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PROTECTING VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY

Many people have heard of child abuse, however, the abuse of vulnerable adults is not so well known. Adult abuse does take place.

This guidance includes information on:

- Who are vulnerable adults
- The types of abuse
- How to report your concerns

Who are vulnerable adults?

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 against significant harm or exploitation.

Whether or not a person is vulnerable in these cases will depend upon surrounding circumstances, environment and each case must be judged on its own merits.

What is abuse?

Abuse is defined as: a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or person.

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 be broadly defined under the following categories:

- **Physical abuse**

Physical abuse is the non-accidental infliction of physical force that results (or could result) in bodily injury, pain or impairment. Signs might include burns, bruising, scratches or accidents that cannot be explained, misuses of medication or forcing someone, for example, to stay in a care home against their wishes.

- **Neglect**

Neglect is when a vulnerable adult does not have their basic needs met, such as adequate food or warmth or help with personal hygiene. Signs might include deteriorating health, appearance or mood.

Financial abuse is when a vulnerable adult is exploited for financial gain e.g. by a relative or door-to-door salesman. Often valuables will go missing in the home or there may be a change in financial circumstances that cannot be explained.





- **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse is direct or indirect involvement in sexual activity that the vulnerable adult has not or could not consent to or was pressurised or manipulated into. Signs can include changes in physical behaviour or physical discomfort.

- **Psychological abuse**

Psychological abuse is that which impinges on the emotional health and development of individuals. It might be emotional abuse such as threats of harm or abandonment, enforced isolation, blaming or controlling behaviour, or verbal and racial insults. Signs may be fear, confusion or disturbed sleep.

- **Discriminatory abuse**

Discriminatory abuse consists of abusive or derisive attitudes or behaviour based on a person's sex, sexuality, ethnic origin, race, age or disability

- **Professional abuse**

This is the misuse of a therapeutic power and abuse of trust by professionals and the failure to act on suspected abuse/crimes

Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts.

Who may be abusers?

People who abuse:

- Are often well known to their victims but can be strangers
- Might be a relative, partner, son or daughter, friend or neighbour, a paid or voluntary worker, or a health or social care worker
- Could be another vulnerable adult, service user or group member
- May not realise they are abusing and can sometimes act out of character and abuse because of the stress of caring

Where does abuse take place?

Abuse can take place in a wide range of settings such as:

- The vulnerable adult's home
- Transportation including a carer's vehicle
- A carer's home
- A day centre
- A community centre
- A care home
- A hospital
- The workplace
- Educational institutions

This list is not exhaustive.

Recognising the signs and indicators of abuse

Where abuse has occurred one or more of the following signs or indicators may have been present. None of these definitively suggest abuse, however, suspicions should be heightened if one or a combination of these indicators exists.

- Changes in a person's behaviour
- Unexplained changes in a person's circumstances
- Physical signs of abuse





- Withdrawal of verbal communication
- A person appearing withdrawn
- Unexplained reactions towards particular individuals or settings
- Dislike of being touched and flinching on being touched
- Disturbed sleep patterns
- Frequent or regular visits to the general practitioner or the accident and emergency department or hospital admissions
- Panic attacks
- Absconding / wandering
- Obsessive or challenging behaviour
- Self harm
- History of domestic violence

Reporting and recording concerns

Staff members and volunteers involved with WESSEX SHIA ITHNA ASHERI JAMAAT are required to promptly pass on any concerns about possible abuse of vulnerable adults or concerns about their welfare and safety to the Designated Staff Member. The designated person is Taki Jaffer (Vice President). If the Designated Person is not available, the staff member/volunteer is required to contact Abbas Rahim (Hon Secretary) and if he is not available then Roshan Gangji (Vice President)

If you are concerned that a person is, or may be being abused you have a responsibility and duty to report it.

If a person tells you that they are being abused or you suspect that a person is being abused:

- Allow the person to speak without interruption, listening carefully, accepting what is said without passing judgement
- Record the words of the person in writing as soon as is practical, including time, date and location
- Discuss that you must pass the information on, who will be informed and why

This initial conversation could be regarded as a source of evidence. Therefore it is important to listen and not ask leading questions which may suggest or invite an anticipated or acceptable answer, and to record the concerns precisely, as expressed by the person. This initial conversation may become the basis for a formal interview at a later date.

