

Vulnerable Adults and Child Protection Policy

Boulders is committed to ensuring that vulnerable people who use our services are not abused and that working practices minimise the risk of such abuse.

Introduction

The characteristics of child and vulnerable adult abuse can take a number of forms and cause victims to suffer pain, fear and distress reaching well beyond the time of the actual incident(s). Victims may be too afraid or embarrassed to raise any complaint. They may be reluctant to discuss their concerns with other people or unsure who to trust or approach with their worries. There may be some situations where victims are unaware that they are being abused or have difficulty in communicating this information to others.

Aim of Policy

The aim of this policy is to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults by outlining clear procedures and ensuring that all staff and members of the public are clear about their responsibilities.

Definitions

Children are defined for this policy as people under the age of 18.

Vulnerable adults are people who are over 18 years of age and may be unable to take care of themselves and to protect themselves from harm or exploitation by other people.

This **may** include a person who:

- Is elderly and frail
- Has a mental illness including dementia
- Has a physical or sensory disability
- Has a learning disability
- Has a severe physical illness
- Is a substance mis-user
- Is homeless

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. It can take a number of forms, including:

1. Physical abuse e.g. hitting, pushing, shaking, inappropriate restraint, neglect or abandonment.
2. Sexual abuse e.g. involvement in any sexual activity against his/her will, exposure to pornography, voyeurism and exhibitionism.
3. Emotional/psychological abuse e.g. intimidation or humiliation.
4. Financial abuse e.g. theft or exerting improper pressure to sign over money.
5. Discriminatory abuse e.g. racial, sexual or religious harassment.
6. Personal exploitation – involves denying an individual his/her rights or forcing him/her to perform tasks that are against his/her will.

Possible situations of abuse

Staff or members of the public may become aware of abuse of children or vulnerable adults:

- By witnessing or being told of abuse by Boulders staff towards a customer

- By witnessing abuse of one customer towards another, for example a parent/guardian abusing a child or a teacher with a pupil.
- Through a child or vulnerable adult with whom they have established a trusting situation confiding in them about abuse.

Staff as Role Models

Boulders staff are in a position of responsibility and should remember at all times that they are role models for children. They are expected to model good behaviour at all times, including no use of swearing, aggressive language or posturing, or suggestive behaviour.

The following code of practice applies to all staff:

- Unnecessary or potentially inappropriate physical contact must be avoided at all times.
- Staff should never carry out a personal task for children that they can do for themselves. Unless a child has a particular need, staff should not accompany children to the toilet. Where help with a personal task or toileting is essential, staff must always be accompanied by a colleague and record their actions on a Confidential Incident Record form.
- Always ensure that there are 2 members of staff present in a room/area/outside. If you need to leave that room/area/ outside ensure a replacement for you is found without delay.
- Taking children or vulnerable adults on car journeys is not permitted.
- Do not make suggestive or inappropriate remarks to or about a child or vulnerable adult, even in fun, as this could be misinterpreted.
- Remember that those who abuse children and vulnerable adults can be of any age (even other children and vulnerable adults), gender, ethnic background or class, and it is important not to allow personal preconceptions about people to prevent appropriate actions taking place.
- Good practice includes valuing and respecting children and vulnerable adults as individuals, and adult role modelling of appropriate conduct - which would exclude bullying, aggressive behaviour, racism, sectarianism or sexism.
- Never engage in sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Never engage in rough or physical contact except as permitted within the rules of the game or competition.
- Never form intimate emotional or physical relationships with children or vulnerable adults.
- Never allow or engage in touching a child or vulnerable adult in a sexually suggestive manner.
- Never allow children or vulnerable adults to swear or use sexualised language unchallenged.
- Never make sexually suggestive comments to a child or vulnerable adult, even in fun.
- Never reduce a child or vulnerable adult to tears as a form of control.
- Never allow allegations made by a child or vulnerable adult to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.

