

**SENIOR CITIZENS CONCERN CLG  
ST LOUIS DAY CARE CENTRE**

**SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS  
POLICY**

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## **1. Introduction**

*This guidance is for all staff and volunteers, work placements and students, working in St Louis Day Care Centre who come into contact with vulnerable adults. Senior Citizens Concern CLG are fully committed to safeguarding the well-being of adults by protecting them from physical, sexual, psychological, financial, discriminatory abuse and neglect. Senior Citizens Concern CLG accepts that in all matters concerning vulnerable adults, the welfare and protection of such adults is paramount.*

## **2. Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Statement**

*Senior Citizens Concern CLG aims to adhere to the HSE Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse National Policy and Procedures and to minimise the negative impacts of risk, while respecting and upholding the human rights and inherent dignity of all people involved with Senior Citizens Concern CLG. The Health Service Executive Publication "Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse National Policy and Procedures (2014)" is available for reference. The full date report is available online on the HSE website at: HSE National Safeguarding Office 2016 Safeguarding Data.*

*Senior Citizens Concern CLG Nurse runs in house training annually in identifying signs of abuse.*

## **3. What does a Vulnerable Adult mean?**

A vulnerable person is defined in the HSE Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse Policy and Procedures as any person aged 18 or over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness, and is or may be restricted in capacity to guard himself/herself against harm or exploitation or to repeat such harm or exploitation.

Community care services is defined as all care services provided in any setting or context.

The Term "Vulnerable Adult" may include

- People with a learning disability
- People with a physical disability
- People with a sensory impairment
- People with mental ill health
- People with dementia
- People who are frail due to age or other factors
- People with acquired brain injury
- People with a drug or alcohol problem
- People with certain types of physical illness

#### 4. What is meant by “ Abuse”.

Senior Citizens Concern CLG understands the definition of abuse in accordance with Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse National Policy and Procedures “any act, or failure to act, which results in a breach of a vulnerable person’s human rights, civil liberties, physical and mental integrity, dignity or general wellbeing, whether intended or through negligence, including sexual relationships or financial transactions to which the person does not or cannot validly consent, or which are deliberately exploitative. Abuse may take a variety of forms. Abuse is a violation of an individual’s human and civil right by another person or persons. Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts.

#### 5. Types of Abuse:

- **PHYSICAL ABUSE:** includes hitting, slapping, rough handling, misuse of medication, misuse of restraints or inappropriate sanctions.
- **SEXUAL ABUSE:** includes making someone carry out a sexual act they have not or cannot consent to or into which he or she was compelled to consent and also includes rape and sexual assault.
- **PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE:** includes emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.
- **FINANCIAL OR MATERIAL ABUSE:** includes theft of money/possessions, misuse of someone’s benefits, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions or the misuse or misappropriation of property possession or benefits, denying someone access to their money.
- **DISCRIMINATORY ABUSE:** includes ageism, racism, sexism, that based on a person’s disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.
- **NEGLECT AND ACTS OF OMISSION:** includes ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

#### WHO MAY BE THE ABUSER?

Vulnerable adults may be abused by anyone including:

- Relatives and family members.
- Professional staff, managers and paid care workers.
- Volunteers.
- Other Clients.

- Neighbours.
- Friends and associates.
- People who deliberately exploit vulnerable people and strangers.

### **IN WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES MAY ABUSE OCCUR?**

Abuse can take place anywhere including when a vulnerable adult:

- Lives alone.
- Lives with a relative.
- Lives or is staying in a nursing home.
- Attend a day care establishment.
- Is admitted to hospital.
- Is in a public place.

### **SIGNS OF POSSIBLE ABUSE**

The following is meant as guide and is not intended to be exhaustive.

- **Physical**- fractures, bruising, burns, pain, marks, recoiling from contact.
- **Sexual**- Genital irritation, S.T.I.'s, offensive language, recoiling contact, persistent sexually inappropriate behavior.
- **Psychological** – Withdrawn, overly compliant, compulsive behavior, reduction in skills.
- **Financial**- Insufficient funds, over protection over money/ possessions, unpaid bills/debts, lack of amenities.
- **Neglect**- Pain/discomfort, overly hungry/thirsty, unkempt, deterioration in health, behavior changes.
- **Discriminatory Abuse**- Rejection of services, seen to be not conforming or being uncooperative, unexplained injuries/ falls.
- **Institutional Abuse**- Lack of personal clothing/ possessions, no care plan, frequent hospital admissions.

