

## HAMPSHIRE PARENT CARER NETWORK SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY

Date introduced:	September 2022
Next Review Date:	September 2023

The aim of this policy is to provide Hampshire Parent Carer Network (HPCN) staff, steering group members and volunteers with clear guidance about their role and responsibilities in safeguarding vulnerable adults. A vulnerable adult refers to a person aged 18 years or over who may be unable to protect themselves from significant harm or serious exploitation because of physical or mental disability, age or illness. The first priority should always be the safety and protection of vulnerable adults.

Whilst it is not the responsibility of HPCN to determine whether or not abuse has taken place (this is undertaken in liaison with external child protection professionals), it is everyone's responsibility to report any concerns in relation to children, or vulnerable adults to the relevant authority.

HPCN does not have direct contact with vulnerable adults, however by the nature of the organisation we work directly with parent carers of disabled children and young people. Therefore it is essential that we have robust policies and procedures.

Parent carers of vulnerable adults who attend events or are members of HPCN need to be aware that any concerns that a vulnerable adult has, or may be experiencing harm, which comes to the attention of HPCN may be referred to the local statutory agency.

HPCN will use safe recruitment practices (including the taking of references and a DBS check) to ensure they are suitable individuals to take on a role which puts them into contact with large numbers of parent carers. Staff, steering group members and volunteers will be provided with training and induction to assist them to fulfil their duties.

Whilst recognising that the HPCN will have little direct contact with vulnerable adults, its work with parent carers means that they may indirectly have contact with vulnerable adults, and certainly have contact with parent carers who often live in particularly challenging situations. Therefore these procedures are designed to support the recognition of abuse of vulnerable adults, and provide clear guidance about what processes and actions should be taken if this is identified to ensure that vulnerable adults are safeguarded and protected.

HPCN will work in accordance with Hampshire County Council Guidelines for Safeguarding Adults.

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal or psychological, it 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. Abuse can occur in any relationship, and it may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it.

The Department of Health in its 'No Secrets' report suggests the following as the main types of abuse:

- **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 or 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, the 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, age or sexuality and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

In addition, the Care 2014 sets out the following areas which are recognised forms of abuse:

- **Domestic Violence** including psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse, so-called 'honour' based violence.
- **Modern Slavery** encompassing slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.
- **Organisational Abuse** including neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one's own home. This may range from one off incidents to on-going will-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.
- **Self Neglect** including neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.

Guidance on how to respond to a vulnerable adult disclosing abuse:

**DO:**

- Do treat any allegations extremely seriously and act at all times towards the vulnerable adult as if you believe what they are saying.
- Do tell the vulnerable adult they are right to tell you.
- Do reassure them that they are not to blame.

- Do be honest about your own position, who you have to tell and why.
- Do tell the vulnerable adult what you are doing and when, and keep them up to date with what is happening.
- Do take further action, you may be the only person in a position to prevent future abuse, tell your nominated Safeguarding Lead immediately.
- Do write down everything said and what was done.

**DON'T:**

- Don't make promises you can't keep.
- Don't interrogate the vulnerable adult, it is not your job to carry out an investigation, this will be up to the police and adult social care, who have experience in this.
- Don't cast doubt on what the vulnerable adult has told you, don't interrupt or change the subject.
- Don't say anything that makes the vulnerable adult feel responsible for the abuse.
- Don't do nothing, make sure you tell your nominated Safeguarding Lead immediately, they will know how to follow this up and where to go for further advice.

It is good practice to be as open and honest as possible with parent carers about any concerns and if you need to make a referral to social care, you should normally discuss this with the parent carer before you do. However, inability to inform parent carers should not prevent a referral being made. It would then be a joint decision with social services about how and when the parents should be approached and by whom.

However you should **NOT** discuss your concerns with parent carer in the following circumstances:

- Where sexual abuse or sexual exploitation is suspected
- Where organised or multiple abuse is suspected.
- Where Fabricated or Induced Illness (previously known as Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy) is suspected
- Where Female Genital Mutilation is the concern
- In cases of suspected Forced Marriage
- Where contacting or discussing the referral would place a vulnerable adult, yourself, or others at immediate risk.

If a parent carer discloses abuse to you;

**DO:**

- If you enter into a discussion with a parent carer who you believe may begin to disclose information which leads you to believe that a vulnerable adult has suffered, or may suffer harm, make sure they know as soon as possible that you will not be able to keep this information to yourself.
- Do treat any allegations extremely seriously and act at all times towards the parent carer as if you believe what they are saying.
- Do tell the parent carer they are right to tell you.
- Do be honest about who you have to tell and why.
- If a referral needs to be made to safeguarding, encourage the parent carer to make the referral themselves. Support them if necessary, however be clear that if they won't do this you will have to do this.

- Do make sure you are clear (if possible) where the vulnerable adult is at the current time, and consider their immediate safety.
- If you have to make the referral, do tell the parent carer what you are doing and when, and keep them up to date with what is happening.
- Do write down everything said and what was done.

**DON'T:**

- Don't make promises you can't keep, e.g. tell people they can tell you things in confidence.
- Don't interrogate the parent carer, it is not your job to carry out an investigation, this will be up to the police and adult social care, who have experience in this.
- Don't do nothing, make sure you tell your nominated Safeguarding Lead immediately, they will know how to follow this up and where to go for further advice.

**Emergency Situations**

If emergency medical attention is required this can be secured by calling an ambulance (dial 999) or taking the vulnerable adult to the nearest Accident and Emergency Department.

If a vulnerable adult is in immediate danger the police should be contacted (dial 999) as they alone have the power to remove a vulnerable adult immediately if protection is necessary, via their powers to use Police Protection

It is vitally important that any disclosure made in confidence is recorded factually as soon as possible; this is whether or not the matter is taken to another authority.

An accurate account should be made of:

- Date and time of what has occurred and the time the disclosure was made.
- Names of people who were involved.
- What was said or done by whom.
- Any action taken by the group to gather information and refer on.
- Any further action, e.g. suspension of a worker or volunteer.
- Where relevant, reasons why there is no referral to a statutory agency.
- Names of person reporting and to whom reported.

The designated member of HPCN responsible for Safeguarding should then use the appropriate reporting systems for the situation. This may be reporting the matter to Local Authorities, Adult Social Care or the Police. This is why recording all information impartially and accurately is vital as this could be used for evidence for later use.

The nominated Safeguarding Advisor for HPCN is Carol Dixon. The role of the nominated officer is to:

- Provide a single point of contact between HPCN and the statutory child protection agencies -adults social care and the police.
- Offer consultation and advice about safeguarding concerns pertaining to the activity of HPCN.