LUTHER KING HOUSE
POLICY AND PROCEDURES: VULNERABLE ADULTS

LKH has a legal and moral duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of vulnerable adults who may be receiving education and training at the College, working on the staff team, or making use of the accommodation and conference facilities. The aim of this policy is to establish how LKH seeks to:

- provide a safe environment;
- identify vulnerable adults who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm;
- take appropriate action to ensure the safety of vulnerable adults.

Who is a Vulnerable Adult?

In the terms of this policy a 'vulnerable adult' has the following definition:

- A person who is over 18.
- And who is or may be in need of care services by reason of mental or other disabilities, age or illness.
- And who is or may be unable to take care of him/herself or unable to protect him/herself against significant harm or exploitation.
- Vulnerable adults may include people with learning disabilities, mental health problems, people aged 65 or over, people with physical disabilities.

What is Abuse?

Abuse is behaviour towards a person that either deliberately or unknowingly causes a vulnerable adult harm, or endangers their life or their human or civil rights.

- It may be of a physical, neglectful, sexual, financial, psychological/emotional, institutional or discriminatory nature.
- It can be passive, e.g. failing to take action to care for someone, or failing to raise the alert about abuse.
- It can be active, e.g. hitting, stealing or doing something that causes harm.
- It can be a one-off or something that is repeated.

Aims

LKH seeks to:

- Safeguard adults whose circumstances may make them vulnerable to abuse, by developing and maintaining an inclusive culture, developing staff knowledge and awareness of safeguarding issues, and by applying best practice at all levels of the organisation.
- Aid the identification of vulnerable adults at risk of significant harm, and provide procedures for reporting concerns.
- Act promptly in response to any incident reported.
- Maintain records of all reported vulnerable adult protection issues.

- Provide a report to the Board of any issues that arise and the actions that have been taken.

Procedures

The designated member of staff with lead responsibility for safeguarding vulnerable adults is the President, assisted by members of the Operations Committee.

The designated members of staff are responsible for:

- receiving any reports of concerns regarding possible abuse.
- overseeing the referral of cases of suspected abuse or allegations.
- maintaining a proper record of any safeguarding adult referrals, complaints or concerns (even where the concern does not lead to a referral).
- liaising with appropriate agencies.

Whenever any member of staff hears an allegation from a vulnerable adult that abuse has, or may have, occurred, or where there is a significant concern that a vulnerable adult may have been be abused, the following steps should be taken:

a) RECEIVE
   What is said;
   Accept what you are told – you do not need to decide whether or not it is true;
   Listen without displaying shock or disbelief
b) REASSURE
   The person concerned;
   Acknowledge their courage in telling you;
   Do not promise confidentiality;
   Remind them they are not to blame – avoid criticising the alleged perpetrator;
   Do not promise that 'everything will be alright now' (it might not be)
c) REACT
   Respond to the person concerned but do not interrogate;
   Avoid leading questions but ask open ended ones;
   Clarify anything you do not understand;
   Explain what you will do next, i.e. inform the designated member of staff
d) RECORD
   Make notes as soon as possible – during the interview if you can;
   Include: time, date, place, who was present;
   The person's own words – do not assume – ask e.g. 'Please tell me what xxxxx means';
   Describe observable behaviour;
   Do not destroy your original notes – they may be needed later on
e) SUPPORT
   Consider what support is needed for the person concerned – you may need to give them a lot of your time;
   Ensure you are supported – such interviews can be extremely stressful and time consuming;
   Talk to your Designated Person.

If LKH receives information which suggests that a person has been actually abused or neglected or that this is likely, it has a duty to refer these concerns to Adult Services or Police. However, things may not be clear-cut. In which case, it is most likely that a process of consultation will take place with an appropriate agency which is usually, but not always, Adult Services. Further actions will then be taken as advised and as considered appropriate.

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