

## Welland Seniors Forum Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults policy

The abuse of vulnerable adults is commonly hidden (by both the victim and the alleged perpetrator). The most likely perpetrator is a care-giver or someone else close to the victim. It is important that everyone who comes into contact with potentially vulnerable adults (eg older people) has an important role to play in their protection and safeguarding. Concerns may be raised by anyone working with or knowing the vulnerable adult. It is vital to listen to and take concerns seriously.

### What is a Vulnerable Adult?

The broad definition of a 'vulnerable adult' referred to in the 1997 Consultation Paper *'Who decides?'* issued by the Lord Chancellor's Department, is a person

**"who is or 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 him or herself or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation".**

Age UK estimate that 5-10% of elderly people are being abused at any one time and most instances of abuse are not reported. 60% of the reported cases are among the elderly and those with learning disabilities and 80% of perpetrators are a close relative, other service user, a paid carer or staff member. Many frail or confused older people are especially vulnerable.

### What is Abuse?

Abuse may be a single or repeated occurrence. It may be: physical, sexual, psychological, financial or material, it may be neglect or acts of omission, it may be discriminatory, institutional, domestic abuse and violence, and/or significant harm.

These can be described as follows:

- **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 adult has not consented, could not consent or was pressured into consenting
- **psychological abuse** - including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks
- **financial or material abuse** - including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or 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, withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating
- **discriminatory abuse** - including racist, sexist, that based on a person's disability and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

Whilst it is not anticipated that members of Welland Senior Forum (WSF) will come into contact with vulnerable adults it is considered important that all officers of the WSF

committee are aware of safeguarding issues related to vulnerable adults and should know where they can refer safeguarding issues to and have access to contact details for other agencies who deal with safeguarding issues.

### **Confidentiality.**

It is important to remember that confidentiality is vital at all stages of this process and consent to refer safeguarding concerns should be sought from the vulnerable adult in question. If a vulnerable adult, with capacity to consent, does not give consent it may be necessary to disclose if:

- The vulnerable adult is being subjected to abuse on a continuous basis
- They are under undue influence not to give consent
- They are subjected to a type of abuse that constitutes a crime
- Other vulnerable adults / children are being placed at risk.