

## Vulnerable Adults Risk Management Policy

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### a. Introduction

This document outlines IARS policy on identifying and responding to risks when coming in contact with vulnerable adults such as victims of crime, refugee and asylum seeking women etc. This policy, with the associated procedures, provides guidance for all staff, trustees, volunteers, consultants and interns of IARS.

This policy applies to all activities of IARS which involve interaction with vulnerable adults and particularly its standing user groups (e.g. User Scrutiny Panel, Women's' Advisory Board, Youth Advisory Board).

### b. Objective

The objective of this policy is to contribute to the effective functioning of IARS and its user panels, the safety of panel members and the prevention of re-traumatisation through actively promoting awareness, good practice and sound procedures.

### c. Implementation

- The Management shall appoint one of their members as Responsible Officer ("RO") for all aspects of awareness and implementation of this policy.
- The RO will be responsible to the Management for:
  - ensuring that this policy is implemented throughout the project's activities by all staff and volunteers;
  - ensuring all necessary risk management enquiries, procedures and investigations are carried out;
  - reporting results of screening enquiries and for preserving a "need to know" level of confidentiality and access to secure records;
  - the reporting to all meetings of the Management on the implementation of this policy;
  - ensuring there is adequate induction and training relating to safeguarding individuals against re-traumatisation and how to respond if this occurs;
  - ensuring that each activity carried out by the project is sound in terms of prevention of re-traumatisation as regards personnel, practices and premises; and
  - checking all incident reports made by staff and volunteers, countersigning them, and making such reference to authority as is appropriate, after consultation with the Senior Staff Member ("SSM"), etc as detailed below.
- The SSM of the project shall ensure active compliance with this policy by all working in the project, and shall work closely with the RO to ensure this, affording the RO every assistance to this end. All other officers, staff and voluntary workers of the project will actively endeavour to implement this policy.

### d. Personnel Checks

- IARS's aim is to ensure, as far as is possible, that anyone, paid or voluntary, who seeks to work with victims of crime or vulnerable adults through IARS's activities and who gains

substantial access to them thereby (whether within activity hours and/or beyond) is as safe to do so as can be guaranteed.

- Therefore, the RO will ensure that DBS checks are carried out on all staff and workers (paid and unpaid).
- The written consent of the applicant must be obtained to enable such enquiries to be made. No application may proceed unless such consent is given by the applicant.
- Where there is a delay, the SSM may, in consultation with the RO, authorise an applicant to have supervised access where it is absolutely clear there will be no problems arising from the checks.
- IARS's policy is to recheck all trustees, staff and volunteers after three years' service. This will be undertaken by the RO in consultation with the SSM.
- At all times the onus is on the applicant/employee/volunteer to reveal any conviction, caution, bind-over, probation order, or pending prosecution, whether imposed prior to or within the period the applicant works on project activities.

#### e. Reporting of Inquiry Results

- The RO will indicate to the SSM whether an applicant is suitable to work on project activities, as revealed by the results of the DBS check.
- The RO will recommend at each meeting of the Management on the acceptance or otherwise of applicants. No details other than an applicant was accepted or otherwise shall be given or minuted. The Management shall consider the RO's recommendation and their decision shall be recorded in the minutes.
- On receipt of all replies to enquiries, the applicant shall be invited to attend an interview with the RO and the SSM. The RO will show the applicant all replies received. The SSM will also read these, to ensure fair play, and non-bias/collusion etc.
- Any discrepancies revealed between the applicant's statements and the replies must be investigated thoroughly with the applicant by the RO and the SSM. In particular, the applicant should be advised as to the necessary procedures s/he can take if s/he queries the accuracy of a reference or check. The replies given may be taken into account by the RO, in consultation with the SSM, in making a recommendation to the Management.
- Where an applicant declines to attend such an interview, the RO shall write to the applicant to inform him/her that their application has not been successful.
- The RO shall be authorised to undertake any additional enquiries as sanctioned by the applicant as may assist the making of a recommendation to the Management.
- The file of an unsuccessful applicant shall be kept for six months and then safely destroyed by the RO - likewise for a successful applicant who declines to commence with the project - this period will be increased to 12 months from the date of leaving the project's service for any successful applicant who commences work with the project.
- Anyone working with the project has the right to inspect their own confidential records and may do so on request to the RO who shall not withhold consent unreasonably and will do so within one working day.

#### g. Activities

- Prior to any activity/site/programme being commenced, the RO shall ensure that an adequate risk assessment has been completed and that appropriate procedures are in place. These will be recorded in a risk register.

- All sessions shall be conducted with the provisions, aims and objective of this policy in mind.
- Every activity shall be undertaken with the possibility in mind that such activities might act as a trigger of past trauma or may result in disclosure of previous trauma. It is important that the environment created for project activity is as conducive to supporting individuals in such a situation as is possible.
- For their own protection, but mainly as good practice and good manners, staff are advised that individuals should initiate disclosure of any personal details of past trauma or experience rather than being required to provide this information.

