

West End Refugee Service Policy Statement

Safeguarding Adults

Background

This policy relates to ‘vulnerable adults’, or ‘adults at risk’.¹ The safety and welfare of such adults is of the utmost importance. It is the duty of all our employees and volunteers to protect them from abuse and to be alert to the possibility of abuse. Staff and volunteers, including trustees, should familiarise themselves with WERS procedures.

The standard definition of ‘Vulnerable adult’ describes a person aged 18 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’. The vulnerability may be permanent or temporary, and may be on account of the misuse of drugs or alcohol.

In the context of WERS, we recognise that many people we work with are experiencing trauma (often undiagnosed) as a result of what they have been through, both in their country of origin, on their journey to safety and finding themselves stuck in an unfair and ineffective asylum system. They may be socially isolated, unsure of the UK protocols and norms, fearful of authority and therefore more likely to acquiesce or be submissive as a result. This increases their risk of abuse and manipulation, therefore making them a potential target for exploitation. They may also lack appropriate levels of English to communicate their needs clearly. As a consequence, they may find it difficult to protect themselves from abuse and/or radicalisation.

The following list outlines forms that abuse could take:

1. Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subject to it.
2. Physical abuse includes hitting, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate touch or punishment.
3. Sexual abuse includes rape and sexual assault or sexual acts of touching of intimate places to which the vulnerable adult has not or could not consent to and/or was pressured into consenting.
4. Psychological abuse includes emotional abuse (obvious or implied), threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, compulsion, inappropriate language, verbal or racial abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive and/or spiritual networks, withdrawal or omission to provide opportunities and choice including choice of gender of carer.
5. Financial or material abuse includes theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits. Damage or threats of damage to property.

1 ‘Adult at risk’ is a new term in official use, in place of ‘vulnerable adult’.

6. Discriminatory abuse includes racism, sexism, or prejudice based on an individual's disability, or other forms of harassment, taunts or similar treatment.
7. Neglect or acts of omission – Failing to act appropriately whether intentionally or negligently. This may include ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational and leisure services, the withholding of the necessities of life such as; medication, adequate and appropriate nutrition, information, clothing, comfort, relationships, safety and environment.

General policy statement

WERS does not tolerate any abuse or harm (deliberate or through neglect) to vulnerable adults and wishes to ensure their protection and safety.

In keeping with WERS' mission to provide material and emotional support and advocacy for its clients, this policy sets out WERS position on the protection of adults deemed to be vulnerable under the above definitions.

WERS recognises that although some of its clients may fall under the above definition of vulnerable adults, particularly due to mental health difficulties, many are vulnerable in the general sense because of their position as asylum seekers or refugees.

Responsibilities

WERS trustees are responsible overall for setting the Safeguarding Adults policy and ensuring its implementation. However, all employees and volunteers have a duty to do everything they can to ensure that the policy works in practice.

The Director is responsible for ensuring that staff know of and adhere to the policy. The volunteer co-ordinators are responsible for ensuring that existing and potential volunteers are aware of and adhere to the policy. After their induction at WERS, staff and volunteers sign to say that they have read, understood and agree to abide by this policy.

The safeguarding policy, the name and details of the safeguarding lead and a poster detailing the key areas covered by the policy will be displayed in the building.

With regard to other agencies providing regular surgeries/drop-ins on WERS' premises:

- a) At the outset, WERS should ask to see the agency's policy to ensure that visiting agencies adhere to the same standards as WERS in regard to safeguarding. In the event that an agency does not have a policy, WERS will give them a copy of its own safeguarding policies to which they must adhere.
- b) If a safeguarding issue is disclosed to a worker from a visiting organisation, that organisation should initiate the safeguarding process.

Supporting Guidelines

1. Training

In order to ensure the best protection for WERS' clients and their families, senior staff and trustees will receive appropriate training in relation to safeguarding.

2. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks

All WERS staff are subject to Enhanced DBS Checks.

As trustees and volunteer roles at WERS do not meet the official eligibility criteria for standard or enhanced DBS checks and they are not engaged in 'regulated activity', checks are not undertaken for these voluntary roles.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar an individual from working with the organisation. This will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of the offences.

