



## Shannow Family Resource Centre (FRC) Protection of Vulnerable Adults Policy

Document:	Protection of Vulnerable Adults Policy
Notes:	
Use of Document:	All Shannow FRC Staff and Contracted Counsellors, and Board of Management/Trustees of the Shannow FRC
Date Policy Approved:	This policy was approved by the Voluntary Board of Management of Shannow FRC at its meeting on October 21, 2024.
Review Date:	This policy will be reviewed by the Voluntary Board of Management of Shannow FRC every 3 years or before if needed

Signed Elizabeth Beirne Date: Oct 21, 2024  
Chairperson

Signed Mary Leon Date: Oct 21, 2024  
Secretary



## **1. Policy Statement**

This policy will demonstrate Shannow FRC's commitment to the safety of vulnerable adults and acknowledges its duty to respond appropriately to any allegations, reports, or suspicions of abuse. From time to time, Shannow FRC may be supporting or working with vulnerable adults.

## **2. Purpose**

This policy sets out the roles, responsibilities, and procedures to ensure the utmost protection and support to vulnerable adults engaged in Shannow FRC. It is one of several policies and procedures that Shannow FRC implements that contributes to supporting and engaging vulnerable adults including:

- A. Complaints Policy
- B. Garda Vetting Policy
- C. IT Security Policy.

This policy should be used in conjunction with all other relevant Shannow FRC policies as necessary.

## **3. Scope**

This policy has been drawn up to ensure that Shannow FRC:

- 3.1. Promote good practice and work in a way that can prevent harm, abuse and coercion from occurring.
- 3.2. To highlight the zero-tolerance approach to any form of abuse and to promote the culture that supports this.
- 3.3. Ensure that any allegations of abuse or suspicions are dealt with appropriately and the person experiencing abuse is supported.

## **4. Definition of a Vulnerable Adult**

4.1. For the purposes of this Policy and Procedures, the HSE (Social Care Division) considers a vulnerable (adult) person to be:

4.1.1. A person over the age of 18 years who is restricted in capacity to guard himself/herself/themselves against harm or exploitation, or to report such harm or exploitation.

4.1.2. This may arise because of physical or intellectual impairment and risk of abuse may be influenced by both context and individual circumstances.

4.2. Vulnerable Adults may also be:

4.2.1. Receiving or in need of community care services because of learning, physical or mental disability, age, or illness;



4.2.2. Unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

4.3. Shannow FRC - understands that adults who become vulnerable have the right to:

- 4.3.1. Be accorded the same respect and dignity as any other adult, by recognising their uniqueness and personal needs.
- 4.3.2. Be given access to knowledge and information in a manner which they can understand, to help them to make informed choices.
- 4.3.3. Be provided with information on, and practical help in, keeping themselves safe and protecting themselves from abuse.
- 4.3.4. Live safely without fear of violence in any form.
- 4.3.5. Have their money, goods and possessions treated with respect and to receive equal protection for themselves and their property through the law.
- 4.3.6. Be given guidance and assistance in seeking help because of abuse.
- 4.3.7. Be supported in making their own decisions about how they wish to proceed in the event of abuse, and to know that their wishes will be considered paramount, unless it is considered necessary for their own safety or the safety of others to take an alternate course, or if required by law to do so.
- 4.3.8. Be supported in bringing a complaint.
- 4.3.9. Have alleged, suspected, or confirmed cases of abuse investigated promptly and appropriately.
- 4.3.10. Receive support, education, and support following abuse.
- 4.3.11. Seek redress through appropriate agencies.

4.4. Shannow FRC - will ensure that:

- 4.4.1. All Board members, FRC staff (permanent and contracted), volunteers, students, participants, and carers/families are familiar with this policy and procedures;
- 4.4.2. It acts within its confidentiality policy and will (unless it is outside the limits of confidentiality) gain permission from participants before sharing information about them with another agency;
- 4.4.3. It makes a referral (with permission) to the appropriate adult services if and when appropriate;
- 4.4.4. Ensure that the Designated Named Person understands his/her/their responsibility to refer incidents of adult abuse to the relevant statutory agencies (Gardaí/ HSE).

## 5. Reporting Adult Abuse

- 5.1. Staff at Shannow FRC who suspect or receive an allegation that an adult is suffering abuse, neglect, or coercive control, are obliged to report it.
- 5.2. Staff who are mandated persons may report directly and must inform the DLP of Shannow FRC that they have done so. Alternatively, mandated persons may consult with the DLP and submit a joint report.
- 5.3. Other staff/sessional workers who are not mandated persons, must consult with the DLP who will submit a report on their behalf.