#### **h. Reporting of Concerns**

- Those working on project activities have a duty to ensure that any suspicion, incident, allegation or other manifestation relating to re-traumatisation, the protection of vulnerable adults, or abuse is reported as provided below.
- Disclosure or evidence for concern may occur in any number of ways. This may be by what an individual says, about themselves or another person. It may be through receipt of a written item, or through observation of activity or behaviour giving cause for concern. It may be through changes in behaviour or attitude or physical and emotional pointers.
- It is vital for the successful operation of this policy that all incidents, observations, however insignificant-seeming, are logged by the observer(s) in the appropriate accident and incident report book/forms.
- The observing worker, paid and voluntary, will make a verbal report to the SSM, and also will make a written report outlining in adequate detail what was heard, seen, reported, alleged etc. The worker will sign and date the report. The RO will read and countersign the report, with any comments/ recommendations.
- If more than one worker has an observation on the same incident on the day in question, a separate report is to be made by each worker and treated as above.
- The RO and SSM will meet to review the evidence and concerns and the RO will consult in making a decision on action. Any previous records relevant will be also consulted by the RO. The RO will record his/her decision by a memorandum, copy to the SSM and copy filed in the appropriate restricted files.
- The RO will take an appropriate course of action including the provision of information on how to access relevant support and/or counselling services, providing referrals to these where possible, or supporting the individual to report the matter to police where desired or making a report where required by law.

#### **i. Feedback and Reporting**

- Vulnerable adults will always wish to be assured that, having made a report, appropriate action has been taken. The RO and the SSM should always attempt to give such feedback from a reporting situation as is appropriate.
- In giving any feedback to workers, the RO has to bear in mind "need to know" and confidentiality.

#### **j. Allegations**

- If an individual makes allegations against any person working for IARS, whether paid or unpaid, or a member of the Management, the following procedure will come into force - incident reports will be made at all stages as appropriate:
- The person receiving the complaint will contact the SSM who will at once contact the RO.
- The RO should inform the person against whom an allegation has been made as soon as possible.
- The RO will gather as much detail from available sources of information as possible, by way of investigation, including interviewing the individual making the allegation so long as this poses no further risk to them.
- The person against whom such allegations are made should have opportunity to give an explanation or answer to any allegation at an interview conducted by the RO and the course of such an interview should be minuted by the SSM who should be present.
- If necessary, the worker against who allegations have been made may be suspended by the RO until the completion of the RO's enquiries. The person suspended should be advised by the RO of a person in the Project with whom s/he can communicate during the period of suspension on matters relating to their employment or engagement as a volunteer, and the person so appointed should be told clearly, as should the person suspended the address to which any communication should be made, whether or not communication includes personal contact, and the hours/times of contact.
- Under no circumstances is any person suspended to re-enter project premises or property or attend a session site whilst under suspension.
- The RO will recommend whether the circumstances constitute grounds either:
  - to treat the matter as a disciplinary issue, either as misconduct or gross misconduct, with associated rights of appeal;
  - to terminate employment or volunteer agreement;
  - or to dismiss the allegations as unfounded, or to make such other non-disciplinary recommendations as are appropriate.

#### **k. Induction and Training**

IARS shall ensure that there is adequate and appropriate induction and ongoing training and information to all employed staff and voluntary workers concerning the rights of victims of crime, the risks of re-traumatisation, and protection of vulnerable adults which shall be the responsibility of the SSM to devise and implement, in consultation and liaison with the RO. All directors, employees and voluntary workers shall have this policy drawn to their attention on joining the project and it shall be the duty of the SSM, in consultation with the RO, to ensure that such persons are fully aware of how and where to access the full policy statement, and that the SSM is the person through whom they should route queries concerning the policy.

#### **l. Review of this policy**

The Management shall review this policy, its effectiveness and regarding its implementation every two years and the RO shall ensure with the SSM that the views of all workers, paid and voluntary, are sought and reflected in such a review process, and that any statutory authority input is sought as appropriate.

#### **J. Vulnerable Adults**

Government guidance as to the legal and policy basis for responding to concerns regarding the safeguarding and welfare of vulnerable adults is contained in the document 'No Secrets' and the previous Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) guidance (now Adult's List guidance).<sup>1</sup> Good practice guidance is also available through the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) publication – *Safeguarding Adults: A national framework of standards for good practice and outcomes in adult protection work*.<sup>2</sup>

However, it is important to be aware that following amendments to the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, adults are no longer deemed vulnerable because of their personal attributes, characteristics or abilities. An adult is considered 'vulnerable' if they receive a health, personal or social care service from a professional. Personal services would include, for example, help with financial matters, feeding, washing or dressing.

The definition of abuse of adults is contained in 'No Secrets' (para 2.5). Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons. Abuse may consist of single or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal or psychological, it may be an act of neglect or omission to act, or it may occur when a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented, or cannot consent. Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it. Within this context abuse can take the form of:

- physical abuse – including hitting, pushing, kicking, misuse of restraint or inappropriate sanctions
- sexual abuse – including sexual assault or acts to which the adult did not, or could not, consent
- psychological abuse – including emotional abuse, threats, deprivation of contact, humiliation, intimidation, coercion, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services
- financial or material abuse – including exploitation and pressure in connection to wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions
- neglect or acts of omission – including ignoring medical or physical care needs, withholding of medication or adequate nutrition and failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services
- discriminatory abuse – including racist, sexist and other forms of harassment.

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<sup>1</sup> *No Secrets: guidance on protecting vulnerable adults in care*, Department of Health, 2010:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/no-secrets-guidance-on-protecting-vulnerable-adults-in-care](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/no-secrets-guidance-on-protecting-vulnerable-adults-in-care)

<sup>2</sup> *Safeguarding adults: a national framework of standards for good practice and outcomes in adult protection work*, Association of Directors of Social Services, 2005: <http://lx.iriss.org.uk/content/safeguarding-adults-national-framework-standards-good-practice-and-outcomes-adult-protection>