



# **Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **OVERVIEW**

Sample-Studios is a not-for-profit arts organisation that supports the professional development of contemporary arts practitioners in Cork City and beyond. What began as a volunteer-led initiative in 2011 has grown into a professional arts organisation with a dedicated team of staff and volunteers that manages: artist studios and shared facilities in Churchfield, the city-wide TACTIC Visual Arts Programme, the Lord Mayor's Pavilion exhibition and project space, and a successful graduate Residency Programme. In 2021, Sample-Studios marks its 10th anniversary with an ambitious programme of exhibitions, events, community outreach projects and a new Education Programme for children and young people. Sample-Studios is committed to providing a safe environment and a positive experience for all vulnerable adults with whom we interact.

### **Purpose**

At Sample Studios we launch, support and sustain creative careers and practices in Cork.

### **Vision**

Sample-Studios will be a catalyst in the artistic and cultural vibrancy of Cork and the creative community beyond.

### **Mission**

We deliver on our purpose and vision to drive creative practice and cultural vibrancy in Cork in 3 ways:

- high quality and affordable studio space
- professional development and supports
- opportunities to show or make work with local and national partners and the community

Facilitating community engagement with the arts is a core aspect of our strategic

vision. Sample-Studios recognises the importance of having a Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy and the responsibility to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all vulnerable people that interact with the organisation.

The following policies and procedures have been implemented:

- A Sample-Studios Policy Statement
- Code of behaviour for staff and volunteers
- Roles and responsibilities of staff/members and carers/parents
- A reporting procedure for issues/concerns
- Confidentiality Policy
- Procedure for allegations of misconduct or abuse by staff
- Procedure for complaints and comments
- Procedure for incidents and accidents

Provided that all Sample-Studios policies and procedures are adhered to, it is the wish of Sample-Studios' Board of Trustees that staff and volunteers encourage vulnerable adults to participate in activities and support them to develop their ideas and skills, as well as experience the many other positive outcomes, both personally and socially, acquired by participation in arts practice and arts activities. This policy fulfils the requirements of the legislation and embraces the principles of best practice in relation to Vulnerable Adult policies and procedures in the Republic of Ireland. This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it continually addresses and adheres to policies and procedures nationally.

## **VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION POLICY STATEMENT**

A 'Vulnerable Adult' is defined as: "a person who is, or who may be, in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is, or may be, unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation."

"Good Practice With Vulnerable Adults", Jackie (EDT) Prichard, Jessica Kingsley Publishers

The term "disability" for the purposes of this policy applies to persons who have physical, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Sample-Studios operates a Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy which is subject to annual review. Sample-Studios has a responsibility to ensure all vulnerable adults who are part of our membership or attending any of the organisation's events and activities are accompanied by at least one other appointed adult who is aware of, and will follow, Sample-Studios Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy. The Vulnerable Adults must be supervised at all times during the organisation's events and activities to ensure against their involvement in activities which are considered dangerous or disadvantageous in some way(s).

Sample-Studios will endeavour to ensure that all staff and volunteers have current satisfactory Garda checks completed before they work with participants considered to be 'Vulnerable Adults' as part of Sample-Studios' membership, projects and events. Where this is not possible, efforts will be made to acquire accurate and satisfactory references from previous employers.

Responsibility for leading implementation of this policy and procedure rests with Sample-Studios. Aoibhie McCarthy, the Artistic Director of Sample-Studios is the designated person with overall responsibility for implementation of this policy and procedure, and will undertake the following:

- Communicate this policy to all staff and volunteers.
- Ensure that service specific procedures are developed, implemented and reviewed in compliance with this policy.
- Ensure that all Vulnerable Adults in contact with Sample-Studios and their next of kin / advocates, are informed of Sample-Studios' policies / procedures / protocols for safeguarding.

This Policy must be used in conjunction with the following as appropriate:

*Policies for Managing Allegations of Abuse against Staff Members*

*Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children Safety  
Incident Management Policy*

## **STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS' CODE OF BEHAVIOUR**

A code of behaviour is in place which staff and volunteers must strictly adhere to at all times when working with Vulnerable Adults. This code can help minimise the risk of abuse or harm to Vulnerable Adults during Sample-Studios' events and activities.

Staff and Volunteers must:

- Take steps to avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with Vulnerable Adults and should, conversely, endeavour to avoid situations where this may arise. Any necessary meetings with Vulnerable Adults should be conducted as openly as possible with the awareness of other staff, volunteers and/or other adults present. Where possible, it is preferred that any necessary meetings are conducted within sight of other staff, volunteers and/or other adults present. Should any meetings be deemed to require privacy, doors to the rooms where the meetings are conducted must be left open (propped open, if necessary).
- Not engage in activity of a physical nature unless as vital elements of art workshops or structured activities. In the planning of workshops and activities, staff and volunteers should attempt, where possible, to avoid activities which require such physical contact.
- Not engage in or allow inappropriate physical contact with, or make sexually suggestive comments to, Vulnerable Adults.
- Not perform tasks, involving physical contact, for Vulnerable Adults which they are capable of doing themselves.

Please note that all the above points apply whether activities or events are conducted in any premises or venues both indoor and outdoor, as well as during travel to and from any other premises/venues, as part of Sample-Studios activities or events.

## **DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE**

Abuse may be defined as “ any act, or failure to act , which results in a breach of a vulnerable persons human rights, civil liberties, physical and mental integrity, dignity or general well being, 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.”

(Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA). *The National Standards for Residential Services for Children and Adults with Disabilities*. Dublin, 2013)

This definition excludes self-neglect which is an inability or unwillingness to provide for oneself. However, Sample-Studios acknowledges that people may come into contact with individuals living in conditions of extreme self-neglect. To address this issue, Sample-Studios has developed a specific policy to manage such situations at the end of this document.

Although this abuse definition focuses on acts of abuse by individuals, abuse can also arise from inappropriate or inadequacy of care or programmes of care. There are several forms of abuse, any or all of which may be perpetrated as the result of deliberate intent, negligence or lack of insight and ignorance. A person may experience more than one form of abuse at any one time. The following are the main categories/types of abuse.

### **Types of Abuse**

**Physical abuse** includes hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate sanctions.

**Sexual abuse** includes rape and sexual assault, or sexual acts to which the Vulnerable Adult has not consented, or could not consent, or into which he or she was compelled to consent.

**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, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

**Neglect and acts of omission** include 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.

**Discriminatory abuse** includes ageism, racism, sexism, that based on a person's disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

**Institutional abuse** may occur within residential care and acute settings including nursing homes, acute hospitals and any other in-patient settings, and may involve poor standards of care, rigid routines and inadequate responses to complex needs.

### **Where might abuse occur?**

Abuse can happen at any time in any setting.

Anyone who has contact with a Vulnerable Adult may be abusive, including a member of their family, community or a friend, informal carer, healthcare/ social care or other worker.