3. Identifying and responding to safeguarding concerns

WERS staff (employees and volunteers) may have concerns about the safeguarding of a vulnerable adult as a result of:

- observation while working with a vulnerable adult
- a disclosure by the adult
- another person reporting a concern
- observation of or reports about the behaviour of a staff member towards a vulnerable adult

If a vulnerable adult discloses a safeguarding issue to a WERS staff member, the latter should:

- listen carefully, without interrupting
- remain calm and receptive, without displaying emotion
- give reassurance that it is right to speak out
- try to clarify information without probing or over-questioning
- explain the need to share information
- not make promises or agree to keep information confidential

4. Reporting and investigation

The staff member must pass on their concerns to the appropriate person. They should report it immediately to the Chief Executive, or, in the Director's absence, to the Head of Corporate Services. If the Chief Executive is thought to be involved in the abuse, concerns should be reported to the Chair of WERS trustees, or, in the Chair's absence, to Board's Safeguarding Lead. In any event, the staff member reporting the concern should as soon as possible make a factual, verbatim written record of the disclosure or other event. If the client appears to be in immediate danger or in need of urgent medical attention, the emergency services must be contacted immediately.

The reported concerns will be investigated to establish the facts, assess the needs of the vulnerable adult and determine a course of action. The investigation will be documented, including as many specific details (date, location, form of suspected abuse, reasons why abuse is suspected) as can be supplied. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout by all involved, with the aim of protecting the interests of the client.

If, as a result of the investigation, it is felt that there is not sufficiently strong evidence to involve other agencies, the documentation will be filed and the client's situation monitored as far as is feasible within the normal services operated by WERS. If it is felt that the concerns may be well-founded, WERS will strive to ensure that any client who has experienced abuse is helped to access the appropriate statutory or voluntary agency.

WERS works closely with a wide range of health professionals in primary and secondary care, Northumbria Police, Victim Support, Hate Crime UK, Social Services, REACH (a counselling service for rape victims) and others. Additionally, a number of its own services offer support and advice in the areas of befriending, advice and advocacy and these may be helpful in preventing further abuse or helping the client who has been abused.

Any follow-up action taken by WERS after the initial report will be documented and kept on file.

If a WERS employee or volunteer is found to have harmed or posed a risk to a vulnerable adult while working for the organisation, WERS will refer the matter to Newcastle City Council Community Health and Social Care Direct within 1 working day (see contact details below).

5. Consent

When offering advice and support, WERS staff should ensure that vulnerable clients understand the options described to them, are able to make an informed choice, and consent to any follow-up action taken by WERS, including information sharing with other agencies and referral to Adult Services.

A referral to Adult Services or other notification to statutory services may be made without the person's consent if the situation is of such seriousness that inaction would leave the person or other people at risk of significant harm. The person still should be informed about the action taken, unless telling them would jeopardise their safety or the safety of others. Mental capacity is a factor in such situations.

Advice on these matters (including the assessment of mental capacity) should be sought from Newcastle Safeguarding Adults Unit (contact details below).

6. Report to the board of trustees

Chief Executive will report on safeguarding issues at each meeting of the board of trustees; either that there are none to report or the outline of the concern if any have arisen.

7. Important local contacts

WERS named safeguarding officer:

- 1) Carolyn Hepplewhite – 0191 273 7482 – carolyn@wers.org.uk
- 2) Peter Noble – 0191 273 7482 – peter@wers.org.uk

WERS named Safeguarding Lead for the Board of Trustees: Revd John Howard-Norman
john.howard-norman@methodist.org.uk

Adults 18 years and over

Newcastle City Council Community Health and Social Care Direct for referrals during office hours
Call 0191 278 8377

Newcastle City Council Out of Hours Service for emergency social care needs
Call 0191 278 7878

Newcastle Safeguarding Adults Unit Advice line for advice (not referrals) for practitioners Monday to Friday 10.00am to 4.00pm. Call 0191 278 8156.

Newcastle City Council Community Health and Social Care Direct (0191 278 8377, 8am-5pm) should be contacted within one working day if there are allegations that a member of staff or a volunteer

has harmed or posed a risk to a vulnerable adult.

Adults and children

If you think a crime against a child, young person, or adult at risk has been committed but they are not in immediate danger, or you want advice if you are worried about sexual exploitation, call 101 and ask for the Northumbria Police Safeguarding Department.

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