

Vulnerable Adult Policy

Attic believes that the safety and welfare of vulnerable adults is of the utmost importance. It is the duty of all our staff & volunteers (where appropriate) to protect each vulnerable adult from abuse and to be alert to the possibility of abuse.

The following Policy has been adopted by the Trustee Board of Attic Theatre Company and has been based on Merton's multi-agency 'No Secrets' policy and procedures. The Trustees nominate the General Manager as the Vulnerable Adult Officer for the Company with day to day responsibility for ensuring that this policy is put into practice. The policy is reviewed annually on rotation with all other policies.

Definitions

Vulnerable adults are people over 18, who are in need of care and unable to protect themselves because of:

- a mental or learning disability.
- a physical disability.
- age or illness.
- Inability to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation'. (*Definition from 'No Secrets' March 2000 Department of Health*)

It may also include victims of domestic abuse, hate crime and anti-social abuse.

People who abuse are:

- often well known to their victims but can be strangers.
- might be a relative, partner, son or daughter, friend or neighbour, a paid or voluntary worker, or a health or social care worker.
- could be another vulnerable adult or service user.
- may not realise they are abusing and can sometimes act out of character and abuse because of the stress of caring.

Abuse can take place in a wide range of settings such as:

- The vulnerable adults' own home.
- A carer's home.
- A day centre.
- A care home.
- A hospital.
- The workplace.
- Educational institutions.

Recognition

The most common types of abuse are:

- **Physical abuse:** this is usually the use of force to cause pain and injury and signs might include:
 - A history of unexplained falls or minor injuries
 - Bruising in well protected areas, or clustered from repeated striking
 - Finger marks
 - Burns of unusual location or type

- Injuries found at different states of healing
- Injury shape similar to an object
- Injuries to head/face/scalp
- History of GP or agency hopping, or reluctance to seek help
- Accounts which vary with time or are inconsistent with physical evidence
- Weight loss due to malnutrition, or rapid weight gain
- Ulcers, bed sores and being left in wet clothing
- Drowsiness due to too much medication, or lack of medication causing recurring crises/ hospital admissions
- Also included is misuse of medication or forcing someone, for example, to stay in a care home against their wishes.
- **Neglect:** this is when a vulnerable adult does not have their basic needs met, such as adequate food or warmth or help with personal hygiene. Signs might include deteriorating health, appearance or mood.
- **Financial abuse:** this is when a vulnerable adult is exploited for financial gain.
- Often valuables will go missing in the home or there may be a change in financial circumstances that cannot be explained.
- **Sexual abuse:** this includes:
 - Disclosure or partial disclosure (use of phrases such as 'It's a secret')
 - Medical problems, e.g. Genital infections, pregnancy, difficulty walking or sitting
 - Disturbed behaviour e.g. depression, sudden withdrawal from activities,
 - Loss of previous skills, sleeplessness or nightmares, self-injury,
 - Showing fear or aggression to one particular person, repeated or excessive masturbation, inappropriately seductive behaviour,
 - Loss of appetite or difficulty in keeping food down.
 - Behaviour of others towards the vulnerable adult
 - Circumstances - e.g. two service users found in a toilet area, one in a distressed state
- **Psychological abuse:** this might be emotional abuse such as threats of harm or abandonment, enforced isolation, blaming or controlling behaviour, or verbal and racial insults. Signs may be fear, confusion or disturbed sleep.
- **Discriminatory abuse:** this includes any sort of abuse based on a vulnerable adult's race, gender or impairment such as their mental or physical health.
- **Institutional abuse:** this is poor professional practice, including neglect, and can take the form of isolated incidents right through to ill treatment or gross misconduct.

Action to be taken

- It is responsibility of all staff & volunteers to report abuse.
- If the vulnerable adult is in danger, first ensure they are safe and if immediate help is needed, call the emergency services on 999.
- Then follow the detailed reporting procedure set out below.
- A worker from Merton Social Services may then arrange an investigation that involves other agencies who work with vulnerable adults.
- Action will then be taken to ensure the vulnerable adult is protected in the future.
- Staff & volunteers who abuse will be dealt with through Attic's disciplinary procedures.
- Where a criminal offence has been committed the police will always be informed.

Reporting procedures for cases of alleged/suspected abuse

- Only ask the person sufficient questions to establish what has happened i.e. accident or possible abuse.
- If danger exists, ensure the person and any other vulnerable adults are protected.

- If the person is seriously injured seek immediate medical treatment - ringing 999 for ambulance and police if the injuries are serious.
- Immediately report the incident to your line manager and adhere to existing policies e.g. Health and Safety. Your line manager should decide if Social Services or National Care Standards Commission need to be informed, if the victim's relatives need to be contacted, and if the police should be informed.
- Outside of office hours, cases of suspected abuse should be reported to the emergency out of hours duty social worker, except mental health cases, which should be reported through the existing duty senior nurse.
- Be careful not to destroy or contaminate evidence.
- As soon as possible detailed notes should be made. Documentation is vital and if evidence might be required for criminal proceedings at a later date, a medical examination by a GP/hospital doctor or nurse would be advantageous.
- If the suspected abuser is a member of staff, the matter will be dealt with through Attic's disciplinary procedure. The police could be involved and s/he could be suspended pending an investigation.