#### **Familial Abuse**

Abuse of a Vulnerable Adult by a family member.

#### **Professional Abuse**

Misuse of power and trust by professionals and a failure to act on suspected abuse, poor care practice or neglect.

#### **Peer Abuse**

Abuse, for example, of one adult with a disability by another adult with a disability.

#### **Stranger Abuse**

Abuse by someone unfamiliar to the Vulnerable Adult.

### **Accidents, Incidents and Near Misses**

Lessons can be learned from accidents, incidents and/or near misses. As a result, Sample-Studios has in place a procedure for reporting accidents, incidents and near misses that occur. Accidents, incidents and near misses, particularly those which are recurring, can be indicators of organisational risk, including risk to safeguarding, which needs to be managed. Accidents, Incidents and Near Misses can be reported to Sample-Studios staff using an Accident and Incident Form displayed in its premises.



## **Vulnerable Adults - Special Considerations**

Abuse of a Vulnerable Adult may be a single act or repeated over a period of time. It may comprise one form or multiple forms of abuse. The lack of appropriate action can also be a form of abuse. Abuse may occur in a relationship where there is an expectation of trust and can be perpetrated by a person who acts in breach of that trust. Abuse can also be perpetrated by people who have influence over the lives of Vulnerable Adults, whether they are formal or informal carers or family members or others. It may also occur outside such relationships.

Abuse of Vulnerable Adults may take somewhat different forms and therefore physical abuse may, for example, include inappropriate restraint or use of medication. Vulnerable Adults may also be subject to additional forms of abuse such as financial or material abuse and discriminatory abuse. It is critical that the rights of Vulnerable Adults to lead as normal a life as possible is recognised, in particular deprivation of the following rights may constitute abuse:

- Liberty
- Privacy
- Respect and dignity
- Freedom to choose
- Opportunities to fulfil personal aspirations and realise potential in their daily lives Opportunity to live safely without fear of abuse in any form
- Respect for possessions

People with disabilities and older people may be particularly vulnerable due to:

- diminished social skills
- dependence on others for personal and intimate care
- capacity to report
- sensory difficulties
- isolation
- power differentials

Adults who become vulnerable have the right:

- To be accorded the same respect and dignity as any other adult, by recognising their uniqueness and personal needs.
- To be given access to knowledge and information in a manner which they can understand in order to help them make informed choices.

- To be provided with information on, and practical help in, keeping themselves safe and protecting themselves from abuse.
- To live safely without fear of violence in any form.
- To have their money, goods and possessions treated with respect and to receive equal protection for themselves and their property through the law.
- To be given guidance and assistance in seeking help as a consequence of abuse.
- To be supported in making their own decisions about how they wish to proceed in the event of abuse and to know that their wishes will be considered paramount unless it is considered necessary for their own safety or the safety of others to take an alternate course, or if required by law to do so.
- To be supported in bringing a complaint.
- To have alleged, suspected or confirmed cases of abuse investigated promptly and appropriately.
- To receive support, education and counselling following abuse.
- To seek redress through appropriate agencies.

## **BUILDING BLOCKS FOR THE SAFEGUARDING AND PROMOTING WELFARE**

### **Prevention**

While research on *what works* to prevent abuse in practice has, to date, focused primarily on children, people with intellectual disabilities, older persons and institutional settings, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) identified some of the following building blocks for prevention and early intervention:

- People being informed of their rights to be free from abuse and supported to exercise these rights, including access to advocacy.
- A well trained team operating in a culture of zero tolerance to abuse.
- A sound framework for confidentiality and information sharing across service providers.
- Needs and risk assessments to inform people's choices.
- A range of options for support to keep people safe from abuse tailored to people's individual needs.
- Services that prioritise both safeguarding and independence.
- Multi-disciplinary team work, interagency co-operation and information sharing.

## Risk Management

- The assessment and management of risk should promote independence, real choices and social inclusion of Vulnerable Adults.
- Risks change as circumstances change.
- Risk can be minimised but not eliminated.
- Identification of risk carries a duty to manage the identified risk.
- Involvement with Vulnerable Adults, their families, advocates and practitioners from a range of services and organisations helps to improve the quality of risk assessments and decision making.
- Defensible decisions are those based on clear reasoning.
- Risk-taking can involve everybody working together to achieve desired outcomes. Confidentiality is a right, but not an absolute right, and it may be breached in exceptional circumstances when people are deemed to be at risk of harm or it is in the greater public interest.
- The standards of practice expected of staff must be made clear by their team manager/supervisor.
- Sensitivity should be shown to the experience of people affected by any risks that have been taken and where an event has occurred.

Sample-Studios commits to having an effective procedure for assessing, evaluating and putting in place risk-reducing measures in respect of all relevant activities and programmes. In assessing and managing risks, the aim is to minimise the likelihood of risk or its potential impacts while respecting an ambition that the individual is entitled to live their life to the fullest extent possible. In safeguarding terms, the aim of risk assessment and management is to prevent abuse occurring, to reduce the likelihood of it occurring and to minimise the impacts of abuse by responding effectively if it does occur.

No endeavour, activity or interaction is entirely risk-free and, even with good planning, it may not be possible to completely eliminate risks. Risk assessment and management practice is essential to reduce the likelihood and impact of identified risks. In some situations, living with a risk can be outweighed by the benefit of having a lifestyle that the individual values and freely chooses. In such circumstances, risk-taking can be considered to be a positive action. Consequently, as well as considering the dangers associated with risk, the potential benefits of risk-taking have to be considered. In such circumstances strategies to manage/mitigate the risk need to be put in place on a case by case basis.

A consistent theme in the literature is the value of identifying factors that indicate an increased risk of abuse among adults in the interests of prevention. Identifying risk factors can help to prevent abuse by raising awareness among staff and service managers of the people in their care/support who may be most at risk of abuse. Staff can use these insights to develop effective risk assessments and

prevention strategies.

Common personal risk factors include:

- diminished social skills / judgement
- diminished capacity
- physical dependence
- need for help with personal hygiene and intimate body care
- lack of knowledge about how to defend against abuse.

Common organisational risk factors include:

- low staffing levels
- high staff turnover
- lack of policy awareness
- isolated services
- a neglected physical environment
- weak / inappropriate management
- staff competencies not matched to service requirements
- staff not supported by training/ongoing professional development.

## **Principles**

Vulnerable Adults have a right to be protected against abuse and to have any concerns regarding abusive experiences addressed. They have a right to be treated with respect and to feel safe.

The following principles are critical to the safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults from abuse:

- Human Rights
- Person Centeredness
- Advocacy
- Confidentiality
- Empowerment
- Collaboration

## **Human Rights**

All persons have a fundamental right to dignity and respect. Basic human rights, including rights to participation in society, are enshrined in the Constitution and the laws of the State.

