



FREEDOM SUPPORT NETWORK VULNERABLE CLIENTS POLICY

Introduction

This is Freedom Support Network's policy regarding the vulnerability of some of its client groups and how the organisation will manage services regarding the different vulnerability levels amongst its clients. This policy also highlights how staff members and volunteers will be trained to understand the type of service we deliver and how this will apply to specific vulnerable clients.

This policy is in line with the Human Rights Act and the REGULATION 11 (Safeguarding People who use Services from Abuse)

Aim of the Policy

This document clarifies our response to vulnerable clients. This document outlines the policy of Freedom Support Network in relation to the special arrangements for particularly vulnerable clients.

Principles

The following principles will underlie Freedom Support Network's approach to vulnerable clients.

1. All of the people using our services are likely to be somewhat vulnerable through release from incarceration, or societal exclusion due to poor health or disability, or other labels and may need protection from hazards which would present little problem to people in sound health and without disabilities.
2. A minority of our customers are especially vulnerable in ways which need to be specifically identified and addressed; this vulnerability may be permanent or temporary, and it may involve all or only some of their activities.
3. It is not possible or sensible to aim for a lifestyle for vulnerable clients which is totally free from risk.
4. Many clients find the taking of risks an essential, and sometimes desirable, element in the way they live.
5. Clients, except for those in whom the lack of capacity to take responsible decisions about their own welfare has been specifically identified and agreed, retain the right to take decisions about risks for themselves.
6. Some, but not all clients, wish a carer, family member, friend or representative to be involved in decisions about situations in which they might be especially vulnerable.

7. Our right to intervene to protect vulnerable clients from potentially damaging risks is circumscribed by the fact that we provide services only for specific periods and within contracted areas and that we operate on the private premises of our clients.

Assessment of Needs

Before we enter into an agreement to provide a service, we will always ensure that a thorough assessment of the prospective client's needs has been undertaken, either by the referring organisation or under our own procedures. The assessment will include the identification of clients who are especially vulnerable in general (through, for example, a permanent physical disability or mental health issues) or who have specific areas or times of special vulnerability (such as a recurrent illness or periods when they are alone). The vulnerability of a client will be re-assessed when the client's plan is reviewed or more frequently if circumstances alter. We will respect the right to the greatest possible degree of independence, which vulnerable clients retain.

Risk Assessment

For any situation which might carry a significant risk, a formal risk assessment will be undertaken by a trained and qualified person at the time of the drawing up or revision of the care plan. Each risk assessment will list the possible benefits of taking the risk against the possible adverse outcomes, the precautions which should be taken, and the arrangements for reconsidering the matter when appropriate. These factors and the conclusion of the risk assessment will be recorded in the plan, and the responsibility of the relevant staff in relation to any risk likely to be faced by the client will be clarified. Risk assessments will be reviewed at regular intervals or whenever circumstances change significantly, or a new risk arises.

Sources of Danger for Vulnerable Clients

The assessment of need will take into account all sources of possible danger. These include the client's own behaviour, illnesses or disabilities, self-medicating and risks posed by members of the family or friends. The client's limited capacity to react to some of these risks will be recognised and taken into account in their support plan.

Changes to Agreed Action Following a Risk Assessment

If a vulnerable client does not follow the action agreed in relation to the assessment of any risk and therefore puts themselves in unacceptable danger, the staff/volunteer member will communicate this fact to their supervisor who will consider whether any further action is required, for example, further discussion with family members or other professionals, revision of the risk assessment and care plan, or in extreme circumstances a different service may be required. Any discussion and the action taken will be fully recorded. However, safety of clients and staff will be paramount, and no procedure will be carried out unless identified in the risk assessment.

Involving Others in Decisions About Vulnerable Clients

For those whom the lack of capacity to take responsible decisions about their own welfare has been specifically identified and agreed, our clients retain the right to take decisions about the lifestyles and the risks they choose to take. For those with capacity decisions about care or risk-taking we will only involve others – family members, friends, representatives or other professionals – with the specific permission of the client.

Staff

We will ensure that all staff having contact with vulnerable clients are adequately trained and appropriately experienced to provide the best possible service. Where a prospective client presents an area of vulnerability outside the experience of the staff allocated to their care, the staff will be given specific briefing or training before starting to provide a service. Staff will be provided with supervision by qualified and experienced senior staff and will have access at all times when on duty to a responsible and competent person for advice and support.

Charging for Services

If the fact that a client is especially vulnerable significantly effects the way in which our service needs to be provided or calls for any special training or preparation of the responsible staff, this may be reflected in the agreed fees.

Training

All staff members will be given a copy of this policy and encouraged to read it during induction.

This policy will be reviewed by the service manager.

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