Confidentiality

Our vulnerable adults have the right to expect that all staff and volunteers will deal sensitively and sympathetically with their situation. It is important that information remains confidential and that only those with a 'need to know' should be privy to it.

Use of images and data

Attic Theatre Company recognises that taking pictures and videos of the achievements and activities of vulnerable adults is a wonderful way of capturing a memory and promoting successes, but consideration needs to be given to who might have access to those images in whatever media and who gives permission for their use. Attic Theatre Company endeavours to safeguard the rights of vulnerable adults in images by:

- always seeking written consent from the vulnerable adult BEFORE taking photographs.
- always being clear about how the image will be used and for how long;
- being careful when naming a vulnerable adult and never using the person's full name or the place where he or she lives in conjunction with a photograph.
- never publishing any images that could be used inappropriately;
- ensuring consent forms and images are stored safely and securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Use of social media

Attic Theatre Company recognises that social media provides opportunities to engage, connect and develop unique relationships with vulnerable adults in a creative and dynamic medium, where users are active participants, such as social networking sites e.g. Facebook, and other current platforms; micro-blogging services e.g. Twitter; video-sharing services e.g. YouTube; and photo-sharing services e.g. Flickr or Instagram. However, Attic Theatre Company also recognises the risks associated with user interactive services.

- Attic Theatre Company will:
 - ensure that any Attic webpage/profile created specifically for a social media site adheres to this policy's guidelines relating to the privacy of personal information and the use of images;
 - monitor the use of such sites, and comments made on the sites, to ensure that they are appropriate and not abusive;

- ensure that there is a dedicated manager of social media responsible for setting up, managing and moderating (overseeing / reviewing / responding to posted content) such sites. Attic Theatre Company will ensure that this person is trained in and understands online safeguarding issues, including warning signs of grooming and sexual exploitation and that they have a DBS check; and ensure compliance with Attic Theatre Company's policy on social media as detailed in this document.
- not ask users to divulge any personal details - including home and email addresses, schools or mobile numbers - that may help locate a child, young person or vulnerable adult;
- promote safe and responsible use of social networking to Attic Theatre Company audiences online

Use of Data

Attic Theatre Company recognises that the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998 must be adhered to when handling the personal information of vulnerable adults. This means that personal information must be obtained and processed fairly and lawfully and kept securely; only disclosed in appropriate circumstances; and not held for longer than necessary.

It is best practice to gain verbal or written consent, from a vulnerable adult before any personal information relating to them is shared with another organisation. However, you may not need to seek consent to share information if it might be unsafe to seek (e.g. seeking consent might increase the risk to the vulnerable adult) or causes an unjustified delay or if it would prejudice the prevention, detection or Procedure for documenting suspicions or allegations of abuse.

All vulnerable adult protection concerns must be recorded accurately and immediately using clear and simple language. Staff must record information as soon as possible and all records must be signed, dated and timed. Records should an account of factual information and any view or judgement expressed about these facts should be clearly qualified as such. All records should be kept in a secure place (which are locked in a filing cabinet behind a separate door to the main office) and regarded as highly sensitive material. Please refer to the company's Data Protection Policy for details.

Safe Recruitment Procedures

Attic's recruitment policy stipulates that all staff (paid or voluntary) will have to submit a CV or complete an application form, detailing past work history and references.

Individuals are then interviewed and references requested. Only on receipt of satisfactory references will a formal offer of employment or placement be made.

All staff and volunteers working directly with vulnerable adults are required to have an enhanced check through the Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) before commencement of work or placement. Attic Theatre Company is registered with the LB Merton DBS department.

Staff members (voluntary or paid) are thus required to fill out a DBS form and produce evidence as to their identity, in accordance with the Disclosure Service Guidelines. This information is then witnessed by the Designated Person responsible for vulnerable adults and signed as an acknowledgement of information produced.

Copies of all returned DBS checks and documentation pertaining to any vulnerable adult issues will be kept confidentially and securely locked within the organisations administration office.

Staff can undergo training and induction whilst waiting for the checks to clear, but

cannot undertake any unsupervised face-to-face work until satisfactory checks have been received.

Safe Operational Procedures

Attic has a comprehensive series of policies and procedures which outline the expected standards of behaviour and codes of conduct for all those employed or volunteering with the company. These policies are presented alongside the contract and signed accordingly as part of their agreement with Attic.

It is a condition of employment that they adhere to these policies and procedures. Attic maintains a risk assessment and register for all activities undertaken. The company holds Accident and Incident books, First Aid kits and specific data (stored securely) detailing each participant's requirements and any extra support they may need.

Signature:..... 

Chairman, Board of Trustees, Attic Theatre Company (London) Ltd.

Date:.....

Designated person: General Manager, Victoria Hibbs
020 8640 6800 (work)
07836 575660 (mobile)

Deputy designated person: Artistic Director, Louise Hill
020 8640 6800 (work)
07980 265939 (mobile)

Emergency Number: 999

Police Station: 0208 947 1212 (Wimbledon)
call 999 if you believe a child or adult is in immediate danger

Social Services: 0208 545 4227 (duty social worker)

Attic Office 020 8640 6800

Reviewed July 2016
V Hibbs - General Manager
Ratified by the Board of Trustees