The National Standards for Residential Services for Children and Adults with Disabilities (HIQA 2013 – Standard 1.4.2) requires service providers to ensure that:

*“People are facilitated and encouraged to integrate into their communities. The centre is proactive in identifying and facilitating initiatives for participation in the wider community, developing friendships and involvement in local social, educational and professional networks.”*

In addition the National Quality Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People in Ireland (HIQA 2009 – Standard 18: Routines and Expectations) states that:

*“Each resident has a lifestyle in the residential care setting that is consistent with his/her previous routines, expectations and preferences, and satisfies his/her social, cultural, language, religious and recreational interests and needs.”*

Vulnerable Adults may have limited sources of outside assistance, support or advocacy to safeguard them from abuse and to support them if they are ever victimised. It is crucial to provide opportunities for individuals that will expand their relationships and promote community inclusion. Both services and individuals benefit from having contact with a wide range of people in the community. Reducing isolation through links with the community can mean that there are more people who can be alert to the possibility of abuse as well as providing links with potential sources of support. Service isolation can lead to unacceptable practices that can become normalised and staff may be cut off from new ideas and information about best practice.

### **Person Centeredness**

Person Centeredness is the principle which places the person as an individual at the heart and centre of any exchange concerning the provision or delivery of a service, such as provision of Studios or an artistic programme in the case of Sample-Studios. It is a dynamic approach that places the person in the centre. The focus is on their choices, goals, dreams, ambitions and potential with the service seen as supporting and enabling the realisation of the person’s goals rather than a person fitting into what the services or system can offer. This approach highlights the importance of partnerships and recognises the need for continuous review and redevelopment of plans to ensure that they remain reflective of the person’s current needs and that they do not become static.

### **Culture**

*“Culture manifests what is important, valued and accepted in an organisation. It is not easily changed nor is it susceptible to change merely by a pronouncement, command or the declaration of a new vision. At its most basic*

*it can be reduced to the observation the way things are done around here".<sup>7</sup>*

Key to the successful safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults is an open culture with a genuinely person-centred approach, underpinned by a zero-tolerance policy towards abuse and neglect. It is important that service providers create and nurture an open culture where people can feel safe to raise concerns. The importance of good leadership and modelling of good practice is essential in determining the culture of services.

Human Resource policies are fundamental to ensuring that staff are aware of the standards of care expected of them and support their protection from situations which may render them vulnerable to unsubstantiated/inappropriate allegations of abuse. Sample-Studios has procedures in place for the effective recruitment, vetting induction, management, support, supervision and training of all staff and volunteers that provide services to, or have direct contact with, Vulnerable Adults.

Sample-Studios has put in place a framework of organisational policies and procedures that ensures good practice and a high standard of service. The following are some of the policy areas that assist in the safeguarding of service users from abuse:

- Employee Handbook
- Organisational Manual
- Safety Statement
- Data Protection and Privacy Policy
- Protected Disclosure Policy
- Handling Feedback and Complaints Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Dignity and Respect in the Workplace Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Grievances Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Ethical Partnerships Policy
- Induction Policy

## **Advocacy**

Advocacy assumes an important role in enabling people to know their rights and voice their concerns. The role of an advocate is to ensure that individuals have access to all the relevant and accurate information to allow them to be able to make informed choices. Vulnerable Adults can be marginalised in terms of health, housing, employment and social participation. Advocacy is one of the ways of supporting and protecting Vulnerable Adults. Advocacy services may be preventative in that they can enable Vulnerable Adults to express themselves in potentially, or actually, abusive situations.

The purpose of advocacy is to:

- Enable people to seek and receive information, explore and understand their options, make their wishes and views known to others and make decisions for themselves.
- Support people to represent their own views, wishes and interests, especially when they find it difficult to express them.
- Ensure that people's rights are respected by others.
- Ensure that people's needs and wishes are given due consideration and acted upon.
- Enable people to be involved in decisions that would otherwise be made for them by others.

The National Standards for Residential Services for Children and Adults with Disabilities (HIQA Jan 2013) requires:

*"Each person has access to an advocate to facilitate communication and information sharing;"*

and

*"Each person is facilitated to access citizens information, advocacy services or an advocate of their choice when making decisions, in accordance with their wishes;"*

The National Quality Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People (HIQA 2009) requires:

*"Each resident has access to information, in an accessible format, appropriate to his/her individual needs, to assist in decision making"*

Access to independent and accurate information improves equality of opportunity and provides a pathway to social and other services. Advocacy needs to respond to a range of complexity, from situations that require limited involvement and intervention, to a level of complexity that requires significant intervention.

There are many types of advocacy that can help to support Vulnerable Adults which should be considered by service providers:

**Informal advocacy** – this form of advocacy is most often provided by family/friends.

**Self advocacy** – an individual who speaks up for him/herself or is supported to speak up for him/herself.

**Independent representative advocacy** – a trained advocate who provides advocacy support on a one-to-one basis to empower the individual to express his/her views, wishes and interests.

**Citizen advocacy** – a volunteer is trained to provide one-to-one ongoing advocacy support.

**Peer advocacy** – provided by someone who is using the same service, or who has used a service in the past, to support another person to assert his/her views/choices.

**Legal advocacy** – representation by a legally trained professional.

**Group advocacy** – a group of people collectively advocate on issues that are important to the group.

**Professional advocacy** – it is the responsibility of professional staff to advocate on behalf of service users who are unable to advocate for themselves.

**Public policy advocacy** – advocates who lobby Government or agencies about legislation/policy.

Group advocacy is an important form of advocacy that has the potential to move self-advocacy to a higher level and it should be encouraged, supported and developed by service providers. It provides an opportunity for individuals to speak up on issues collectively and gives them a greater level of confidence to attain their full potential. The importance of ensuring that there is an adequate level of support cannot be over-emphasised.

While families and service providers can be great supporters and often are informal advocates, it may be necessary to have access to independent advocacy. This may be due to the potential for conflict/disagreement among family members and/or service providers and the Vulnerable Adult .

## **Collaboration**

Interagency collaboration is an essential component to successful safeguarding. It can be undermined by single service focus, poor information sharing, limited understanding of roles, different organisational priorities and poor involvement of key stakeholders in adult safeguarding meetings.

A number of key features have been identified to promote good collaboration such as:

- Leadership commitment to collaboration.



- Team working on a multidisciplinary level.
- A history of joint working/joint protocols.
- Development of information sharing processes.
- Perceptions of good will and positive relationships.
- Mutual understanding and shared acknowledgement of the importance of Vulnerable Adult protection.

## **KEY CONSIDERATIONS IN RECOGNISING ABUSE**

### **Recognising Abuse**

Abuse can be difficult to identify and may present in many forms. No one indicator should be seen as conclusive in itself of abuse. It may indicate conditions other than abuse. All signs and symptoms must be examined in the context of the person's situation and family circumstances.

