

Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and Procedures

Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy Statement

Hawk's Well Theatre is an organisation fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of vulnerable adults from harm, regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or religion. Hawk's Well Theatre

accepts that in all matters concerning vulnerable adults, the welfare and protection of such adults is paramount. Although Hawk's Well Theatre does not directly provide services to or work with vulnerable adults, we do as an organisation come into contact with vulnerable adults using our facilities and so it is considered important that we are fully compliant with all relevant safeguarding guidance and legislation. Hawk's Well Theatre requires that any organisations working with vulnerable adults at the theatre to provide a copy of their own relevant policies to the theatre also.

We undertake to ensure that vulnerable adults well-being and safety is paramount and that their needs are fully respected at all times. Our Policy Guidelines apply to all staff and artists who work for Hawk's Well Theatre whether on permanent, temporary or freelance contracts, or working as volunteers. We aim to adhere to the HSE Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse National Policy and Procedures and to minimise the negative impacts of risk, while respecting and upholding the human rights and inherent dignity of all people involved with Hawk's Well Theatre.

1. A Vulnerable Person

A vulnerable person is defined in the HSE Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse Policy and Procedures (p.3) as: *'an adult who may be restricted in capacity to guard himself / herself against harm or exploitation or to report such harm or exploitation.'*

2. Defining Abuse

Hawk's Well Theatre understands the definition of abuse in accordance with Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse National Policy and Procedures (p. 8). *'any act, or failure to act, which results in a breach of a vulnerable person's human rights, civil liberties, physical and mental integrity, dignity or general wellbeing, whether intended or through negligence, including sexual relationships or financial transactions to which the person does not or cannot validly consent, or which are deliberately exploitative. Abuse may take a variety of forms'.*

3. Types of Abuse

In the event that a person working for Hawk's Well Theatre is concerned that a vulnerable adult is suffering from abuse it is their responsibility to act; they must not be "passive in relation to concerns, ie, don't do nothing". Everyone has a responsibility to report suspected or alleged abuse of vulnerable adults.

- Physical abuse - includes hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking and misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate sanctions.
 - Signs of physical abuse may include:
 - Unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body
 - Bruises which reflect hand marks or fingertips (from slapping or pinching)
 - Cigarette Burns
 - Bite marks
 - Broken bones
 - Scalds
 - Changes in behaviour which can also indicate physical abuse:
 - Fear of parents/carers being approached for an explanation
 - Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts
 - Flinching when approached or touched

- Reluctance to get changed, for example wearing long sleeves in hot weather
 - Depression
 - Withdrawn behaviour
- Sexual abuse - includes rape and sexual assault, or sexual acts to which the vulnerable person has not consented, or could not consent, or into which he or she was compelled to consent.
 - Physical signs of abuse may include:
 - Pain or itching in the genital/anal areas
 - Bruising or bleeding near genital/anal areas
 - Sexually transmitted disease
 - Vaginal discharge or infection
 - Stomach pains
 - Discomfort when walking or sitting down
 - Pregnancy
 - Changes in behaviour which can also indicate sexual abuse include:
 - Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour e.g becoming aggressive or withdrawn
 - Fear of being left with a specific person
 - Saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone
 - Substance or drug abuse
 - Suddenly having unexplained sources of money
 - Acting in a sexually explicit way towards adults
- Psychological - abuse includes emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.
 - Psychological abuse may be revealed physically in a number of ways such as:
 - Failure to thrive or grow, particularly if the child puts on weight in other circumstances, e.g in hospital or away from their parent's care.
 - Sudden speech disorders
 - Developmental delay, either in terms of physical or emotional progress
 - Extreme lethargy or tiredness
 - Changes in behaviour which can also indicate emotional abuse include:
 - Neurotic behaviour e.g hair twisting, rocking
 - Being unable to play
 - Fear of making mistakes
 - Self-harm
 - Fear of parent or carer being approached regarding their behaviour
- Financial or material abuse - includes theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.
- Discriminatory abuse - includes ageism, racism, sexism, that based on a person's disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.
- Neglect and acts of omission - includes ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.
 - Physical signs of abuse may include:
 - Constant hunger
 - Constantly dirty or 'smelly'
 - Loss of weight, or being constantly underweight
 - Inappropriate dress for the conditions
 - Changes in behaviour which can also indicate neglect may include:
 - Complaining of being tired all the time