### **6. Barriers for Vulnerable Persons Disclosing Abuse:**

Barriers to disclosure may occur due to some of the following:

- Fear on the part of the service user of having to leave their home or service as a result of disclosing abuse.
- A lack of awareness that what they are experiencing is abuse.
- A lack of clarity as to whom they should talk to.
- Lack of capacity to understand and report the incident.
- Fear of an alleged abuser.
- Ambivalence regarding a person who may be abusive.

- Limited verbal and other communication skills.
- Fear of upsetting relationships.
- Shame and/or embarrassment.

## **7. How to Respond to Disclosure of Abuse:**

A vulnerable adult may carefully select a person to confide in. That chosen person will be someone they trust and have confidence in. It is important that a vulnerable adult who discloses abuse feels supported and facilitated in what may be a frightening and traumatic process for them. A vulnerable adult may feel perplexed, afraid, angry, despondent and guilty. It is important that any negative feelings they may have are not made worse by the kind of response they receive. A vulnerable adult who divulges abuse has engaged in an act of trust and their disclosure must be treated with respect, sensitivity, urgency and care.

**It is of the utmost importance that disclosures are treated in a sensitive and discreet manner. Anyone responding to a vulnerable adult making such a disclosure should take the following steps:**

- Take what the vulnerable adult says seriously.
- React calmly, as over-reaction may intimidate the vulnerable adult and increase any feelings of guilt that they may have.
- Reassure the vulnerable adult that they were correct to tell somebody what happened.
- Listen carefully and attentively.
- Never ask leading questions.
- Use open-ended questions to clarify what is being said and try to avoid having them repeat what they have told you.
- Do not promise to keep secrets.
- Advise that you will offer support but that you must pass on the information.
- Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser to the person reporting to you.
- Explain and make sure that the vulnerable adult understands what will happen next. Do not confront the alleged abuser.

## **8. Reporting Procedures**

Following a disclosure of abuse, employees/volunteers should:

Write down immediately after the conversation what was said, including all the names of those involved, what happened, where, when, if there were any witnesses and any other significant factors and note any visible marks on the individual making a report or any signs you observed.

- Record the event, sign and date all reports and indicate the time the notes were made.
- Ensure that the information is treated with the utmost confidence.
- Allegations should not be investigated by employees/volunteers.
- Employees/volunteers should pass that report to the Designated Officer of Senior Citizens Concern CLG.

**Under no circumstances should a vulnerable adult be left in a situation that exposes him or her to harm or to risk of harm. In the event of an emergency where you think a vulnerable adult is in immediate danger you should contact the Gardai in the first instance. The nearest Garda Station to Senior Citizens Concern CLG is Duncannon Garda Station.**

**What Does an Employee/Volunteer do if they Suspect or have reasonable grounds for concern that a Vulnerable Adult is being abused:**

Try to ensure insofar as is possible that no situation arises that could cause any further risk to the vulnerable adult.

Record the facts as you know them. Include the person's name, address, the nature of the concern, allegation or disclosure. Employees/volunteers should pass that report to the Designated Officer of Senior Citizens Concern CLG who is Mary Coyne, Nurse.

In accordance with the National Safeguarding Office directive on responding to concerns of allegations of abuse of Vulnerable Adults the following steps and procedures should be followed in a service setting within 1-3 days of the alleged incident:

- (a) Staff immediately ensure safety of client.
- (b) Staff informs Designated Officer and Line Manager.
- (c) Line Manager assesses the need for support and /or intervention.
- (d) Contact An Garda Siochana as appropriate as set out above.
- (e) Ensure referable to Tusla where a child is identified as being at risk or harm.
- (f) Staff outlines in writing all relevant information as outlined above.
- (g) The Line Manager, Manager of the Centre and Designated Officer will meet to ensure that the preliminary screening is undertaken and all necessary actions are taken.
- (h) The Manager of the Centre will notify the Safeguarding and Protection Team.

