

# Owston Ferry Parish Council

## Vulnerable Adults Policy

### 1 Statement

Owston Ferry Parish Council considers it the duty of members and facilities users to protect vulnerable adults with whom they come into contact from abuse.

### 2 Introduction

Owston Ferry Parish Council is involved in providing services for a wide range of people. Some of these people maybe 'vulnerable adults.'

This policy is based on "No Secrets", the national guidance on developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse (Department of Health, 2000)

The Council has obligations to strive to protect vulnerable adults who it may believe to be abused or at risk of abuse or neglect.

The policy and procedures have been developed to assist members and users in acting on reported or suspected abuse.

Depending upon the nature of particular services or the requirements of particular funders or partner agencies, the policy and procedures may be supplemented by local procedures.

If applicable, users of Council facilities should develop and produce their own Safeguarding Vulnerable Adult Policy, reflecting the policy set out in this document.

### 3 Definitions

"No Secrets" defines a vulnerable adult as:

***'A person (over 18) 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.'***

\* Disability includes sensory impairment, physical impairment, learning difficulties etc.

"No Secrets" defines abuse as:

***'Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons.'***

### 4 Categories of Abuse

"No Secrets" recognises six categories of abuse:

- Physical Abuse, including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions;

- Sexual Abuse, including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not consented, or could not consent or was pressured into consenting;
- Psychological Abuse, including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks;
- Financial or Material abuse, including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits;
- Neglect and Acts of Omission, including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating; and
- Discriminatory Abuse, including racist, sexist, that based on a person's disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

## **5 Responsibilities of Council Members**

Council Members have a responsibility to be aware and alert to signs that all is not well with a vulnerable person. However, they are not responsible for diagnosing, investigating or providing a therapeutic response to abuse. In addition, not all concerns relate to abuse, there may well be other explanations. It is important to keep an open mind and consider what is known about the vulnerable person and his or her circumstances. No action should be taken without discussion with a member of the Council.

## **6 Disclosure of Abuse**

If a vulnerable person discloses that they are being abused or any person discloses that they are involved in abuse of a vulnerable person, action should continue as in Section 8. All action must proceed urgently and without delay.

## **7 Suspicion of Abuse**

There may be circumstances when a Council member suspects that a vulnerable adult is being abused or neglected.

It is vital that any anyone who suspects a vulnerable adult is being neglected or abused discusses the situation immediately with a member of the Council. Action should continue as in Section 9.

## **8 Action on Disclosure of Abuse**

There should always be the opportunity to discuss welfare concerns with and seek advice from colleagues and other agencies, but:

- never delay emergency action to protect a vulnerable adult;
- always record in writing concerns about a vulnerable adult's welfare, whether or not further action is taken;
- always record in writing discussions about a vulnerable adult's welfare;

- at the close of discussion, always reach clear and explicit recorded agreement about who will be taking what action, or that no further action will be taken.

At all times action must proceed urgently.

A Council member informed of abuse should remind the person that the Council cannot guarantee confidentiality where a vulnerable person is at risk of abuse or further abuse.

Users should consult with a Council member before taking any action.

Additionally, all action taken following a disclosure of abuse should be discussed in advance with a member of the Council.

In circumstances where a person declines to disclose, despite some work having been done towards disclosing, it may be necessary to report the alleged abuse without the person's agreement. In these circumstances, the person must be notified in advance of the decision to report to Social Services.

Any Council member may report a disclosure of abuse to Social Services irrespective of the opinion of other members.

It is important for Council members to make written records of any incidents or concerns that they have as soon as possible and if appropriate to include sketches of sites and sizes of injuries. It is also important to make a record of conversations with the vulnerable person using the same language the vulnerable person used especially names used for body parts or sexual acts.

Full written records must be maintained of all disclosures and actions following disclosure.

## **9 Action on Suspicion of Abuse**

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- at the close of discussion, always reach clear and explicit recorded agreement about who will be taking what action, or that no further action will be taken.

At all times action must proceed urgently.

Consultation should take place with a Council member before taking any action.

Additionally, all action taken following suspicion of abuse should be discussed in advance with a member of the Council.

In all cases of suspected abuse the Council member should discuss whether issues relevant to different cultures and lifestyles have any bearing on the matter.

As an organisation Owston Ferry Parish Council welcomes the fact that people and lifestyles are diverse and does not make judgements about the acceptability or otherwise of lifestyles.

However it is important that this philosophy does not stand in the way of the organisation's responsibility to protect vulnerable people from harm.

Any Council member may report a suspicion of abuse to Social Services irrespective of the opinion of other members.

It is important for Council members to make written records of any incidents or concerns that they have as soon as possible and if appropriate to include sketches of sites and sizes of injuries. It is also important to make a record of conversations with the vulnerable person using the same language the vulnerable person used especially names used for body parts or sexual acts.

Full written records must be maintained of all disclosures and actions following disclosure.

## **10 Making a Referral**

Social Services Departments have been designated as the lead agencies with responsibility for co-ordinating a response to allegations or concerns of abuse.

Each of the Council members has the responsibility of informing the relevant Social Services Department of concerns over the abuse or neglect of vulnerable adults. Detailed referral arrangements may differ between localities and, therefore, the Parish Council Clerk is to ensure that up-to-date referral information is available for their locality.

Council members should work within the following timescales for reporting allegations or suspicions of abuse:

- Immediate, if the vulnerable person is at risk of serious physical harm, or a serious criminal act has taken place, and evidence will need to be kept safe;
- Within 24 Hours, if it relates to a specific incident which is, or may be still going on, or may happen again;
- Within 7 Days if it is a more general concern, which does not indicate immediate harm.

## **11 Support**

Owston Ferry Parish Council will support any person in these circumstances. If the Social Services Department need further involvement from any person following a report of abuse, a Council member will discuss with the Social Services Department the nature of their needs and how they might be met.

## **12 Allegation of Abuse Made Against a Staff Member or Volunteer**

Council members and facility users may be subject to abuse allegations. The Council will offer support in these circumstances, but the Social Services Department will be assisted in their investigation and the disciplinary procedure may be implemented.

## **13 Confidentiality**

Where appropriate, within the Code of Conduct rules, confidentiality is central to the work of Owston Ferry Parish Council, and the attention of all members is drawn to the current Code of Conduct.

## **14 Preventing Abuse by Staff and Volunteers**

No member of Owston Ferry Parish Council will work alone with vulnerable people. There must be at least 2 people present at any one time.

It may be very hard for a member or user to report a concern about a colleague to another member, but, as with all the other difficulties people will come across, the safety and protection of a vulnerable person must be the priority in any decision that is made.