

## **INTRODUCTION**

Sight Loss Shropshire (SLS) is committed to safeguarding everyone who uses our services.

All adults have the right to be safe from harm and should be able to live free from fear of abuse, neglect and exploitation.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to outline the responsibility of everyone working for, or on behalf of, SLS towards adults at risk and the procedure for addressing protection issues.

It is the responsibility of everyone working for, or on behalf of, SLS to act on any suspicion or evidence of abuse or neglect and to pass on their concerns to a responsible person/agency.

This policy applies to all employees, committee members, trustees and volunteers of SLS.

## **REVIEW**

This policy is due for review every 12 months unless an incident or new legislation or guidance suggests the need for an interim review. The SLS Trustees are responsible for this review.

Next review date: January 2024

## **DEFINITIONS**

An **adult at risk** is commonly defined as a person over the age of 18 who:

- has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and
- is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect and
- as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect

**Abuse** is defined as “mistreatment by any other person or persons that violates a person’s human and civil rights”.

Some key points:

- There are different types of abuse, such as: physical, sexual, psychological, financial, neglect or acts of omission and discrimination (see Appendix A)
- The level of abuse can vary, from treating someone with disrespect in a way that significantly affects the person’s quality of life, to causing actual physical or mental suffering.
- The adult at risk may not realise that they are being abused. They may be reluctant to assert themselves for fear of upsetting the abuser or making situation worse.
- Abuse can happen anywhere – in a person’s home or workplace, or in a public place.
- Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the individual.
- Abuse can be perpetrated by someone known to the person being abused, such as a paid carer, a health worker, relative, friend, or neighbour - or by a stranger.
- Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts

- Abuse 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

### **IN THE EVENT OF AN ALLEGATION OR INCIDENT**

Anyone who witnesses or suspects abusive behaviour towards an adult at risk has a duty to record the details and report it to the SLS Safeguarding Lead (see Appendix B).

The person who first encounters a case of alleged abuse is not responsible for deciding whether abuse has occurred. This will be dealt with by professional adult protection agencies.

Where possible, consent should be obtained before sharing personal information with third parties but, in some circumstances, obtaining consent may be neither possible nor desirable. The safety and welfare of the adult at risk is the priority.

The SLS Safeguarding Lead will record an allegation or reported incident and contact the appropriate Adult Protection Team on the same working day where possible.

The SLS Safeguarding Lead's report will be kept confidential and only shared with appropriate authorities.

Allegations of abuse made against anyone working or volunteering for SLS will be thoroughly investigated by the Safeguarding Lead. Serious breaches may lead to suspension and, if necessary, dismissal.

### **RESPONDING APPROPRIATELY TO AN ALLEGATION OF ABUSE**

In the event of an incident or an adult at risk disclosing that they have been abused:

#### **DO**

- Stay calm and listen
- Offer support and reassurance
- Remember personal and physical boundaries
- Make it clear that you will be informing the SLS Safeguarding Lead about the conversation (even if the adult at risk does not want you to)
- Make some notes afterwards (basic facts, date, time, other people present) but not personally identifiable information
- Contact the SLS Safeguarding Lead

#### **DON'T**

- Panic
- Ignore the allegation or be dismissive of the concern
- Ask leading or prompting questions
- Make assumptions or presumptions
- Make promises
- Worry about reporting an allegation or concern

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Protection of adults at risk raises issues of confidentiality that must be clearly understood by all.

Staff, volunteers and trustees have a responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of adults at risk with other professionals, particularly investigative agencies and adult social services.

## **Safeguarding Policy**

All personal information regarding an adult at risk will be kept confidential. All written records will be kept in a secure area for a specific time as identified in data protection guidelines. Records will only record details required in the Cause for Concern report.

If an adult confides in a member of staff or volunteer and requests that the information is kept secret, it is important that the adult is told sensitively that he or she has a responsibility to refer cases of alleged abuse to the appropriate agencies. Within that context, the adult must, however, be assured that the matter will be disclosed only to people who need to know about it.

Where possible, it is desirable that consent is obtained from the adult before sharing personal information with third parties. However, in some circumstances obtaining consent may be neither possible nor desirable as the safety and welfare of the adult at risk is the priority.

The Safeguarding Lead must assure the adult that they will always be informed of any action to be taken and why. The adults' involvement in the process of sharing information must be fully considered and their wishes and feelings taken into account.

Issues surrounding abuse or potential abuse are highly sensitive and must be treated as confidential. SLS staff, SLS volunteers SLS Committee members and SLS trustees must respect the person's right to confidentiality and must not disclose any information about the case to anyone who does not 'need to know.'

## **BOUNDARIES**

All contact with adults at risk should take place in public spaces. Do not meet adults at risk in their own homes or offer them lifts.

Do not enter into any social or other non-work arrangements with an adult at risk with whom you are working. Do not give out personal contact information and only share personal information that you are comfortable with sharing.

The exchange of gifts is not appropriate and could be considered as a bribe or inducement, and give rise to allegations of improper conduct.

Physical contact is not acceptable unless it is to prevent accident or injury or to provide medical assistance. The consent of the affected person, or where appropriate and possible the consent from those with caring responsibility, should be obtained before such assistance is offered.

## **DISCLOSURE & BARRING SERVICE CHECKS**

The Disclosure and Barring Service identifies certain activities as regulated and specified under statutory stipulations. Anyone involved in regulated activity with vulnerable adults will be subject to a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

At present SLS does not undertake any regulated activities, and none are anticipated to be introduced in the foreseeable future.