

Safeguarding Policy

Policy and Procedural guidelines

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1.00 The need for a Policy

1.01 The purpose of this policy is to make staff and volunteers at Ability Bow aware of the main issues involved in providing services to vulnerable people.

1.02 Ability Bow has a duty of care to safeguard all children and vulnerable adults involved in our activities.

1.03 The guidelines are to help all Ability Bow personnel involved in service delivery to carry out appropriate actions that will:

- ☐ prevent the abuse of vulnerable people who are receiving an Ability Bow service;
- ☐ deal with any instances that come to notice.

1.04 The document will be distributed to all employees and volunteers, to trustees, and to individuals or agencies that enquire about Ability Bow's policy on this matter. The agencies will probably be potential funders, referring authorities, primary carers, and voluntary organisations whose members use Ability Bow's services.

2.00 Ability Bow's Code of Practice

2.01 Purpose

For as long as there are people with exceptional needs, with profound disabilities, injured in accidents or affected by degenerative and disabling conditions, Ability Bow will strive to meet their needs for healthy, purposeful, and enjoyable leisure activities open to all.

2.02 Mission

Ability Bow works with people of all abilities to bring about positive change and maximise health and wellbeing in the communities of East London.

2.03 Aims

- To serve communities local to its resources as well as the nationwide community of disabled people.
- To provide inclusive, accessible, and affordable fitness opportunities.
- To focus on the inclusion of people who have a physical or sensory disability, learning difficulty, mental health problem or long term illness, and those close to them.
- To work in partnership with its beneficiaries, and other organisations that have complementary aims.

- To assist the rehabilitation process for people who have experienced a life-changing crisis.
- To ensure that all its activities and resources are appropriate to the needs of each individual participant.
- To enable the participants to feel safe, valued, and satisfied with their achievements.

3.00 General Statement

3.01 "Service users" is the generic term for those people who benefit from Ability Bow's resources.

3.02 The services are delivered by qualified staff members and volunteers.

3.03 The teams are expected to aim for the highest standards of services and resources. The needs, expectations, and wellbeing of the service users are paramount.

3.04 The corporate values of Ability Bow should be evident in the ways that staff members conduct themselves, contribute to their team, and present the facilities.

3.05 Newly appointed team members are inducted as employees or volunteers of Ability Bow by their line manager. Staff members are assisted in the process of self-evaluation through a system of support and supervision. This culminates in an annual appraisal with the line manager, including a review of individual training needs.

4.00 Vulnerability

4.01 Ability Bow's gym provides inclusive health and fitness services and facilities that are open to all.

4.02 Ability Bow recognises that some service users are vulnerable to inappropriate or abusive practices, both within and external to Ability Bow's resources. The most vulnerable are children, elderly and frail people, people with severe physical disabilities, and those with learning difficulties.

4.03 The vulnerability is in respect of their:

- Physical wellbeing, e.g. threatened by accident or ill-treatment;
- Psychological welfare, e.g. threatened by bullying or over-protection;
- Finances and personal possessions, e.g. threatened by theft or persuasion to mispend.

5.00 Duty

5.01 Ability Bow has a duty to ensure that everyone using its services is welcomed, safe, valued, and satisfied. Ability Bow will therefore actively raise the awareness of all staff and volunteers of the protection issues, which relate to the vulnerability of adults who use its services. Staff and volunteers are educated and trained to recognise and minimise the level of risk of abuse whilst people are receiving an Ability Bow service. They are also made aware of the need to recognise possible abuse that is taking place elsewhere.

6.00 Internal and External Factors

6.01 In-house factors

6.01.1 Ability Bow staff and volunteers have to be sensitive to each service user's needs, and be aware that some aspects of person-to-person interaction may be open to misinterpretation and could result in allegations of abuse. The key to good practice is valuing people and using common sense; being vigilant, treating each person with dignity and respect, observing privacy, and obtaining their permission before making personal contact.

6.01.2 The staff and volunteer recruitment process is a key factor in minimising the risk of abuse. Ability Bow is careful to appoint people with a proven professional track record and who demonstrate good understanding of the issues involved in working with people who have special needs. Candidates are made aware that the post is not exempt from the provision of Section 4(2) of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. With the knowledge of the appointed person, CRB checks are made on all staff, and references are taken from previous employers.

