

Policy



Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults

Vulnerable Adult Protection

Section 1 – Safeguarding Strategy, Policy and Statutory Framework

1. Scope

This policy deals with the protection of Vulnerable Adults, children and those under 18 years of age and will include those on 14 – 16 and 16 – 18 courses, and children in College crèches. A separate policy covers Child Protection.

2. Safeguarding Strategy

The College will:

- Take a preventive approach to protecting vulnerable adults from potential harm or damage.
- Take all appropriate actions to address concerns about the welfare of vulnerable adults.
- Work to agreed local policies and procedures in full partnership with other local agencies.
- Plan, implement, monitor and review policies and procedures to ensure that the maximum is done to provide a safe environment for vulnerable adults in the College.
- Take all reasonable measures to ensure that risks of harm to vulnerable adult's welfare is minimised by appropriate:
 - Risk assessment and management

- Health and Safety procedures
- Staff selection, recruitment, induction supervision and training
- Reacting to and reporting abuse

3. Policy Statement

- Adult Education College Bexley holds as a high priority the health, safety and welfare of all vulnerable adults involved in courses or activities which come under the responsibility of the College.
- The College and its staff have a collective and individual responsibility for duty of care to ensure that its staff fulfil their responsibilities to prevent abuse of vulnerable adults and to report any abuse discovered or suspected.
- The College will advise all parents/guardians/carers of vulnerable adults of the existence of the College's Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and Procedures, and the fact that this may require cases to be referred to the investigative agencies in the interests of the vulnerable adult.
- The College will advise vulnerable adults about the standards of behaviour and conduct they can expect from staff and volunteers and of what to do if they experience or suspect abuse.
- The College will work with appropriate local agencies, and in particular Bexley Social Services, to ensure that vulnerable adults are safeguarded through the effective operation of the College's vulnerable adult protection procedures.
- The College recognises that any vulnerable adult can be subject to abuse and all allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and treated in accordance with the College's procedures.
- The College recognises that it is the responsibility of all staff to act upon any concern, no matter how small or trivial it may seem.
- The College recognises its responsibility to implement, maintain and regularly review the procedures that are designed to prevent or notify suspected abuse.
- The College is committed to supporting, resourcing and training those who work with, or who come into contact with, vulnerable adults and to providing appropriate supervision.
- The College will prepare and implement an action plan to ensure it fulfils its duties to protect vulnerable adults.

- The Policy Act 1997 (Enhanced Criminal Record Certificates - Protection of Vulnerable Adults) Regulations 2002 require employers to carry out Criminal Record Checks before employees are allowed to

come into contact with vulnerable adults. The College is required under this legislation to apply for an enhanced disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau for staff working with such adults.

4. What is abuse?

Abuse is 'any act or failure to act, which results in a significant breach of the person's human rights or civil liberties, bodily integrity, dignity or well-being; including sexual relationships and financial transactions to which the person has not or cannot validly consent'. Adapted from Council of Europe report.

Abuse can take many forms:

Physical Abuse: Non-accidental harm to the body caused by use of force which results in pain, injury or changes in the person's physical state.
Examples: includes hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate punishments.

Sexual abuse: Involvement of a vulnerable adult in sexual activities or relationships which are for the gratification of the other person, which they have not consented to or cannot consent to.
Examples: includes rape and sexual assault or sexual acts or exposure to pornographic material.

Psychological/emotional abuse: Behaviour that has a harmful effect on a vulnerable adult's mental health or emotional health and development.
Examples: includes threats of harm or abandonment, shouting, swearing, verbal bullying, deprivation of choice/privacy, isolation or withdrawal from services or support networks.

Financial or material abuse: Using a vulnerable person's property, assets or income to another person's advantage.
Examples: include theft of money or possessions, pressure in connection with wills or, inheritance, property or finances, misuse of property possessions or benefits.

Neglect: Behaviour that results in a vulnerable person's basic needs not being met.
Examples: includes ignoring medical or physical care needs, leaving vulnerable person on their own when they are unable to look after themselves, failure to provide the necessities of life: heating, medication, drink or food; not ensuring access to aids to living, such as walking aids, hearing aids or spectacles.

