

## **Appendix 16: Definitions of Abuse – Adults at Risk of Harm (Vulnerable Adults) – Wales**

*In Safe Hands* identified five main categories of abuse – physical, sexual, financial, emotional or psychological and neglect. A vulnerable adult may be abused in more than one way – indicators need to be considered together and in combination. The Wales Interim Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Vulnerable Adults from Abuse (January 2013) provides the following categories of abuse:

### **Physical abuse**

Physical abuse is any physical pain, suffering or injury wilfully inflicted by a person who has responsibility, charge, care or custody of, or who stands in a position of or expectation of trust to, a vulnerable person.

### **Sexual abuse**

Adult sexual abuse refers to the direct or indirect involvement of a vulnerable adult in sexual activity to which they are unwilling or unable to give informed consent, or which they do not fully comprehend, or which violates the social taboos of family roles, e.g. incest.

### **Emotional or psychological abuse**

Emotional or psychological abuse is the wilful infliction of mental suffering, by a person in a position of, or expectation of, trust to a vulnerable person.

### **Financial or material abuse**

Financial or material abuse is any theft or misuse of a person's money, property or resources, by a person in a position of, or expectation of, trust to a vulnerable person.

### **Neglect**

Neglect is the failure of any person having the responsibility, charge, care or custody of a vulnerable person to provide that degree of care which a reasonable person in a like position would provide.

Neglect can involve intentional or unintentional acts. It includes the unintentional failure of a carer to fulfil their caring role or responsibilities, because of inadequate knowledge or understanding of the need for services.

### **POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF ABUSE**

- Physical abuse – includes hitting, slapping or punching, overuse or misuse of medication and using undue restraint.
- Sexual abuse – a serious offence which includes rape and sexual assault; touching a person where he/she does not want to be touched, such as genital areas; or making somebody touch another person's genital areas.
- Emotional/psychological abuse – e.g. use of 'terms of endearment,' verbal abuse, threats of harm, treating an adult like a child.
- Financial abuse – e.g. theft, fraud, pressure around wills, property or inheritance or misappropriation of benefits.
- Neglect – e.g. not supporting someone to meet their needs for nutrition, hydration or hygiene, or negligence in failing to administer medication or appropriately manage skin care needs.