### **Early Detection**

All staff and volunteers of Sample-Studios need to be aware of circumstances that may leave a Vulnerable Adult open to abuse and must be able to recognise the possible early signs of abuse. They need to be alert to the demeanour and behaviour of adults who may become vulnerable and to the changes that may indicate that something is wrong. It must not be assumed that an adult is necessarily vulnerable; however it is important to identify the added risk factors that may increase vulnerability. People with disabilities and some older people may be in environments or circumstances in which they require safeguards to be in place to mitigate against vulnerability which may arise. As vulnerability increases, responsibility to recognise and respond to this increases.

### **Barriers for Vulnerable Adults 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.
- 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.

All staff employed in Sample-Studios should be aware that safeguarding Vulnerable Adults is an essential part of their duty. Staff must be alert to the fact

that abuse can occur in a range of settings and, therefore, must make themselves aware of the signs of abuse and the appropriate procedures to report such concerns or allegations of abuse.

### **Considering the Possibility**

The possibility of abuse should be considered if a Vulnerable Adult appears to have suffered a suspicious injury for which no reasonable explanation can be offered. It should also be considered if the Vulnerable Adult seems distressed without obvious reason or displays persistent or new behavioural difficulties. The possibility of abuse should also be considered if the Vulnerable Adult displays unusual or fearful responses to carers. A pattern of ongoing neglect should also be considered even when there are short periods of improvement. Financial abuse can be manifested in a number of ways, for example, in unexplained shortages of money or unusual financial behaviour. A person may form an opinion or may directly observe an incident. A Vulnerable Adult, relative or friend may disclose an incident. An allegation of abuse may be reported anonymously or come to attention through a complaints process.

### **Capacity**

All persons should be supported to act according to their own wishes. Only in exceptional circumstances (and these should be communicated to the service user when they occur) should decisions and actions be taken that conflict with a person's wishes, for example to meet a legal responsibility to report or to prevent immediate and significant harm. As far as possible, people should be supported to communicate their concerns to relevant agencies.

A key challenge arises in relation to work with Vulnerable Adults regarding capacity and consent. It is necessary to consider if a Vulnerable Adult gave meaningful consent to an act, relationship or situation which is being considered as possibly representing abuse. While no assumptions must be made regarding lack of capacity, it is clear that abuse occurs when the Vulnerable Adult does not or is unable to consent to an activity or other barriers to consent exist, for example, where the person may be experiencing intimidation or coercion. For a valid consent to be given, consent must be full, free and informed.

It is important that a Vulnerable Adult is supported in making their own decisions about how they wish to deal with concerns or complaints. The Vulnerable Adult should be assured that his/her wishes concerning a complaint will only be overridden if it is considered essential for his/her own safety or the safety of others or arising from legal responsibilities. In normal circumstances, observing the principle of confidentiality will mean that information is only communicated to others with the consent of the person involved. However, all Vulnerable Adults and, where appropriate, their carers or representatives, need to be made aware

that the operation of safeguarding procedures will, on occasion, require the sharing of information with relevant professionals and statutory agencies in order to protect a Vulnerable Adult or others.

## **Complaints**

Things can go wrong and do go wrong in any organisation. People may instinctively regard complaints as a comment on personal performance. However, the appropriate handling of complaints is an integral part of good governance and risk management. Sample-Studios has a Handling Feedback and Complaints Policy and procedure, available on [www.sample-studios.com](http://www.sample-studios.com)

Complaints procedures provide an opportunity to put things right for service users and their families. They also are a useful additional means of monitoring the quality of service provision. Complaints are best dealt with through local resolution where the emphasis should be on achieving quick and effective resolutions to the satisfaction of all concerned. Vulnerable Adults may need particular support to use a complaints procedure. Constructive comments and suggestions also provide a helpful insight into existing problems and offer new ideas which can be used to improve services and provide an opportunity to establish a positive relationship with the complainant and to develop an understanding of their needs. Complaints should be dealt with in a positive manner, lessons should be learned and changes made to systems or procedures where this is considered necessary. Sample-Studios' Handling Feedback and Complaints Policy is reviewed annually.

Particular attention should be paid to complaints which are suggestive of abusive or neglectful practices or which indicate a degree of vulnerability. All cases of alleged or suspected abuse must be taken seriously, and the Designated Officer, Aoibhie McCarthy should be informed immediately, who will ensure a prompt response to concerns and complaints. Ensuring the safety and well-being of the Vulnerable Adult is the priority consideration.

## **Anonymous and Historical Complaints**

All concerns or allegations of abuse must be assessed, regardless of the source or date of occurrence. The quality and nature of information available in anonymous referrals may impact on the capacity to assess and respond appropriately. Critical issues for consideration include:

- The significance/seriousness of the concern/complaint.
- The potential to obtain independent information.
- Potential for ongoing risk.

In relation to historical complaints the welfare and wishes of the person and the

potential for ongoing risk will guide the intervention. Any person who is identified in any complaint, whether historic or current, made anonymously or otherwise, has a right to be made aware of the information received. Sample-Studios operates a Protected Disclosure Policy.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Sample-Studios Staff**

- Promote the welfare of Vulnerable Adults in all interactions.
- Be aware of this Policy and relevant procedures, protocols and guidance documents. Comply with the policy and procedure to ensure the safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults from all forms of abuse.
- Support an environment in which Vulnerable Adults are safeguarded from abuse or abusive practices through the implementation of preventative measures and strategies.
- Be aware of the signs and indicators of abuse.
- Support Vulnerable Adults to report any type of abuse or abusive practice.
- Ensure that any concerns or allegations of abuse are reported in accordance with the policy.

### **Designated Officer**

- Ensure that a local policy for the safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults is in place and is compliant with this national policy.
- Promote a culture of zero tolerance for any type of abuse or abusive practice.
- Ensure that the policy and procedures are made available to all employees and volunteers and to all persons accessing services and their advocates/families in an accessible format.
- Maintain a record of all employees and voluntary staff members “sign off” on policies/procedures/guidelines pertaining to the safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults.
- Ensure that all employees / volunteer staff receive the appropriate training with regard to the implementation of this policy.
- Ensure safeguarding is part of the Induction Programme for everyone involved in the service.
- Ensure that any concerns or allegations of abuse are managed in accordance with the policy
- Receive reports of concerns and complaints regarding the abuse of Vulnerable Adults.
- Maintain appropriate records.
- Sample-Studios commits to ensuring the Designated Officer receives specific training on the legal and policy context in which safeguarding occurs and maintains a familiarity with key practice issues.

