# Ability Shetland Protecting Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedure

**1 Scope and Purpose**

**Ability Shetland** is committed to ensuring that vulnerable people who use our services are not abused and that working practices minimise the risk of such abuse. Anyone aged 16 or over can become an adult at risk.

**Definition**

Vulnerable adults are those who are getting or may need help and services to live in the community. Vulnerable adults may be unable to take care of themselves and unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation by other people. Vulnerable adults, at risk, have additional support needs and may be dependent on others. For example:

* People with learning disabilities.
* Older people who are dependent on the help of others.
* People with physical, social or sensory impairment
* People with mental health problems
* People who are unable to protect themselves from physical harm or from being taken advantage of.
* People who are controlled or suppressed by dominant partners.
* People unable to defend their rights or their property.

**2. People who harm**

There is no typical abuser. Those who harm include husbands, wives, partners, children, relatives, friends, neighbours, members of staff, other service users, visitors or strangers.

It can take place by anyone, anywhere, such as the family home, a hospital ward, a care home, a social club, day centre, at work or in a public place.

Abuse can include: physical, financial, material, sexual, psychological, discriminatory, emotional abuse and neglect. Abuse can take place in any setting, public or private, and can be perpetuated by anyone.

Volunteers, staff and trustees have a duty to identify abuse and report it.

**3. Signs of harm**

Some of the signs of harm include:

* Unexplained or unusual injuries.
* A delay in seeking treatment for injuries or illness.
* Sudden increase in confusion.
* Unexplained deterioration in health or appearance.
* People who are anxious or afraid.
* Unexplained changes in behaviour.
* Not having basic needs met such as adequate food or heating.
* Prejudice through actions or comments about age, gender, colour, disability, race, sexual or religious orientation.
* Lack of appropriate care leading to harm.
* Misuse of medication, for example not giving medicines properly.
* Undue pressure by family or professionals to have someone moved or taken into care.
* Denial that harm is happening.
* Financial abuse. E.g. unexplained cash withdrawals.

1. **Responsibilities of Ability Shetland**

* To ensure staff and volunteers are aware of vulnerable people’s need for protection
* To notify the appropriate agencies if abuse is identified or suspected
* To support and where possible secure the safety of individuals and ensure that all referrals to services have full information in relation to identified risk and vulnerability
* To PVG check volunteers and staff who work with Vulnerable Adults and Children.

5. Responsibilities of staff and volunteers

* To be familiar with the vulnerable adult protection policy
* To take appropriate action in line with the policy of Ability Shetland
* To declare any existing or subsequent convictions.

**6. Support to volunteers and staff**

The volunteers and staff reporting of incidents of suspected or potential abuse may find that the victim and/or the other responsible adult concerned i.e. are upset or angry. The Team Leader will support you. Other support may take the form of support provided by work colleagues or support or counselling provided by an outside body if required.

Volunteers and staff themselves may also be the subject of an allegation of abuse. While support will be offered, **Ability Shetland** will ensure that Social Services are given all assistance pending any investigation. Suspension and/or discipline may be implemented.

**7. Reporting abuse**

If a member of staff or someone they know is being harmed, they should tell someone about it as soon as possible. Some adults at risk can be harmed by other people or by their own actions. A person being harmed may be too frightened or worried to tell anyone else.

Staff or volunteers are encouraged to speak about the harm even if it took place a long time ago. Sometimes those who harm continue to target and exploit others for many years. Reporting past harm may well prevent others from being harmed.

**8. Support for those who report abuse**

All those making a **complaint** or allegation or expressing concern, whether they are staff & volunteers of Ability Shetland, service users carers or members of the general public should be reassured that:

* They will be taken seriously
* Their comments will usually be treated confidentially, but their concerns may be shared with the appropriate authorities if they or others are at significant risk

1. **Suspect of abuse by a member of Ability Shetland** **volunteers or staff**

Where an Ability Shetland staff member or volunteer is suspected of abuse the following action should be taken:

* 1. The Team Leader should interview the member of volunteers and staff with a witness present.
  2. The Team Leader should make arrangements for interviewing the suspected victim. This should be done with **Ability Shetland** volunteers or staff member and a support for the victim present.
  3. The purpose of the meeting is not to investigate but to establish whether there are grounds for the allegation
  4. The procedure in 4 above should then be followed.

1. **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is crucial to all our work and relationships and the **Ability Shetland** confidentiality policy should be adhered to except that the welfare of vulnerable adults and children is paramount and takes precedence over it. Do not keep concerns relating to potential abuse of vulnerable adults to yourself.

Confidentiality may NOT be maintained if the withholding of information will prejudice the welfare of the adult or child.

**11. Rights**

Everyone has the right to live in a safe, secure community free from exploitation and harm. However, some of us live in fear, unable to speak out. Some people need help to ensure their right to live in safety, with good care and support. Adults at risk deserve support, protection, respect and care.

**References**

Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 (AS&P Act)\*

The Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007

\* Adults aged 16-18 will also be subject to the Children (Scotland) Act 1995

**www.safershetland.com/adult-protection**

Call: Social work, Grantfield: 01595 744400, out of hours 01595 695611

Police: 101 or 999 in emergency.