

# Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy

Wycombe Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme (WRDGS)

Reviewed November 2022

## Introduction

Wycombe Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme is committed to ensuring that vulnerable people are not abused and that working practices minimise the risk of abuse.

Living a life that is free from harm and abuse is a fundamental right of every person. All of us need to act as good neighbours and citizens in looking out for one another and seeking to prevent the isolation which can easily lead to abusive situations and put adults at risk of harm.

Wycombe Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme is committed to working with the main statutory agencies – local councils, the police and NHS organisations and other local voluntary organisations to promote safer communities, to prevent harm and abuse and to deal with suspected or actual cases of abuse. Our procedures aim to make sure that the safety, needs and interests of adults at risk are always respected and upheld. This includes upholding human rights.

Wycombe Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme is committed to working within the framework of the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Adults Board

[Home - Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Adults Board \(buckssafeguarding.org.uk\)](http://buckssafeguarding.org.uk)

to:

- improve inter-agency working
- avoid people falling between the gaps in services
- reduce duplication of work
- gain a better understanding of safeguarding across all agencies
- ensure alignment of language used across agencies.

All staff and volunteers, in whatever setting and role, are the frontline in preventing harm or abuse occurring and empowering the person at risk to take action where concerns arise.

## Who is an 'adult at risk'?

An 'adult at risk' is someone who is 18 years or over who may be in need of community care due to a mental health problem, learning disability, physical disability, age or illness. As a result, they may find it difficult to protect themselves from abuse.

## **What is abuse?**

There are many different types of abuse, including:

- Physical – this is 'the use of force which results in pain or injury or a change in a person's natural physical state' or 'the non-accidental infliction of physical force that results in bodily injury, pain or impairment'.
- Sexual – examples of sexual abuse include the direct or indirect involvement of the adult at risk in sexual activity or relationships which they do not want or have not consented to.
- Emotional and psychological – this is behaviour that has a harmful effect on the person's emotional health and development, or any form of mental cruelty that results in mental distress, the denial of basic human and civil rights such as self-expression, privacy and dignity.
- Institutional – institutional abuse is the mistreatment or neglect of an adult at risk by a regime, or individuals within settings and services, that adults at risk live in or use. Such abuse violates the person's dignity, resulting in lack of respect for their human rights.
- Discrimination – discriminatory abuse exists when values, beliefs or culture result in a misuse of power that denies opportunities to some groups or individuals.
- Financial and material – this is the use of a person's property, assets, income, funds or any other resources without their informed consent or authorisation. It includes theft, fraud, exploitation and the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

## **What to do if an adult experiencing abuse tells you about it**

If an adult experiencing abuse or neglect speaks to you about this, assure them that you are taking them seriously. Listen carefully to what they are saying, stay calm and get a clear and factual picture of the concern.

Be honest and avoid making assurances that you may not be able to keep, for example, complete confidentiality. Be clear and say that you need to report the abuse. Do not be judgemental and try to keep an open mind.

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.

All WRDGS staff (professionals and volunteers) involved with adults at risk should inform the Operations Manager if they are concerned that an adult has been abused or may be at risk of harm.

If you hear about an incident of abuse from a third party (this is when someone else tells you about what they have heard or seen happen to a vulnerable adult at risk), encourage them to report it themselves or help them to report the facts of what they know.

### **What to do if you suspect abuse**

Everyone with a duty of care to an adult at risk should:

- act to protect the adult at risk
- deal with immediate needs and ensure the person is, as far as possible, central to the decision making process
- report the abuse to the Operations Manager (who will report it to the correct agency)
- if a crime has or may have been committed, contact the police to discuss or report it
- record the events.

A concern may be a direct disclosure by the adult at risk, or a concern raised by staff or volunteers, others using the service, a carer or member of the public, or an observation of the behaviour of the adult at risk, or the behaviour of another.

### **How to make a report of suspected abuse**

All concerns of abuse or neglect of a vulnerable adult at risk can be reported by the Operations Manager to the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Adults Team on 0800 137 915 (09.00 to 17.30) or 0800 999 7677 (outside office hours). [ascfirstresponse@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:ascfirstresponse@buckinghamshire.gov.uk) However, if a serious crime has taken place or there is a need for an immediate police response to protect the adult at risk, consider dialling 999.

### **What happens when I make a report of suspected abuse?**

Referrals to the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Adults Team will be taken from anyone who has a concern that an adult is at risk. Details from the referrer about the allegation of abuse will be needed so it is helpful to have the facts of the circumstances ready to hand.

The referral may be passed to the local safeguarding adults team or allocated to a worker who will seek to:

- clarify the circumstances of the alleged abuse or neglect
- take any immediate steps to protect the adult at risk, if needed
- decide if the safeguarding adult procedures are the required and appropriate response to the situation
- work in partnership with other agencies, like the police or health services, where necessary.

The allocated worker will call a multi-agency strategy meeting where details of the investigation and responsibilities will be agreed. Protecting adults at risk is the

responsibility of all the agencies working together and they will all follow the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Adults Board Safeguarding Adults Multi Agency Policy and Procedures:

<https://www.buckssafeguarding.org.uk/adultsboard/resources/reviews-annual-reports-policies-procedures/>

## **Personnel and Training**

The lead member of staff for ensuring the implementation of the safeguarding adults policy is Phil Thomas – Operations Manager. He will maintain an overview of safeguarding concerns, take a lead on liaising with other agencies and keeping them informed about local developments in safeguarding. He will ensure that all staff and volunteers at Wycombe Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme have access to relevant training and support.

## **Allegations of abuse by volunteers or staff**

Volunteers and staff themselves may be the subject of an allegation of abuse. If you are the subject of such an allegation or made aware of an allegation then you must immediately report this to the lead member of staff responsible for ensuring the implementation of the safeguarding vulnerable adults policy. In these instances Wycombe Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme will report the allegation to Social Services and ensure that they are given all assistance pursuing any investigation. Suspension and/or disciplinary action may be taken.

In these circumstances Wycombe Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme will be as supportive as possible to the employee or volunteer concerned who will also be encouraged to seek appropriate external help and support.

## **Staff and volunteer recruitment**

When staff and volunteers are being recruited to roles that involve regular direct work with vulnerable adults this will be taken into account by Wycombe Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme trustees in the recruitment process, which will include DBS checks, take up of appropriate references, and relevant interview questions to ensure safer recruitment.

## **Monitoring of existing staff and volunteers**

Members of WRDGS staff and volunteers who work with vulnerable adults will be checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) every three years and the trustees will use the information to review whether staff are still suitable to work with vulnerable adults.

Signed by: Phil Thomas

Position in organisation: Operations Manager  
Date to be reviewed: November 2023