Discriminatory Abuse: Behaviour that victimises the vulnerable person on the basis of their disability, sexuality, race or other features that is seen as 'different'.

Examples: includes racist, sexist or ageist insults or other forms of harassment or mistreatment.

Institutional abuse: General ill-treatment/neglect of a group of vulnerable people in a care service.

Examples: includes a culture where bullying and physical abuse is widespread and/or repeated failure to provide care to an acceptable standard.

Who are the Abusers?

Abuse can be perpetrated by a wide range of people including relatives, friends, other vulnerable people, paid or volunteer workers and can take place anywhere including in a person's own home or in a hospital or care home.

Finding out about abuse: Vulnerable people may report abuse themselves (a disclosure of abuse) but often they do not report because they are frightened, they are ashamed or because they are unable to do so because of their disabilities or because they do not know how to ask for help.

Signs of Abuse

Because vulnerable adults may not be able to report abuse themselves it is important that those working with them know what to look out for.

Look out for these signs of possible abuse *but keep an open mind and try not to jump to conclusions.*

If you are not sure if it is abuse or not, still speak to your line manager. You do not have to be certain that abuse is taking place before reporting it.

Be particularly concerned if the vulnerable person appears distressed or frightened in the presence of the suspected abuser or if the suspected abuser has a history of violence or other personal problems.

Record carefully what you see, what you hear and what you do.

- **Signs of possible physical abuse:** a history of unexplained falls or minor injuries; finger marks, clusters of bruises, untreated medical problems, unexplained weight loss.
- **Signs of possible sexual abuse:** pain, bruising, soreness, infections, changes in usual behaviour.
- **Signs of possible psychological/emotional abuse:** vulnerable person seems very distressed or confused, appears frightened of care-giver.

- **Signs of possible financial abuse:** unexplained or sudden withdrawal of money from accounts, inability to pay bills, an unusual interest in vulnerable person's assets, failure to explain financial transactions by person managing the vulnerable person's money.
- **Signs of possible neglect:** living conditions are filthy/cold, clothing is dirty or inappropriate, the person's health is deteriorating and they are not getting the medical treatment and care they need.
- **Signs of possible discriminatory abuse:** the vulnerable person is excluded from activities; there is no attempt to address their communication needs or provide food or care that meets their cultural needs.
- **Signs of possible institutional abuse:** repeated concerns about poor care or ill-treatment, lack of flexibility about waking/bedtimes, no respect of privacy, poor bedding or heating, lack of individual care planning, inadequate provision and choice re. food and drink.

Section 2 – Procedures

1. The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that the rights of vulnerable adults are protected through staff awareness of the issues and the following of the statutory and local guidelines in the reporting of concerns.

It is the responsibility of all staff working within the College to record and report vulnerable adult protection concerns, i.e. where they believe a vulnerable adult has been or is at risk of abuse, or significant harm. This responsibility extends to all staff and not just those specifically working with vulnerable adults.

2. The College will take steps to identify a vulnerable adult. On admission to a course tutors will be informed, as part of the admissions procedures, if vulnerable adults have been enrolled on their courses. Where these are not specifically designed for vulnerable adults, other additional supervisor measures' will be put in place for all students defined as vulnerable adults, and such students will come under the provisions of this policy.

3. Learner Support Manager

The College has a Learner Support Manager who will advise on vulnerable adult protection concerns.

4. Advice to Staff on When to Take Action and How

Vulnerable adults can potentially be abused within the family, community and organisations by employees (including those employed to promote their welfare and protection from abuse), visitors, volunteers, and fellow students.

Once you suspect or know of any abuse of any vulnerable adult, you should immediately inform the College's Learner Support Manager in person or by telephone. Even if you have only heard rumours of abuse, or you have a suspicion but do not have firm evidence, you should still contact the Learner Support Manager to discuss your concerns.

If the Learner Support Manager is not available you should contact the Strategic Manager Students and College Services.

You must not try to investigate the matter on your own. Staff are not equipped or qualified to do so.