**9. Designated Officer(s):**

In accordance with Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse National Policy and Procedures, Senior Citizens Concern CLG has appointed a Designated Office who is responsible for:

- Receiving concerns or allegations of abuse regarding vulnerable persons.
- Collating basis relevant information.
- Ensuring the appropriate manager is informed and collaboratively ensuring necessary actions are identified.
- Ensuring all reporting obligations are met (internally to the service and externally to the statutory authorities).
- Supporting the manager and other personnel in addressing the issues arising.
- Maintaining appropriate records.

**Designated Officer:**

**Name: Mary Coyne**  
**Nurse**  
**St. Louis Day Care Centre**

#### **10. Confidentiality**

All information regarding concern for a vulnerable adult should be shared on a “need to know” basis in the interests of the person concerned. The provision of information to the statutory agencies for the protection of a vulnerable adult is not a breach of confidentiality or data protection. Employees/Volunteers should not give any undertakings regarding secrecy.

#### **11. Guidance for Senior Citizens Concern CLG as an employer Dealing with An Allegation of Abuse of a Vulnerable Adult.**

If an allegation is made against an employee/volunteer within Senior Citizens Concern CLG we will ensure that everyone involved gets a proper response. This involved making sure that two separate procedures are followed:

- The reporting procedure in respect of the vulnerable adult.
- The procedure for dealing with the employee/volunteer.

**The same person will not deal with both of the above.**

When an allegation of abuse is received against employees/volunteers it will be assessed promptly and carefully by Senior Citizens Concern CLG. Action taken in reporting an allegation of the abuse of a vulnerable adult against an employee/volunteer should be based on the opinion formed reasonably and in good faith. It will be necessary to decide whether a formal report should be made to the relevant Safeguarding & Protection Team within the HSE. This decision should be based on reasonable grounds for concern, as outlined earlier in this policy document.

The first priority is to ensure that no vulnerable adult is exposed to unnecessary risk. Senior Citizens Concern CLG as an employer, will as a matter of urgency take any necessary protective measures. These measures will be proportionate to the level of risk and will not unreasonably penalise the employee/volunteer financially or otherwise, unless necessary to protect any vulnerable adults. Where protective measures penalise the employee/volunteer it is important that early consideration be given to the case.

Any action taken should be guided by agreed procedures, the applicable employment contract and the rules of natural justice.

The Manager of St. Louis Day Care Centre should be informed about the allegation as soon as possible. When Senior Citizens Concern CLG becomes aware of an allegation of abuse of a vulnerable adult by an employee/volunteer during the execution of that person’s duties, the Manager of St. Louis Day Care Centre will inform the employee/volunteer of the following:-

1. The fact that an allegation has been made against him or her.

(i) The nature of the allegation.

The employee/volunteer will be afforded an opportunity to respond. The Manager of St. Louis Day Care Centre will note the response and pass on this information if making a formal report to the relevant Safeguarding & Protection Team within the HSE.

Everyone in Senior Citizens Concern CLG will take care to ensure that actions taken by them do not undermine or frustrate any investigation / assessments conducted by the relevant Safeguarding & Protection Team within the HSE or An Garda Siochana. The Manager of St. Louis Day Care Centre will maintain a close liaison with the statutory authorities to achieve this.

Senior Citizens Concern CLG should be notified of the outcome of an investigation and/or assessment. This will assist them in reaching a decision about the action to be taken in the longer term concerning the employee.

Note: The reporting procedure in respect of the vulnerable adult will be dealt with by Senior Citizens Concern CLG Designated Officer unless there is any reason why this is not possible.

In the event that it is not appropriate for the Manager of St. Louis Day Care Centre to carry out the responsibilities above, the Chairperson of Senior Citizens Concern CLG will do so.

**12. National Contacts for Safeguarding & Protection Teams within the HSE:**

[www.hse.ie/safeguarding](http://www.hse.ie/safeguarding)

**13. Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information On Offences Against Children And Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012**

Senior Citizens Concern CLG understands that failure to record, disclose and share information about alleged abuse is a failure to discharge a duty of care and that it may be an offence under the Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information On Offences Against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 to withhold information in such instances.