

Go-Woman! Alliance CIC actively seeks to demonstrate this commitment by adopting policies, codes of practice and action plans to protect vulnerable adults. We believe that all vulnerable adults have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation.

The broad definition of a vulnerable adult is:

'A person who is 18 years of age or over, and 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 take care of him/herself, or unable to protect him/herself against significant harm or serious exploitation'.

People with learning disabilities, mental health problems, older people and disabled people may fall within this definition.

All vulnerable adults have a right to protection from harm.

We must ensure that:

- All vulnerable adults, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicion and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer.
- All partner agencies and organisations must co-operate with each other on issues relating to the identification, investigation, treatment and prevention of abuse of vulnerable adults.
- Each agency has a responsibility to share information on a 'need to know' basis so that effective decisions can be made, and appropriate preventative action taken.

Our Core Values and Principles:

- Vulnerable adults have the right to privacy, dignity, independence, self-determination, choice, fulfilment and the maintenance of all the rights and entitlements associated with citizenship.
- A person's right to involvement in decision-making is promoted to the fullest capacity.
- A person is enabled to protect him/herself from harm.
- Involvement of others significant to the person's life is identified and supported.
- The response is appropriate and only as intensive as the situation demands.
- A vulnerable adult and the alleged abuser have the right to the protection of the law.
- A vulnerable adult will have the opportunity and right to comment or complain about the service they receive.
- Vulnerable adults will have the opportunity and right to independent advice and advocacy when they request it. This will also apply to those vulnerable adults who are incapable of making such a request but are deemed in need of such independent advice and advocacy.
- The awareness and understanding of other agencies, organisations and the public is raised and with it, a commitment to respond.

Policy Aims:

The aim of Go-Woman! Alliance CIC Policy on the Protection of Vulnerable Adults is to promote good practice:

- Providing vulnerable adults with appropriate safety and protection.
- Allowing all staff and volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific issues on the protection of vulnerable adults.

Staff and Volunteers must never:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or abuse vulnerable adults.
- Develop physical or sexual relationships with vulnerable adults.
- Develop relationships with vulnerable adults, which could in any way be deemed inappropriate or exploitative.
- Act in ways that may be abusive or place vulnerable adults at risk of abuse.
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice, which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive.
- Behave in an inappropriate or sexually provocative manner.
- Condone, or participate in the behaviour of vulnerable adults, which is illegal, abusive or unsafe.
- Intentionally act in ways intended to shame, humiliate or degrade vulnerable adults.
- Discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favour particular vulnerable adults to the exclusion of others.

All staff/volunteers in contact with vulnerable adults to:

- Be aware of situations, which may present risks.
- Plan and organise the work and the workplace so as to minimise risks.
- Be visible in working with vulnerable adults – as far as is humanly possible.
- Ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues of concern to be discussed.
- Ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged.
- Empower vulnerable adults – discuss their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what to do if there is a problem.

Go-Woman! Alliance CIC will meet its commitment to protect vulnerable adults from abuse through the following means:

- We will ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of the issues of the protection of vulnerable adults (POVA), the problem of abuse of vulnerable adults and the risks.
- We will ensure, through awareness and good practice, that all staff and volunteers minimise the risk to vulnerable adults.
- We will ensure that all staff and volunteers are clear about what steps to take where concerns arise regarding the safety of vulnerable adults.
- We will ensure that action is taken to support and protect vulnerable adults where concerns arise regarding possible abuse.

Responding to allegations or suspicions

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in Go-Woman! Alliance CIC, in a paid or unpaid capacity, to decide whether or not the abuse of vulnerable adults has taken place. There is however a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities.

Go-Woman! Alliance CIC will assure all staff/volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concerns that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a vulnerable adult.

Where there is a complaint made, there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation
- A protection of vulnerable adult's investigation
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation

The result of the police and protection of vulnerable adult's investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

Every effort must be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. Information must be stored in a secure place with limited access to the designated people, in line with data protection.