017.0 – Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy

017.1 – Policy Statement

**017.1.1 – Zero Tolerance Statement**

Open Homes Nottingham states that it is committed to zero tolerance of abuse and neglect of any form within our organisation, and will endeavour to deal effectively with any manifestation of the behaviour irrespective of its magnitude.

**017.1.2 – Responsibility**

It is the responsibility of each member of the Open Homes Nottingham team to prevent the abuse of vulnerable adults accessing our projects, and to report any abuse discovered or suspected by following the reporting procedures outlined. Each member of the Open Homes Nottingham team working with vulnerable adults must know the recommendations, and undertake to observe them.

No staff member or volunteer will prejudice their own position or standing with Open Homes Nottingham by responsibly reporting potential or suspected abuse of vulnerable adults. Any allegation or concern regarding the abuse of a vulnerable adult will be treated seriously and for this reason it is important for anyone raising a concern to strictly follow the procedures laid down by Open Homes Nottingham. Particular care should be taken in regard to confidentiality and the sharing of information with appropriate people.

**017.1.3 – Policy Aims**

* Protect vulnerable adults:

Vulnerable adults should be assured of good standards of care and protection from all Open Homes Nottingham staff, volunteers and representatives.

* Protect Open Homes Nottingham staff, volunteers and representatives:

By following the guidelines and procedures in the policy, everyone working with Open Homes Nottingham should be able to avoid inappropriate, misguided or wrong behaviour and know what to do should they be concerned about a vulnerable adult’s welfare.

* To protect Open Homes Nottingham:

The policy forms part of Open Homes Nottingham’s commitment to best practice in all areas of our work.

**017.1.4 – Access**

This policy will be made accessible via the following methods:

* This policy will be made accessible to all staff members on the Open Homes Nottingham system;
* This policy will be provided all volunteers;
* This policy will be provided to any service users or third parties who request it by submitting a [027.7 Subject Access Request Form], or who require it for the purposes of funding applications.

017.2 – Definitions

**017.2.1 – Vulnerable Adult**

A person who is in need of extra support because they are elderly or have a learning disability, physical or sensory impairment or mental health problem and who is or may be unable to take care of themselves or unable to protect themselves against harm (*definition from Nottingham City Council*).

Those in need of community care services may include (but are not limited to):

* People with a learning disability;
* People with a physical disability;
* People with mental ill health;
* People who are profoundly deaf;
* People who are visually impaired;
* People who are deaf/blind;
* People over 65;
* People with HIV/AIDS.

**017.2.2 – Abuse**

Mistreatment by any other person or persons that violates a person's human and civil rights. It can vary from treating someone with disrespect in a way which significantly affects the person's quality of life, to causing actual physical suffering. It can happen anywhere - in a residential or nursing home, a hospital, in the workplace, at a day centre or educational establishment, in supported housing or in the street (*definition from Nottingham City Council*).

Any of these forms of abuse can be either deliberate or be the result of ignorance, or lack of training, knowledge or understanding. Often if a person is being abused in one way they are also being abused in other ways

As defined in the [*Care Act 2014*](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents/enacted), this can include any of the following:

**017.2.2.1 – Physical Abuse**

Including hitting, slapping, and pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions;

**017.2.2.2 – Domestic Violence**

Including psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse and honour-based violence;

**017.2.2.3 – Sexual Abuse**

Including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult at risk has not consented, or is incapable of giving informed consent or was pressured into consenting. This may involve contact or non-contact abuse (e.g. touch, masturbation, being photographed, teasing, and inappropriate touching);

**017.2.2.4 – Psychological Abuse**

Including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks;

**017.2.2.5 – Financial or Material Abuse**

Including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits;

**017.2.2.6 – Modern Slavery**

Encompasses slavery, human trafficking; forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment;

**017.2.2.7 – Discriminatory Abuse**

Including racist, sexist, that based on a person's disability, culture and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment;

**017.2.2.8 – Organisational Abuse** (previously known as institutional abuse)

Neglect and poor professional practice in care settings also need to be taken into account. It may take the form of isolated incidents of poor practice at one end of the spectrum, through to pervasive ill treatment or gross misconduct at the other. It can occur when the routines, systems, communications and norms of an institution compel individuals to sacrifice their preferred lifestyle and cultural diversity to the needs of that institution. Repeated instances of poor care may be an indication of more serious problems;

**017.2.2.9 – Neglect & Acts of Omission**

Including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, and the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating;

**017.2.2.10 – Self- Neglect**

Covering a wide range of behaviours: neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.

