

THE BRIDGES COMMUNITY TRUST

P14: Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy



Designated Vulnerable Adult Protection Officer:

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1. Statement of Purpose

- 1.1 The Bridges Community Trust is fully committed to safeguarding vulnerable adults, notably ensuring they are protected and kept safe from harm, abuse and exploitation and enabling them to be involved in any decisions that directly affect them. The Bridges Community Trust has a duty of care to implement effective policies and procedures for safeguarding the welfare of vulnerable adults. In order to achieve this we will ensure our staff and volunteers are carefully selected, screened, trained and supervised. Furthermore we will endeavour to keep up to date with national developments relating to the care and protection of vulnerable adults.
- 1.2 This Vulnerable Adults Policy will be followed by all staff and volunteers of The Bridges Community Trust and followed and promoted by those in a position of leadership within the organisation.
- 1.3 The purpose of TBCT is to promote any charitable purpose for the benefit of inhabitants of The Meadows, Nottingham, and in particular the relief of poverty, suffering or distress; the advancement of education; the promotion of health; the provision of recreation and leisure facilities in the interests of social welfare; and the improvement of efficiency of charities and community organisations in direct pursuit of their charitable objects by the provision of education and training.
- 1.4 The organisation does not often undertake activities with vulnerable adults; however should these occur then we know that being a vulnerable adult may make them vulnerable to abuse. The purpose of this policy is to make sure that the actions of any person in the context of the work carried out by the organisation are transparent and safeguard and promote the welfare of vulnerable adults.
- 1.5 If any carer or other person has any concerns about the conduct of any member of the organisation in relation to their behaviour with a vulnerable adult, this should be raised in the first instance with the designated vulnerable adult protection officer.

2. Principles

- 2.1 The Bridges Community Trust's vulnerable adult policy is based on the following key principles:
- The welfare of a vulnerable adult will always be paramount
 - The rights, wishes and feelings of vulnerable adults will be respected and listened to
- 2.2 A Vulnerable Adult is defined as:
A person aged 18 years or over 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'.
- 2.3 Those people in positions of responsibility within the organisation will work in accordance with the interests of vulnerable adults and follow the policy outlined below.

- 2.4 Those people in positions of responsibility within the organisation will ensure that the same opportunities are available to everyone and that all differences between individuals are treated with respect.
- 2.5 All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- 2.6 All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to report concerns to the designated vulnerable adult protection officer.
- 2.7 Staff and volunteers will receive appropriate training and supervision to adopt and abide by the appropriate codes of conduct and policies.
- 2.8 The Bridges Community Trust is committed to promoting good practice.
- 2.9 This policy will be reviewed regularly.

3. Recognition of Abuse or Neglect

- 3.1 Abuse or neglect of a vulnerable adult is caused by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm.
- 3.2 **Physical Abuse** may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a vulnerable adult. Physical harm may also be caused when a carer feigns the symptoms, of, or deliberately causes ill health to a vulnerable adult whom they are looking after.
- 3.3 **Emotional Abuse** is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a vulnerable adult such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the vulnerable adult's emotional state. It may involve conveying to vulnerable adults that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a vulnerable adult, though it may occur alone.
- 3.4 **Sexual Abuse** involves forcing or enticing a vulnerable adult to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the vulnerable adult is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (eg rape or buggery) or non-penetrative acts. Sexual Abuse may involve verbal or non-contact activities.
- 3.5 **Financial Abuse** is when a carer or other person takes control or attempts to take control of a vulnerable adult's finances without their knowledge or consent (this would include a situation where consent has been provided under duress).
- 3.6 **Neglect** is the persistent failure to meet a person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the vulnerable adult's health or wellbeing. It may involve a carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a vulnerable adult from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a vulnerable adult's basic emotional needs.

4. Procedures

- 4.1 The responsibility for managing this policy lies with the designated vulnerable adult protection officer. All concerns should be viewed as serious and will be referred to the designated vulnerable adult protection officer. The designated vulnerable adult protection officer will ensure that all workers, through training and discussion are familiar with the categories of abuse and the signs and symptoms for recognising abuse.
- 4.2 It is the responsibility of all workers to report any concerns. The designated person will maintain records relating to vulnerable adult protection issues, this information will be held confidentially and in a secure location.
- 4.3 DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks will be carried out on staff and volunteers who work with vulnerable adults when deemed appropriate by The Meadows Partnership Trust designated vulnerable adult protection officer.
- 4.4 Individuals within the organisation need to be alert to the potential abuse of vulnerable adults, both within their homes and also from other sources including abuse by members of the organisation. There is an expected responsibility for all members of the organisation to respond to any suspected or actual abuse of vulnerable adults in accordance with these procedures.
- 4.5 **What to do if a vulnerable adults talk to you about abuse or neglect:** It is recognised that a vulnerable adult may seek you out to share information about abuse or neglect, or talk spontaneously individually or in groups when you are present. In these situations you must:
- Listen carefully; DO NOT directly question the vulnerable adult.
 - Give the vulnerable adult time and attention.
 - Allow them to give a spontaneous account; do not stop a vulnerable adult who is freely recalling significant events.
 - Make an accurate record of the information you have been given taking care to record the timing, setting and people present, the vulnerable adults presentation as well as what was said. Do not throw this away as it may later be needed as evidence.
 - Use the vulnerable adults own words where possible.
 - Explain that you cannot promise not to speak to others about the information they have shared.
 - Reassure the vulnerable adult that:
 - ✓ you are glad they have told you
 - ✓ they have not done anything wrong
 - ✓ what you are going to do next
 - Explain that you will need to get help to keep the vulnerable adult safe.
 - Do NOT ask the vulnerable adult to repeat his or her account of events to anyone.
 - **Complete a referral form as soon as possible after speaking to the vulnerable adult**, ideally within an hour.
- 4.6 Referral
- ALL concerns must be reported to the designated vulnerable adult protection officer through the use of the *Vulnerable Adult Protection Referral Form (P14A)*.