If, following your initial contact with the Learner Support Manager, it is decided that the matter should be taken further, a written report from you is essential to prevent any misrepresentation of your findings. This should be sent to the Learner Support Manager within 24 hours of the suspicion arising. The report should be factual and should not include opinions or personal interpretations of the facts presented. The report should contain as much detail as possible, including any apparent physical signs of abuse or other circumstances which led to your suspicions, or the account given to you of abuse by the vulnerable adult concerned, as accurately as you are able to record it. The report should be signed, dated and a copy stored in a secure place. If you are unsure about what to write, you can get advice from the Learner Support Manager.

If a vulnerable adult comes to you with a report of apparent abuse, you should listen carefully to him/her, using the following guidelines. When listening to the vulnerable adult staff must:

- Allow the vulnerable adult to speak without interruption
- Never trivialise or exaggerate the issue
- Never make suggestions
- Never coach or lead the vulnerable adult in any way
- Reassure the vulnerable adult, let them know you are glad they have spoken up and that they are right to do so
- Always ask enough questions to clarify your understanding, do not probe or interrogate – no matter how well you know the vulnerable adult – spare them having to repeat themselves over and over
- Be honest – let the vulnerable adult know that you cannot keep this a secret, you will need to tell someone else
- Try to remain calm – remember this is not an easy thing for them to do

- Do not show your emotions – if you show anger, disgust or disbelief, they may stop talking. This may be because they feel they are upsetting you or they may feel your negative feelings are directed towards them
- Let the vulnerable adult know that you are taking the matter seriously
- Make the vulnerable adult feel secure and safe without causing them any further anxiety

The Learner Support Manager/Strategic Manager Student & College Services will advise on how to report abuse to the relevant Council team

5. What Happens Next?

Staff may need to

- Seek further advice from Social Services
- Make a referral to Social Services
- Report the incident to a designated Social Worker
- Report the matter to the police if a crime is suspected

If a referral is made, this must be confirmed in writing to the appropriate agency within 24 hours.

6. Confidentiality

Confidentiality and trust should be maintained as far as possible, but staff must act on the basis that the safety of the vulnerable adult is the overriding concern. The degree of confidentiality will be governed by the need to protect the vulnerable adult. The vulnerable adult should be informed at the earliest possible stage of the disclosure that the information will be passed on. All concerns regarding a vulnerable adult should always be held in private.

The College complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998, which allows for disclosure of personal data where this is necessary to protect the vital interests of a vulnerable adult.

In all cases the main restrictions on disclosure of information are:

- Common law duty of confidence
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 1998

Each of these has to be considered separately. Other statutory provisions may also be relevant, but in general, legislation does not prevent sharing of information if:

- Those likely to be affected consent; or
- The public interest in safeguarding the child's welfare overrides the need to keep the information confidential; or
- Disclosure is required under court order or other legal obligation

Whatever happens, you should always be open and honest with the vulnerable adult if you intend to take the case further.

Staff must not discuss the case with anyone other than those involved in the case. If staff have any concerns about the progress of the case or have any other concerns these must be discussed with the Learner Support Manager.

7. Allegations Against Staff

The primary concern of the College is to ensure the safety of the vulnerable adult. It is essential in all cases of suspected abuse by a member of staff that action is taken quickly and professionally whatever the validity.

There are occasions where a vulnerable adult will accuse a member of staff or physically or sexually abusing them. In some cases this may be false or unfounded. However in some cases the allegations may be true.

Any instance of a vulnerable adult being abused by a member of staff is particularly serious. On the other hand for an innocent person to be accused of such an act is a serious ordeal which can result in long term damage to their health and career.

In the event that any member of staff suspects any other member of staff of abusing a student, it is their responsibility to bring these concerns to the Strategic Manager Student and College Services or Principal.

The procedure adopted in the College's Child Protection Policy will need to be followed.

WHAT YOU MUST DO IF YOU SUSPECT ABUSE HAS TAKEN PLACE

We all have a responsibility to ensure all adults are safeguarded from abuse and we have responsibility to take action when we suspect or are informed abuse has taken place.

