



## Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy MAY 2015

### 1.0 Introduction

STaSS believes that every individual who uses our services has a right to a life free from fear, to be treated with dignity and respect, to have their choice respected and not to be forced to do anything against their will. STaSS believes that everyone has the right to protection from abuse regardless of their age, culture, disability, gender, racial origin, language, religious beliefs or sexual orientation.

### 2.0 The Policy

STaSS recognises the importance of its support services to families, children, adults and young people and its particular responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of those who are vulnerable or at risk.

This requires us to:

- Listen to, value, encourage and support those we work with.
- Provide clear internal procedures for identifying and dealing with concerns about possible abuse and ensure the procedures are followed.
- Provide effective management for staff, students and volunteers through supervision, support and training.
- Adopt and promote a code of conduct for staff.
- Train staff to continually assess the well-being of all service users and to be on the look-out for signs of abuse.
- Ensure that all staff, volunteers and any students are DBS approved and that references for staff and volunteers are taken up. Any students on placement must have a recent DBS, approved by their college before their placement with STaSS commences and the college must have taken up 2 good references for each student.
- Share information about safeguarding adults and good practice with service users, staff, students and volunteers.
- Work with statutory services and other agencies as necessary

This policy applies to all vulnerable people over the age of 18 with whom we work and to all trustees, staff, students and volunteers working for STaSS.

All allegations or concerns about abuse must be taken seriously and reported to the director, or in her absence, the Service co-ordinator immediately and further action will be taken as necessary.

### 3.0 Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, a vulnerable adult is “anyone over the age of 18 who: is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and is or may be unable to take care of herself or himself or is unable to protect themselves against significant harm or serious exploitation”. “No Secrets” - Department of Health [2000].

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People who may be included in a definition of “Vulnerable Person”:

- People with physical disabilities including sensory impairment
- People with a learning disability
- People with sensory impairment
- People with mental health needs including dementia
- People who misuse substances or alcohol
- People who are physically or mentally frail

Service users outside these definitions may also be vulnerable due to low self-esteem, social exclusion, offending history, homelessness, domestic abuse, ethnicity, immigration status etc. It can sometimes be hard to decide if a person is vulnerable. If in doubt, discuss with the Director.

#### 4.0 Responsibilities of Staff, Volunteers and Students

Employees, volunteers and students have a responsibility to be aware and alert to signs that all is not well with a vulnerable person. However, they are not responsible for diagnosing, investigating or providing a therapeutic response to abuse. In addition, not all concerns relate to abuse, there may well be other explanations. It is important to keep an open mind and consider what is known about the vulnerable person and his or her circumstances. All concerns should be reported to the Director or the Service co-ordinator.

#### 5.0 Categories of Abuse

##### Physical abuse:

hitting  
slapping  
pushing  
kicking  
burning  
giving medication that may harm  
disciplining in an inappropriate way

##### Possible signs:

fractures  
bruising  
burns  
pain  
marks  
not wanting to be touched

##### Psychological abuse:

emotional abuse

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verbal abuse  
humiliation

bullying  
the use of threats

**Possible signs:**

being withdrawn  
too eager to do everything they are asked  
showing compulsive behaviour  
not being able to do things they used to  
not being able to concentrate or focus

**Financial or material abuse:**

stealing from the person  
cheating them  
using them for financial gain  
putting pressure on them about wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions  
misusing or stealing their property, possessions or benefits

**Possible signs:**

having unusual difficulty with finances  
not having enough money  
being too protective of money and things they own  
not paying bills  
not having normal home comforts

**Sexual abuse:**

direct or indirect sexual activity where the vulnerable adult cannot or does not agree to it

**Possible signs:**

genital itching, soreness or having a sexually transmitted disease  
using bad language  
not wanting to be touched  
behaving in a sexually inappropriate way  
changes in appearance

**Neglect or acts of omission including:**

withdrawing or not giving the help that a vulnerable adult needs, so causing them to suffer

**Possible signs:**

having pain or discomfort  
being very hungry, thirsty or untidy  
failing health