- Mentioning their being left alone or unsupervised
- Institutional abuse - may occur within residential care and acute settings including nursing homes, acute hospitals and any other in-patient settings, and may involve poor standards of care, rigid routines and inadequate responses to complex needs.

4. Barriers for Vulnerable Persons

Disclosing Abuse Barriers to disclosure may occur due to some of the following:

- Fear on the part of the service user of having to leave their home or service as a result of disclosing abuse.
- A lack of awareness that what they are experiencing is abuse.
- A lack of clarity as to whom they should talk.
- Lack of capacity to understand and report the incident.
- Fear of an alleged abuser.
- Ambivalence regarding a person who may be abusive.
- Limited verbal and other communication skills.
- Fear of upsetting relationships.
- Shame and/or embarrassment.

5. How to Respond to a Disclosure of Abuse

A vulnerable adult may carefully select a person to confide in. That chosen person will be someone they trust and have confidence in. It is important that a vulnerable adult who discloses abuse feels supported and facilitated in what may be a frightening and traumatic process for them. A vulnerable adult may feel perplexed, afraid, angry, despondent and guilty. It is important that any negative feelings they may have are not made worse by the kind of response they receive. A vulnerable adult who divulges abuse has engaged in an act of trust and their disclosure must be treated with respect, sensitivity, urgency and care.

It is of the utmost importance that disclosures are treated in a sensitive and discreet manner. Anyone responding to a vulnerable adult making such a disclosure should take the following steps.

- a) Take what the vulnerable adult says seriously.
- b) React calmly, as over-reaction may intimidate the vulnerable adult and increase any feelings of guilt that they may have.
- c) Reassure the vulnerable adult that they were correct to tell somebody what happened.
- d) Listen carefully and attentively.
- e) Never ask leading questions.
- f) Use open-ended questions to clarify what is being said and try to avoid having them repeat what they have told you.
- g) Do not promise to keep secrets.
- h) Advise that you will offer support but that you must pass on the information.
- i) Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser to the person reporting to you.
- j) Explain and make sure that the vulnerable adult understands what will happen next. Do not confront the alleged abuser.

6. Reporting Procedures

Following a disclosure of abuse, employees/facilitators should:

Write down immediately after the conversation what was said, including all the names of those involved, what happened, where, when, if there were any witnesses and any other significant factors and note any visible marks on the individual making the report or any signs you observed.

- Record the event, sign and date all reports and indicate the time the notes were made.

- Ensure that the information is treated with the utmost confidence.
- Allegations should not be investigated by employees/volunteers.
- Employees/volunteers should pass that report to the Designated Liaison Officer.

Under no circumstances should a vulnerable adult be left in a situation that exposes him or her to harm or to risk of harm. In the event of an emergency where you think a vulnerable adult is in immediate danger you should contact the Gardaí in the first instance.

The nearest Garda station to Hawk's Well Theatre is the:

Sligo Garda Station,
Pearse Road,
Sligo,
Co. Sligo
Tel: 071 9157000

What Does an Employee/Facilitator do if they Suspect or have reasonable grounds for concern that a vulnerable adult is being abused

Any member of staff who is made aware of actual or possible abuse of a vulnerable adult should report and discuss their concerns as soon as possible to Hawk's Well Theatre's Designated Liaison Person or Deputy.

In an emergency – and in the unlikely event of member of staff being unable to contact the Designated Liaison Person or Deputy you must immediately report any urgent concerns directly to the Garda (See section 4 for contact details).

All incidents, disclosure or observations however minor, should be recorded in writing. If you have a suspicion or concern about a vulnerable adult never ignore or delay taking action.