6.01.3 The staff teams are small and they meet regularly with their manager. This is an opportunity to raise and share issues about the welfare of service users and ensure awareness of good practice.

6.01.4 Some users are vulnerable to inappropriate use of equipment, which could lead to physical harm. The risk is minimised by the careful selection and maintenance of high quality equipment, the provision of specialist rehabilitation equipment, the individualisation of personal activity programmes, and skilled supervision and guidance from professional staff. All events and activities are subject to a prior risk assessment.

6.01.5 Occasionally vulnerable people are potentially open to abuse from other service users, or from their carers, when on Ability Bow's premises or participating in an Ability Bow event; e.g. by bullying, intimidation, patronisation, or over-protection. They can also be vulnerable to their own actions due to lack of awareness or a tendency to self-harm.

6.02 External Factors

6.02.1 Whilst Ability Bow has no direct responsibility for the everyday care of its vulnerable users when

they are off the premises, staff and volunteers have to be vigilant in their interaction in order to carefully observe the physical appearance and emotional behaviour of service users. This is an inclusive part of the one-to-one work with those on rehabilitation or GP referral programmes particularly focusing on developmental and clinical progress, but the vigilance needs to be unobtrusively extended to look for signs of ill-treatment, negligence, under-nourishment, and poor general health amongst all users. If a member of staff has some concern about the well-being of a service user they follow the procedures given in Section 8.

6.02.2 Evidence from sources such as DoH, DfES, and BMA on the extent of abuse amongst children and adults with disabilities in the UK suggests they are at much greater risk than non-disabled people, and that the presence of severe or multiple disabilities increases the risk of both abuse and neglect. Due to their level of dependency, they are especially vulnerable because they may:

- Be domestically isolated with few outside contacts;
- Receive intimate personal care from someone who is also isolated, or from multiple carers which makes it difficult to set and maintain physical boundaries;
- Have an impaired capacity to resist abuse;
- Have communication difficulties;
- Be inhibited about complaining for fear of losing services;
- Be fearful of recrimination and revengeful actions.

6.02.3 It is intended that users will benefit from Ability Bow's resources and increase their independence. This may lead to their travelling alone, which can make them vulnerable to abuse by transport operators and drivers.

7.00 Vulnerable People Information

7.01 Whilst the information in this section is based on reports and legislation that focus on children and young people, such as The Children Act 1989 and the white paper "Working Together to Safeguard Children" (DoH 1999), Ability Bow considers the information to be applicable across the vulnerable sector of the population.

7.02 Definition of Abuse

7.02.1 Abuse is defined as violation of a person caused by inflicting, or failing to prevent, harm.

7.02.2 Harm is ill-treatment, neglect, insult, or impairment of health and welfare. This encompasses physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and mental health.

7.02.3 Ill-treatment includes physical assault, sexual abuse, and forms of negative interaction, which are not physical.

7.03 Categories of Abuse

7.03.1 Neglect is caused by the persistent failure to meet the person's basic physical or psychological needs. It may result from inadequate provision of food, shelter and clothing, failure to protect from physical harm or danger, or failure to ensure access to appropriate medical treatment. It may also be caused by ignorance or unresponsiveness to a person's emotional needs.

7.03.2 Physical abuse is caused by hitting, shaking, throwing, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise doing bodily harm to a person.

7.03.3 Clinical abuse is caused by deliberate negative actions against a person's health such as by poisoning, misrepresenting medical conditions, denial of medical treatment, or inducing illness.

7.03.4 Sexual abuse is caused by forcing a person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the person is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may be non-contact activities, which involve the person looking at, or participating in the production of pornographic material, observing sexual activity, or being made or encouraged to behave in a sexually inappropriate way.

7.03.5 Emotional abuse is the persistent intellectual and social ill-treatment of a person, which causes severe and enduring adverse effects on their emotional development or behaviour. It is caused by conveying to the person that they are worthless, unwanted, unloved, inadequate, or only valued insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature the imposition of age or developmentally inappropriate expectations leading to a sense of fear, exploitation or corruption.

