



Vulnerable persons (suspected abuse)

Why should Sonshine Club take the protection of vulnerable adults seriously?

- 1 It is a legal requirement that organisations working with vulnerable adults carry out criminal records checks on relevant staff.
- 2 Registration with bodies such as the Charity Commissioners and the National Care Standards Board require organisations such as Sonshine Club to have Vulnerable Persons protection policy and to carry out checks on its staff.
- 3 Funders and Purchasers require such checks and policies.
- 4 Prevention is better than cure – this is true of:
 - a *the long term physical and psychological effects abuse may have*
 - b *the financial risk to Sonshine Club*
 - c *the reputation damage which could be inflicted on Sonshine Club.*

Definition

Anyone of any age who, because of their age, disability or infirmity, is dependent on other people for support in any areas of their lives, may be vulnerable to abuse.

Elders abuse Action on Elders Abuse defines abuse as “the mistreatment of an older person – a 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 the older person”. (No Secrets, Department of Health 2000.)

Abuse of vulnerable adults The Law Commission’s definition of a vulnerable adult is anyone who “by reason of old age, infirmity or disability (including mental disorder within the meaning of the Mental Health Act 1983) and who may be in receipt of Community Care services and is unable to protect himself from others”.

Introduction

Sonshine Club recognises that its service users may be vulnerable to abuse in many different forms and from any of the people with whom they have contact.

Abuse may be:

- Physical
- Emotional
- Mental
- Sexual
- Verbal
- Financial
- By coercion including controlling medication
- By neglect

Unintentional abuse We recognise that behaviour which may be seen as abuse and can be defined as such, may not be intentional e.g. in a situation where a confused person is attempting to look after his/her life long partner whose frailty or disability makes him/her vulnerable. Occasionally Sonshine Club is required to monitor situations where abuse is already identified.

Covering up Sonshine Club recognises that the abused person may go to great lengths to cover up for the abuser. This can include vulnerable adults who are being abused by a close family member. They may be frightened of repercussions which could intensify the abuse or do not wish to betray a relationship which is valuable to them. They may believe that they have caused the abuse.

Cultural considerations Sonshine Club recognises that there are many cultural differences in what is the norm and therefore acceptable behaviour to a particular cultural group may be seen to be abusive. Sonshine Club will seek appropriate advice if this appeared to be an issue.

Action

Recording, investigating and reporting

Where any form of abuse is suspected:

- Sonshine Club workers have a clear duty to record and report every incident to their team manager or care co-ordinator.
- The team manager or care co-ordinator will discuss the situation with a senior manager.

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- As soon as the information available is sufficient to cause concern, Sonshine Club must report in writing its suspicions to the appropriate Social Services department.
- Sonshine Club will expect action to be taken in line with the relevant local authority policy on Vulnerable Persons and Abuse. This usually takes the form of a Focused Assessment and will involve all appropriate agencies including the police.
- In severe or life threatening situations, Sonshine Club has a duty to involve the police immediately and to take any other appropriate action, eg call an ambulance, ask for a visit from the GP or other health professional who knows the abused person.

Working with vulnerable adults

Getting permission Whenever possible, the abused person's permission to report the abuse will be sought. There may however be occasions where this is not possible and in the service user's interest, a breach of confidentiality is unavoidable.

The abuser Sonshine Club acknowledges that abuse is sometimes a cry for help and that the suspected abuser has a right to support and understanding.

Training, Supervision and support

Sonshine Club acknowledges that its employees may be put in a very difficult position by working in a situation where abuse is suspected and recognises its responsibility to train, supervise and support its workers.

Abuse by Sonshine Club staff

Sonshine Club acknowledges that its service users could be abused by staff employed by Sonshine Club to support them.

To minimise this risk:

- Two references are followed up for all employees.
- In line with the National Care Standards, all staff providing hands on care and support are required to be checked by the Criminal Records Bureau.

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- All contracts of employment include a probationary period.
- All care and support staff receive training in working in challenging situations.
- All staff receive supervision and are supported by a line manager at all times including out of office hours.
- Service users and their carers are visited by a member of the Sonshine Club management team at the commencement of service, are reviewed regularly and are encouraged to keep regular telephone contact with the office staff.
- Sonshine Club has an active complaints policy and all complaints are followed up under the Complaints and where necessary, the Disciplinary Procedures.