



## **Policy for Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults**

Rag and Bone Arts believe that protection from abuse should become an integral part of the policy and practice of all organisations working with, or coming into contact with, vulnerable adults. We have a commitment to protecting vulnerable adults with/for whom we work.

The broad definition of a vulnerable adult is:

‘A person who is 18 years of age or over, and who is or 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/herself, or unable to protect him/herself against significant harm or serious exploitation’

People with learning disabilities, mental health problems, older people and disabled people may fall within this definition.

We must ensure that:

- All vulnerable adults, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- All staff and volunteers are aware of the issues of safeguarding and the risks to vulnerable groups.
- All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to report concerns regarding the safety of vulnerable people to the Safeguarding Lead.
- All suspicion and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately ensuring that action is taken to support and protect vulnerable people.

## **Good Practice Guidelines**

All staff and volunteers should be actively encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations. The following are practical examples of how to create a positive, non-threatening culture and climate.

Good practice in reality means:

- Always working in an open environment e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations.
- Being aware of personal space and keeping an appropriate distance.
- Treating all vulnerable people with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of vulnerable people first.
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust, which empowers vulnerable people to share in the decision making process.
- Being an excellent role model
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs or any extraordinary situation.

Staff and volunteers should:

- Be aware of situations, which may present risks.
- Plan and organise the work and the workplace so as to minimise risks.
- Ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues of concern to be discussed.
- Ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged.
- Be alert and to feel confident about reporting abuse (underpinned by appropriate and ongoing training and support).

It is not the responsibility of anyone working for or with Rag and Bone Arts, in a paid or unpaid capacity, to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. There is however, a responsibility to

act on any concerns and report them to the designated Safeguarding lead person who will then contact the appropriate authorities.

Staff and volunteers must never:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or abuse vulnerable people.
- Develop physical, sexual relationships with vulnerable people.
- Develop relationships with vulnerable people, which could in any way be deemed inappropriate or exploitative.
- Act in ways that may be abusive or place vulnerable people at risk of abuse.
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice, which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive.
- Behave in an inappropriate or sexually provocative manner.
- Allow vulnerable people, with whom they are working, with to stay overnight at their home unsupervised.
- Sleep in the same room as vulnerable people on residential experiences.<sup>[1]</sup><sup>[SEP]</sup> Do things of a personal nature that vulnerable people are able to do for themselves.
- Condone, or participate in the behaviour of vulnerable people, which is illegal, abusive or unsafe.
- Intentionally act in ways intended to shame, humiliate or degrade vulnerable people.
- Discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favour particular individuals to the exclusion of others.

<i>Originally written by</i>	<i>Katie Bradbury</i>	<i>October 2017</i>
<i>Last Reviewed by</i>	<i>Laura Graham-May</i>	<i>October 2019</i>
<i>Due for Review</i>	<i>October 2020</i>	

## **Appendix 1 - Definition of a Vulnerable Adult**

A vulnerable adult is someone who is aged 18 years or over who 'is or may be in need of community care services by reasons of mental health or other disability, age or illness' and 'is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation'.

A vulnerable adult may be a person who is:

- elderly or frail
- as learning disabilities
- suffers from mental illness
- has a physical disability
- is a substance mis-user
- is homeless
- is in an abusive relationship

*It should be noted that disability or age alone does not signify that an adult is vulnerable.*

## **Appendix 2 – Definition and indicators of Adult abuse**

Abuse can consist of a single or repeated act of harm or exploitation. It may be perpetrated as a result of deliberate intent, negligence or ignorance. Abuse can be verbal, physical, emotional, psychological, or a result of neglect or an omission to act. Abuse can also occur when a vulnerable adult is persuaded to enter into a financial arrangement or sexual relationship to which they have not, or could not, consent to or understand e.g. as a result of physical or mental incapacity.

Physical Abuse – includes hitting, slapping, pushing, and misuse of medication, undue restraint or inappropriate sanctions. Possible indicators include: multiple bruising, which is not consistent with the explanation given; cowering and flinching; unusually sleepy or docile.

Sexual Abuse – includes rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not, or could not, consent and/or was pressured into consenting. Possible indicators include: unexplained and uncharacteristic changes in behaviour; excessive washing; deliberate self-harm.

Psychological Abuse – includes threats of harm or abandonment, humiliation, verbal or racial abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks. Possible indicators include: anxiety, confusion or general resignation; loss of confidence; excessive or inappropriate craving for attention.

Financial Abuse – includes theft, fraud, pressure around wills, property or inheritance, misuse or misappropriation of benefits. Possible indicators include: unexplained or sudden inability to pay bills; sudden withdrawal of money from accounts; personal possessions going missing.

Neglect and/or Acts of Omission – includes failure to access medical care or services, failure to give prescribed medication, poor nutrition or lack of heating. Possible indicators include: poor hygiene and cleanliness; repeated infections; reluctant contact with health and social care agencies.

Whilst not classified as an individual category of abuse, racial and homophobia motivated abuse can take any of the above forms and needs to be noted. Domestic Abuse is a serious crime and must be treated as such. Victims of domestic abuse may also be vulnerable adults within the meaning of the Adult Protection procedures.

### **Appendix 3 - What to do if abuse is suspected**

If abuse is suspected or reported, employees should act in line with local policies and procedures to:

- Take reasonable steps to ensure the adult is in no immediate danger
- Contact the police if it is believed a crime may have been committed
- Obtain permission from the vulnerable adult before disclosing confidential information about them
- Where appropriate, discuss concerns with the Safeguarding Lead. If, after discussion, abuse or neglect is still considered to be a possibility, referral should be made to the Social Services Department. See Safeguarding Policy for reporting/referral detail.