7.04 Signs and Symptoms of Abuse

7.04.1 Evidence of abuse is obtained by observation and listening. Signs are not always obvious and people show their distress in several different ways, but a person who has been abused by other means will usually display the signs and symptoms of emotional abuse. Compared to those working in a residential resource, Ability Bow staff members see service users infrequently and for short periods. Therefore, signs of change in a person's behaviour, demeanour or reactions will usually be difficult to monitor.

7.04.2 Of course, many injuries and conditions are the result of accident or illness; a common sense approach to each situation is necessary. It is helpful though to be aware of the main recognised signs and symptoms of abuse. The following list is not exhaustive, and is indicative rather than prescriptive:

- Excessive change in normal disposition and demeanour;

- Unusual unresponsiveness or withdrawal;
- Exceptional weight change or dehydration;
- Scarring, burn marks, teeth marks, or unhealed lacerations;
- Fractures and crepitus;
- Repetitive cuts, bruises, and swellings;
- Crying, complaints of pain, reluctance to move a limb, severe muscular rigidity, refusal to weight-bear;
- Suspicious disclosures, promiscuous or provocative behaviour;
- Restlessness, hyperactivity;
- Irrationality and sudden uncontrolled reactions;
- Avoidance of personal contact, or excessively clinging or attention seeking behaviour;
- Low self-esteem, incontinence, apathy, fearfulness, obsessive hair twisting.

8.00 Procedural Guidelines

8.01 These guidelines written for the benefit of staff and volunteers concerned about a service user's safety or welfare. The aim is to keep people safe and happy by ensuring that everyone working in an Ability Bow team is aware of the possible risks to service users, and has the confidence to express their concerns.

8.02 If someone has sustained an injury or appears to be in medical danger, arrange for them to be examined by a doctor or paramedic on site as soon as possible; if they are unconscious or in pain they should not be moved, but be made comfortable in situ.

8.03 If there is concern about the possibility, however vague, that someone is being abused or is at risk of abuse either in-house or external to Ability Bow, the concerned person has a duty of care to do something about it. Take action by informing the line-manager urgently in person or by telephone; and in their absence Ability Bow's Director. Volunteers should inform a staff member on duty.

8.04 Clearly identify the nature and cause of concern, and record the details on a Vulnerable Person Protection Incident Report. This should be passed to the line-manager immediately.

8.05 All staff members and volunteers are bound under contract to be confidential. Personal information may only be shared on a need-to-know basis. Confidential information is kept secure by the Centre Manager.

8.06 When listening, be careful about promising confidentiality if there is the possibility that for the protection of the person the information may have to be recorded and shared. The protection of the vulnerable person is paramount. Listen and pass on – do not question or investigate.

8.07 During one-to-one activities a healthy trusting relationship is often established. It is good to foster this.

However, it can lead to disclosures of a personal nature by a vulnerable person that may give rise to concern by the listener. If this happens, proceed as follows:

- Listen carefully and empathetically but do not cross question;
- Explain that the information will have to be passed on;
- Record immediately what has been said by both parties;
- Proceed as in 8.04 above.

8.08 When the Centre Manager has been fully briefed, the information will be shared with Ability Bow's Director and follow-up action agreed. This may include passing full information to the local authority.

8.09 Most local authorities have multi-agency procedures for protecting vulnerable children and vulnerable adults. These state the actions to be taken to report any suspected incident. Ability Bow Centre Managers should have a copy of the procedural document produced by their local authority's social services department.

8.10 The responsibility for carrying out a full investigation rests with the local authority's Child or Vulnerable Adult Protection Committee. Ability Bow will cooperate fully with any enquiry and subsequent protection conference.

9.00 Flow Chart of Procedure.

9.01

- Identify the cause for concern
- Staff member to inform line manager or designated person
- Staff member to complete incident report form
- Staff member to discuss report with parent, partner, or carer if appropriate
- If concerns persist, the line manager informs the AB director and statutory authority (Tower Hamlets).
- AB director to report to chair of trustees

9.02. Link to Tower hamlets safeguarding: [Safeguarding Adults Board](#)