

## **Policy Aims**

The aim of Interlink's policies for safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults is to promote good practice:

- Providing children, young people and vulnerable adults with appropriate safety and protection.
- Allowing all staff and volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific safeguarding issues.

## **POLICY FOR SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE**

We strongly believe all children and young people have a right to protection from harm. All Interlink staff understand their professional responsibilities to safeguard children and promote their welfare and are clear about actions they must take if they have concerns about a child's welfare.

All organisations which make provision for children and young people must ensure that:

- The welfare of the child / young person is paramount.
- All children and young people, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicion and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer.

A child is defined by the Children Act 1989 as anyone less than 18 years of age. Everyone must follow the All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008 and any Local Safeguarding Children Board protocols for promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children. They must know who to contact to express concerns about a child's welfare.

### **Interlink believes that:**

- All child abuse contravenes children and young people's rights.
- All children and young people have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation.
- The situation for all children and young people must be improved through promotion of their rights as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This includes the right to freedom from abuse and exploitation.
- Child abuse is never acceptable.
- We have a commitment to protecting children and young people with/for whom we work.

- When we work through partners, they have a responsibility to meet minimum standards for the safeguarding of children and young people in their programmes.

## **POLICY FOR SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS**

Protection from abuse should become an integral part of the policy and practice of all organisations working with, or coming into contact with, vulnerable adults.

The broad definition of a vulnerable adult is:

‘A person who is 18 years of age or over, and 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/herself, or unable to protect him/herself against significant harm or serious exploitation’

(Law Commission – Who decides?: Making decisions on behalf of mentally incapacitated adults 1997)

People with learning disabilities, mental health problems, older people and disabled people may fall within this definition. All vulnerable adults have a right to protection from harm.

We must ensure that:

- All vulnerable adults, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicion and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer.
- All partner agencies and organisations must co-operate with each other on issues relating to the identification, investigation, treatment and prevention of abuse of vulnerable adults.
- Each agency has a responsibility to share information on a ‘need to know’ basis so that effective decisions can be made and appropriate preventative action taken.

(The Inter-Agency Policy and Procedures for responding to Alleged Abuse and Inappropriate Care of Vulnerable Adults in South Wales).

**Interlink believes that:**

- All vulnerable adults have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation.
- Abuse of vulnerable adults is never acceptable.

## Interlink Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policies

- We have a commitment to protecting vulnerable adults with/for whom we work.
- When we work with partners, they have a responsibility to meet minimum standards for protection of vulnerable adults in their programmes.

### **Core Values and Principles:**

- Vulnerable adults have the right to privacy, dignity, independence, self-determination, choice, fulfilment and the maintenance of all the rights and entitlements associated with citizenship.
- A person's right to involvement in decision-making is promoted to the fullest capacity.
- A person is enabled to protect him/herself from harm.
- Involvement of others significant to the person's life is identified and supported.
- The response is appropriate and only as intensive as the situation demands.
- A vulnerable adult and the alleged abuser have the right to the protection of the law.
- A vulnerable adult will have the opportunity and right to comment or complain about the service they receive.
- Vulnerable adults will have the opportunity and right to independent advice and advocacy when they request it. This will also apply to those vulnerable adults who are incapable of making such a request but are deemed in need of such independent advice and advocacy.
- The awareness and understanding of other agencies, organisations and the public is raised and with it, a commitment to respond.

### **Interlink Roles and Responsibilities**

- Interlink will appoint a designated lead person for safeguarding children and young people and a designated lead person for safeguarding vulnerable adults.
- All staff are aware of their own safeguarding responsibilities and can identify the designated lead persons.
- All staff attend core training on safeguarding children and young people and/or safeguarding vulnerable adults, as appropriate.
- All staff adhere to the safeguarding procedures and good practice guidelines
- Interlink's Executive Committee will review these policies annually.

## **DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE – Children and Young People**

The term child abuse is used to describe ways in which children and young people are harmed, usually by adults and often by those they know and trust.

There are four main types of abuse, though a child may experience more than one kind at any one time.

- **Physical Abuse** - Occasions when parents, carers, adults or other children deliberately inflict injuries on a child or knowingly do not prevent such injuries. It includes injury caused by hitting, shaking, biting, burning, giving children alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison and attempts to drown or suffocate them.
- **Emotional abuse** – Occasions when adults fail to show children and young people due care and attention or threaten, use sarcasm, taunt or shout at a child / young person causing loss of self-confidence or self-esteem. These may also occur when an adult repeatedly ignores or fails to respond to a child's progress or places unrealistic pressure to perform to high expectations constantly.
- **Neglect**– Occasions where adults fail to meet a child / young person's essential needs, such as adequate food, warmth, clothing and medical care. It also includes occasions where children and young people are left alone without proper supervision.
- **Sexual Abuse** – Occasions where males and females use children and young people to meeting their own sexual needs.

## **DEFINITIONS AND INDICATORS OF ABUSE – Vulnerable Adults**

- **Physical Abuse** – includes hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, undue restraint or inappropriate sanctions. Possible indicators include: multiple bruising, which is not consistent with the explanation given; cowering and flinching; unusually sleepy or docile.
- **Sexual Abuse** – includes rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not, or could not, consent and/or was pressured into consenting. Possible indicators include: unexplained and uncharacteristic changes in behaviour; excessive washing; deliberate self-harm.
- **Psychological Abuse** – includes threats of harm or abandonment, humiliation, verbal or racial abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks. Possible indicators include: anxiety, confusion or general resignation; loss of confidence; excessive or inappropriate craving for attention.
- **Financial Abuse** – includes theft, fraud, pressure around wills, property or inheritance, misuse or misappropriation of benefits. Possible indicators include: unexplained or sudden inability to pay bills; sudden withdrawal of money from accounts; personal possessions going missing.

