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FRIENDS OF CATHJA
Protection of Vulnerable Adults Policy
Approved by the Board of Trustees

This policy statement is formulated in recognition that abuse of vulnerable adults is widespread, but frequently unrecognised in our society. Abuse can take place in any situation, care setting or hospital, as well as at home.

The prevention of abuse of vulnerable adults is a collective responsibility. However, those agencies, professionals and voluntary groups working with, or in contact with vulnerable adults, hold a particular responsibility to ensure safe, effective services and to facilitate the prevention and early detection of abuse from whatever quarter, thus ensuring that appropriate protective action can be taken.

Abuse is a violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by any other person or persons. The risk of being abused depends upon the situation, the environment and the perpetrators, not on the behaviour of victims. Many incidents of abuse are criminal offences.

Recognising that inequality, disadvantage and discrimination exist in society, all vulnerable adults regardless of their ethnic origin, religion, language, age, sexuality, gender or disability have equal opportunity to access services and information designed to protect them from abuse and to promote their welfare.

Friends of Cathja’s nominated lead for Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults and development of all policy and practice is the Project Director

1.0 DEFINITIONS

Abuse is defined as ‘single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to a vulnerable person’. Or ‘the violation of an individuals human rights by any other person or persons’

Under this policy **vulnerable adults** are those:

‘Aged 18 years or over, who 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’.

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2.0 RECOGNITION OF ADULT ABUSE

Who may be the Abuser?

Perpetrators of abuse are not confined to any section of society, and may be people who hold a position of trust, power or authority in relation to a vulnerable adult. A person who abuses may be:

- A member of staff, proprietor or service manager
- A member of a recognised professional group
- A volunteer or member of a community group or social club
- A service user or vulnerable adult
- A spouse, relative or member of the person's social network
- A neighbour, member of the public or stranger

3.0 TYPES OF ABUSE

3.1 Physical Abuse

The use of force which results in pain, injury or a change in the persons natural physical state e.g. injuries inconsistent with the lifestyle of the vulnerable adult, bruises, burns, pain or impairment. These injuries may have been sustained by hitting, pushing, forcing, restraining or burning a vulnerable person.

2.1 Psychological Abuse

Behaviour that has a harmful effect on the vulnerable adults emotional health and development. A person may psychologically abuse a vulnerable adult in a variety of ways. He/she may swear, humiliate, ignore or frighten a vulnerable person. The result of emotional abuse may be intimidation of the victim, mental distress, denial of basic human and civil rights, negation of choices, wishes and self esteem.

3.3 Financial Abuse

The use of a vulnerable person's property, assets, income, funds or any resources without their informed consent or authorisation. Indicators include: stealing or illegal use of the vulnerable persons monies or physically taking cash or valuables without consent.

3.4 Sexual Abuse

A vulnerable person who is forced or coerced by a carer or other person into taking part in sexual activities or who is unable to give consent, is being sexually abused. In appropriate sexual behaviour between a member of staff and a resident are always abusive and will lead to disciplinary proceedings. Indicators include:

- Significant change in sexual behaviour, language or outlook

- Signs of withdrawal, depression and stress
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- Pain or itching, bruises or bleeding

3.5 Neglect

A service provider may neglect a vulnerable person who is in need of care by depriving them of essential elements of normal day to day living e.g. food, personal/medical care, including the failure to intervene in behaviour which is dangerous to the vulnerable adult or to others.

3.6 Discriminatory Abuse

Exists when values, beliefs or culture result in a misuse of power that denies opportunities to some groups or individuals. It is the exploitation of a persons vulnerability, resulting in repeated or pervasive negative/discriminatory treatment of an individual, which excludes them from opportunities in society.

3.7 Institutional Abuse

The mistreatment of or abuse of a vulnerable adult by a regime or individual within an institution. Institutional abuse can occur when the routines, systems and norms of an institution force individuals to sacrifice their own preferred lifestyle, cultural diversity to the needs of the institution.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Recruitment, Selection & Training of Staff & Volunteers

- i. Friends of Cathja will ensure that its recruitment and selection procedures will take account of the need to protect vulnerable adults. Two references will be taken up for all successful candidates prior to a formal offer of employment. For volunteers at least one professional reference will be obtained before a volunteer has contact with vulnerable adults. No volunteers have unsupervised contact with vulnerable adults. Where appropriate referees will be asked to comment on the applicant's suitability to work with vulnerable adults .
- ii. Where relevant to the staff or volunteer post, the successful applicant will be asked to agree to an appropriate Criminal Records Bureau check. Disclosures will be requested prior to the applicant taking up post.
- iii. Induction for new staff and volunteers will include information on all relevant policies and procedure, including the protection of vulnerable adults and young people, and on-going training will be provided where necessary.
- iv. All staff and volunteers will have a designated supervisor who will provide appropriate ongoing support and supervision. All staff are expected to speak to their manager or other staff member if they have any concerns about vulnerable adults or suspicions of abuse.

