

## Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy

### Aim

The aim of this policy is to raise awareness of the issues relevant to the prevention of abuse of vulnerable adults and to advise Pets as Therapy Volunteers on what action to take if they witness, suspect or are told of abuse of a person/s that they are visiting on behalf of Pets As Therapy.

### Definitions

Safeguarding adults at risk means protecting their right to live in safety and free from abuse and neglect.

The Care Act 2014 sets out safeguarding duties for adults at risk which applies to any charity working with anyone aged 18 or over who:

- has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs), and
- is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect
- as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.

An adult at risk of abuse may:

- have an illness affecting their mental or physical health
- have a learning disability
- suffer from drug or alcohol problems
- be frail.

It is of particular importance for people who, because of their situation or circumstances, are unable to keep themselves safe. Some adults receiving health care may be at greater risk from harm than others, sometimes as a complication of their presenting condition and their individual circumstances. However, any adult can be subject to abuse, whether a patient, visitor, relative, carer, or employee.

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal or psychological, it may be an act of neglect or an omission to act, or it may occur when a person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented or cannot consent. Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to or exploitation of, the person subjected to it.

## Key safeguarding principles

The Care Act (2014) has set out six key principles as below that underpin all safeguarding work.

**Empowerment:** People being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent. 'I am asked what I want as the outcomes of the safeguarding process and these directly affect what happens.'

**Prevention:** It is better to take action before harm occurs. 'I receive clear and simple information about what abuse, how to recognise the signs and what I can do to seek help.'

**Proportionality:** The least intrusive responsive appropriate to the risk presented. 'I am sure the professional will work in my best interest, as I see them, and they will only get involved as much as needed.'

**Protection:** Support and representation for those in greatest need. 'I get help and support to report abuse and neglect. I get help so that I am able to take part in the safeguarding process to the extent which I want.'

**Partnership:** Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse. 'I know that staff treat any personal and sensitive information in confidence, only sharing what is helpful and necessary. I am confident that professionals will work together and will get the best result for me.'

**Accountability:** Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding. 'I understand the role of everyone in my life and so do they.'

## Forms of abuse

Some forms of abuse are listed here but the Care Act 2014 does not limit what constitutes abuse or neglect to this list only. The specific circumstances of an individual case must always be considered.

**Physical abuse:** This includes assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate physical sanctions.

**Domestic violence:** This includes psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse; so called 'honour' based violence.

**Sexual abuse:** This includes rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting.

**Sexual exploitation:** Involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where adults at risk (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (for example, food, accommodation, drugs,

alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities.

**Psychological abuse:** This includes emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or support networks.

**Financial or material abuse:** This includes theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult's financial affairs or arrangements including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

**Modern slavery:** This encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.

**Discriminatory abuse:** This includes forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment because of race, gender, gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.

**Organisational abuse:** This includes poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one's own home. This may range from one off incidents to ongoing ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, and practices within an organisation.

**Neglect and acts of omission:** This includes ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services, the withholding of necessities of life such as or the withholding of the necessities of life such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating. If a pressure ulcer is believed to have been caused by neglect or abuse it must be reported and escalated using the safeguarding processes.

**Self-neglect:** This covers a wide range of behaviour such as neglecting to care for one's own personal hygiene, health and surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.

**Female genital mutilation (FGM):** This includes females who may have had FGM or are at risk of having FGM. FGM is a procedure where the female genital organs are injured or changed, but there is no medical reason for this. It can seriously harm the health of women and girls in the long term. It is illegal to practise FGM in the UK or to take girls under the age of 18 who are British nationals or permanent residents of the UK abroad for FGM whether or not it is lawful in another country. If a vulnerable adult is identified as having had or being at risk of FGM, this should be reported using the safeguarding processes to protect vulnerable adults.

**Forced marriage:** This is where there is concern that someone is being forced into a marriage they do not or cannot consent to.

**Radicalisation:** Radicalisation is comparable to other forms of exploitation. The aim of radicalisation is to attract people to their reasoning, inspire new recruits and embed their extreme views and persuade vulnerable individuals of the legitimacy of their cause. This may be direct through a relationship, or through social media. There are a number of factors that may make the individual

susceptible to exploitation by violent extremists. None of these factors should be considered in isolation but in conjunction with the particular circumstances of the individual. Safeguarding vulnerable people from radicalisation is no different from safeguarding them from any other forms of harm. If staff are concerned that an individual may be at risk of radicalisation, they should treat this as they would any other safeguarding issue; and escalate it using the safeguarding processes.