## **Carer Responsibility**

Carers have an obligation to inform Sample-Studios staff and volunteers of any of the following that may impact on the positive experience or safety of their the person in their care:

- Any relevant medical history should be disclosed to the relevant staff member and on a need-to-know basis with staff, volunteers or arts facilitators.
- Correct information as to who is the designated carer and/or collector of the Vulnerable Adult from Sample-Studios activities and/or events should be disclosed to staff, volunteers or arts facilitators.
- Where applicable, all parents/carers must adhere to timetables with regard to “drop off and pick up” times in relation to attending events & activities.
- Any family history that is impacting negatively on the Vulnerable Adult in their care, and may cause behavioural issues to arise as a result, should also be disclosed if possible to staff and volunteers or facilitators. Staff, volunteers and facilitators must treat this information confidentially and share with their colleagues only on a need-to-know basis.
- Any special needs, e.g. dietary, social, educational of Vulnerable Adults should also be made known to staff, volunteers or arts facilitators.
- The name of Family Doctor should be offered to staff, volunteers or arts facilitators if relevant in the management of a person’s medical condition or in the event of a medical emergency.

## **REPORTING PROCEDURES AT SAMPLE-STUDIOS**

If you have concerns about any aspects of a Vulnerable Adult’s safety or welfare, contact Aoibhie McCarthy, Artistic Director immediately. Aoibhie McCarthy is the

Designated Officer to report issues and concerns relating to a Vulnerable Adult's welfare while on Sample-Studios' premises and/or engaging in Sample-Studios' activities.

Aoibhie McCarthy Phone: 0863509668
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## **Responding to Concerns or Allegations of Abuse of Vulnerable Adults**

### **Designated Officer**

The Designated Officer will be responsible for:

- Receiving reports of alleged abuse of Vulnerable Adults on behalf of Sample-Studios.
- Ensure the appropriate authorities are informed and collaboratively ensure necessary actions are identified and implemented.
- Ensure reporting obligations are met and maintain accurate records.

All concerns/reports of abuse must be immediately notified to the Designated Officer. Sample-Studios commits to keeping detailed and accurate records of concerns or allegations of abuse and of any subsequent actions taken. Failure to adequately record such information and to appropriately share that information in accordance with this policy is a failure to adequately discharge a duty of care.

### **Reporting Procedure**

The following are key responsibilities and actions for **any staff member or volunteer** who has a concern in relation to the abuse or neglect of a Vulnerable Adult. These responsibilities must be addressed on the **same day** as the alert is raised.

#### **Immediate Protection.**

Take any immediate actions to safeguard anyone at immediate risk of harm including seeking, for example, medical assistance or the assistance of An Garda Síochána, as appropriate.

#### **Listen, Reassure and Support.**

If the Vulnerable Adult has made a direct disclosure of abuse or is upset and distressed about an abusive incident, listen to what he/she says and ensure he/she is given the support needed.

**Do not:**

- Appear shocked or display negative emotions
- Press the individual for details
- Make judgments
- Promise to keep secrets
- Give sweeping reassurances

**Detection and Prevention of Crime.**

Where there is a concern that a serious criminal offence may have taken place, or a crime may be about to be committed, contact An Garda Síochána immediately.

**Record and Preserve Evidence.**

Preserve evidence through recording and take steps to preserve any physical evidence (if appropriate).

***As soon as possible on the same day***, make a detailed written record of what you have seen, been told or have concerns about and who you reported it to. Try to make sure anyone else who saw or heard anything relating to the concern of abuse also makes a written report.

The report will need to include:

- When the disclosure was made, or when you were told about/witnessed this incident/s.
- Who was involved and any other witnesses, including service users and other staff.
- Exactly what happened or what you were told, using the person's own words, keeping it factual and not interpreting what you saw or were told.
- Any other relevant information, e.g. previous incidents that have caused you concern.

Remember to:

- Include as much detail as possible.
- Make sure the written report is legible and of a photocopyable quality.
- Make sure you have printed your name on the report and that it is

signed and dated.

- Keep the report(s) confidential, storing them in a safe and secure place until needed.

### **Report & Inform.**

Report to the Designated Officer as soon as possible. This must be reported on the ***same day*** as the concern is raised. The Designated Officer must ensure the care, safety and protection of the victim and any other potential victims, where appropriate. He/she must check with the person reporting the concern as to what steps have been taken (as above) and instigate any other appropriate steps.

The following must be done by the Designated Officer:

The Designated Officer must notify **Tusla *immediately*** if there are concerns in relation to children.

Nothing should be done to compromise the statutory responsibilities of An Garda Síochána. If it is considered that a criminal act may have occurred, agreement on engagement with the person who is the subject of the complaint should be discussed with An Garda Síochána.

### **Confidentiality**

All Vulnerable Adults must be secure in the knowledge that all information about them is managed appropriately and that there is a clear understanding of confidentiality among all service personnel. The effective safeguarding of a Vulnerable Adult often depends on the willingness of the staff in statutory and voluntary organisations to share and exchange relevant information. It is, therefore, critical that there is a clear understanding of professional and legal responsibilities with regard to confidentiality and the exchange of information. All information regarding concerns or allegations of abuse or assessments of abuse of a vulnerable person should be shared, on 'a need to know' basis in the interests of the Vulnerable Adult, with the relevant statutory authorities and relevant professionals.

No undertakings regarding secrecy can be given. Those working with Vulnerable Adults should make this clear to all parties involved. However, it is important to respect the wishes of the vulnerable person as much as is reasonably practical. Ethical and statutory codes concerned with confidentiality and data protection provide general guidance. Sample-Studios adheres to its own Data Protection and Privacy Policy available on [www.sample-studios.com](http://www.sample-studios.com) They are not intended to limit or prevent the exchange of information between professional staff with a responsibility for ensuring the protection and welfare of Vulnerable Adults. It is possible to share confidential information with the appropriate authorities without breaching data protection laws. Regard should be had for the provisions of the



Data Protection Acts when confidential information is to be shared. If in doubt legal advice should be obtained.

The Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2012. It is an offence to withhold information on certain offences against children and Vulnerable Adults from An Garda Síochána. The main purpose of the Act is to create a criminal offence of withholding information relating to the commission of a serious offence, including a sexual offence, against a person who is under 18 years or an otherwise Vulnerable Adult, with the aim of ensuring more effective protection of children and other Vulnerable Adults from serious crime. An offence is committed when a person who knows, or believes, that one or more offences has been committed by another person against a child or Vulnerable Adult and the person has information which they know or believe might be of material assistance in securing apprehension, prosecution or conviction of that other person for that offence, and fails without reasonable excuse to disclose that information as soon as it is practicable to do so to a member of An Garda Síochána. The offence applies to a person acquiring information after the passing of the Act on 18<sup>th</sup> July, 2012 and it does not apply to the victim. The offence exists even if the information is about an offence which took place prior to the Act being enacted and even if the child or Vulnerable Adult is no longer a child or Vulnerable Adult.

### **Stage 1: Preliminary Screening**

The Designated Officer is responsible for ensuring that the Preliminary Screening takes place. The Preliminary Screening will take account of all relevant information which is readily available in order to establish:

- If an abusive act could have occurred.
- If there are reasonable grounds for concern.