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**Discriminatory abuse including:**

abusing a person because of their ethnic origin, religion, language, age, sexuality, gender or disability

**Possible signs:**

the person is not receiving the care they require  
their carer is over critical or makes insulting remarks about the person  
the person is made to dress differently from how they wish

**Institutional abuse:**

abuse or mistreatment by an organisation or by any individual within a building where the the person is living or receiving care

**Possible signs:**

the person has no personal clothing or possessions

there is no care plan for them  
he or she is often admitted to hospital  
there are instances of professionals having treated them badly or unsatisfactorily or acting in a way that cause harm to the person

**5.1 Disclosure of Abuse**

If a vulnerable person discloses that they are being abused or any service user discloses that they are involved in the abuse of a vulnerable person, action should be taken in accordance with Section 8. All action must proceed promptly and without delay.

**5.2 Suspicion of Abuse**

There may be circumstances when a member of staff, student or volunteer suspects that a vulnerable adult is being abused or neglected. It is vital that anyone who suspects a vulnerable adult is being neglected or abused discusses the situation immediately with the Director or in her absence the Service co-ordinator. Action should continue as in Section 9.

**5.3 Action to be taken on Disclosure of Abuse**

5.3.1 There will always be the opportunity for staff, students and volunteers to discuss welfare concerns with and seek advice from the Director or Service co-ordinator, but:

- Never delay emergency action to protect a vulnerable adult;
- At all times action must proceed urgently;
- A staff member, student or volunteer informed of abuse should remind the service user that STaSS cannot guarantee confidentiality - Social Services and the Police may become involved - where a vulnerable person is involved
- Always record in writing details of any incidents or concerns about a vulnerable adult's welfare, even if the matter does not go any further at that point. If appropriate, include sketches of the sites and sizes of any injuries. It is important to ensure that the

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note of any conversations held with the vulnerable adult records the same language the vulnerable person used particularly names used for body parts or sexual acts.

5.3.2 Full written records must be maintained of all disclosures and actions following disclosure.

5.3.3 Always make a written record of any meetings about a vulnerable adult's welfare. At the close of the meeting, always reach clear and explicit agreement about who will be taking what action, or that no further action will be taken.

5.3.4 Volunteers and students should consult with the Director, the Service Manager or one of the support workers before taking any action.

5.3.5 Additionally, all action taken following a disclosure of abuse should be discussed in advance with the Director or in her absence, the Service co-ordinator.

5.3.6 In circumstances where a service user declines to disclose, even though attempts have been made by staff to encourage disclosure, it may be necessary to report alleged abuse without the service user's agreement. In these circumstances, a service user must be notified in advance of the decision to report to social services.

5.3.7 Any staff member may report a disclosure of abuse to social services irrespective of the opinion of other staff.

5.3.8 It is important for staff, students and volunteers to make written records of any incidents or concerns that they have as soon as possible and if appropriate to include sketches of sites and sizes of any injuries. Always specify whether you are recording your own suspicions or those of someone else. If it is a third party's suspicions you are recording ensure that you include their name and address, the date of the incident and the date that you were told about the incident.

#### 5.4 Action on Suspicion of Abuse

5.4.1 The opportunity to discuss concerns over welfare with the Director, Service co-ordinator or other agencies should always be available but:

- Never delay emergency action to protect a vulnerable adult
- Always record in writing concerns about a vulnerable adult's welfare, whether further action is taken or not.
- At the close of any discussion, always reach clear and explicit recorded agreement about who will be taking what action, or that no further action will be taken.

5.4.2 At all times, action must proceed urgently.

5.4.3 Students and volunteers should consult with the Director or Service co-ordinator before taking any action.

5.4.4 Additionally, plans made in response to suspicion of abuse should be discussed in advance with the Director or Service co-ordinator.

5.4.5 In all cases of suspected abuse, the Director and staff member/student/volunteer should discuss whether issues relevant to different cultures and lifestyles have any bearing on the matter.

5.4.6 As an organisation, STaSS welcomes the fact that people and lifestyles are diverse and does not make judgements about the acceptability or otherwise of lifestyles. However, it is

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important that this philosophy does not obscure the organisation's responsibility to protect vulnerable people from harm.