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is- Shannow FRC Manager, Kristy McFetridge

The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Shannow FRC Family Support Worker, Sarah Hayes

### 5.4. Depending on each circumstance the following action must be taken:

- 5.4.1. If there is an immediate risk or danger call the Gardaí at 999 or 112;
  - 5.4.2. If there is mistreatment which is serious, but not an immediate danger, report it urgently to the local Garda station (directory of stations at [www.garda.ie](http://www.garda.ie)), or call the Garda confidential line at 1800 666 111;
  - 5.4.3. For an ongoing safeguarding concern that needs support, contact the local HSE Safeguarding and Protection Team. There are nine safeguarding and protection teams covering all regions in the country, and the contact details for each team are at [www.hse.ie/safeguarding](http://www.hse.ie/safeguarding);
  - 5.4.4. Comprehensive and confidential notes must be kept, in a secure area, according to GDPR policy/procedure.
- 5.5. Staff/sessional workers involved in the reporting of abuse may be asked at a future date, for more information/assistance (according only to the facts they possess) with any investigation that may subsequently take place, and must observe the confidentiality and staff code of conduct procedures in place at Shannow FRC in order to preserve the rights of the adult concerned and the integrity of the investigation.

## 6. What is Abuse

- 6.1. Safeguarding Ireland was established to promote the safeguarding of adults who may be vulnerable, protect them from all forms of abuse by persons, organisations and institutions and develop a national plan for promoting their welfare, and accordingly states that:

**6.1.1.** Abuse can affect any adult at any stage of life but is more likely to occur at times of difficulty such as living with frailty due to age, a physical or intellectual disability, an acquired brain injury, a mental health condition, or in situations of coercive control;

**6.1.2.** Adult Abuse happens when a person's rights, independence or dignity are not respected. This can be deliberate, or it can be caused by a lack of knowledge, or omission of care. However, all circumstances of not respecting a person's rights are abusive.

## **6.2. Types of Abuse**

### **6.2.1. Emotional and Psychological:**

Intimidation, threats, humiliation, isolation, verbal abuse or being prevented from receiving services.

### **6.2.2. Physical:**

Hitting, kicking, pushing, shaking, rough handling, threat of physical force, medication mismanagement.

### **6.2.3. Financial:**

Unauthorised or improper use of a person's funds, property, pension, or pressuring a person to transfer their assets.

### **6.2.4. Sexual:**

Sexual activity to which the person has not consented, could not consent, or felt compelled to consent to.

### **6.2.5. Organisational:**

Inadequate care, poor communication, or systematic poor practice by an organisation.

### **6.2.6. Online:**

Internet, email, or social media based scamming, bullying, or coercion.

### **6.2.7. Neglect:**

When essentials such as food, heating, medication, or hygiene are withheld – or a person's money is not used for their own benefit. It includes ignoring medical or physical care needs, failing to provide access to appropriate health and social care, or educational services.

### **6.2.8. Coercive Control:**

Making a person dependent by isolating them from support, exploiting them, depriving them of independence and regulating their everyday behaviours. It often involves multiple forms of abuse.

6.2.9. Discrimination:

Unequal treatment, harassment or abuse of a person based on the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion and membership of the traveller community.

### **6.3. Common signs of Abuse, Neglect or Coercive Control**

6.3.1. Physical

3.2.1.1. Unexplained bruises, marks, or injuries

3.2.1.2. Unusual weight loss

3.2.1.3. Dirty, or unsafe living conditions

3.2.1.4. Anxiety

6.3.2. Financial

3.2.3.1. Inexplicable shortage of money

3.2.3.2. Suspicious addition of names to financial accounts

3.2.3.3. Unexpected changes to will, or Power of Attorney

### **6.4. Responding to Adult Abuse**

6.4.1. Support For Those Who Report Abuse

Those who report abuse or express concern should know that:

6.4.1.1. They will be taken seriously.

6.4.1.2. Their concerns will be treated confidentially but may be shared with others (as documented above).

6.4.1.3. There will be no intimidation or reprisal.

6.4.2. Rights of the Vulnerable Adult

6.4.2.1. To be aware of this policy.

6.4.2.2. To have allegations/concerns taken seriously.

6.4.2.3. To be respected and have their dignity upheld.

6.4.2.4. To be involved in the process as appropriate.

6.4.2.5. To receive information about the outcome.

6.4.3 Anyone responding to a vulnerable adult making such a disclosure should take the following steps:

6.4.3.1 Take what the vulnerable adult says seriously.

6.4.3.2 React calmly, as over-reaction may intimidate the vulnerable adult and increase any feelings of guilt that they may have.

6.4.3.3 Reassure the vulnerable adult that they were correct to tell somebody what happened.

6.4.3.4 Listen carefully and attentively.

6.4.3.5 Do not ask leading questions. Use open-ended questions to clarify what is being said and try to avoid having them repeat what they have told you.

6.4.3.6 Do not promise to keep secrets. Advise that you will offer support but that you must pass on the information.

6.4.3.7 Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser to the person reporting to you.

6.4.3.8 Explain and make sure that the vulnerable adult understands what will happen next. Do not confront the abuser.

