

# Safeguarding and protection from abuse handout

## Types and indicators of abuse

### Physical abuse

Physical abuse is the deliberate infliction of pain, physical harm or injury including: hitting, slapping, punching, pushing, kicking, hair-pulling, restraint, withholding or misuse of medication.

Indicators include:

- Multiple bruising
- A history of unexplained falls and/or minor injuries
- Fractures not consistent with falls or explanations or the injury
- Unexplained loss of hair, in clumps
- Cuts that are not likely to be explained by self-injury
- Finger marks
- Burns not consistent with possible explanations
- Excessive consumption of alcohol which is unusual

### Psychological and emotional abuse

Psychological and emotional abuse is any pattern of behaviour by another that results in the psychological harm to a service user and may include: verbal abuse, humiliation, insults, ridicule, bullying, threats, enforced isolation, coercion, lack of privacy or choice, denial of dignity.

Indicators include:

- Strain within the relationship
- Indications that the abuser acts differently with the worker present than at other times with the service user
- An air of silence in the home when the alleged abuser is present
- A general lack of consideration for the service user's needs
- Refusal to allow the service user an opinion of their own
- Denial of privacy in relation to their care, feelings or other aspects of their life
- A denial of access to the service user, especially where the adult is in need of assistance which they will consequently not receive
- Denial of freedom of movement e.g. locking the service user in a room
- Alterations in the psychological state, possible withdrawal or fear

## **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse is any sexual act carried out without the informed consent of a service user and may include: fondling, sexual intercourse, offensive or suggestive language inappropriate touching.

Indicators include:

- Unexplained bruising around the vaginal or genital areas
- Unexplained difficulties in walking
- Reluctance of the service user to be alone with an individual known to them
- Unexplained behaviour change
- Unexplained bleeding from vaginal or genital areas
- Stained or bloody clothing

## **Financial abuse**

Financial abuse is the misappropriation of the funds of a service user and may include: misuse of finances, exploitation, theft or fraudulent use of money, embezzlement, misuse of property.

Indicators include:

- situations where, despite having a regular income/pension, the service user is without money soon after its receipt, particularly where that service user is not able to spend money without assistance
- unexplained shortage of money despite a seemingly adequate income
- unexplained withdrawals from savings accounts
- unexplained disappearance of financial documents e.g. building society books and bank statements

## **Neglect**

Neglect may be deliberate or by default where the abuser is not able to provide the care needed and may not recognise the need for that care to be given. The abuser may also be neglecting them self.

Indicators include:

- persistent hunger
- loss of weight
- poor hygiene
- inappropriate dress

- consistent lack of supervision for long periods, especially during activities which hold danger for them
- denial of religious or cultural needs
- constant fatigue or listlessness
- physical problems and medical needs that are not attended to

## **Discrimination**

Discriminatory abuse can manifest itself in any of the above ways and frequently will include a combination of forms of abuse. What differentiates it from the other categories is that the abuse is motivated by prejudice and discrimination against the service user because he or she is perceived to belong to a specific group; this may be gender, sexual orientation, race, religion or disability amongst others.

## **Abusive regimes**

Some people argue that there is a 7<sup>th</sup> type of abuse that doesn't fall into the definition stated previously since it is abuse by regime rather than by individuals. On occasion institutions develop practices which allow the abuse of the service users.

In residential homes indicators include:

- lack of flexibility and choice for service users in waking/bed times
- lack of opportunity to obtain drinks and snacks
- lack of choice over meals
- lack of appropriate bedding
- lack of appropriate heating
- lack of service user's possessions
- lack of procedures in financial management, medical requirements and other matters pertaining to the service user's care
- lack of privacy in service users care, such as bathing, dressing, editing mail, restricting visits
- Not allowing visitors
- derogatory remarks
- public discussion of matters private to service users
- restraint of service users that cannot be justified
- lack of action to deal with abuse

In supported housing, indicators include:

- staff using master keys without good reason/due cause
- staff entering flats/rooms without permission or not waiting for reply after knocking
- breaches of service users' confidentiality
- restrictive practices in the use of communal facilities

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