

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (WWT) Adults at Risk Protection Procedures

This document sets out what to do if you or someone else suspects the abuse of an adult at risk or an adult at risk adult makes a disclosure about being abused. WWT defines an adult as someone over the age of 18. WWT aims to ensure that there is a speedy and effective response for dealing with concerns.

The procedures below should be followed by all Wiltshire Wildlife Trust staff and volunteers who come in contact with an adult at risk as part of any activity organised by the Trust.

WWT is committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for adults at risk.

Definition

“Under the Care Act 2014 local authorities and other public agencies should protect adults at risk of abuse or neglect. The local authority has a duty to make (or cause to be made) whatever enquiries it thinks necessary to enable it to decide whether any action should be taken in the case of an adult in its area (whether or not ordinarily resident there) where the adult:

- has needs for care and support,*
- is experiencing, or is at risk of abuse or neglect, and*
- as a result of those needs, is unable to protect them self against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.”*

(Wiltshire Council)

Who is at risk?

Examples - A person may be at risk if they:

- are elderly or frail
- suffer from mental illness
- have a learning disability or a physical disability
- are a substance misuser
- are homeless or in a state of realised poverty
- are in an abusive relationship

This list is not exhaustive.

It should be noted that a person is not normally regarded as being at risk purely on the grounds of disability, gender, age or illness alone. Rather these are indicators that a person may be vulnerable to abuse or exploitation, but in fact they may not be. It should also be noted that a person's at risk status can change. A person in an abusive relationship or suffering from an illness may become at risk, but the situation or the individual's own resources may then alter so that the person would cease to be at risk. Equally a person who has not historically been regarded as at risk may become so either for a period of time or in some cases permanently.

What constitutes the abuse of an adult at risk?

Abuse may be defined as the wrongful application of power by someone in a dominant position. It involves an imbalance of power and exploitation without a full and informed consent. Abuse can take several different forms and may be a single act or repeated acts.

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust recognises that an adult at risk may suffer:

- **Physical abuse** – includes hitting, slapping, kicking, pushing, withholding or misuse of medication.
- **Psychological abuse** - includes persistent maltreatment, threats of harm, emotional abuse (for example saying they are worthless, unloved or inadequate, humiliation, verbal abuse, intimidation, coercion, harassment, withdrawal of support, isolation and deprivation (physical and sensory).
- **Sexual abuse** – includes sexual assault and rape, or sexual acts where the adult has not given (or could not give) consent or was forced into consenting. This may include inappropriate physical contact, penetration and non-penetrative acts, looking at inappropriate images and grooming.
- **Neglect and Acts of Omission** – includes ignoring physical care and medical needs, withholding basic living requirements e.g. adequate nutrition, safe and warm environment, withholding necessary medication and failure to provide access to appropriate health and social care services and/or educational services.
- **Self-neglect** – includes lack of self-care, failing to seek medical attention and being unwilling or unable to manage personal affairs.
- **Domestic violence or abuse** – includes controlling, coercive and/or threatening behaviour involving individuals who are or have been intimate partners or family members.
- **Financial / material abuse** – includes fraud, theft, exploitation, financial transactions, misappropriation e.g. willed inheritance, property, benefits and possessions.
- **Modern slavery** – includes human trafficking, forced labour and coercing services from a captive individual.
- **Discrimination** – includes harassment and/or exclusion because of race, creed, culture, ability, age, gender and any slur deemed offensive and abusive.
- **Institutional abuse** – indicated by repeated instances of unsatisfactory professional practice, pervasive ill treatment or gross misconduct indicating an abusive climate.

Additional types of abuse include:

- **Abuse using social media** – cyber bullying, threats, offensive comments and obscene remarks, sexting and grooming
- **County Lines / Cuckooing** – use of mobile phone by gangs to facilitate the movement and supply of drugs to users and/or using a local property as a base often belonging to an adult at risk that has been obtained through force or coercion (known as 'cuckooing').

What to do if you suspect that an adult at risk is being abused.

A concern about abuse may be raised where:

- there is direct disclosure of abuse by the adult at risk or;

- there is a complaint or expression of concern by another person or;
- the behaviour or appearance of the adult at risk causes concern.

Care must be taken not to disclose the allegation of abuse to the alleged perpetrator as this may place the adult at risk under an increased risk of abuse or escalation.

Care must be taken not to disturb or destroy anything that may be used in evidence if a criminal investigation were to take place.

