



# Vulnerable Adult Policy

## Introduction

The aim of this policy is to communicate the commitment of SLI and its Management Committee to the prevention of harm to vulnerable adults participating in SLI activities and programmes. This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, and clients of SLI.

## Definitions

Abuse of vulnerable adults can include, but is not limited, to:

- Physical
- Psychological
- Emotional
- Financial
- Sexual
- Neglect
- Discriminatory
- Institutional

Lack of action is also considered abuse. Physical, sexual, and financial abuse will be reported to the Garda. SLI recognises that there is a statutory duty to implement a Vulnerable Adults Policy. The designated liaison for reporting of incidents is the Manager of SLI who, along with the Chair, will follow-up on any incidents.

## Implementation

The Chair of Committee and the Manager of SLI have a specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy. We expect all employees and volunteers to abide by the policy and help to create the environment which is its objective.

In order to implement this policy, we shall:

- Communicate the policy to employees by making the policy known to current and future employees.
- SLI will endeavour, through appropriate training, to ensure that it will not consciously, or unconsciously, violate the rights of any Vulnerable Adults participating in our programme.
- Ensure that adequate resources are made available to fulfil the objectives of the policy.

## Complaints

- Any complaints, either by an employee, volunteer, or participant, will be recorded as part of Committee minutes along with actions taken and resolution. All complaints will be dealt with seriously, promptly, and confidentially.
- Every effort will be made to ensure that employees who make complaints will not be victimised.
- Any complaint of victimisation will be dealt with seriously, promptly, and confidentially. Victimisation will result in disciplinary action and may warrant dismissal.
- Complaints from members of the public will be dealt with under agreed procedures.

## How to Respond To A Disclosure

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.



1. Take what the vulnerable adult says seriously.
2. React calmly, as over-reaction may intimidate the vulnerable adult and increase any feelings of guilt that they may have.
3. Reassure the vulnerable adult that they were correct to tell somebody what happened.
4. Listen carefully and attentively.
5. Never ask leading questions.
6. Use open-ended questions to clarify what is being said and try to avoid having them repeat what they have told you.
7. Do not promise to keep secrets.
8. Advise that you will offer support but that you must pass on the information.
9. Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser to the person reporting to you.
10. Explain and make sure that the vulnerable adult understands what will happen next.
11. Do not confront the alleged abuser.

## Reporting Procedures


Following a disclosure of abuse, employees/volunteers should:

1. Record the event, 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.
2. Sign and date all reports and indicate the time the notes were made.
3. Ensure that the information is treated with the utmost confidence.
4. Allegations should not be investigated by employees/volunteers.
5. Employees/volunteers should pass that report to the Designated Officer(s).
6. Under no circumstances should a vulnerable adult be left in a situation that exposes them 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.

## Monitoring and Review

We will establish appropriate information and monitoring systems to assist the effective implementation of this Vulnerable Adults Policy. The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed regularly, and action taken as necessary.

The Vulnerable Adult Policy will be reviewed in June 2025, or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

Signed:  (John Hawkes, SLI Board Chair)

This policy was approved by SLI's Management Committee, June 2023.