This process should be led by the Designated Officer or other person as determined by Sample-Studios and completed, if possible, **within 3 working days** following the report. Additional expertise may be added as appropriate.

### **Ensuring Immediate Safety and Support**

On receipt of the report of suspected or actual abuse, the Designated Officer will establish and document the following:

- What is the concern?
- Who is making the report?
- Who is involved, how they are involved and are there risks to others?
- What actions have been taken to date?
- Biographical information of those involved, including the alleged perpetrator

where appropriate, e.g. name, gender, DOB, address, GP details, details of other professionals involved, an overview of health and care needs (and needs relating to faith, race, disability, age, and sexual orientation as appropriate).

- What is known of their mental capacity and of their wishes in relation to the abuse/neglect?
- Any immediate risks identified, or actions already taken, to address immediate risks.
- Establish the current safety status of the victim.
- Arrange medical treatment if required.
- Establish if An Garda Síochána have been notified.
- Ensure referral to Tusla where a child is identified as being at risk of harm.

### **Information Gathering**

The person referred should be contacted by the Designated Officer at the earliest appropriate time. Consent to share or seek information should be addressed at this stage.

It is important to remember that in the process of gathering information, no actions should be taken which may put the person/s referred or others at further risk of harm or that would contaminate evidence.

The types of information to be gathered will be dependent on the individual circumstances of the report. Accordingly, information sources will vary depending on the nature of the referrals but some examples include:

- Gaining the views of the individual referred.
- Checking of electronic/paper files to establish known history of the person.
- Checking if there are services already in place and liaison with those services.
- Verifying referral information and gaining further information from the referral source.
- Considering consultation with An Garda Síochána to see if they have any information relating to the person/s referred or alleged perpetrator.

In general, through the information gathering process, the following information should be available:

- Name of person/s referred.
- Biographical details and address/living situation.
- As much detail as possible of the abuse and/or neglect that is alleged to have taken place/is taking place/at risk of taking place (including how it came to light, the impact on the individual, and details of any witnesses).
- The views of the person/s referred and their capacity to make decisions.
- Details of any immediate actions that have taken place (including use of emergency or medical services).

- An overview of the person/s health and care needs (including communication needs, access needs, support and advocacy needs).
- An overview of the person's needs.
- GP details and other health services/professionals.
- Details of other services/professionals involved.
- Name of main carer (where applicable) or name and contact details of organisation providing support.
- Checks made to ensure that the referral is not a duplicate referral.
- Checks made for possible aliases.
- Checks made if other services, teams or allocated workers are involved with the person/s referred or alleged perpetrator/s.
- Checks made for previous concerns of abuse and/or neglect with regards to person/s referred.
- Check for previous concerns of abuse and/or neglect with regards to the alleged perpetrator.

### **Involvement of Staff Member:**

In situations where the allegation of abuse arises in respect of a member of staff of Sample-Studios then the Policies for Managing Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Members will be followed.

### **Involvement of a Service User:**

In the event that the concerns or allegations of abuse identified a service user, the rights of all parties must receive individual consideration, with the welfare of the vulnerable person being paramount.

### **Outcome of Preliminary Screening:**

A report on the Preliminary Screening will be prepared with a recommendation regarding proposed/required actions. Based on the information gathered, an assessment should be made which addresses the following:

- Does the person/s referred or group of individuals affected fall under the definition of Vulnerable Adult (as defined above)?
- Do the concerns referred constitute a possible issue of abuse and/or neglect?
- Where it is appropriate to do so, has the informed consent of the individual been obtained?
- If consent has been refused and the person has the mental capacity to make this decision, is there a compelling reason to continue without consent?
- Have the risks and possible consequences been made known to Vulnerable Adults?

The outcome of the Preliminary Screening may be:

- A. No grounds for reasonable concerns exist.
- B. Additional information required (this should be specified).
- C. Reasonable grounds for concern exist.

**A. No grounds for reasonable concern**

An outcome that there are not reasonable grounds for concern that abuse has occurred does not exclude an assessment that lessons may be learned and that, for example, clinical and care issues need to be addressed within the normal management arrangements.

**B. Additional information required**

A plan to secure the relevant information and the deployment of resources to achieve this within a specified time will be developed by the Designated Officer. This may involve the appointment of a small team with relevant expertise. All immediate safety and protective issues must also be specified.

**C. Reasonable Grounds for Concern Exists**

A safeguarding plan must be developed to address the concerns.

The plan may include:

1. Local informal process
2. Internal Inquiry
3. An Independent Inquiry

An Garda Síochána should be notified if the complaint/concern could be criminal in nature or if the Inquiry could interfere with the statutory responsibilities of An Garda Síochána.

An investigation by An Garda Síochána should not necessarily prevent the Inquiry. Where possible agreement should be reached with An Garda Síochána regarding the conduct of the Inquiry and the issuing of a report. If necessary advice should be obtained in this regard. In B and C above a safeguarding plan must be formulated.

## Stage 2: The Safeguarding Plan

If the preliminary screening determines that reasonable grounds for concern exist a safeguarding plan must be developed. Responsibility to ensure a safeguarding plan is developed rests with the Designated Officer. Prior to the processes outlined in stage 3 below, a safeguarding plan must be developed even if this can only be preliminary in nature. The safeguarding plan will need to be informed and amended by the process determined at stage 3. The Safeguarding Plan will outline the planned actions that have been identified to address the needs and minimise the risk to individuals or groups of individuals.

The Safeguarding Plan will be further developed in line with further assessments, i.e., when the appropriate assessments/investigations have been carried out to establish levels of risk and whether the abuse or neglect occurred. The Safeguarding Plan will be formulated in partnership with all relevant stakeholder parties. A Safeguarding Plan will be informed by the Preliminary Screening and developed in all cases where reasonable grounds for concern exist.

If the Vulnerable Adult has capacity and agrees to an intervention, a safeguarding plan will be developed, as far as possible, in accordance with their wishes. If the person has capacity and refuses services, every effort should be made to negotiate with the person. Time is taken to develop and build up rapport and trust. It is important to continue to monitor the person's well being. If the person lacks capacity, legal advice may be required to inform the decision making process. Decisions must be made in the best interests of the person and, if possible, based on their wishes and values. It is not appropriate to take a paternalistic view which removes the autonomy of the Vulnerable Adult .

### Timescale

The Safeguarding Plan should be formulated, even in a preliminary form, and implemented **within three weeks** of the Preliminary Screening being completed. A Safeguarding Plan Review should be undertaken at appropriate intervals and must be undertaken **within six months** of the Safeguarding Plan commencing and, at a minimum, at six monthly intervals thereafter or on case closure.

