



Policy for Working with Vulnerable Adults



Definition of Vulnerable Adults

Vulnerable adults are those over 16 years old who are getting, or may need help and services to live in the community. In accordance with the Mental Capacity Act 2005, young people aged 16 and over are deemed to have competence to make decisions on their own behalf. Vulnerable adults may be unable to take care of themselves effectively, and may be unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation by other people. We recognise that a majority of our clients are, or might be vulnerable adults.

What is abuse?

Abuse can include:

Physical, financial, material, sexual, psychological, discriminatory, emotional abuse and neglect. Abuse can take place in any setting, public or private, and can be perpetuated by anyone.

Allegation of alleged abuse which occurred when a person is over 18 years old falls under the Protection of Vulnerable Adults and needs to be reported to the H2H Service Director.

Volunteers, staff and Trustees have a duty to identify abuse and report it.

H2H's commitment to our service users

H2H provides weekly sessions of one to one counselling, therapeutic, psycho-education group work and creative therapies groups. We work with men and women over the age of 16 who experienced any form of abuse or neglect under the age of 16. All our services, procedures and policies take place within the ethical framework of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. The following procedures take place within the context of this framework.

All clients are assessed for their readiness to participate in our services, and their ability to sufficiently be able to manage emotional distress between sessions. We are clear about the limitations of our services. We do not provide crisis intervention or response. If the vulnerability of any service user's needs exceed our limits to support them according to their presenting needs, we will refer that person to an appropriate service such as their GP, CMHT, and/or Samaritans or other non-statutory agency.

H2H is committed to ensuring that everyone who uses our services is not abused or misused in any way and that our working practices minimise the risk of such abuse. In a group context, in addition to the needs of the individual, protection of the needs and well-being of the group as a whole is prioritised,

Our aims

Hurting to Healing aims to:

- ✓ Ensure that **all** H2H service users are protected from **avoidable** harm or injury as a result of our actions/activities.
- ✓ Work preventatively to protect vulnerable adults and minimise the risk of abuse or neglect
- ✓ Respond promptly, sensitively, consistently and effectively to reports or allegations of abuse or neglect
- ✓ Seek to protect service users' rights to dignity, privacy and confidentiality
- ✓ Where appropriate, work in partnership with, refer to and co-operate with statutory agencies in the implementation of their obligations under their statutory duties for protecting vulnerable adults
- ✓ Ensure that volunteers and staff have appropriate support and training

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Support to volunteers and staff

The volunteers and staff reporting incidents of suspected or potential abuse may find that the victim and/or the others concerned are upset or angry. H2H representatives/trustees will provide support to all involved throughout the process. If such support is insufficient, every effort will be made to enable the person to access external support

Volunteers and staff themselves may also be the subject of an allegation of abuse. While support will be offered, H2H will ensure that any investigation will be thorough. Suspension and/or disciplinary procedures may be implemented.

Suspicion of abuse by a member of H2H volunteers and staff

Where a member of volunteers and staff is suspected of abuse the following action should be taken:

- The Service Director and if appropriate, trustees, should interview the member of volunteers and staff with a witness present
- The Service Director should make arrangements for interviewing the suspected victim. This should be done with a H2H staff member, trustee or volunteer, and a support for the victim present.
- The purpose of the meeting is not to investigate but to establish whether there are grounds for the allegation of abuse of a vulnerable adult.
- If it is considered that abuse of a vulnerable adult has occurred, then the H2H Complaints procedure should then be followed.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is crucial to all our work and relationships and the H2H confidentiality policy should be adhered to. However, the welfare of vulnerable adults is paramount and in specific instances could take precedence over it. All involved in working with H2H will know not to keep any concerns relating to potential abuse of vulnerable adults to themselves. Confidentiality may NOT be maintained if the withholding of information will prejudice the welfare of the adult.