

Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil

Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Policies

1 Scope

This Policy applies to all aspects of VAMT's work carried out under its jurisdiction. It will promote and safeguard the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk and that staff and volunteers know who to contact to express any concerns about their welfare. For the purposes of these policies the term "vulnerable people" will refer to both children and young people and adults at risk.

2 Aims

The aim of VAMT's policies for safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk is to promote good practice and in so doing;

- provide children, young people and adults at risk with appropriate safety and protection
- allow all staff and volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific safeguarding issues

3 POLICY FOR SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure all VAMT staff including volunteers and partners working under the jurisdiction of VAMT understand their responsibilities to safeguard children and promote their welfare. They must be clear about the actions they must take if they have concerns about a child's welfare under the Children's Act 2004.

All children and young people have a right to protection from harm. All VAMT staff and volunteers must understand their professional responsibility to safeguard children and promote their welfare and are clear about actions they must take if they have concerns about a child's welfare.

All organisations which make provision for children and young people must ensure that:

- the welfare of the child / young person is paramount
- all children and young people, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse
- all suspicion and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- all staff and volunteers have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer

A child is defined by the Children Act 1989 as anyone less than 18 years of age. Everyone must follow the All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008 and any Local Safeguarding

Children Board protocols for promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children. These documents are available from the Chief Officer. They must know who to contact to express concerns about a child's welfare.

VAMT believes that:

- all child abuse contravenes children and young people's rights
- all children and young people have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation
- the situation for all children and young people must be improved through promotion of their rights as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child including the right to freedom from abuse and exploitation
- child abuse is never acceptable
- we have a commitment to protecting children and young people with/for whom we work
- when we work through partners, they have a responsibility to meet minimum standards for the safeguarding of children and young people in their programmes.

4 DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE – Children and Young People

The term child abuse is used to describe ways in which children and young people are harmed, usually by adults and often by those they know and trust.

There are four main types of abuse, though a child may experience more than one kind at any one time ¹

- **Physical Abuse** - Occasions when parents, carers, adults or other children deliberately inflict injuries on a child or knowingly do not prevent such injuries. It includes injury caused by hitting, shaking, biting, burning, giving children alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison and attempts to drown or suffocate them.
- **Emotional abuse** – Occasions when adults fail to show children and young people due care and attention or threaten, use sarcasm, taunt or shout at a child / young person causing loss of self-confidence or self-esteem. These may also occur when an adult repeatedly ignores or fails to respond to a child's progress or places unrealistic pressure to perform to high expectations constantly.
- **Neglect**– Occasions where adults fail to meet a child / young person's essential needs, such as adequate food, warmth, clothing and medical care. It also includes occasions where children and young people are left alone without proper supervision.
- **Sexual Abuse** – Occasions where males and females use children and young people to meet their own sexual needs.

5 POLICY FOR SAFEGUARDING ADULTS AT RISK

Protection from abuse should become an integral part of the policy and practice of all organisations working with, or coming into contact with, adults at risk.

¹ Safeguarding Children: Working Together under the Children Act 2004/ All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008

The definition of an adult at risk as in section 126 of Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014 is

an adult who :

- (a) Is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect,
- (b) Has needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs), and
- (c) As a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

People with learning disabilities, mental health problems, older people and disabled people may fall within this definition. All adults at risk have a right to protection from harm.

We must ensure that:

- all adults at risk, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse
- all suspicion and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- all staff and volunteers have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer
- all partner agencies and organisations must co-operate with each other on issues relating to the identification, investigation, treatment and prevention of abuse of adults at risk
- each agency has a responsibility to share information on a 'need to know' basis so that effective decisions can be made and appropriate preventative action taken

(Adult Protection Procedures)

VAMT believes that;

- all adults at risk have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation
- abuse of adults at risk is never acceptable
- we have a commitment to protecting adults at risk with/for whom we work
- when we work with partners, they have a responsibility to meet minimum standards for protection of adults at risk in their programmes
- adults at risk have the right to privacy, dignity, independence, self-determination, choice, fulfilment and the maintenance of all the rights and entitlements associated with citizenship
- a person's right to involvement in decision-making is promoted to the fullest capacity
- a person is enabled to protect him/herself from harm
- involvement of others significant to the person's life is identified and supported
- the response is appropriate and only as intensive as the situation demands
- a vulnerable adult and the alleged abuser have the right to the protection of the law
- a vulnerable adult will have the opportunity and right to comment or complain about the service they receive
- adults at risk will have the opportunity and right to independent advice and advocacy when they request it. This will also apply to those adults at risk who are incapable of making such a request but are deemed in need of such independent advice and advocacy.