### Formulating the Safeguarding Plan

The Safeguarding Plan should include, relevant to the individual situation:

- Positive actions to safeguard the person/s at risk from further abuse/neglect and to promote recovery.
- Positive actions to prevent identified perpetrators from abusing or neglecting in the future.
- Consideration of what triggers or circumstances would indicate increasing levels of risk of abuse or neglect for individual/s and how this should be dealt with.

## **Support for Vulnerable Adults**

Support measures for Vulnerable Adults who have experienced abuse or who are at risk of abuse should be carefully considered when formulating the Safeguarding Plan. The role of An Garda Síochána and related support measures should be considered where a Vulnerable Adult may be going through the criminal justice process, including use of intermediaries, independent advocates, etc. Where there is a potential for criminal prosecution, it is important to ensure that support is provided to the Vulnerable Adult.

## **Updating the Safeguarding Plan**

Updating and review of the Safeguarding Plan will be informed by all stages of the process.

Discussions/meetings on the Safeguarding Plan will be arranged by the Designated Officer and should address the following:

- Feedback and evaluation of the evidence and outcomes from the assessments, including making a multi-agency (where appropriate) judgement of whether the abuse/neglect has occurred, has not occurred, or whether this is still not known.
- A review of the initial Safeguarding Plan.
- An assessment of current and future risk of abuse/neglect to the individual, group of individuals, or others.
- To evaluate the need for further assessment and investigation.
- Where abuse/neglect has taken place, or an ongoing risk of abuse/neglect is identified, a Safeguarding Plan should be agreed with proactive steps to prevent/decrease the risk of further abuse or neglect.
- Agreeing an ongoing communication plan, including the level of information that should be fed back to the person who raised the concerns (the referrer), other involved individuals or agencies, and who will be responsible for doing this.
- To set an agreed timescale for further review of the Safeguarding Plan.

## **2.2 The Safeguarding Plan Review**

The Safeguarding Plan Review refers to the planned process of reviewing the actions and safeguards put in place through the Safeguarding Plan. If new or heightened concerns arise prior to the planned Review, these should be addressed in the Safeguarding Plan.

### **Aims of the Safeguarding Plan Review**

The Safeguarding Plan Review should:

- Establish any changes in circumstances or further concerns which may affect the Safeguarding Plan.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Safeguarding Plan.
- Evaluate, through appropriate risk assessment, whether there remains a risk of abuse or neglect to the individuals or group of individuals.
- Make required changes to the Safeguarding Plan and set a further review date.

### **Evaluating the Safeguarding Process**

The Safeguarding Plan Review process should also be used as an opportunity to evaluate the intervention in general terms, e.g., what worked well, what caused difficulties, how effectively did people and agencies work together.

This level of information should be fed back through the Designated Officer and disseminated to other staff/agencies as appropriate. Experiences from practice, positive and negative, can be used to facilitate learning arising from specific situations to enable services to develop and be in a better position to safeguard individuals at risk from abuse and neglect.

### **Closing the Safeguarding Plan**

The updated risk assessment arising from a Safeguarding Plan Review may provide evidence that the risk of abuse or neglect has been removed, or through changed circumstances, be no longer appropriate to be managed through this procedure. When this occurs, decisions should be taken with multi-agency agreement, where appropriate. Reasons and rationale for closing the Procedure must be recorded in full. The client and/or referrer may be formally notified of closure where appropriate.

### **Stage 3: Reasonable Grounds for Concern have been Established**

If it is determined that abuse of a Vulnerable Adult may have occurred, the responsibilities towards all relevant parties must be considered and addressed.

These may include:

- The Vulnerable Adult .
- The family of the Vulnerable Adult .
- Other Vulnerable Adults, where appropriate.
- The perpetrator, particularly if a service user.
- Staff.

The needs of the Vulnerable Adult is the paramount consideration and a formal

Safeguarding Plan must be developed which addresses the therapeutic and support needs arising from the experience and the protective interventions aimed at preventing further abuse.

### **3.1 Outcome of Preliminary Screening**

#### **Local Informal Process**

If it is established that, for example, a single incident has occurred which is not of a serious nature, the Designated Officer may decide to deal with the matter locally and informally. This would usually include training. This approach must be agreed with the Vulnerable Adult .

#### **Assessment and Management by External Safeguarding and Protection Officer**

In certain circumstances, Sample-Studios may decide that the matter should be assessed and managed by an external Safeguarding and Protection Team Officer. Such circumstances may include any possible/perceived conflict of interest.

Sample-Studios may also determine that another process, appropriate to the particular issues arising, is required and may arrange such a process. This may include the arranging of a comprehensive professional assessment.

#### **Management of an Allegation of Abuse against a Staff Member**

In situations where the allegation of abuse arises in respect of a member of staff of Sample-Studios, then **Policies for Managing Allegations of Abuse against Staff Members** will be followed.

The safety of the service user is paramount, and all protective measures proportionate to the assessed risk must be taken to safeguard the welfare of the service user.

Nothing should be done to compromise the statutory responsibilities of An Garda Síochána. If it is considered that a criminal act may have occurred, agreement on engagement with the person who is the subject of the complaint should be discussed in the first instance with An Garda Síochána.

#### **Notification**

##### **An Garda Síochána**

An Garda Síochána must be informed if it is suspected that the concern or complaint of abuse may be criminal in nature; this may become apparent at the time of disclosure or following the outcome of the preliminary assessment.



## **HIQA**

If the Vulnerable Adult is a resident of a HIQA designated centre there is a requirement for the person in charge of a designated centre to report in writing to the Chief Inspector (HIQA) within 3 working days any adverse incident when the injury is deemed to be a consequence of an alleged, suspected or confirmed incident of abuse.

## **Good Faith Reporting**

Where employees do not wish to make a protected disclosure, they can make a report in good faith. Sample-Studios will provide support and advice where necessary to the employee who reports genuine concerns of fraud or malpractice in the organisation.

*Good faith reports will be referred for investigation. The identity of the employee making the good faith report will not be disclosed where the employee so instructs.*

*In general, employees' identities will not be disclosed without prior consent. Where concerns cannot be resolved without revealing the identity of the employee raising the concern, Sample-Studios will enter into a dialogue with the employee concerned as to whether and how it can proceed. (based on HSE Good Faith Reporting Policy, 2009).*

## **Protected Disclosures**

In certain limited circumstances, an employee may make a protected disclosure to a *Scheduled body* or a *professional regulatory body*.

## **SELF-NEGLECT**

Sample-Studios is committed to the protection of Vulnerable Adults who seriously neglect themselves and is concerned with Vulnerable Adults where concern has arisen due to the Vulnerable Adult seriously neglecting their own care and welfare and putting themselves and/or others at serious risk.

Responding to cases of self-neglect poses many challenges. The seriousness of this issue lies in the recognition that self-neglect in Vulnerable Adults is often not just a personal preference or a behavioural idiosyncrasy, but a spectrum of behaviours associated with increased morbidity, mortality and impairments in activities of daily living. Therefore, self-neglect referrals should be viewed as alerts to potentially serious underlying problems requiring evaluation and treatment (Naik et al, 2007).