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- v. All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to act on any allegation, report or concern of abuse of a vulnerable adult to ensure that the situation is assessed and investigated immediately a concern arises.
- vi. Staff should ensure they maintain professional boundaries at all times and have awareness of Equality and Diversity issues. Managers should ensure that staff's professional boundaries with service users are upheld and provide coaching and monitoring to staff through supervision. Managers and staff should ensure service users are aware of the appropriate code of conduct and professional relationships expected.

Information suggesting that abuse has occurred could come from a number of sources: Directly from a vulnerable adult being abused, a concern arising from an observation, from a relative or friend or other service user, another member of staff or a member of the public raising a concern

The protection of vulnerable adults from abuse should be the highest priority and an allegation, suspicion or report of abuse should be dealt with as a priority over other work. Staff should share concerns with colleagues and report all concerns to their line manager without delay.

5. What must be done

Managers are usually responsible for a decision about what action is to be taken. They are responsible for ensuring procedures are followed and notifying and consulting with other agencies. They must:

- Deal with immediate needs to ensure safety of the vulnerable adult.
- Clarify the facts and decide if it falls under this procedure, and reporting requirements.
- Inform their manager and other relevant agencies as required
- Ensure concerns are confidentially documented

Where a service user raises concerns regarding the possible abuse of another service user to them personally and/or a member of staff; if the resident or service user that the concern relates to does not wish to address this or reports it to be an untrue statement, this should be respected but staff should monitor the situation until any concerns are dispelled.

5.1 Receipt of Allegation

Reports of abuse in Friends of Cathja's projects should immediately be passed to the Project Manager or Director. . Any investigation will be carried out by two senior staff members or a senior staff member and member of the management committee. An exploration of the allegations should be made and documented. Where abuse occurs outside the scheme, it is only possible

for staff to report it as a crime or to social services. An internal investigation would not be appropriate.

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5.2 Ensure Safety of the Vulnerable Adult

It is essential that the vulnerable adult who may be experiencing abuse is protected as the first priority. Upon a concern expressed, the following should be applied:

- Take the allegation seriously (regardless of frequency)
- Stay calm
- Listen patiently
- Reassure the person that they are doing the right thing in telling you
- Explain what you are going to do
- If necessary, contact emergency medical services or police
- Record all elements relating to the matter and date
- Provide ongoing support

5.3 Employees as Abusers

Allegations or concerns of abuse to service users by employees will be investigated thoroughly and reported to Friends of Cathja management, who may suspend an employee while an investigation is carried out. Where substantiated evidence is found that abuse from an employee has occurred, this will be defined as gross misconduct may result in instant dismissal from the organisation.

In conjunction with Friends of Cathja's disciplinary proceedings, the Police and relevant Local Authority will be informed. The resident's family and the immediate professional carers will also be informed of the allegation/occurrence, with the consent of the service user (where they are able to make an informed decision).

Where an allegation of abuse has been made the member of staff will be informed and will be suspended pending an investigation taking place .

5.4 Investigation

If the abuse allegation or concern involves a member of staff, following suspension the Project Director will comprehensively investigate the allegation. Meetings with potential witnesses will need to be arranged where written statements will be obtained. Having made a full investigation the findings will be reported to Friends of Cathja's Management Committee.

5.5 Staff Support

During and following the completion of disciplinary proceedings, sensitive support should be offered to staff, with opportunities to openly discuss and express their feelings, and record their account of the situation.

5.6 Non-employees

Staff may observe or receive reports of abuse relating to non-employees. These will be reported immediately to the Project Director, who will take a

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Written report of the allegation or occurrence. This will be discussed with and investigated with by Friends of Cathja Management.

5.7 Service Users

Where service users are the alleged perpetrators they may need to be removed from the vicinity of the victim while an investigation is carried out . This will be through a temporary bar from the service.

6. Interagency working

Friends of Cathja will share information with other agencies such as WLMHT; The Borough and Primary Care Trust with a view to safeguarding vulnerable adults and limiting for example the amount of times that victims need to be interviewed. Sharing information complies with the Government Guidance document 'No Secrets' which recognizes the need to share specific information to safeguard adults.

Friends of Cathja will share learning from dealing with allegations and instances of abuse with partner agencies and the Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board.

If an adult is in danger first ensure that the individual is safe. Call emergency services on **999** if immediate help is needed.

Action helps to prevent abuse. Not acting is not an option