



VULNERABLE PERSON POLICY

River of Life Metropolitan Community Church Dorchester



**ADOPTED BY THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS 30th SEPTEMBER 2008**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

This policy has been produced in accordance with the Department of Health and the Home Office Guidance on developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse, as laid down in the "No Secrets" and "Speaking up for Justice" documents (April 2006). The objective of this policy is to establish common practice for dealing with allegations/incidents of abuse. River of Life MCC operates zero tolerance concerning the abuse of vulnerable adults. The abuse of vulnerable adults by River of Life MCC staff and volunteers is regarded as a clear infringement of their rights and liberty. This will include any or all of these types of abuse which may be perpetrated as the result of deliberate intent, negligence or ignorance. Incidents of abuse may be multiple, either to one person in a continuing relationship or service context, or to more than one person at a time. In some instances, abuse will constitute a criminal offence. In this respect vulnerable adults are entitled to rely on the same standard of legal protection as any other member of society.

- River of Life MCC are committed to ensuring peoples individual rights and freedom are protected and promoted through eliminating: neglect, abuse, exploitation, harassment and discrimination.
- In order to achieve this principle, River of Life MCC has devised this policy for use as a guide to dealing with issues that arise: what amounts to abuse, who it aims to protect and who it doesn't.
- This policy needs to be conveyed to all staff and volunteers joining River of Life MCC as part of their membership classes.
- River of Life MCC aims to create a culture of 'openness' where all members speak out against abuse, promoting protection of vulnerable people and raising awareness of the kinds of abuse that might occur.

2. **STATEMENT OF INTENT**

The abuse of vulnerable adults constitutes a clear infringement of their rights and freedoms as citizens. This policy aims to protect vulnerable adults, who are at risk of all forms of abuse, receive a safe, sound and supportive service, through the process of identifying, investigating, managing and preventing such abuse. As a service we are committed to promoting equality of opportunity to all members of our community.

- It is every adult's right to live in safety and to be free from abuse or fear of abuse from others.
- It is the responsibility of River of Life MCC to link in with other agencies and professionals to actively work together to help

prevent abuse of vulnerable adults. This will be achieved by raising awareness, empowering people to make their own decisions and putting safeguards in place.

- When a situation is discovered in which a vulnerable adult reports, or is thought to be at risk of abuse, then River of Life MCC will react quickly in a co-ordinated manner to help them to overcome these difficulties.
- River of Life MCC recognises that people are discriminated against on the basis of race, culture, gender, age, disability or sexual orientation. We are committed to working with vulnerable adults in a positive manner that values them as individuals.

3. **DEFINITIONS**

"Vulnerable adult" in the context of this document, means a person aged 18 or over who has a condition of the following type: i) a learning or physical disability; ii) a physical or mental illness, chronic or otherwise, including an addiction to alcohol or drugs; or iii) a reduction in physical or mental capacity.

"Harm" for vulnerable adults this refers to the concept of 'significant harm' introduced in the Children Act 1989. "Harm" should be taken to include not only ill treatment (including sexual abuse and forms of ill treatment which are not physical), but also the impairment of, or an avoidable deterioration in physical or mental health and the impairment of physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development.

"Abuse" is a violation of individual human and civil rights by any other person(s).

1. Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of the person subject to it.
2. Physical abuse includes hitting, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate touch or punishment.
3. Sexual abuse includes rape and sexual assault or sexual acts of touching intimate places to which the vulnerable adult has not or could not consent to and/or was pressured into consenting.
4. Psychological abuse includes emotional abuse, obvious or implied threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming controlling, intimidation, compulsion, inappropriate language, verbal or racial abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive and/or spiritual networks, withdrawal or omission to provide opportunities and choice.

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. Damage or threats of damage to property.
6. Discriminatory abuse includes racist, sexist opinions, or opinions based on an individuals disability, or other forms of harassment, taunts or similar treatment.
7. Abuse may include neglect or instances of neglect.

4. WHO ARE THE ABUSERS?

- Those regarded as an abuser might be anyone, including family members, professional staff, paid care workers, volunteers and fellow service users, neighbours, friends and associates.
- There should be particular concern when abuse is perpetrated by someone in a position of power or authority who uses his/her position to the detriment of the health, safety, welfare and general well being of a vulnerable person. River of Life MCC regards this abuse of trust as intolerable.
- Abuse may take place in any context; occurring when a vulnerable adult lives alone or with another, it may also occur within Nursing, Residential or Day Care settings, in hospitals, custodial situations, support services into peoples own homes and other places previously assumed safe, or in public places.
- River of Life MCC not only has a responsibility to all vulnerable adults it comes in contact with where there is an allegation of abuse, but also to an alleged abuser if they are a vulnerable adult. The roles, powers and duties of the Board of Trustees will vary according to the circumstances.

5. ADDRESSING AN ALLEGATION OF ABUSE

1. Every member of River of Life MCC is responsible for recognising and reporting an allegation of abuse.
2. An allegation of abuse must be treated seriously, regardless of the source of the information. It is important for staff to pass on information or concerns immediately to the Vulnerable Person Protection Officer, who will record and report appropriately.

3. It is important that vulnerable adult is aware of procedures at all times, and that they are enabled to express their own fears/concerns/points of view.