The purpose of this Policy and Procedures is to offer guidance to staff of Sample-Studios who become aware of concerns regarding extreme self-neglect.

It also offers guidance to the Designated Officer when referrals are received or where advice and support is sought.

## **Definitions**

### **Self-neglect:**

Self-neglect is the inability or unwillingness to provide for oneself the goods and services needed to live safely and independently.

A Vulnerable Adult's profound inattention to health or hygiene, stemming from an inability, unwillingness, or both, to access potentially remediating services.

The result of an adult's inability, due to physical and /or mental impairments or diminished capacity, to perform essential self-care tasks.

The failure to provide for oneself the goods or services, including medical services, which are necessary to avoid physical or emotional harm or pain.

Self-neglect in Vulnerable Adults is a spectrum of behaviours defined as the failure to, (a) engage in self-care acts that adequately regulate independent living or, (b) to take actions to prevent conditions or situations that adversely affect the health and safety of oneself or others.

### **Groups that may present with self-neglecting behaviours.**

Those with lifelong mental illness.

Persons with degenerative neurocognitive disorders such as dementia or affective disorders such as depression.

Those whose habit of living in squalor is a long-standing lifestyle with no mental or physical diagnosis (Poythress, 2006: 11).

Self-neglect is common among those who consume large quantities of alcohol; the consequences of such drinking may precipitate self-neglect (Blondell, 1999).

Those who live alone, in isolation from social support networks of family, friends and neighbours (Burnett et al, 2006).

Self-neglect can be non-intentional, arising from an underlying health condition, or intentional, arising from a deliberate choice.

## **Guiding Principles**

1. Self-neglect occurs across the life span. There is a danger in targeting Vulnerable Adults and the decisions they make about lifestyle, which society may find unacceptable.

2. The definition of self-neglect is based on cultural understandings and challenges cultural values of cleanliness, hygiene and care. It can be redefined by cultural and community norms and professional training.

3. A threshold needs to be exceeded before the label of self-neglect is attached – many common behaviours do not result in action by social or health services or the courts.

4. Distinguish between self-neglect, which involves personal care, and neglect of the environment, manifested in squalor and hoarding behaviour.

5. Recognition of the community aspects or dimensions rather than just an individualistic focus on capacity and choice: some self-neglecting behaviour can have a serious impact on family, neighbours and surroundings.

6. Importance of protection from harm and not just 'non- interference' in cases of refusal of services. Building trust and negotiation is critical for successful intervention.

7. Interventions need to be informed by the Vulnerable Adult's beliefs regarding the stress experienced by Caregivers, including family members, and must address the underlying causes.

8. Assumptions must not be made regarding lack of mental capacity and, as far as possible, people must be supported in making their own decisions.

## **Manifestations of Self-Neglect**

### **Hygiene**

Poor personal hygiene and/or domestic/environmental squalor; hoarding behaviour (Poythress et al, 2006; Mc Dermott, 2008).

### **Life Threatening Behaviour**

Indirect life threatening behaviour: refusal to eat, drink; take prescribed medications; comply with an understood medical regime (Thibault et al, 1999)

### **Financial**

Mismanagement of financial affairs.

## **Assessment of Self-Neglect- Key Areas**

### **Personal Appearance:**

Matted, dirty hair; long, untrimmed, dirty nails; multiple or severe clothing, insect infestation pressure ulcers, other injuries; very soiled clothing; multiple insect infestation.

### **Functional Status:**

Cognitive; delusional.

Impaired cognition; delusional state; unable to call for help or respond to emergencies.

### **Medical needs:**

No documentation of a healthcare provider; untreated conditions, appears ill or in pain, or complains of pain or discomfort.

### **Environment:**

Poorly maintained- evidence of rubbish, debris; dilapidated dwelling – broken or missing windows, walls. Severe structural damage, leaking roof. Pungent, unpleasant odour. Human /animal waste. Rotting food; litter. Clutter- difficult to move around or find things. Multiple uncared for pets. Problems with electricity, gas, water, telephone.

### **Nutrition:**

Nutritional deficiencies are significant. It is difficult to assess food storage, availability of food groups and expiry dates.

*(Dyer et al, 2006) From Draft of the Self-Neglect Severity Scale accessed from: <http://www.bcm.edu/crest/?PMID=5668>*

## **Procedures**

### **Consider the possibility**

Concerns regarding extreme neglect can arise for a variety of people in diverse circumstances. It is critical that one remains open to considering the possibility that a Vulnerable Adult may not be acting in their own interest and that their welfare is being seriously compromised. Considering the possibility of extreme self neglect is a professional responsibility and a service to the person. Discuss the concerns with appropriate people and directly with the Vulnerable Adult . If

concerns cannot be addressed directly, they should be directed to the Designated Officer who will assist in an assessment of the severity of the situation.

### **Approach**

As far as possible and appropriate, the Designated Officer will report concerns to the relevant support professionals and services to undertake assessment and intervention.

### **Assessment**

On receiving a report of concern about a Vulnerable Adult neglecting themselves, the Designated Officer will begin the process of preliminary assessment. The Designated Officer will establish whether the Vulnerable Adult is aware of the referral and his/her response to the person making the referral. The Designated Officer will consult with the person's relevant health and social care professionals to ascertain if they are aware of this concern. The focus of this preliminary process is to establish the areas of concern, i.e. the manifestations of self-neglect and the perception of those making the referral of the potential harm to which the Vulnerable Adult and/or others are exposed. The Designated Officer will establish if there have been any previous attempts to intervene and the outcome of such attempts/interventions. The Designated Officer will arrange for an appropriate person to meet the Vulnerable Adult to ascertain their views and wishes.

A comprehensive assessment may need to be undertaken by a relevant specialist. This will require a GP referral. Where there is a doubt about the person's capacity to make decisions and/or to execute decisions regarding health, safety and independent living, the assessment should include specific mental competency assessment. If it is not possible to engage a Vulnerable Adult in obtaining such an assessment, it may be appropriate to seek legal advice.

### **Safeguarding Plan:**

As outlined in Stage 2.

### **Review:**

The Vulnerable Adult's situation must be kept under review, as appropriate and deemed necessary. Family, friends and community have a vital role in helping vulnerable people remain safe in the community. The Designated Officer will be available to provide support.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

Sample-Studios will have responsibility for implementation, monitoring and review of this policy and procedures. Sample-Studios will review this Policy and Procedure annually, or otherwise as may be appropriate, for example, due to legislative changes and/or from feedback.

Adopted as agreed on behalf of Sample-Studios:



PRINT NAME: Carl Dixon, Chairperson, Sample-Studios

Date: 29/6/21



PRINT NAME: Aoibhie McCarthy, Artistic Director, Sample-Studios

Date: 29/6/21