Photographing, Videoing and Filming of Children and Vulnerable Adults

There is evidence that some people have used sporting venues and activities as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of children and vulnerable

adults. The following procedures have been developed to protect children and vulnerable adults.

The following is required for the activities or events where children or vulnerable adults are participating:

- Where possible consent from the parent/guardian for photographing, videoing and/or filming of a child or vulnerable adult must be obtained prior to the event or activity.
- Where possible anyone wishing to use photographic/film/video equipment at a venue must obtain the approval of the management.
- No unsupervised access or one-to-one sessions are to be permitted unless this has been approved in advance by the child or vulnerable adult, parent/guardian and the organisation, and appropriate vetting has occurred e.g. CRB check of individual wanting to photograph, film or video.
- Boulders Ltd reserves the right at all times to prohibit the use of photography, film or video at any event or activity with which it is associated.
- The requirements above are promoted to ensure all people present at the event or activity understand the procedure and are aware of whom to contact if concerned.

Support for staff

Customers and staff reporting incidents of suspected or potential abuse may find that the victim and/or the other responsible adult concerned are upset or angry. The Directors will provide support where appropriate. Other support may take the form of support provided by work colleagues or support or counselling provided by an outside body if required. Customers and staff themselves may also be the subject of an allegation of abuse. While support will be offered, Boulders will ensure that Social Services are given all assistance pursuing any investigation. Suspension and/or discipline may be implemented.

Reporting Procedures

If the allegation or suspicion of abuse is discovered by a member of staff, then they should inform a Director as soon as possible. The Director will make a written record of the allegation or suspicion of abuse and discuss the situation with other directors.

Staff have a duty to identify abuse and report it.

If a member of staff has been told about the allegation of abuse in confidence, they should attempt to gain the consent of the person who has told them to make a referral to another agency. However, the gaining of the consent is not essential in order for information to be passed on. Consideration needs to be given to:

1. The scale of the abuse
2. The risk of harm to others
3. The capacity of the customer to understand the issues of abuse and consent

If there is any doubt about whether or not to report an issue to Social Services then it should be reported.

In emergency situations (e.g. where there is the risk or occurrence or severe physical injury), where immediate action is needed to safeguard the health or safety of the individual or anyone else who may be at risk, the emergency services must be contacted.

Where a crime is taking place, has just occurred or is suspected, the police must be contacted immediately.

Responsibilities

All members of staff have a responsibility to be aware of this policy and to report any suspicions that they might have concerning abuse.

Suspicion of Abuse by a Member of Boulders Staff

Where a member of staff is suspected of abuse the disciplinary policy will be followed. In these cases:

- The Operational Director should interview the member of staff with a witness present.
- The Operational Director should make arrangements for interviewing the suspected victim. This should be done with a member of Boulders staff and support for the victim present.
- The purpose of the meeting is not to investigate but to establish whether there are grounds for the allegation

Confidentiality

The Boulders confidentiality policy should be adhered to except that the welfare of children and vulnerable adults is paramount and takes precedence over it. Do not keep concerns relating to potential abuse of children or vulnerable adults to yourself.

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

CRB Checks

All newly recruited staff are CRB checked and a system is implemented to ensure ongoing checks for all employees

Training

Every member of staff will be made aware of the risks of abuse and what signs to look for. They will be made aware of this policy.

Important Points to Remember

1. In any conflict of interests between the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the child – the needs of the child **MUST** come first.
2. Where possible the parent(s)/guardian(s) co-operation should be obtained before Boulders contact the appropriate authority.
3. Recognising and coping with cases of child abuse is very stressful, but it should be remembered that is not the responsibility of anyone involved with Boulders to make judgement about the concerns or to investigate further.

Boulders has no statutory remit or role to investigate child abuse.

4. Ultimately, social services have a statutory responsibility for the protection of children.
5. The Managing Director should ensure that communication with those directly involved is clear and frequent.
6. The Managing Director will contact key agencies for clarification and or discussion

Procedure for Staff Responding to Suspicions and/or Allegations of Abuse of a Child or Vulnerable Adult against a Member