017.3 – Minimising & Preventing Abuse

The [[Care Act 2014](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents/enacted)] is that the care and support system works to actively promote wellbeing and independence, and does not just wait to respond when people reach a crisis point. It is essential that all members of the Open Homes Nottingham team proactively intervene at an early stage to minimise the chances of an Adult at Risk becoming vulnerable to exploitation, abuse or harm.

Members of the Open Homes Nottingham Team should be trained in knowing where to access information to best sign-post Vulnerable Adults to services that can aid prevention of Abuse.

As a part of Open Homes Nottingham’s responsibility to minimise and prevent abuse, it endeavours to enact the following:

* All members of the Open Homes Nottingham Team (including both staff and volunteers) who interact with Vulnerable Adults will undergo a DBS check;
* All prospective members of the Open Homes Nottingham Team (including both staff and volunteers) will be required to:
  + Be interviewed by a panel consisting at least two board members or members of staff;
  + Provide a character reference;
  + Undergo safeguarding training that will enable them to confidently identify potential indicators of abuse and neglect, and know the reporting procedures they must follow;
* Annual safeguarding ‘refresher’ training will be held for all members of the Open Homes Nottingham Team who interact with Vulnerable Adults;
* All Volunteers will undergo an annual supervision, as outlined in the [13.0 Support & Supervision] policy.

017.4 – Reporting Procedure

**017.4.1 – Emergencies**

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| If someone is at risk of immediate harm, then call the police on 999 |

**017.4.2 – Other**

When in any doubt about the appropriate best course of action, all members of the Open Homes Team should contact the Safeguarding Lead:

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| Dawn Randall: +44 7840 867773  dawn.randall@openhomes.org.uk |

**017.4.3 – Within the Organisation**

Should any alleged abuse involve member(s) of the Open Homes Nottingham Team, reporting procedures 017.4.1 & 017.4.2 must still be followed, in conjunction with the [028.0 Whistleblowing] and [005.0 Disciplinary] policies.

017.5 – Section 42 Enquiries

**017.5.1 – Definition**

[[Section 42 of the Care Act 2014](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/section/42/enacted)] describes that when having reasonable cause to suspect that a vulnerable adult is unable to protect themselves from abuse or neglect (or risk of), it is the responsibility of the local authority to make (or cause to be made) whatever enquiries it thinks necessary to enable it to decide whether or not action should be takin in the adult’s case and, if so, what and by whom.

As such, after contacting the Adult Safeguarding Team, Open Homes Nottingham may be requested to make further enquiries into the alleged abuse.

Should Open Homes Nottingham be asked by the Local Authority to undertake a Section 42 enquiry, the Local Authority takes the lead, and reporting should be done through them.

**017.5.2 – Objectives**

* Establish facts (determine what has actually happened/may happen);
* Ascertain the adult's views and wishes;
* Assess the needs of the adult for protection, support and redress and how they might be met;
* Protect from the abuse and neglect, in accordance with the wishes of the adult;
* Make decisions as to what follow-up action should be taken with regard to the person or organisation responsible for the abuse or neglect;
* Enable the adult to achieve resolution and recovery.

**017.5.3 – Advise for Making Enquiries**

**017.5.3.1 – Core Considerations**

* What facts need to be established?
* What information is relevant/irrelevant?
* What information has already been gathered, and how reliable is it?
* What additional information is needed and what is the best way to gather it?

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| Where a police investigation is taking place (or will be) the individual making the enquiry must first establish with the investigating officer any potential enquiry actions that may/may not be carried out. |

**017.5.3.2 – Facts to Establish**

The following are examples of key questions of fact that may need to be established by an enquiry:

* What is the adult's insight into the concern and situation? Is mental capacity an issue? Is coercion or undue influence a concern?
* What does the adult want to happen/not happen?
* What was the impact of the abuse on the adult-at the time if happened and now-do they need support to recover? Have their needs changed?
* What is the nature of the alleged abuse or neglect? How likely is it that it occurred?
* Did the alleged abuse happen in more than one place? Are there any other people at risk?
* Who caused the alleged abuse or neglect? Do they still pose a risk?
* Has the alleged abuse been happening for some time? Are there previous referrals? If so, is there a pattern?
* Is the alleged abuse likely to happen again? If so, how can this be mitigated?
* Has a crime been committed? Is advice needed from the police?
* Is the adult able to protect themselves from further abuse?

**17.5.3.3 – Actions**

The following are examples of possible actions that may be appropriate dependent on the specific circumstances of the enquiry:

* A conversation with a care-giver or family member;
* A conversation with a professional or organisation;
* A conversation with anyone deemed to be a witness to what may have happened;
* A conversation with the person alleged to have caused harm;
* An examination of records, including contact logs etc.;
* An exploration into alternative options for meeting needs, including accommodation;
* An exploration into available support services;
* A review of equipment.