

Asylum Aid Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy

Asylum Aid is committed to ensuring that vulnerable people who use our services are not abused and that working practices minimise the risk of such abuse. The purpose of this policy statement is:

- To protect all vulnerable adults from harm.
- To provide staff and volunteers, as well as vulnerable adults and their families and communities, with the overarching principles that guide our approach to vulnerable adult protection.

This policy is to be used in conjunction with the following policies:

- Safeguarding Adults Referral Pathway;
- Safeguarding Children Referral Pathway
- Risk Assessment and Management in Mental Health

Where the client is a child, please also refer to Asylum Aid's specific Safeguarding Children Policy.

These documents set out the steps to take when working with vulnerable adult clients including where clients indicate, including through behaviour, that they may harm themselves, harm others or are at risk of harm from others. Supervisors and the Director and Chief Executive Officer at Asylum Aid are the allocated safeguarding leads.

Vulnerable adults are people over 18 years of age who are getting or may need help and services to live in the community. Vulnerable adults may be unable to take care of themselves and unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation by other people.

Categories of abuse:

- physical
- financial
- sexual
- psychological
- discriminatory
- emotional
- neglect

Abuse can take place in any setting, public or private, and can be perpetuated by anyone. When abuse takes place it needs to be dealt with swiftly and effectively, in ways which are proportionate to the issues, and where the adult in need of protection has as much control over the decision making process as possible. All staff, volunteers and trustees of Asylum Aid have a duty to recognize and identify abuse and report it.

Safeguarding means protecting a person's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.

There are six key principles that underpin all safeguarding work:

Empowerment: People being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and give informed consent. "I am asked what I want as a safeguarding outcome and this directly informs what happens."

Prevention: It is better to take action before harm occurs. "I receive clear and simple information about what abuse is, how to recognise the signs and what I can do to seek help."

Proportionality: The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented. "I am sure that the professionals will work in my interest, I see them and they will only get involved as much as needed."

Protection: Support and representation for those in greatest need. "I get help and support to report abuse and neglect. I get help so that I am able to take part in the safeguarding process to the extent to which I want."

Partnership: Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse. "I know that staff treat any personal and sensitive information in confidence, only sharing what is helpful and necessary. I am confident that professionals will work together and with me to get the best result for me."

Accountability: Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding. "I understand the role of everyone involved in my life and so do they."

The Mental Capacity Act 2005

Mental capacity should always be considered in responding to safeguarding concerns.

The following statutory principles apply:

1. Assume a person has capacity unless it is proved otherwise
2. Take all practicable steps to enable people to make their own decisions
3. Do not assume incapacity simply because someone makes an unwise decision
4. Always act, or decide, for a person without capacity in their best interests
5. Carefully consider actions to ensure the least restrictive option is taken

Rights & Responsibilities

Organisational Responsibilities of Asylum Aid

- To ensure that all staff, volunteers and trustees are aware of vulnerable adults' need for protection
- To notify the appropriate agencies if abuse is identified or suspected.
- To support and where possible secure the safety of individuals and ensure that all referrals to services have full information in relation to identified risk and vulnerability.
- To DBS check all staff and volunteers that have access to or work with vulnerable adults.
- To appoint a Vulnerable Adults Protection Lead (VAPL) who will oversee the implementation of the Policy and ensure that appropriate monitoring and audit takes place.

Individual Responsibilities of Asylum Aid Staff, Volunteers and Trustees

- To be familiar with the Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and the Safeguarding vulnerable adults referral pathway
- To take appropriate action in line with the policy of Asylum Aid.
- To declare any existing or subsequent convictions.

Support for those who report abuse

All those making a complaint or allegation or expressing concern, whether they are staff, volunteers, trustees, clients, carers or members of the public, should be reassured that:

- They will be taken seriously
- Their comments will usually be treated confidentially, but their concerns may be shared with the appropriate authorities if they or others are at significant risk.

Confidentiality issues

All staff, volunteers and trustees should be aware that in circumstances where there is serious risk of harm to self or others, confidentiality may be broken. Where possible, consent for disclosure should be sought from the client, but where this is not possible, relevant authorities should be contacted even without consent.

Where a staff member is unsure about whether the circumstances are at a threshold where confidentiality can be broken without consent, advice should be sought from the VAPL, their supervisor and/or line manager. In appropriate cases advice can also be sought from the Helen Bamber Foundation head of therapies or medical director.

In any case where it is proposed to break a duty of confidentiality to a client, the advice of a supervisor must be sought and consideration given to any relevant OISC, SRA, Law Society or Bar Council guidance. Advice may be sought from the Law Society ethics helpline. The reasons for the decision to break, or not to break confidentiality and any advice obtained to inform that decision, must be recorded on the file. We will normally inform the client of the decision and the reasons for it, unless exceptionally a decision is taken not to do so for safeguarding reasons. Any decision not to inform a client must be authorized by the CEO or, in her absence, the Director.

The Vulnerable Adult has the right:

- To be made aware of this policy
- To have alleged incidents recognised and taken seriously
- To receive fair and respectful treatment throughout
- To be involved in any process as appropriate
- To receive information about the outcome

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

The named Vulnerable Adult Protection Leads are:

Alison Pickup – Director of Asylum Aid

Kerry Smith – Chief Executive Office of Asylum Aid and the Helen Bamber Foundation

Reviewed: December 2022

To be reviewed: December 2023

Director's Signature: A. Pickup 7.12.22