You must inform either:

- Designated Liaison Person (Marie O'Byrne)
- Designated Liaison Person (Maeve McGowan)

After full consideration of all factors and information you may:

- Have your concerns allayed
- Ensure a record is kept in writing
- Take no further action

7. Designated Officer(s)

In accordance with Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse National Policy and Procedures Hawk's Well Theatre has appointed a Designated Liaison Officer & Deputy Designated Liaison Officer who are responsible for:

- Receiving concerns or allegations of abuse regarding vulnerable persons
- Collating basic relevant information
- Ensuring the appropriate manager is informed and collaboratively ensuring necessary actions are identified
- Ensuring all reporting obligations are met (internally to the service and externally to the statutory authorities)
- Supporting the manager and other personnel in addressing the issues arising.
- Maintaining appropriate records.

Hawk's Well Theatre's Designated Liaison Person is Marie O'Byrne, Director. She can be contacted at:

- Hawk's Well Theatre, Temple Street, Sligo

- 071-9161518
- director@hawkswell.ie

In her absence the Deputy Designated Liaison Person is Maeve McGowan, Marketing Manager. She be contacted at:

- Hawk's Well Theatre, Temple Street, Sligo
- 071-9161518
- maeve@hawkswell.ie

8. Confidentiality

The legal principle that the 'welfare of the vulnerable adult' is paramount means that the considerations of confidentiality, which might apply to other situations at Hawk's Well Theatre, should not be allowed to override the right of the vulnerable adult to be protected from harm. All information regarding concern for a vulnerable adult should be shared on 'a need to know' basis in the interests of the person concerned. The provision of information to the statutory agencies for the protection of a vulnerable adult is not a breach of confidentiality or data protection. Employees/facilitators should not give any undertakings regarding secrecy.

9. Dealing with Allegations Against Staff

It is recognised by Hawk's Well Theatre that it can be extremely complex to deal with this type of allegation not only in terms of the victim, alleged abuser, and primary carers involved but also for other members of staff, therefore it is important that all aspects should be dealt with as sensitively as possible at all times.

In the event of allegations of abuse made against a member of staff there are two separate reporting procedures which Hawk's Well Theatre is committed to undertaking with respect to any issues raised in connection to:

- the vulnerable adult as the alleged victim
- the person against whom the allegation is made

In all incidents the priority is to ensure that no vulnerable adult is exposed to unnecessary risk, and that we should as a matter of urgency take any necessary protective measures.

If allegations are made against the Designated Liaison Officer the Deputy Designated Liaison Officer should oversee all procedures. Reporting procedures should be followed immediately by any member of staff or primary carer who becomes aware that abuse is taking place.

It is the responsibility of the designated person to privately inform the member of staff that an allegation of abuse has been made of the following:

- that an allegation has been against them
- the nature of the allegation

As part of the procedure Hawk's Well Theatre recognises that it is the right of the member of staff to be given the opportunity to respond to the allegation made, and that the response is included in any assessment and communicated to other parties involved.

Any further action considered should be:

- based on reasonable grounds for concern by the employer that abuse has taken place as defined in Section 3.
- guided by Hawk's Well Theatre's Grievance and Disciplinary Policy and applicable employment contract.

- through consultation with other professional bodies such as the local Regional Health Authority and An Gardai Siochana.
- in communication with relevant primary carers (parents, carers or responsible adults).
- Following clarification of the allegation and in close consultation with the all parties concerned Hawk's Well Theatre

10. Conclusion

Hawk's Well Theatre endeavours to safeguard vulnerable adults at all times by:

- Adopting protection guidelines through set procedures and a Code of Conduct for staff and volunteers
- Following carefully the procedures for recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteer through supervision, support and training.
- Sharing information about concerns with relevant professional agencies.
- Sharing information about vulnerable adult protection and good practice both internally and by making it publicly available.
- Reviewing policies and practice at regular intervals.