

Policy on the Protection of Vulnerable Adults and Young People

1. Introduction

AdvoCard provides a service to mental health service users living in the community in Edinburgh and therefore is classed as a service that works with adults who can be vulnerable. In the context of this policy a vulnerable adult is defined as:-

A person, being aged 18 or over who:

- Receives personal care, or nursing, or support to live independently in their own home, or a care home
- Receives any health or social services
- Has a substantial learning or physical disability, or
- Has a physical or mental illness, or chronic or otherwise, including addiction to alcohol or drugs, or
- Has a substantial reduction in physical or mental capacity due to advanced age or to illness

(Source; CBRS)

All workers at AdvoCard can play an important part in promoting the safety and protection of the vulnerable adults with whom the organisation works. By workers this policy is referring to paid staff, committee members, volunteers and trainees of the organisation. The aim of this policy is to ensure that any vulnerable adults are protected and kept safe from harm while they are in receipt of services from AdvoCard.

In addition to this policy AdvoCard has a framework of policies and procedures which are designed to ensure the emotional and physical safety of service users, staff and volunteers which includes:-

- Recruitment Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy

- Data Protection Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Fair Treatment Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Lone Working Policy
- AdvoCard Disciplinary & Grievance Procedures

2. Recruitment, Selection & Training of Staff and Volunteers

2.1 AdvoCard will ensure that its recruitment and selection procedures take account of the need to protect vulnerable adults and young people. Two references will be taken up for all successful candidates as a condition of a formal offer of employment or voluntary work, and where appropriate the referees will be asked to comment on the applicant's suitability to work with vulnerable adults.

2.2 Where relevant to the post, any offer of employment or voluntary work will be made subject to receipt of a satisfactory Disclosure Scotland check. Disclosures will be requested prior to the applicant taking up the post of the voluntary opportunity and will be Enhanced level checks.

2.3 Induction for new staff will include information on all relevant policies and procedures, including the policy on the protection of vulnerable adults and young people, and on-going training will be provided if necessary.

2.4 All staff will have a designated supervisor who will provide appropriate support and supervision. Volunteers will have access to their own supervision arrangements.

3. Reporting Procedure

3.1 Abuse of vulnerable adults can take many forms including physical, verbal, emotional, psychological, sexual and financial. It is **not** the responsibility of anyone working within AdvoCard, in a paid or unpaid

capacity to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. It is therefore vital that staff raise all cases of suspected or alleged abuse in line with the procedures identified in this policy (see appendix 1 overleaf). It is important to do this as there may already have been concerns expressed by other members of staff and failure to report may put a vulnerable adult at risk.

3.2 Any disclosure or suspicion of abuse should be reported to the staff member's line manager as soon as possible. In cases where the line manager is not the Project Manager then the Project Manager must also be informed immediately. In the event that a line manager or the Project Manager are unavailable, perhaps for a prolonged period of time due to annual leave or sickness then the Convenor of the AdvoCard Management Committee should be informed. In the event that the Convenor is unavailable then another Office Bearer within the Executive of the committee must be informed.

3.3 The line manager and/or the Project Manager will gather further information and details by interviewing the person making the report and/or the service user directly.

3.4 The Project Manager or a line manager or Convenor/office bearer will then devise an appropriate plan of action. The exact nature of the action taken will be determined by the individual circumstances. Action may include the involvement of external authorities such as Social Work or the Police.

3.5 All workers of AdvoCard will be familiar with the good practice guidelines on the immediate action to be taken following a report or allegation of abuse. Familiarity will be gained through induction and/or training.

3.6 Any allegation made against a worker of AdvoCard should be reported to a line manager and/or the Project Manager. In the event of an allegation made against a line manager then the Project Manager must be informed. In the event of an allegation made against the Project Manager then the Convenor, or an office bearer of the AdvoCard

Management Committee must be informed. In the event of an allegation against a committee member then the Convenor or an office bearer must be informed who will then inform the Project Manager. In the event of an allegation made against the Convenor or an office bearer of the AdvoCard Management Committee then the funding authority of AdvoCard must be informed. The funding authority is the City of Edinburgh Council, Department of Health and Social Care.

3.7 If a disclosure of abuse is made by a service user, care should be taken to explain to them the procedure that will be followed and they should be told that it may be necessary break confidentiality in line with AdvoCard's policy on confidentiality in order to inform someone else of the facts.

3.8 If a service user makes an allegation about another organisation and their staff or volunteers this should be reported to the Project Manager and/or the Convenor or office bearer of the management committee who will then take appropriate action.

4. Good Practice

4.1 If it is necessary for a worker to meet a service user outside of AdvoCard's offices then he/she should arrange for this meeting to be in a public place.

4.2 When visiting service users in their homes, workers must normally be accompanied by another staff member or volunteer. There will be occasions when a worker will visit someone in their home alone. This is only done after a risk assessment has been followed and when previous knowledge of the individual concerned has been gained. Please refer to Lone Working Policy.

4.3 Service users should not be given access to home addresses or telephone numbers of staff members or volunteers. Service users' contact details should not be disclosed to anyone outside of AdvoCard without the individual's explicit consent.

4.4 Workers should not be alone in the office with a service user. If a meeting with a service user is happening outside of normal office hours then another member of staff should be informed and telephone access both ways arranged through the use of mobile phones. The staff member or volunteer who is meeting the service user should report to the other member of staff before and after the meeting takes place. The on-call member of staff should be aware of the time and place of the meeting.

Appendix 1

The following are guidelines on immediate action to be taken following the reporting of abuse by a vulnerable adult or young person.

- **React calmly so as not to frighten or deter him/her**
- **Reassure him/her that you are glad they have told you and it is not their fault**
- **Don't promise to keep it to yourself, and at the earliest opportunity remind them of our Confidentiality Policy and explain what this means**
- **Explain that you need to make sure that they will be safe and may have to pass on information to somebody trusted to deal with it appropriately**
- **Listen carefully to what they say and take them seriously**
- **Allow them to tell you what happened in their own words**
- **It is important to clarify what you have heard and to establish the basic facts. However avoid leading questions and do not ask them specific questions about explicit details**
- **If possible make brief notes during the initial disclosure, explaining to them why you are doing this. If it is not possible to do this at the time then make notes as soon as possible afterwards. All notes should be dated and signed by the staff**

member or volunteer taking them. All notes should then be handed over to the person investigating the allegation

- When leaving the service user take time to ensure, as far as is practicable, that they are ok and that they will be going somewhere safe when they leave you. Do not accompany them however. If it is clear that they are not ok then seek appropriate intervention for example a GP or Social Worker or a Nurse.**
- The allegation and any notes should be communicated to the appropriate person as soon as possible. This means the same day if possible or first thing the next day. You may decide that it is so urgent that you must inform someone immediately in which case this can happen in the evening or over the weekend**
- Seek support yourself from the person who line manages or supervises you about how you found the experience and how it has left you feeling**

March 2006