

Adult Protection Policy – Handling Allegations and Suspicions of Harm

What do we mean by Adult Protection?

The Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 was introduced to protect adults at risk of harm. Adults are individuals who are aged 16 or over who are at risk of:

- Being unable to safeguard their own well-being, property, rights or other interests;
- Being affected by disability, mental health problems, illness of physical or mental infirmity; and is more vulnerable to being harmed than adults who are not so affected.

There are many different types of harm, including:

- Physical: can include hitting, shaking, punching, pulling hair etc., being locked in a room or having your freedom limited;
- Emotional / psychological: can include being made to feel scared or embarrassed, being intimidated or bullied, constantly criticised, not being allowed to see or talk freely to other people;
- Neglect: can include not being given the correct medication or care, not allowed to see a doctor or other health professional, not allowed enough food or have proper heating, lack of privacy and dignity;
- Financial: can include stealing, fraud, forcing to hand over money or goods, misuse of property or benefits or stopping someone getting their own money or possessions;
- Sexual abuse: can include any sexual activity that the person does not understand or want; degrading or inappropriate photographs.

There are a number of ways to spot if an adult is at risk of or abuse or neglect. Some of these include:

- the adult themselves may advise they are being harmed or they may make a comment which leads you to suspect they are being abused or neglected;
- unusual, unexplained or suspicious injury;
- unexplained loss of weight or increased confusion;
- the adult may appear frightened of a particular person;
- unable to spend time alone with the adult due to the insistence or presence of another;
- unexplained debts or reduction in assets may be indicators of financial abuse.

At Scottish Adoption and Fostering our Adult Protection Policy is:

Key Principle

We will handle any allegations and suspicions of harm in a way that provides effective protection and support for vulnerable adults.

Procedure

If any member of staff becomes aware of an allegation, concern or suspicion of abuse in relation to a vulnerable adult, they should discuss this immediately with one of the Practice Managers or Chief

Executive, who will take on the role of the designated manager with responsibility for liaising with the Local Authority.

If this takes place out of office hours, the member of staff should contact the Scottish Adoption and Fostering Out of Hours Emergency Number on 0131 555 7530.

1. The Practice Manager /Chief Executive will contact the relevant Local Authority to make them aware of the allegation/concern and agree whether the matter is to be treated under their Adult Protection Procedures or followed up as a concern.
2. If it is agreed with the Local Authority that it is initially to be followed up as a concern rather than under Adult Protection procedures it would normally be expected that the Senior Practitioner (Scottish Adoption and Fostering) and the vulnerable adult's social worker will do this jointly.
3. If it is agreed to follow the matter up under Adult Protection Procedures, the lead authority will be the one in whose area the vulnerable adult is currently living. Scottish Adoption and Fostering staff cannot undertake the Statutory Adult Protection investigations but will follow the local area Adult Protection guidelines.
4. Scottish Adoption and Fostering staff will fully co-operate with the Adult Protection procedure for the responsible Local Authority – providing written information and participating in any referral meetings or discussions as required.
5. The Chief Executive will be responsible for making any notifications to the Care Inspectorate.
6. If the allegation concerns a prospective adopter/adopter/foster/continuing carer the Agency will agree with the investigating staff, a support plan and the timing of this in respect of the prospective adoptive family / foster care placement.
7. Scottish Adoption and Fostering will work to ensure that any prospective adopter/foster/continuing carer and the family will be supported in respect of any allegations made:
 - a. A named support worker will be identified. This can either be a Senior Practitioner from within the agency or someone independent of the Agency if this is assessed as more appropriate.
 - b. Written information about the Adult Protection procedure under which the investigation is being undertaken will be provided.
 - c. Ensuring the prospective adopter/adopter/foster/continuing carer is able to obtain independent advocacy and legal advice if required. [The Fostering Network may be an appropriate Agency to link with].
 - d. Providing information on the progress of the investigation and ensuring a written record of the outcome is provided.

8. Following the conclusion of any investigation, a decision will be made by the Agency (taking into account any recommendations from the investigation) on what further action is required.
9. In every situation where there is an Adult Protection Investigation in respect of a prospective adoptive parent or foster carer, a Formal Review will be undertaken and chaired by the Chief Executive. This may result in the adopter/foster/continuing carers registration being reviewed at Panel.
10. A record of any formal Adult Protection Investigation or Concern dealt with by Local Authority/Scottish Adoption and Fostering staff will be retained in the adopter / foster/continuing carer file.

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