

Policy and Procedure for the Management of Allegations of Abuse of Vulnerable Adults

Wexford Local Health
Office

December 2008



Context

- 2003 -Draft Regional 'Vulnerable Adults' Policy (Specific to I.D.)
- 2005 – Revised Policy which was approved by Regional Lead for Disabilities
- 2007- Wexford Best Practice Group
- 2008 – Approval of WLHO Policy

Wexford Best practice Group

- Established in 2007
- Worked on Framework for responding to already identified policy gaps
- Communication and information sharing was one gap
- In 2008 the group reframed their work within the PCCC Integrated Quality and Risk Management Framework

Sub Committee

- Sub Committee established to consider the issues of managing allegations of abuse of Vulnerable Adults
- Processes in place for managing allegations of abuse of some Vulnerable Adults
- Gaps existed for Mental Health and Primary Care
- Policy agreed in Dec 2008 and formally implemented in Nov 2009

Related Policies / Standards

- Trust in Care Policy, 2005
- HIQA National Quality Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People in Ireland
- HIQA National Quality Standards: Residential Services for People with Disabilities
- HSE Elder Abuse Policy-Responding to Allegations of Elder Abuse

Objectives of WLHO Policy

- To standardise the approach to the management of allegations of abuse of all Vulnerable Adults
- To raise awareness of abuse of Vulnerable Adults
- To provide a framework for professionals working with Vulnerable Adults
- To reduce risk and safeguard Vulnerable Adults

Standardised Framework

- Standardised definitions
- Clear Reporting Procedure
- Designated Officer assigned for allegations of abuse of all vulnerable adults
- Vulnerable Adult Monitoring Team

Who is a Vulnerable Adult?

“Any person aged 18 or over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and who is or may be unable to fully take care of himself/herself or unable to protect himself /herself against harm or serious exploitation”

What is Abuse?

“A single or repeated act, or a lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to a vulnerable adult or violates their human and civil rights”

Categories of Abuse

- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Psychological Abuse
- Financial or Material Abuse
- Neglect and Acts of Omission (Includes Self Neglect)
- Institutional Abuse
- Discriminatory Abuse

Reporting Procedure

Allegation or concern of abuse comes to the attention of a HSE Staff member



Report to Line Manager



Report to Designated Person

Designated Persons in Wexford LHO

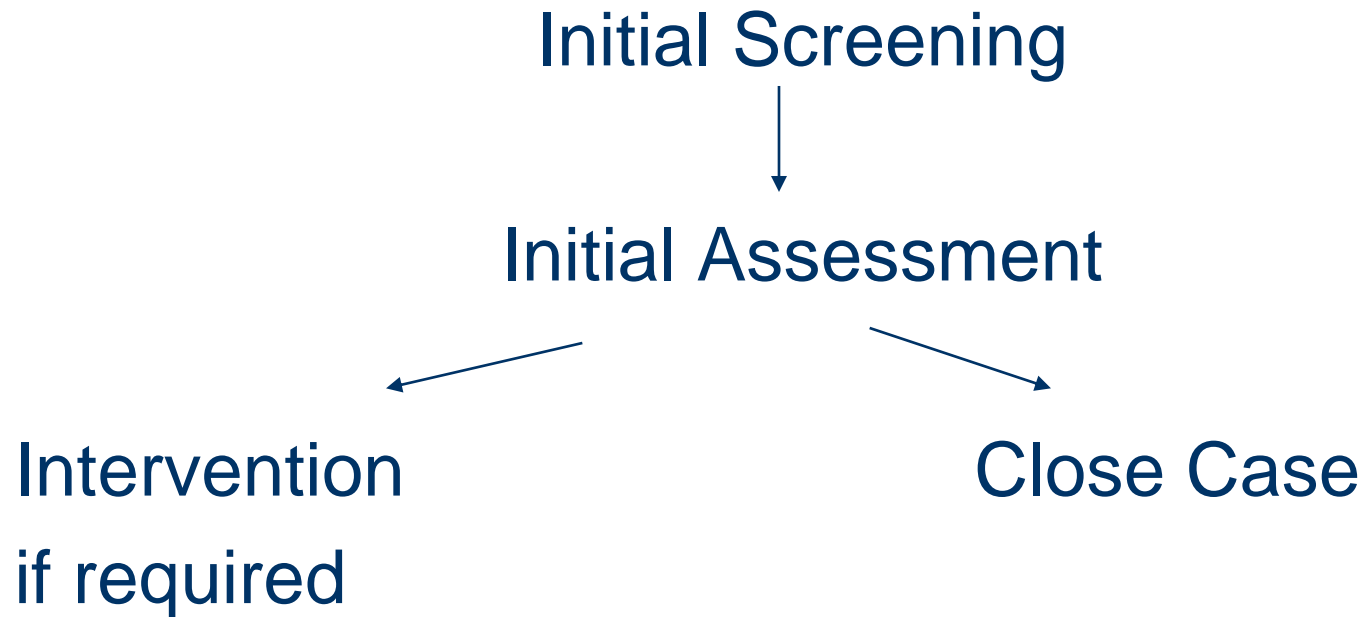
- If the adult is a patient of the **Mental Health Services**, - Phyllis Barry, SWTL MHS
- If the adult is **aged 65 or over** - Carsten Kohl, Senior Case Worker for Elder Abuse
- For adults with an **Intellectual** or **Physical/Sensory Disability**, and for **all other adults** - Theresa McDonagh, SWTL, Disability Services,

