

## Protection of Vulnerable People Policy

Members and employees of BOPF recognise that all people are entitled to a life without exploitation or abuse, and we are aware of the problem of abuse of vulnerable adults and of children.

BOPF is committed to ensuring that vulnerable people with whom we come into contact are not exploited or abused and that our working practices minimise the risk of abuse. Where suspicions of abuse occur, we must ensure that these are reported to the appropriate public authorities without delay. This policy sets out what steps should be taken.

The BOPF Engagement Officer and Chair will act as link person with Bristol Council Social Services in the implementation of this policy.

If any member of staff or BOPF volunteer/activist suspects abuse, they will report it to the BOPF Engagement Officer or Chair who will then report the abuse to the Social Services and Health Directorate at Bristol City Council (SS&H). A record of this contact to go on file. Information about abuse cannot be kept confidential and so that reported to SS&H will include:

- (a) The vulnerable adult, or child's, name and age
- (b) Where they live and who with
- (c) Known organisations providing them with help or services
- (d) Why the person reporting abuse is concerned
- (e) Details of the person(s) who may be abusing the vulnerable adult, or child.

In cases of urgency, members should contact Bristol Council Social Services, and/or the Police, directly and, if appropriate, make a subsequent reference to the BOPF Forum Manager or Chair.

If allegations of abuse are made against members or employees of BOPF, the Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure will apply in addition to this document.

Though we have a confidentiality policy, it must be stressed that where abuse is alleged, suspected, reported or concerns are raised, the Protection of Vulnerable People policy must be followed. It is not acceptable to ignore issues around abuse, although steps must be taken to deal with them in as sensitive a manner as possible.

This policy is inclusive – the same policy covers all people defined as vulnerable.

The Forum will comply with the 'No Secrets in Bristol' document appended to this policy.

### Definitions

**"Vulnerable Adult"** - is a person (over 18) who has or may need help with their everyday tasks. That person "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".

**"Child"** - is "any child or young person under the age of 18".

**"Abuse"** - is "the violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons. Abuse may be the result of action or inaction by a carer, or any other person". It may be

something that is done to the person or something not done when it should have been done. It does not necessarily have to be intentional, if the vulnerable person experiences it as abusive it is considered abuse.

**“Vulnerability”** – is a state, temporary or permanent, which causes any person to be dependent on another for their safety and well being. Some people are more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation because they are disempowered within society. Disabled people, people with learning difficulties and frail older people are more at risk of abuse for this reason. This does not mean that all older people are vulnerable by virtue of their age alone, nor all disabled people because they have an impairment.

**Seven categories of abuse** have been identified. These definitions are not exclusive, and more than one kind of abuse may be occurring at any one time.

- **Physical abuse** - acts of commission, including hitting, slapping, burning, restraining, over medication or giving a person the wrong medication, inappropriate manual handling, sanctions or restraint.
- **Neglect** - includes ignoring medical or physical needs, and acts of omission including neglect of personal hygiene and heating, malnutrition, dehydration, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life such as medication.
- **Sexual abuse** – involvement of the person in sexual activities which they do not want or truly comprehend, or to which they are unable to give informed consent. It includes rape and any sexual act which was not freely consenting.
- **Financial or material abuse** – including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance, benefits or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property.
- **Emotional or psychological abuse** – resulting from acts of omission or commission on the part of others and producing mental anguish in the victim (eg denial of basic rights, acts of shouting, swearing and verbal abuse, frightening behaviour, blaming, bullying, threats of harm or abandonment, humiliation, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, isolation or withdrawing services or depriving a person of normal social contacts.
- **Discriminatory abuse** – which includes all forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment including racist, sexist, or any abuse that is based on a person’s disability, 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.

**Signs and symptoms of abuse** include:

- Frequent minor injuries or bruising
- Depression
- Neglected appearance or poor hygiene
- Weight loss
- Change in eating pattern or loss of appetite
- A more detailed list is available in “No Secrets in Bristol”, and in the national “No Secrets” document.

**Where does it happen?** Abuse can occur 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 well-being

Abuse happens to people in all sections of society.

**What to do if you think someone is being abused or you are being abused yourself:** See the “No Secrets in Bristol” guide as provided in Staff or Management Committee Handbook