6 DEFINITIONS AND INDICATORS OF ABUSE – Adults at risk

- **Physical Abuse** – includes hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, undue restraint or inappropriate sanctions. Possible indicators include: multiple bruising, which is not consistent with the explanation given; cowering and flinching; unusually sleepy or docile.
- **Sexual Abuse** – includes rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not, or could not, consent and/or was pressured into consenting. Possible indicators include: unexplained and uncharacteristic changes in behaviour; excessive washing; deliberate self-harm.
- **Psychological Abuse** – includes threats of harm or abandonment, humiliation, verbal or racial abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks. Possible indicators include: anxiety, confusion or general resignation; loss of confidence; excessive or inappropriate craving for attention.
- **Financial Abuse** – includes theft, fraud, pressure around wills, property or inheritance, misuse or misappropriation of benefits. Possible indicators include: unexplained or sudden inability to pay bills; sudden withdrawal of money from accounts; personal possessions going missing.
- **Neglect and/or Acts of Omission** – includes failure to access medical care or services, failure to give prescribed medication, poor nutrition or lack of heating. Possible indicators include: poor hygiene and cleanliness; repeated infections; reluctant contact with health and social care agencies.²

Whilst not classified as an individual category of abuse, racial and homophobia motivated abuse can take any of the above forms and needs to be noted. Domestic Abuse is a serious crime and must be treated as such. Victims of domestic abuse may also be adults at risk within the meaning of the “adults at risk” protection procedures.

7 SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS AT RISK GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES

All staff and volunteers should be actively encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations. The following are practical examples of how to create a positive, non-threatening culture and climate.

Abuse, particularly of a child, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand those feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about the appropriate course of action to take.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school, sports or arts environment or a social care setting. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with vulnerable people in order to harm them. A coach, instructor, teacher, mentor or volunteer will have regular contact with vulnerable people and be an important link in identifying cases where they need protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

² Safeguarding Children: Working Together under the Children Act 2004/ All Wales Child Protection Procedures 2008

Good practice in reality means:

- Always work in an open environment where possible e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations.
- Being aware of personal space and keeping an appropriate distance.
- Treating all vulnerable people with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of vulnerable people first.
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust, which empowers vulnerable people to share in the decision making process.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs or any extraordinary situation.

In particular with regard to children and young people:

- Being an excellent role model e.g. not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of children and young people.
- Securing parental consent in writing to act *in loco parentis*, if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and / or other medical treatment to children or young people.
- Attaining written consent if staff / volunteers are required to transport children and young people in their cars. Staff need to be mindful that whenever possible that another adult should escort.

8 VAMT'S CODE OF CONDUCT FOR WORKING WITH VULNERABLE PEOPLE

Staff and volunteers must never;

- hit or otherwise physically assault or abuse vulnerable people
- develop physical, sexual relationships with vulnerable people
- develop relationships with vulnerable people, which could in any way be deemed inappropriate or exploitative
- act in ways that may be abusive or place vulnerable people at risk of abuse
- use language, make suggestions or offer advice, which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive
- behave in an inappropriate or sexually provocative manner, including verbal sexual comments
- allow vulnerable people, with whom they are working, with to stay overnight at their home unsupervised
- sleep in the same room as vulnerable people on residential experiences
- do things of a personal nature that vulnerable people are able to do for themselves
- condone, or participate in the behaviour of vulnerable people, which is illegal, abusive or unsafe
- intentionally act in ways intended to shame, humiliate or degrade vulnerable people
- discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favour particular individuals to the exclusion of others

It is vital for all staff & volunteers in contact with vulnerable people to:

- be aware of situations which may present risks
- plan and organise the work and the workplace so as to minimise risks
- ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues of concern to be discussed
- ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff and volunteers so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged
- empower vulnerable people – discuss their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what to do if there is a problem

9 PREVENTION OF ABUSE – DEVELOPING POSITIVE SERVICE CULTURES & GOOD PRACTICE

- Wherever possible, abuse must be prevented. Creating 'safe care' or support for vulnerable people involves a holistic approach, which is centred upon the needs of the cared-for/supported person. It also recognises that this will only be achieved through effective recruitment, induction, support, training and management of staff and volunteers.
- Staff and volunteers are encouraged to be alert and to feel confident about reporting abuse. Staff who make confidential disclosures or 'whistle-blow' are supported and protected.
- Staff and volunteers are knowledgeable about signs and causes of abuse in both community and service settings. Detailed knowledge and understanding of procedures is underpinned by appropriate and on-going training and support.
- Thorough and credible records are kept and regularly checked.
- A good balance is maintained between confidentiality and positive information sharing.

10 VAMT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

VAMT will meet our commitment to protect vulnerable people from abuse through the following means:

Awareness: We will ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of the issues of safeguarding and the risks to vulnerable groups.

