

# **SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY**

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this document is to set out the policy of The Poundbury Clinic in relation to the protection of vulnerable adults. Further guidance may be available on local inter-agency procedures via Dorset Social Services.

## **What is a Vulnerable Adult?**

The definition is wide, however this may be regarded as anyone over the age of 18 years who may be unable to protect themselves from abuse, harm or exploitation, which may be by reason of illness, age, mental illness, disability or other types of physical or mental impairment.

## **Forms of Abuse**

- Neglect – ignoring mental or physical needs, care, education, or basic life necessities or rights
- Bullying – family, carers, friends
- Financial – theft or use of money or possessions
- Sexual – assault, rape, non-consensual acts (including acts where unable to give consent), touching, indecent exposure
- Physical – hitting, assault, man-handling, restraint, pain or forcing medication
- Psychological – threats, fear, being controlled, taunts, isolation
- Discrimination – abuse based on perceived differences and vulnerabilities
- Institutional abuse – in hospitals, care homes, support services or individuals within them, including inappropriate behaviours, discrimination, prejudice, and lack of essential safeguards

Abuse may be deliberate or as a result of lack of attention or thought, and may involve combinations of all or any of the above forms. It may be regular or on an occasional or single event basis, however it will result in some degree of suffering to the individual concerned. Abuse may also take place between one vulnerable adult and another.

## **Indications**

- Bruising
- Burns
- Falls
- Apparent lack of personal care
- Nervous or withdrawn
- Avoidance of topics of discussion
- Inadequate living conditions or confinement to one room in their own home
- Inappropriate controlling by carers or family members
- Obstacles preventing personal visitors or one-to-one personal discussion

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- Sudden changes in personality
- Lack of freedom to move outside the home, or to be on their own
- Lack of access to own money

## Action Required

Where abuse of a vulnerable adult is suspected, the welfare of the patient takes priority. In deciding whether to disclose concerns to a third party or other agency, the clinician will assess the risk to the patient. Ideally the matter should be discussed with the patient involved first, and attempts made to obtain consent to refer the matter to the appropriate agency. Where this is not possible, or in the case of emergency where serious harm is to be prevented, the clinician will balance the need to protect the patient with the duty of confidentiality before deciding whether to refer. The patient should usually be informed that the clinician intends to disclose information, and advice and support should be offered. Where time permits, the medical defence organisation will be telephoned before any action is taken.

In assessing the risk to the individual, the following factors will be considered:

- Nature of abuse, and severity
- Chance of recurrence, and when
- Frequency
- Vulnerability of the adult (frailty, age, physical condition etc.)
- Those involved – family, carers, strangers, visitors etc.
- Whether other third parties are also at risk (other members of the same household may be being abused at the same time)

***Subject to the local procedures in force, consideration will be given to:***

- Report to Dorset Social Services
- Report to Police
- Report to CCG lead
- CQC if a member of staff is suspected of abuse to patients

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Duty of Care

All employees have a duty of care to patients, service users and colleagues.

Duty of care can be said to have reasonably been met where an objective group of professional considers;

- All reasonable steps have been taken
- Reliable assessment methods have been used
- Information has been collated and thoroughly evaluated

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- Decisions are recorded, communicated and thoroughly evaluated
- Policies and procedures have been followed
- Practitioners and managers seek to ascertain the facts and are proactive.

All are responsible for identifying, investigation and responding to allegations/suspicious of abuse.

Employees are responsible for understanding and applying this policy.

The management of The Poundbury Clinic is responsible for communicating the policy and supervising the identification, investigation and reporting of any allegations/suspicious of abuse.

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### **Contact List**

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole: 01202 735046

Dorset: 01305 228558

Police 101 or in an emergency 999

### **Resources**

*GMC Guidance on Confidentiality*

*BMA publication – Confidentiality and Disclosure of Health Information*

*Safeguarding Adults- NHS England*

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