Some things which must be avoided

You must refer. You must NOT investigate

- Do NOT confront the alleged abuser - **this may put you and the vulnerable adult at risk. This could be the role of the police during the investigation, if a criminal offence has been committed.**
- **Do NOT begin an investigation on your own** – there are people from the police and Adults and Community Care who have been trained to carry out investigations
- Do NOT damage or destroy possible evidence – **be aware that you may be the first person to hear about the abuse. It is important that the person gives their full account to the people who have a role in the investigation. If a**





physical or sexual assault may have been committed the police need to be informed immediately in order to gather possible forensic evidence.

Reporting / What to do next

Doing nothing is NOT an option

- If you suspect that a person is being abused
- If a person tells you about abuse by someone else
- If you have any concerns about abuse

You must contact the Designated Person or one of the substitutes

ACTION BY DESIGNATED PERSONS

- The Designated Person must carefully note all the details reported including the circumstances of the alleged incident.
- These details must then be reported to the WESSEX SHIA ITHNA ASHERI JAMAAT executive committee. The staff member or volunteer making the initial report will be kept informed of progress of the investigation as appropriate.

Recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers

The following measures need to be taken to reduce the risk of abuse by staff members and volunteers.

The management of WESSEX SHIA ITHNA ASHERI JAMAAT need to:

- Ensure that all adults working (voluntary or paid) with WESSEX SHIA ITHNA ASHERI JAMAAT who have contact with vulnerable adults during the course of their employment are aware of the fact that such work is exempt from the provision laid down in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and will therefore be subject to a Criminals Records Bureau (CRB) check prior to starting work
- Require all potential workers to provide references, attend interview and sign an agreement to a CRB check and to work for a probationary period. Qualification certificates will be required and past employers will be contacted directly. Original birth certificates or passports will be used to verify dates of birth.
- All new projects undertaken by WESSEX SHIA ITHNA ASHERI JAMAAT should consider issues relating to the protection of vulnerable adults, and in particular, ensure that training is given to all adults involved with the care of vulnerable adults, which will help them recognise and respond to suspected abuse of vulnerable adults whether physical, neglect, financial, sexual, psychological or discriminatory.
- Never allow an unregistered (i.e. not CRB checked) person alone with a vulnerable adult or adults e.g. going to the toilet or supervising a vulnerable adult in a separate room.





- It is important that CRB checked staff do not take non-checked personnel with them to meetings or places where they may come into contact with vulnerable adults or children.

Supervision of vulnerable adults

- Those in charge of vulnerable adults need to be fully competent to do so
- Vulnerable adults must be supervised at all times
- Workers must know where the vulnerable adults are at all times
- There must always be sufficient supervisors present at all times
- Supervising adults must work in at least pairs
- All activities must be planned and appropriate
- The responsibilities of supervising adults must always be clearly defined
- Workers must have received a CRB check prior to starting work

It is important that staff or volunteers do not engage in behaviour that could be misinterpreted.

The Members of the Executive Committee and Heads of Department in Madrasah need to ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of the boundaries between themselves and vulnerable adults.

The Members of the Executive Committee and Heads of Department in Madrasah need to ensure that all staff and volunteers are open in the way they deal with vulnerable adults

The Members of the Executive Committee and Heads of Department in Madrasah need to ensure that all staff and volunteers work in an environment where any concerns they may have about the abuse of a vulnerable adult can be passed on and feel confident that this will be acted upon.

Staff and volunteers should try to ensure that they are not alone with a vulnerable adult and that other staff or volunteers are present at all times.

The President and Executive Committee of WESSEX SHIA ITHNA ASHERI JAMAAT are specifically responsible for ensuring that protection of Vulnerable Adults is accorded the necessary status within the organisation and making sure that all members of staff working with vulnerable adults follow this policy.

Signed by Roshan Gangji, President of Wessex Jamaat

Date Tuesday, February 16 2010

