



FIRST STOP CENTRE

Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Policy

- 1.1 This document sets out the policy and procedure to be adopted by First Stop Centre staff, whether paid or volunteer:
 - when having any contact with vulnerable adults, especially when a vulnerable adult claims to be or appears to be the victim of abuse; and
 - to ensure that children and young people attending the Centre with parents and/or guardians are protected from harm.
- 1.2 All First Stop Centre staff have a duty to ensure the safety and well-being of vulnerable adults, whether those adults are clients of and attending the Centre or whether staff are visiting premises in the course of their work where vulnerable adults may be present.
- 1.3 All staff have a responsibility to ensure a safe environment for children and young people.
- 1.4 All Centre employees have an enhanced DBS and when renewed are required to join the update service.
- 1.5 All contact staff regularly renew their safeguarding and prevent training. The designated safeguarding adults lead (centre manager) renews through the Essex safeguarding adult board every 2 years.
- 1.6 All First Stop Centre staff have a duty to treat all clients with dignity and respect at all times but must be particularly aware of those clients who are vulnerable. Any concerns raised by or about a vulnerable adult must be taken seriously.
- 1.7 All staff must ensure that children under the age of 16 are accompanied by a responsible adult and that adults are made aware of their responsibility for the care of the children they bring to the Centre. Children are not to be left without adult supervision.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 A vulnerable adult is defined as someone aged 18 or over who is or may be:
 - In need of community services due to age, illness or mental or physical disability



- Unable to take care of him or herself or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

2.2 A vulnerable adult may be someone who:

- Is elderly or frail
- Has learning difficulties
- Suffers from mental illness (e.g. dementia, personality disorder)
- Has a physical disability
- Is a substance misuser
- Is homeless
- Is in an abusive relationship.

2.3 Abuse is defined as “*The violation of an individual’s human and civil rights*”.

It can be physical, verbal or psychological. It may be an act 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.

2.4 Types of abuse and examples of abuse of vulnerable adults are:

- Discriminatory (Age, sex, disability, gender, race, orientation)
- Psychological (Intimidation, bullying, cyber-bullying, enforced isolation)
- Financial or material (Exploitation, theft, fraud)
- Organisational (Insufficient staff, lack of respect, abusive attitude)
- Neglect (Failure to provide access to food, shelter. Isolating the person)
- Self-neglect (to the extent it threatens personal health and safety)
- Sexual (Rape, inappropriate touch, non-consensual sexual activity)
- Modern Slavery (Human trafficking, forced labour, domestic servitude)
- Physical (Assault, hitting, biting, scalding, rough-handling)
- Domestic abuse (Assault, exploitation, control, intimidation)

2.5 Examples of possible signs of abuse are:

- Injuries
- Weight loss
- Dehydration
- Lack of personal care
- Bills unusually not being paid
- Sudden loss of assets or possessions, including money
- Loss of contact with or isolation from friends or family
- Not getting to medical or other appointments
- Changes in behaviour or mood.

2.6 Child abuse can take many forms, such as:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse



- Sexual abuse
- Neglect
- Failure to thrive

2.7 There are other types of abuse, particularly associated with drug misuse. Abuse may happen anywhere. All staff should be conscious of changes in behaviour or appearance of children who regularly attend the Centre with parents or guardians.

3 Procedure

3.1 Any member of staff who has concerns about the well-being of a vulnerable adult or child must report those concerns to the Centre Manager, who is the designated safeguarding officer. It will be for the Centre Manager to report those concerns to the appropriate authority as necessary. The appropriate authority might be the police (if it is thought a criminal offence might have been committed); Essex County Council Adult Social Care; the Care Quality Commission (e.g. if the concerns are in respect of the adult's residential care home), Essex Social Services, Child Protection Investigation Unit, NSPCC.

3.2 The Centre Manager must keep First Stop Centre Management Committee informed of matters likely to involve external authorities.

3.3 Staff must ensure the safety of a vulnerable adult, child or other visitors or clients at the Centre and themselves when dealing with any concerns. Staff should call for help if necessary.

3.4 In any meeting or discussion with a vulnerable adult or responsible person in respect of a child, the member of staff should listen carefully to the person concerned, remain calm and ensure that any response is caring and reassuring. It should be explained, however, that it will be necessary to share information with a manager or other authorised person.

3.5 Whilst confidentiality is important and, as far as possible, staff should act within the wishes of the individual, a member of staff should not promise not to tell anyone else if failing to tell someone would or might put the individual *or child* or others at risk or go against legal requirements.

3.6 Examples of when it might be necessary to break confidentiality are:

- If the individual intends to harm him or herself
- If the individual is at risk of causing harm to others
- If there is an indication that a crime has been or is about to be committed



- If a member of staff receives information from a third party about alleged abuse
- If a child is believed to be at risk of harm or abuse

3.7 Staff must keep a full record of any concerns brought to their notice and of any discussion or meeting, including details of:

- Date and time of meeting or discussion
- Date and time of alleged concerns or incident
- Details of the incident or concerns
- What was said by the individual in his or her own words
- Whether anyone else was present at the incident or meeting or discussion.

A written record must be signed and dated by the member of staff and kept securely.

3.8 Staff must not contact the alleged perpetrator of the alleged incident or incidents giving rise to the concerns or contact anyone else mentioned in the incidents. It is **not** the responsibility of staff to investigate concerns or allegations of abuse. Investigation must be left to the appropriate authority.

3.9 Contact phone numbers are:

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| • Essex Police | - | 101 (or 999 if an emergency) |
| • Essex Adult Social Care | - | 0845 603 7630 (office hours)
0845 606 1212 (out of hours) |
| • Care Quality Commission | - | 03000 616161 |
| • Essex Social Services | - | 01376 555400 (office hours)
01245 434083 (out of hours) |
| • Child Protection Investigation Unit | | 01376 516767 |
| • NSPCC Child Protection Helpline | | 0800 800500 |

4 Whistleblowing

4.1 All staff are made aware of their duty to raise any concerns about any colleague's attitude or action, i.e. to blow the whistle on bad practice. Staff can talk to the manager who is the designated safeguarding officer or if that is not appropriate, the chair of the management committee.

5 Keeping Safe

5.1 Staff are guided at induction as to the correct procedures to keep themselves safe. This includes keeping doors open on classrooms, no physical contact with clients, positioning in the room, incident recording, checking advice on social media.

6 Risk Assessments



6.1 Risk Assessments are carried out on the building and the rooms used within the centre, and any external locations, and the interventions being carried out. Clients meet with staff for an initial assessment where any potential risks are identified and managed.