Appendix 6: Allegation of abuse against staff and/or volunteers

All organisations should be proactive in reducing the risk of abuse taking place within the services they provide by:

- developing a safeguarding ethos in which adult at risk, volunteers and staff can express their concerns; where staff are encouraged to challenge constructively poor practice; and where ‘whistle-blowing’ procedures can be engaged without fear;
- adopting safe recruitment and effective safe termination of employment practices;
- ensuring that all staff receive appropriate training in adult safeguarding matters: signs, symptoms and referral procedures, which include how to recognise and respond to allegations against staff;
- ensuring that staff understand what is safe practice is and what is not. In particular, staff must be aware of behaviours that are likely to bring about criminal, adult protection or disciplinary action;
- ensuring that vulnerabilities expressed by staff are taken seriously and responded to at the earliest stage.

All agencies that provide services for adults at risk or provide staff or volunteers to work with or care for adults at risk should have an established policy for handling such allegations within their own organisation. Each agency should invoke its own disciplinary procedures as well as taking action under the HSAB procedures when it is known that a member of staff has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, an adult at risk;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to an adult at risk;
- behaved towards any adult at risk in a way that indicates she is unsuitable to work with adult at risks.

These include concerns relating to inappropriate relationships between members of staff and adult at risks in their care e.g:

- having a sexual relationship with an adult at risk if in a position of trust even if the relationship appears consensual;
- the sending of inappropriate text/e-mail messages or images, providing gifts, socialising etc;
- possession of indecent photographs/pseudo-photographs of adults at risk.

If a crime is suspected a report must always be made to the police.

The underlying principles of dealing with allegations are:

The welfare of the adult at risk is paramount:

- Employees, subject of an allegation, should be listened to, treated fairly and honestly and should be provided with support.
- It is the responsibility of all employers to safeguard and promote the welfare of adults at risk. This responsibility extends to those employed, commissioned or contracted to work with adult at risk.

Record-keeping

Record keeping is an integral part of the management of allegations. Complete and accurate records will need to contain information which provides comprehensive details of:

- events leading to the allegation or concern about an adult’s behaviour
- the circumstances and context of the allegation
- professional opinion
- decisions made and their rationale
- action taken
- final outcome