seriously, listened to and appropriate action taken. Action Hampshire will ensure that anyone making a complaint, allegation or expressing concern, can be reassured that:

- They will be taken seriously and their comments will receive a positive response from management;
- Their comments will be treated with confidence;
- They will be given support if necessary;
- They will be dealt with in a fair and equitable manner;
- They will be informed of action that has been taken and its outcome.

Investigation of abuse allegations

In all cases of suspected abuse consideration will be given to instituting an internal investigation into the allegations or suspicions, unless joint working arrangements with other agencies dictate that an external investigation or an externally led investigation should take priority. The local vulnerable adults' procedure should also be consulted and the actions set out in the procedure followed.

The objectives of an investigation, subject to any criminal investigation, will be to:

- establish the facts;
- decide what actions are necessary with regard to the vulnerable person;
- decide what actions are necessary with regard to the alleged perpetrator;
- decide what actions are necessary with regard to the management of Action Hampshire's services.

The investigation should not delay the intervention required for the protection of the vulnerable person.

As a matter of course allegations of criminal behaviour will be reported to the police and other agencies as required.

Allegations in respect of employees or volunteers will be fully investigated. Employees may be suspended pending the outcome of the investigation which if proven could result in dismissal.

Volunteers may be asked not to continue with the voluntary activity pending the outcome of the investigation which if proven could result in the withdrawal from volunteering.

Action Hampshire may make referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service in accordance with relevant legislation.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Action Hampshire recognises female genital mutilation (FGM) as a safeguarding issue. It is also sometimes referred to as female circumcision.

FGM is a collective term for procedures that remove part or all of the external female genitalia for cultural or other non-medical reasons.

The FGM Act (2003) makes it an offence for UK nationals or permanent UK residents to carry out FGM abroad, or to aid, abet or procure the carrying out of FGM abroad – even in countries where FGM is legal.

If FGM is suspected, disclosed or identified, Action Hampshire will:

- follow local child protection procedures
- contact local Children's Services (if under 18)
- encourage it to be reported to the police (if over 18)