- The vulnerable adult protection officer may then broaden the consultation internally and externally.
- The concern will be clarified and a decision will be made on whether social services/the police should be contacted.
- If external agencies are not contacted then the vulnerable adult will be monitored and observed and any further issues recorded.
- If external agencies are contacted then the designated vulnerable adult protection officer will liaise with the external agencies on the matter.
- If the concerns relate to an employee/volunteer of the trust then the issue should be reported to the police to investigate further. The employee/volunteer should be closely supervised while any concerns are being investigated.
- The only exception to this procedure will be if the designated vulnerable adult protection officer is not available (on holiday/sick e.t.c...) or named as having some involvement in the abuse. In this case the first contact will be the deputy vulnerable adult protection officer of The Bridges Community Trust.
- There will be a 'vulnerable adult protection file' held at the trusts office. This file will contain a copy of the vulnerable adult protection policy, referral forms and contact details for both the vulnerable adult protection officer and the deputy vulnerable adult protection officer with an explanation of what to do with the form and method of contacting the vulnerable adult protection officer. All staff and volunteers will be made aware that this file exists and told where the file is kept. They will be reminded of it's location on an annual basis.
- ***The employee or volunteer reporting the abuse should not discuss this matter with anyone other than the designated vulnerable adult protection officer (or their deputy as in the circumstances stated above).***

5. Risk Assessment

Before undertaking any activity with vulnerable adults, a risk assessment will be carried out. This will be carried out in line with our *Risk Assessment Policy (P19)*.

6. Confidentiality

In line with The Bridges Community Trusts *Confidentiality Policy (P16)*, all records made in relation to a referral will be kept confidentially and in a secure place. Information in relation to vulnerable adult protection concerns should be shared on a "need to know" basis. However, the sharing of information is vital to vulnerable adult protection and, therefore, the issue of confidentiality is secondary to an adult's need for protection.

7. Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers working with Vulnerable Adults

7.1 Staff and volunteers should:

- Play their part in helping to develop an ethos where all people matter and are treated equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Always put the care, welfare and safety needs of a vulnerable adult first.
- Respect a vulnerable adult's right to be involved in making choices and decisions which directly affect them.
- Listen attentively to any ideas and views a vulnerable adult wants to share.

- Respect a vulnerable adults culture (for example their faith and religious beliefs).
- Respect a vulnerable adult's right to privacy and personal space.
- Respond sensitively to vulnerable adults who seem anxious about participating in certain activities.
- Speak to a member of staff immediately if they suspect that a vulnerable adult is experiencing bullying or harassment.
- Be aware of the vulnerability of some groups to being isolated and hurt (for example, adults with physical disabilities and learning difficulties; adults from Gypsy & Traveller communities; Black and Minority Ethnic adults).
- Listen carefully to any vulnerable adult who 'tells them' (sometimes through drawings and behaviour as well as words) that they are being harmed and report what they discover immediately to the designated vulnerable adult protection officer.
- Report immediately any suspicion that a vulnerable adult could be at risk of harm or abuse.
- Never dismiss what a vulnerable adult says as 'lies' or exaggeration.
- Only restrain a vulnerable adult who is at imminent risk of inflicting harm to themselves or others or is at risk of damaging property.
- Never underestimate the contribution that they can make to the development of safe communities for vulnerable adults.

7.2 Staff and volunteers should not:

- Exaggerate or trivialise another worker's concerns about a vulnerable adult or ignore an allegation or suspicion of abuse in the hope that it will either 'go away' or that 'someone else will deal with it'.
- Discuss personal issues about a vulnerable adult or their family with other people except with the vulnerable adult protection officer, when they are concerned about the vulnerable adults wellbeing.
- Allow a vulnerable adult to be bullied or harmed by anyone in the organisation.

7.3 Staff and volunteers should never:

- Engage in sexually provocative games.
- Allow themselves or others to engage in touching a vulnerable adult in a sexually provocative manner.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a vulnerable adult, even in fun.
- Form inappropriate emotional or physical relationships with vulnerable adults.
- Harass or intimidate a vulnerable adult or worker because of age, 'race', gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, socio economic class or disability.
- Invite or allow a vulnerable adult to stay with them at their home.