

Appendix D

Vulnerable Adults

All vulnerable adults should be treated with respect and dignity. Their privacy should be respected. They should be allowed to lead as independent a life as possible. They are entitled to the full protection of the law as much as anyone else.

All adults, including vulnerable adults, have a fundamental human right to choose how and with whom they live, even if to outsiders this appears to involve a degree of risk. The only occasion when that right should be superseded is in situations where other people are put at risk or where the adult is mentally incapacitated, and decisions need to be taken on the basis of their best interests.

Who Abuses Vulnerable adults?

Potentially anyone, adult or child, might be the abuser of a vulnerable adult. Abuse may sometimes be deliberate, but it may also be an unintended consequence of ignorance or lack of awareness. Alternatively, it may arise from frustration or lack of support. The list can include:

- relatives of the vulnerable person including husband, wife, partner, son or daughter. It will sometimes include a relative who is a main carer.
- neighbours.
- workers in places of worship.
- people who are themselves vulnerable and/or are users of a care service.
- confidence tricksters who prey on people in their own homes.

Relatives who are Main Carers

Carers may experience considerable stress, exhaustion and frustration without respite or support. This can lead to unintended poor care or abuse. Relatives who are the main carers may also be subject to abuse by those for whom they are caring. Such abuse is often endured for long periods and unreported.

Institutions

All living in institutions have, by definition, a degree of vulnerability. The national Care Quality Commission (CQC) is responsible for inspecting and regulating hospitals, nursing homes and other care homes. In the CQC 2014 annual report concerns about the quality of care in some residential care homes and nursing homes were highlighted. The CQC received on average 100 complaints a day in 2013 to 2014 in England and Wales relating to such units.

Definitions of Adult Abuse

Six categories of adult abuse are identified in the government publication, 'No Secrets' which provides guidelines on protecting vulnerable adults (Department of Health 2000). They are:

- physical abuse including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate sanctions;
- sexual abuse including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not consented, or could not consent or was pressurised into consenting;
- psychological abuse including 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 including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits;
- neglect or acts of omission including 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 including racist, sexist, that based on a person's disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

To these should be added:

Survivors of abuse which may have been in childhood or adulthood and who may need specific pastoral care.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is usually a systematic, repeated and often escalating pattern of behaviour by which the abuser seeks to control, limit and humiliate, often behind closed doors.

Research evidence and practice experience is increasingly highlighting the profound emotional harm and sometimes physical harm caused to children witnessing domestic abuse.

Detailed guidelines are available in the Church House publication, 'Responding to Domestic Abuse', 2006. This may be accessed via the Cathedral intranet.

Human Trafficking

The number of people trafficked for sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, 'sweat-shop labour', or other exploitation has risen sharply in the UK. Violence, intimidation and restriction of liberty often go hand in hand. Detailed guidelines on the recognition of human trafficking are available on the Cathedral intranet.