

## HELP SHEET: SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS

The abuse of vulnerable people is always unacceptable. Everyone has a right to be treated with dignity and respect. If you think an older person is being abused it is sometimes difficult to know what to do about it.

Hanover is committed to ensuring the safety and well being of all residents but does not assume that they are all vulnerable to abuse or that they are unable to safeguard their own interests or well-being simply because of their age or disability.

It is everyone's responsibility to know about and report the abuse of vulnerable people. This help sheet is designed to provide you with information about abuse and what you can do about it.

### What is Elder Abuse?

*'Abuse is a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person'* (Action on Elder Abuse)

Abuse can take many forms:

- **Physical abuse** e.g. hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, hair pulling etc
- **Emotional abuse** e.g. verbal abuse, humiliation, bullying, threats etc.
- **Sexual abuse** e.g. unwanted sexual advances, inappropriate touching
- **Financial Abuse** e.g. theft, fraud, pressure in connection with wills, misuse of money etc
- **Neglect or Self Neglect** e.g. where the care a person needs is not being provided
- **Discriminatory abuse** e.g. sexism, racism, ageism etc.

### Who could be abused?

Both older men and older women can be at risk of being abused.

### **Who could be an abuser?**

Anyone could be an abuser – they could be a friend, a neighbour, a relative, a carer, a volunteer, a health or social worker or other professional. Older people may also be abused by the person they care for. Most abusers are known by their victim and most are exploiting a special relationship of trust.

### **Where could the abuse occur?**

The abuse could happen anywhere – in your own home, someone else's home, in the community, at a day care centre or in hospital.

### **Why does it happen?**

There are many reasons why abuse occurs – every situation is different. Sometimes the abuse is not intentional, but whether the abuse is deliberate or unintentional, it still hurts.

### **Who should you contact if you are worried?**

If you are being abused or you suspect that someone you know may be the victim of abuse it is important that you talk to someone you trust about your concerns. Hanover will always support residents and help you to seek protection from abuse.

Who can you talk to for advice?

- Your Hanover estate manager or housing manager – all our managers are trained to help and support you
- Your local Adult Social Care Team
- Your own or the older person's doctor

If you think the problem is very serious and the person is at imminent risk of harm, you should contact the police immediately.

If you wish to remain anonymous or to contact someone not associated with where you live then confidential advice is available from Action on Elder Abuse 080 8808 8141 (Mon – Fri 10am – 4.30pm)

However, you need to be aware that, despite your concerns, any older person has the right to refuse assistance from any source.