



## POLICY DOCUMENT

*Policy title:* **VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY**

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### *Document control*

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### What is a “Vulnerable Adult”?

A vulnerable adult is someone who is over 18 who has, or may need, help with their everyday living tasks.

This includes disabled people who have physical or sensory impairments, learning difficulties, who experience mental illness or emotional distress, are frail older people, adults who live in care homes, or who for any other reason are unable to care for or protect themselves.

### What is “Abuse”?

Abuse is the violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by any other person or persons. It may be something that is done to the person, or something not done when it should have been. It does not necessarily have to be intentional - if the vulnerable person experiences it as abusive it is considered abuse.

It may be:

- **Physical abuse**, which includes hitting, pushing, inappropriate use of medication, sanctions or restraint.
- **Sexual abuse**, which includes any sexual act which was not freely consenting.
- **Psychological/emotional abuse**, which includes threats, intimidation, coercion, harassment.
- **Financial abuse**, which includes theft, and pressure in connection with wills or property, possessions or benefits.
- **Neglect**, which includes ignoring medical or physical needs, not providing access to appropriate health or social care, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.
- **Discriminatory abuse**, which includes all forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment based on a person’s disability, ethnic origin, gender, age or sexuality (often called “hate crime”).
- **Institutional abuse**, which can include repeated instances of poor care, ill treatment of vulnerable adults, and unsatisfactory professional practice. This is often an indicator of more serious problems within a paid and/or regulated care environment.

This list is not exhaustive.

### Awareness

As a Settlement member of staff, trustee, service user, volunteer etc., you are not responsible for diagnosing abuse. However, you have a responsibility to be aware and alert to signs that all is not well with a vulnerable adult. Not all concerns about vulnerable adults relate to abuse - there may well be other explanations. It is important to keep an open mind and consider what you know about the person and their circumstances.

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Abuse can happen in any setting - at home, in sheltered housing, in supported living settings, at day centres and other day services, in care homes, in hospitals, wherever people are dependent on the care of others for their wellbeing.

Abuse happens to people in all sections of society.

### What do you do if you have concerns about any vulnerable adult at Barton Hill Settlement?

This procedure applies to any member of staff, trustee, volunteer or service user at Barton Hill Settlement who has a concern.

**Step 1** - You must discuss the concern, confidentially, with any member of staff or your line manager within 24 hours of becoming aware of it. The member of staff or line manager will treat this as top priority.

**Step 2** - The concern may be raised with the carer.

**Step 3a** - If the manager considers the carer's explanation to be adequate, the matter will go no further. The manager will ensure that you understand that the matter has been dealt with. However, if you are unconvinced, you should raise the matter with a Senior Manager.

**Step 3b** - If the manager considers the carer's explanation to be inadequate, s/he will raise the matter with a Senior Manager (the Reporting Officer). If for any reason the Line Manager is unwilling to report the concern to a Senior Manager, it is expected that you would go directly to a Senior Manager.

**Step 4** - The Senior Manager will check through the concerns with the Settlement Chief Executive Officer (or Duty Manager if the CEO is not available), and will then report the concerns to Bristol City Council Adult Community Care via Care Direct, tel: 0117 922 2700. If the Senior Manager is unavailable, or unwilling to take the matter further, the Settlement Chief Executive Officer becomes the Reporting Officer.

NB - If reporting the abuse puts you at risk, you can choose to do so anonymously by ringing Care Direct yourself.

**Step 5** – Once the Reporting Officer has reported any concern to Care Direct, s/he will give a brief report to the Chair of the Board of Trustees, giving no names, but an outline of the category of abuse. The Chair will then check that the correct procedure has been followed.

**If you consider the Vulnerable Adult to be at risk of immediate harm then you should ring 999 for the Police.**

### What will happen to you when you raise a concern?

The Senior Manager will support all those involved in reporting a concern, as the person who raised the concern may be upset or angry as a result of reporting the concern. As Reporting Officer the Senior Manager will be supported by the Settlement Chief Executive Officer. In the case of an allegation against a staff member, while support will be offered as

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above, Barton Hill Settlement will ensure that Adult Community Care or the police are given all assistance in pursuing any investigation. Suspension and or disciplinary procedures may be implemented.

A referral will be made to The Independent Mental Capacity Advocate Service and Safeguarding Adults Enquiries (IMCA) if:

The vulnerable adult has experienced serious significant harm or is thought to be at risk of serious significant harm,

*and*

Lacks the capacity to understand the risks or to make a decision about any proposed safeguarding action which will have a significant implication for health, welfare, accommodation or management of their finance/property,

*and*

The vulnerable adult has no family or friends or has no family or friends willing or able to be consulted regarding his/her best interests,

*or*

Has family or friends, but there is clear evidence to indicate **either** that they are not willing or able to act in the adult's best interests, **or** that they would not have the person's best interests at heart, **or** they are allegedly abusing the vulnerable person.

The IMCA will also be referred to when the vulnerable adult who lacks the capacity is the perpetrator of serious significant harm and any proposed actions to safeguard others will result in significant changes to the vulnerable perpetrator's health, welfare, living arrangements.

### What will happen if any allegation is made against you?

As a Barton Hill Settlement member of staff, volunteer or carer, you will come under the terms of the Settlement's Disciplinary Procedures, Volunteers' Policy or Users' Code of Conduct.

### Other information

This policy will be reviewed and, where necessary, revised annually.

If you have to report suspected abuse it is useful to have the following information:

- The vulnerable adult's name and age,
- Where they live and who they live with,
- Which organisations are providing help or services.
- Why you are concerned, and details of the person(s) who may be abusing the vulnerable person.

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However, don't delay in reporting abuse if you are not sure about some of these details.

This policy is in line with No Secrets in Bristol Policy which can be found on the council website <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/page/safeguarding-vulnerable-adults>.