CENTREPIECES
Mental Health Arts Project
Registered Charity 1160300

The King's Award for Voluntary Service
The MBE for volunteer groups

SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY

Date of policy: January 2025
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1. Introduction

Centrepieces is a small charity that provides opportunities for local people with mental health issues to participate in art activities, for their therapeutic value and in order to sell art works through the charity to generate income for the individual and the charity. There are classes and workshops, and open sessions where artists can drop in to work using the charity's facilities.

Centrepieces is committed to ensuring that individuals who are a part of the organisation in the capacity of staff, artists, volunteers and trustees are safeguarded from any kind of abuse, especially relevant to those individuals classed as vulnerable. Everyone who is a part of the organization is expected to adhere to this policy with absolute concordance. Members of the organization are also expected to be aware and take pro-active steps when met with allegations/ potential incidents of abuse that may have taken place.

As members of the organization and the wider society, it is imperative that all of us to take ownership in playing a part in upholding safeguarding. A life free from harm and abuse, is a fundamental human right of every individual. As a society, we must stand united in protecting one and another. Standing united consequently prevents isolation. Isolation stands as the biggest risk factor in heightened exposure to abusive situations, placing individuals at a risk of harm.

Centrepieces is committed to working with statutory agencies – the London Borough of Bexley and other local authorities, the police, NHS organisations and local voluntary organisations – to promote safer communities, to prevent harm and abuse and to deal with suspected or actual cases of abuse.

2. What is a vulnerable adult?

A vulnerable adult is a person aged 18 years or over who has care and support needs for mental health or other disability or age or illness and is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse and neglect and is unable to protect their self from harm or exploitation because of their care and support needs. A vulnerable person may fall into any one of the following groups: older and frail people; people with a mental health need, a learning difficulty, a physical impairment, a sensory impairment; people who are substance or alcohol dependent; or family carers providing assistance to another vulnerable adult.

3. What is abuse?

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or group of people. Abuse may be single or repeated acts. There are many types of abuse, including

Physical – the use of force that 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. Examples include hitting, slapping burning, pushing, restraining or giving the wrong medication.

Sexual – 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 – 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. Examples include shouting, swearing, frightening, blaming, ignoring or humiliating a person, threats of harm or abandonment, intimidation, verbal abuse.

Organisational/institutional – 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. Also, it can be the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to vulnerable people. This includes a failure to ensure the necessary safeguards are in place to protect vulnerable adults and maintain good standards of care in accordance with their individual needs, including training of staff, supervision and management, record keeping and liaising with other providers of care.

Discrimination – discriminatory abuse exists when values, beliefs or culture result in a misuse of power that denies opportunities to some groups or individuals. It may include racist or sexist remarks or comments based on a person's disability, age or illness, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment. It also includes stopping someone from being involved in religious or cultural activity, services or support networks

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.

Neglect and omission – the withholding of the necessities of life such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating. The ignoring of medical, emotional and physical care needs. These can be deliberate or unintentional, amounting to abuse by a carer or self-neglect by the vulnerable person, eg where a person is deprived of food, heat, clothing, comfort or essential medication, or failing to provide access to appropriate health or social care services. The inability to maintain a socially and culturally accepted standard of self-care with the potential for serious consequences to health and well being.

4. How might Centrepieces become aware of abuse

Concerns about or evidence of abuse can come to the notice of volunteers and trustees of Centrepieces through:

- A direct disclosure by the vulnerable adult
- A complaint or expression of concern by a volunteer, another service user, a carer a member of the public or a relative
- An observation of the behaviour of the vulnerable adult by a volunteer, member of staff, trustee or carer

5. Our commitment

To support vulnerable adults who are experiencing, or are at risk from, abuse, Centrepieces is committed to:

- Identifying the abuse of vulnerable adults where it is occurring
- Responding effectively to any circumstances giving grounds for concern, or where formal complaints or expressions of anxiety are expressed.
- Raising awareness of the extent of abuse on vulnerable adults and its impact on them.
- Promoting and supporting work designed to reduce abuse and the fear of abuse as experienced by vulnerable adults.

We will regularly monitor and evaluate how our policies, procedures and practices for protecting vulnerable adults are working. We will make sure that our policies, procedures and practices stay up to date with good practice and the law in relation to safeguarding vulnerable adults, and ensure that our procedures are in line with multi-agency safeguarding procedures. We have established a confidentiality policy to help safeguard personal details and sensitive information. Where relevant, we will carry out criminal record checks in line with Disclosure and Barring Service guidelines. We have a code of conduct that all members and volunteers are expected to abide by. Our Equality and Diversity policy sets out our commitment to equality, diversity, and respect for all being embedded into everything that we do.

All staff, volunteers and trustees will be asked to read the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures as part of their induction to Centrepieces and will be informed that they have a duty to report any concerns or incidents.

6. What to do if abuse is suspected, or disclosed by a vulnerable adult

If an adult experiencing abuse or neglect approaches a Centrepieces' member of staff, volunteer or trustee, you should listen carefully and get a clear and factual picture of the concern. However you should not promise complete confidentiality, as information may have to be passed to other agencies including the police. The vulnerable person should be made aware that Centrepieces cannot ignore issues around abuse and that steps will be taken to deal with them in as sensitive manner as possible.

The following steps should be taken:

- Make sure that the adult at risk is safe
- Deal with their immediate needs and ensure the person is, as far as possible, central to the decision making process
- Report the abuse to the Project Co-ordinator or other appropriate person within Centrepieces
- If a crime 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 volunteers or members, 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

All suspicions or allegations of abuse must be taken seriously and reported to the Project Co-ordinator.

If you hear about an incident of abuse from someone else, encourage them to report it themselves or help them report the facts of what they know.

The Project Co-ordinator or the person deputising in their absence will decide whether to make a referral to another agency. All concerns of abuse or neglect of a vulnerable adult at risk can be reported to Bexley Adult Social Care on 020 8303 7777. However if a serious crime has taken place or there is a need for immediate police response to protect the adult at risk, consider dialling 999.

7. Contact list for reporting concerns or seeking advice

London Borough of Bexley, 2 Watling Street, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7AT. During office hours (Care Central) on 020 8303 7777.
Out of office hours (Emergency Duty Team) on 020 8303 7777.

Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust (Mental Health)
During office Hours (Intake and Liaison Team) on 01322 356100. Out of office hours (Urgent Advice Line) on 0845 608 0525.

Metropolitan Police Service - Where the concern may also be a crime you can report this to the MPS. In an emergency, always dial 999, or for non-emergencies call 101. You can also report crimes online, in police stations, or call Crime stoppers on 0800 555 111.

Care Quality Commission - 03000 616161 or enquiries.london@cqc.org.uk.

Action on Elder Abuse - Helpline 0808 808 8141.