Role of Designated Person

According to the policy:

“This is the person in the HSE who is tasked with the responsibility of receiving allegations of abuse of vulnerable adults and leading the response to the allegation in his /her care group”

What happens next?



Intervention may involve:

- Protective Action if necessary
- Professionals'/Family Meetings
- Reporting/Liaison with the Gardaí
- Safety Plan/Care plan for the individual
- Referral to the VAMT (Vulnerable Adult Monitoring Team)

Vulnerable Adult Monitoring Team (VAMT)

Original Role/Purpose:

- To review investigations
- To monitor outcomes of investigations
- To review decisions re: informing Gardaí
- To appoint a key worker
- To support non-statutory organisations with the investigation of allegations
- To implement a data collection system of allegations
- To monitor consistency in all investigations
- To inform policy locally and nationally

Vulnerable Adult Monitoring Team

Revised Role / Purpose

- To oversee and review the process for the management of allegations of abuse of vulnerable adults in WLHO area
- Review cases to ensure the vulnerable adult receives appropriate support
- Review cases presented for discussion by the Designated Person

Vulnerable Adult Monitoring Team

Revised Role / Purpose continued

- Determination of the roles and responsibilities of the various professionals involved in the management of the case where 2 care groups involved
- Review the outcome of cases presented before closure
- Monitor and evaluate the work of the team including referral trends.

Criteria for Referral to VAMT

The Designated Person can refer cases that:

- Cross cover more than one care group – Mental Health, Disabilities, Older Persons, Primary Care
- Cases that are complex and high risk
- Cases that are deemed to require discussion at this forum by the Designated Officer and / or the service users care team.

Members of VAMT

- The Designated Person for each care group, i.e. Disability, Mental Health, Older Persons and other adults
- Area Coordinator for Disability Services
- Area Coordinator for Older Persons
- Director of Public Health Nursing
- Nurse Manager from Mental Health Services
- Principal Psychologist from Community & Mental Health Services

Voluntary Organisations

Where an allegation originates in a voluntary organisation funded by the HSE they have a responsibility to conduct an initial assessment to determine if abuse could have taken place.

Where abuse could not have taken place

The voluntary organisation should ensure that details of the allegations, decisions, actions and outcome are recorded, stored in a secure place and reported to the HSE Designated Person.

Where abuse could have taken place

- The voluntary organisation should report the matter to the HSE Designated Person
- D.P. in the Voluntary Organisation and the HSE D.P. decides who will be the lead agency in the investigation
- Where the voluntary organisation is the lead agency a strategy meeting is convened to determine the next actions

Allegations of abuse of Service Users involving staff members

- HSE staff – all allegations investigated in line with Trust In Care Policy
- Staff in Voluntary Organisation – all organisations are contractually required to investigate such allegations and take all necessary actions to ensure safety and protection of Service Users and to report the matter to all relevant authorities (Section 16 Service Level Arrangement)