5.4.7 Any staff member may report a suspicion of abuse to social services irrespective of the opinions of other staff at:

Adult Social Care Access Team

Milton Keynes Council

1 Saxon Gate East

Milton Keynes

MK9 3HG

Tel: 01908 253772/253773

Email: [ascat@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:ascat@milton-keynes.gov.uk)

5.4.8 It is important for staff and volunteers to make written records of any incidents or concerns that they have as soon as possible and if appropriate to include sketches of sites and sizes of injuries. It is also important to make a record of conversations with the vulnerable person using the **same language the vulnerable person uses** especially names used for body parts or sexual acts.

5.4.9 Full written records must be maintained of all disclosures and actions following disclosure.

## 6.0 Making a Referral

6.1 Social services departments have been designated as the lead agencies with responsibility for co-ordinating a response to allegations or concerns of abuse.

6.2 The Director of STaSS has responsibility for informing the relevant social services department of concerns over the abuse or neglect of vulnerable adults.

6.3 The Director should work within the following timescales for reporting allegations or suspicions of abuse:

Immediate if the vulnerable person is at risk of serious physical harm, or a serious criminal act has taken place or is about to take place, and evidence will need to be kept safe;  
Within 24 hours if it relates to a specific incident which is, or may still be going on, or may happen again.

Within 7 days if it is a more general concern, which does not indicate immediate harm.

## 7.0 Support to Staff, Students and Volunteers

7.1 STaSS will support staff, students and volunteers who are involved in the reporting of incidents involving the abuse or alleged abuse of vulnerable adults and children.

## 8.0 Allegation of Abuse Made Against a Staff Member, Student or Volunteer

8.1 Staff, students and volunteers may be subject to abuse allegations. STaSS may offer support in some circumstances but the social services department will be assisted in their investigations and the disciplinary procedure may be implemented.

## 9.0 Confidentiality

9.1 Confidentiality is central to the work of STaSS and the attention of all staff, students and volunteers is drawn to the "Confidentiality Policy".

9.2 One of the most difficult issues relating to HIV is that of confidentiality. The stigma surrounding HIV means that discrimination and harassment are real factors for many individuals and families if information about their status is known.

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9.3 Individuals and families may chose not to tell anyone about their status, except people who are providing them with a service related to HIV. For many people not familiar with HIV issues, this situation may seem at odds with the desire to provide services and protect people by the sharing of information about them with relevant agencies.

9.4 Workers [including students and volunteers] in the HIV/AIDS field need to be aware that acknowledging contact with an individual or family may implicitly reveal HIV status.

9.5 This makes the issue of the protection of the vulnerable in an organisation like STaSS more complicated and sensitive than it might be other organisations involved with vulnerable adults.

9.6 People who come to use the services of STaSS must be made aware from the very start that there are some situations where their right not to have their status disclosed is compromised by a person's right to be protected from harm.

9.7 These procedures override any parts of the "Confidentiality Policy" with which they may appear to be in conflict.

## 10.0 Preventing Abuse by Staff, Students and Volunteers

10.1 It is important that any staff, students or volunteers who are likely to be working alone with vulnerable people are thoroughly vetted. AT STaSS this means that as well as references being taken up, there will also be a DBS check undertaken. A check will be made with any educational establishment placing students with STaSS to ensure that references for students have been obtained and a recent DBS check carried out.

10.2 It should be noted that having a criminal record does not necessarily prevent someone from being recruited as a staff member or volunteer or taking up a student placement. In case of doubt staff should seek the advice of the Director.

10.3 Reporting a concern about a colleague [another employee, student or volunteer] to the Director or Service co-ordinator may be very hard but the safety and protection of a vulnerable adult must be the priority in any decision that it made.

## Policy Review

The Director and Board of Trustees are responsible for reviewing this policy annually and ensuring that it is compliant with current legislation and good practice.

**REVIEWED MAY 2015, NEXT SCHEDULED REVIEW MAY 2016**

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