- **Neglect and/or Acts of Omission** – includes failure to access medical care or services, failure to give prescribed medication, poor nutrition or lack of heating. Possible indicators include: poor hygiene and cleanliness; repeated infections; reluctant contact with health and social care agencies.

Whilst not classified as an individual category of abuse, racial and homophobia motivated abuse can take any of the above forms and needs to be noted. Domestic Abuse is a serious crime and must be treated as such. Victims of domestic abuse may also be vulnerable adults within the meaning of the Adult Protection procedures.

## **GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES**

All staff and volunteers should be actively encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations. The following are practical examples of how to create a positive, non-threatening culture and climate.

## **PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICE**

Abuse, particularly of a child, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand those feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about the appropriate course of action to take.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school, sports or arts environment or a social care setting. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with vulnerable people in order to harm them. A coach, instructor, teacher, mentor or volunteer will have regular contact with vulnerable people and be an important link in identifying cases where they need protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

## **Good practice in reality means:**

- Always working in an open environment e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations.
- Being aware of personal space and keeping an appropriate distance.
- Treating all vulnerable people with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of vulnerable people first.
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust, which empowers vulnerable people to share in the decision making process.
- Being an excellent role model e.g. not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of children and young people.
- Securing parental consent in writing to act *in loco parentis*, if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and / or other medical treatment to children or young people.

- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs or any extraordinary situation.
- Attaining written consent if staff / volunteers are required to transport children and young people in their cars.

## **INTERLINK'S CODE OF CONDUCT FOR WORKING WITH VULNERABLE PEOPLE**

Staff and volunteers must never:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or abuse vulnerable people.
- Develop physical, sexual relationships with vulnerable people.
- Develop relationships with vulnerable people, which could in any way be deemed inappropriate or exploitative.
- Act in ways that may be abusive or place vulnerable people at risk of abuse.
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice, which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive.
- Behave in an inappropriate or sexually provocative manner.
- Allow vulnerable people, with whom they are working, with to stay overnight at their home unsupervised.
- Sleep in the same room as vulnerable people on residential experiences.
- Do things of a personal nature that vulnerable people are able to do for themselves.
- Condone, or participate in the behaviour of vulnerable people, which is illegal, abusive or unsafe.
- Intentionally act in ways intended to shame, humiliate or degrade vulnerable people.
- Discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favour particular individuals to the exclusion of others.

## **IT IS VITAL FOR ALL STAFF & VOLUNTEERS IN CONTACT WITH VULNERABLE PEOPLE TO:**

- Be aware of situations which may present risks.
- Plan and organise the work and the workplace so as to minimise risks.
- Ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues of concern to be discussed.
- Ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged.
- Empower vulnerable people – discuss their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what to do if there is a problem.

## **PREVENTION OF ABUSE – DEVELOPING POSITIVE SERVICE CULTURES & GOOD PRACTICE**

- Wherever possible, abuse must be prevented. Creating ‘safe care’ or support for vulnerable people involves a holistic approach, which is centred upon the needs of the cared-for/supported person. It also recognises that this will only be achieved through effective recruitment, induction, support, training and management of staff.
- Staff are encouraged to be alert and to feel confident about reporting abuse. Staff who make confidential disclosures or ‘whistle-blow’ are supported and protected.
- Staff are knowledgeable about signs and causes of abuse in both community and service settings. Detailed knowledge and understanding of procedures is underpinned by appropriate and ongoing training and support.
- Thorough and credible records are kept and regularly checked.
- A good balance is maintained between confidentiality and positive information sharing.

### **WHAT WE WILL DO:**

Interlink will meet our commitment to protect vulnerable people from abuse through the following means:

**Awareness:** We will ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of the issues of safeguarding and the risks to vulnerable groups.

**Prevention:** We will ensure, through awareness and good practice, that all staff and volunteers minimise the risks to vulnerable people.

**Reporting:** We will ensure that all staff and volunteers are clear what steps to take where concerns arise regarding the safety of vulnerable people.

**Responding:** We will ensure that action is taken to support and protect vulnerable people where concerns arise regarding possible abuse.

### **RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS**

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in Interlink, in a paid or unpaid capacity, to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. There is however, a responsibility to act on any concerns and report them to the designated lead person, at Interlink, who will then contact the appropriate authorities.

Interlink will assure all staff / volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concerns that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a vulnerable person.

Where there is a complaint made, there may be three types of investigation:

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- A criminal investigation.
- A safeguarding investigation.
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The result of the police and safeguarding investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Every effort must be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. Information must be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection.

### **INDEPENDENT SAFEGUARDING AUTHORITY (ISA) AND CRIMINAL RECORDS BUREAU (CRB) CHECKS**

The Independent Safeguarding Authority barring lists act as a workforce ban on those individuals who have harmed children, young people or vulnerable adults in their care. They add an extra layer of protection to pre-employment processes alongside Criminal Records Bureau checks. Employers will be able to check applicants against the ISA lists. There is a list for working with children and young people and a separate list for working with vulnerable adults.

A risk assessment will be carried out for each post within Interlink to determine whether a CRB check is required for the post-holder. As good practice, Interlink staff will generally be CRB checked which is renewable every 3 years.