Prevention: We will ensure, through awareness and good practice, that all staff and volunteers minimise the risks to vulnerable people.

Reporting: We will ensure that all staff and volunteers are clear what steps to take where concerns arise regarding the safety of vulnerable people.

Responding: We will ensure that action is taken to support and protect vulnerable people where concerns arise regarding possible abuse.

VAMT will:

- 10.1 appoint a designated lead person for safeguarding children and young people and a designated lead person for safeguarding adults at risk. In both cases this will be the Chief Officer (see Appendix for alternatives in the absence of the Chief Officer)
- 10.2 appoint a named trustee who will ensure compliance and provide an alternative contact for staff and volunteers
- 10.3 ensure that all staff and volunteers are made aware of their own safeguarding responsibilities and can identify the designated lead persons
- 10.4 ensure that all staff and volunteers attend core training on safeguarding children and young people and/or safeguarding adults at risk, as appropriate
- 10.5 ensure that all staff and volunteers adhere to the safeguarding procedures and good practice guidelines
- 10.6 review these policies bi-annually by the VAMT Board and communicate any changes to staff and volunteers
- 10.7 a risk assessment will be carried out for each post within VAMT to determine whether a DBS or enhanced DBS check is required for the post-holder. A record of all DBS checks carried out will be placed on the post-holders personnel file.

11 RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS

If someone discloses that they are being abused, then upon receiving the information you should:

- React calmly
- Reassure the child/adult that they were right to tell you and that they are not to blame and take what the child/adult says seriously
- Do not promise confidentiality, which might not be feasible in the light of subsequent developments.
- Do not ask leading questions, ensure that only a minimum of questions are used to establish a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. Don't ask about explicit details.
- Inform the child/young person/adult what you will do next
- Make a full and written record of what has been said/ heard as soon as possible (using the persons own words) and don't delay in passing on the information in accordance with the procedure below.

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in VAMT, in a paid or unpaid capacity, to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. There is however, a responsibility to act on any concerns and report them.

If the staff member has Level 3 Safeguarding, report the concern directly to the Cwm Taf MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) via secure email using the appropriate forms

supplied by the MASH. The VAMT Chief Officer must be informed that a referral has been made.

If the staff member does not have Level 3 Safeguarding or is a volunteer the concern must be reported to the designated lead person, at VAMT, who will then contact the appropriate authorities. (See appendix for Reporting Chain).

The designated lead person will then contact either the emergency services, MASH or Safeguarding Unit as appropriate to the circumstances. (See appendix for contact details)

VAMT will assure all staff and volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concerns that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a vulnerable person.

Where there is a complaint made, there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation.
- A safeguarding investigation.
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The result of the police and safeguarding investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

12 CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort must be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. Information must be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection.

13 INDEPENDENT SAFEGUARDING AUTHORITY (ISA) AND CRIMINAL RECORDS BUREAU (CRB) CHECKS

The Independent Safeguarding Authority barring lists act as a workforce ban on those individuals who have harmed children, young people or adults at risk in their care. They add an extra layer of protection to pre-employment processes alongside Disclosure and Barring Service checks. Employers will be able to check applicants against the ISA lists. There is a list for working with children and young people and a separate list for working with adults at risk.

VAMT will carry out DBS checks in accordance with 10.7 above.

Where VAMT enters into any contract for service for delivery to vulnerable people, the contractor will provide a copy of their DBS check. The contractor will also provide a copy of their safeguarding policy/ies which will also be kept on file.

The Chief Officer, as the designated lead officer for Safeguarding, will authorise any contract for service for vulnerable people.

APPENDIX

Reporting Chain (NB required for staff who have not achieved Level 3 safeguarding)

Designated Lead Officer	Chief Officer Ian Davy – 01685 353912 07966 698017
In absence of above	Deputy Chief Officer Hilary Edwards – 01685 353917
In absence of above	Administration & Finance Manager Carol Hindley – 01685 353908
Named Trustee (To be contacted in the absence of all above or if the reporter does not wish to contact the officers for any reason)	Maria Thomas 07793 650110 01685 384303

Contacts

Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board website	http://www.cwmtafsafeguarding.org/
Emergency Services	999
Cwm Taf MASH (adults) Out of Hours	01443 742942 01443 743665
Cwm Taf MASH (childrens) Out of Hours	01443 743619 01443 743665
Safeguarding Unit	Safeguarding Manager (Adults and Children) – Alex Beckham 01685 724686 alexandra.beckham@merthyr.gov.uk
Adult safeguarding, PoVA referrals or information should be sent using the A1 – the Adult at Risk form to: adultsatrisk@merthyr.gcsx.gov.uk	
Child Protection / safeguarding information should be sent using the C1 Safeguarding Children Report Form to: childrens.mash@merthyr.gcsx.gov.uk	