It is important to:

1. Take reasonable steps to ensure there is no immediate danger.
2. Seek appropriate medical treatment if required.
3. Contact the police if it appears that a crime has been committed.
4. Obtain permission from the adult at risk before disclosing confidential information about them (see below for guidance on confidentiality).
5. Where appropriate, discuss concerns with the person responsible for overseeing the care of the adult at risk.
6. Consider the need to inform care professionals that support the adult at risk (after first obtaining their consent). This may include but is not limited to their GP, CPN, Co-Worker, or a range of other care professionals.
7. Where a child is also thought to be at risk, Child Protection procedures should be invoked.

If, after discussion with the adult at risk, abuse or neglect is considered to be a possibility, then a referral should be made to a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) who may, in consultation with the member of staff, refer to the appropriate local authority Social Service department.

A referral form should be completed in all cases and given to the DSO.

If you receive an allegation about any adult:

1. Immediately tell a DSO, who will discuss the situation with you before considering the most appropriate course of action to be taken.
2. Record the facts as you know them including time and date of the incident and sign the record before giving a copy to the DSO.
3. Try to ensure no-one is placed in a position which could cause further compromise.

If you receive an allegation about yourself:

1. Immediately tell a DSO, who will discuss the situation with you and decide the most appropriate course of action to be taken.
2. Record the facts as you know them including time and date of the incident and sign the record before giving a copy to the DSO.
3. If an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer the DSO will be required to advise the Chief Executive or, in their absence, the SLT Safeguarding Lead. The Trust's Disciplinary Procedure may be implemented if genuine concerns are raised.

You must refer – you must not investigate

Confidentiality

WWT employees and trained WWT volunteers have a duty to respect and protect the confidentiality of any information that they have relating to adults at risk. Such information should not normally be disclosed without the consent of the adult at risk. However, there is an underlying professional requirement to act in the interests of service users, members of the public in general, Trust staff and Trust volunteers. It may become necessary to disclose information without the consent of the adult at risk in certain situations, namely:

1. If an adult at risk's health renders them incapable of consent (e.g. mental incapacity).
2. Where disclosure is necessary to prevent serious injury or damage to the health of the adult at risk, a third party or to public health (e.g. others are placed at risk).
3. When disclosure is required by law or by a court order.

It should be borne in mind that adults at risk experience the same protection under the Data Protection Act 1999 as other UK citizens. They should be given the assurance of confidentiality, but never of **absolute** confidentiality. The reasons for this should be explained at the outset of involvement with any adult at risk.

If it becomes necessary to disclose information about an adult at risk for any of the reasons named above, it is vital that the adult at risk should be informed of any decision to share information that is contrary to their wishes. They should be aware of which information is being shared and with whom. This is necessary for the purposes of damage limitation and so that the person will not be further disempowered by the disclosure. Disclosure could, in certain circumstances, place the adult at risk at increased risk of abuse or harm, so this matter should be handled with the greatest of care to ensure this is not the case and with full recourse to all of the necessary agencies.

It is very important that information is handled sensitively and on a need to know basis as incorrect information can sometimes prove very detrimental to the reputations of organisations and to the lives of all parties involved if it were to fall into inappropriate hands. Many adults at risk are at increased risk of stigmatisation within society and due care and attention is needed to ensure that this risk is not exacerbated with life changing consequences.

Social Service authorities, and where a criminal offence may have been committed, the police, have a responsibility to make inquiries into concerns about the welfare of an adult at risk. At a local level, agencies involved in the care and protection of adults at risk (e.g. commissioners, providers and regulators of health and social care services; the police; local housing and education departments; voluntary and private sector organisations) work in partnership to ensure robust procedures are in place.

Procedure following receipt of a report

1. The DSO will discuss the incident with the member of staff or volunteer completing the reporting form and together they will agree the course of action to be taken. This may include the DSO speaking to Social Services, Senior Leadership Safeguarding Lead, police or social worker.
2. If an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer the DSO will be required to advise the Chief Executive or in their absence the Head of Finance and Resources. The Trust's Disciplinary Procedure will be followed immediately.
3. Where appropriate the DSO will keep the member of staff informed of the outcome.
4. All incident reports, records and notes relating to subsequent actions will be securely held (double locked within a filing cabinet and password protected if held electronically).

Contact numbers:

DSO: Debbie Chambers (C&LM Section Coordinator)	01380 725670 / 07849085423
Care Farm Manager: Dean Sherwin	01666 860699 / 07887758380
YEW Team Manager Gail Grimes	07736 457649
SLT Safeguarding Lead: Damian Haasjes	01380 736096 / 07793251558