## Preventing abuse

It is always better to take action before abuse occurs and Pets as Therapy aims to reduce the risk of abuse occurring by:

- Ensuring all Trustees have up-to-date training and knowledge of safeguarding adults including what their responsibilities are as a Trustee.
- All PAT Volunteers understand the charities safeguarding adult's policy and procedure.
- Ensuring all PAT Volunteers understand how to recognise, and report suspected abuse.
- Reporting concerns to the local authority safeguarding lead as soon as they are raised to the Charity.
- Keeping up-to-date records of the memorandum of understanding between the Establishments and Pets As Therapy.
- Cooperate with safeguarding enquiries lead by the local authority or police as appropriate.
- The Board reserves the right to liaise with the host establishment and the Disclosure and Barring Service at any time with regards to any PAT Volunteer of the Charity or for any applicant who applies to be a PAT Volunteer or employee of the Charity.
- No PAT Volunteer is accepted into the Charity unless at least two written references have been obtained certifying that the applicant is of good character. References are obtained from a person independent of the applicant and are checked by the Charity in the event of any doubt either directly with their signatories or, if doubt remains, with the police.
- Pets As Therapy Volunteer visits may only be made to Establishments registered with the Charity.
- Volunteers who make visits to registered Establishments must display the correct photographic ID badge issued by the Charity throughout the visit. Any animal accompanying that PAT Volunteer must be wearing their corresponding photographic ID badge as issued by the Charity identifying that animal and recording its certification as of sound health and suitable temperament.
- Throughout any visit to an Establishment, the Pets As Therapy Volunteer must hold their pet on a secure lead at all times.
- No PAT Volunteer visit may be made on behalf of the Charity to any child or adult who is in medical isolation.
- No PAT Volunteer visit may be made on behalf of the Charity to any adult in the care of an Establishment **without the presence of a member of the Establishment's staff in attendance at all times.**
- Any PAT Volunteer visit made to any adult at risk that is not on behalf of the Charity will **not** be covered by Pets as Therapy's third-party insurance.
- Any PAT Volunteer visit made to any adult, with an animal which is not registered with the Charity, will **not** be covered by Pets As Therapy's third-party insurance.

**If you suspect that abuse may be occurring, if you witness something, or if someone discloses something to you during a Pets As Therapy visit, please note:**

- All allegations should be treated seriously.
- No abuse is acceptable; some are criminal offences.
- Every individual has a duty to take action.
- PAT Volunteers should not be expected to cope with the situation alone.

Volunteers with concerns should discuss them discreetly with their point of contact within the Establishment, or a senior staff member. The first priority is to ensure the safety and protection of the vulnerable adult. If the situation presents an immediate danger, take urgent action by calling the relevant emergency services, for example police or ambulance. Remember to have regard for your own safety – leave the situation if it is not safe for you.

## **Pets As Therapy advises the following:**

### **DO:**

- ✓ Stay calm
- ✓ Listen patiently
- ✓ Reassure the person involved that they are doing the right thing by telling you
- ✓ Explain what you intend to do
- ✓ Report your findings to a relevant person
- ✓ Write a **factual account** of what you have seen or heard **immediately**

### **DON'T:**

- 😞 Appear shocked, disgusted or angry
- 😞 Press the individual for further details
- 😞 Make comments or judgements other than to express concern
- 😞 Promise to keep secrets
- 😞 Confront the alleged abuser
- 😞 Risk contaminating any evidence- it is not necessary, or advisable, for you to seek any further evidence.

## **Tell someone in authority**

Make it clear that you will need to tell someone (your point of contact, for example a manager or ward sister within the Establishment). However, if the adult states that they do not wish their concerns to be pursued, this should be respected if it is possible to do so. This is only appropriate when consideration has been given to the level of risk to the individual and others and their mental capacity to understand that decision. Their wishes can be overridden in some circumstances, but **this is a decision for your point of contact to make, not you.**

**Please notify Head Office immediately on 01865 671440 of any safeguarding incident. We are here to help. More information can be found on the [Volunteering England](#) website or [Charity Commission](#) website.**