



Mai Lighthouse

Guiding whānau to wellbeing

Policy Document

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Abuse and Protection Category

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Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults

"I am listened to and supported to keep myself safe."

Intent

Mai Lighthouse recognises that it is everyone's right to be safe from abuse but that some people are more at risk of abuse, neglect and exploitation than others. This vulnerability can be associated with care needs, detention, previous abuse experience and different forms of cultural, social and economic disadvantage.

This policy reflects our focus on preventing abuse, neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable adults and will guide our response if abuse occurs. It reflects the principles and recommendations of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care 2024, the Enabling Good Lives (EGL) Principles and aligns with Te Aorerekura National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence.

This policy applies when working with people who are in a care or detention setting, or are reliant on care or support from others, for example, care of a kaumātua, or disabled person and who, as a result, are unable to protect themselves.

Definitions

"Abuse" refers to harming, ill-treatment, neglect, or deprivation of a vulnerable person. It includes:

- "Psychological abuse" - includes shouting, name-calling, intimidatory tactics, and withdrawing love, or emotional support.
- "Physical abuse": this can involve hitting, slapping, pushing and threats to cause physical pain or harm.
- "Neglect" – involves not providing the essentials for life such as adequate nutrition, medication and other health requirements, adequate heating and fresh air. It may involve not meeting disability needs, supervisory neglect and not providing necessary equipment or support.
- "Restrictive practices" – restraining or isolating someone for reasons other than medical necessity or to prevent immediate self-harm.
- "Sexual abuse" – refers to any non-consensual sexual activity or verbal abuse of a sexual nature and other inappropriate sexual behaviours.

"Exploitation" involves taking advantage of a vulnerable person for personal gain. This can include:

- "Financial" or "Material Exploitation": The illegal or improper use of an individual's funds, property, or assets. Examples include forging signatures, coercing the person to pay or sign financial documents.



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- "Labor" or "Activity Exploitation": Forcing or coercing an individual to work or engage in activities against their will or in unsafe conditions.

"Self-harm" - refers to any self-injurious behaviours such as cutting or burning oneself, which can be a sign of underlying issues in the person's environment.

"Settlement agreement" refers to an agreement allowing a person to resign without disciplinary action."

"Vulnerable person" -

- is a person (aged 18 years or above) who is detained, or who has care and/or support needs that entail reliance on others and is experiencing (or at risk of) harm, violence, abuse, and neglect, and as a result of
- their care or support needs is unable to protect her/him/themself.
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Guiding Principles

Mana – enhancing - Recognise and enhance the inherent dignity and wellbeing (mana and mauri) of every person in care, supporting them holistically and to be free from abuse, exploitation or neglect.

Person-centred - Responses to care and support needs build on each person's unique strengths, needs, and circumstances, fostery connections and reduce isolation.

Participation and Voice - People are supported to participate in decisions that affect them, with access to support or advocacy, and their concerns are taken seriously.

Prevention and Safety - Use diverse prevention strategies appropriate to those we work with and the wider community with a focus on building awareness about abuse and neglect and ensuring safety of vulnerable people.

Whānau and Community -Actively involve whānau, support networks, and peers in decision-making wherever appropriate and support connections to family and community.

Cultural Responsiveness - Support whānau Māori in their care of tamariki, kaumātua and vulnerable adults and ensure the cultural needs and preferences of vulnerable people are addressed in our responses.

Requirements

Prevention

We aim to prevent abuse and neglect, for example, through:

- **Awareness - raising and training** - promote awareness with staff, volunteers, clients/whānau about the signs of abuse, exploitation, and neglect with vulnerable adults and how to report concerns
- **Proactive Monitoring** - support and check-in on vulnerable adults' care relationships and environments; flag and address risks early and promptly
- **Supportive Culture** - a culture of openness and support is promoted to ensure that people feel safe to express concerns and report issues; provide multiple ways to raise abuse concerns for clients with different abilities (eg in-person, email, formal complaint)
- **Whakawhanaunga** - support safewhānau/care relationships and work with others to create a network of support and vigilance against abuse and neglect including Advocates, older age services, disability consumer groups, hapū, iwi, Māori services, Deaf community, Pasifika and ethnic services
- **Empowerment** - vulnerable adults are encouraged and supported to understand their rights, to speak-up and use strategies to protect themselves from abuse and exploitation.

Reporting and Responding to Abuse Concerns

Inaction is not an option. We will respond appropriately:

- **Report** - abuse concerns and disclosures must be reported immediately to management or a specially designated staff member. The Responding to Abuse, exploitation and Neglect policy will apply.
- **Allegations against staff** - management will ensure that allegations are taken seriously and are properly investigated in accordance with the Reporting Abuse against Team member policy
- **Care and support** - the vulnerable person's safety and support will be prioritised including their needs for medical and psychological assistance; tailored support and continuity of care where possible.
- **Accountability** - people who use violence will be supported to take responsibility for behaviour and its impacts and change their behaviour. Internal and external services may be offered.

Staff Training and Education

- Training and induction will support our workforce to understand the social model of disability, the barriers that disabled people can experience and are competent to provide a safe and responsive service to a disabled person
- Induction Training - for new staff and volunteers, including governance and management, will cover abuse prevention and reporting.
- Ongoing (refresher) training - will keep staff updated about safeguarding practices and skills including communication skills, risk assessment, grooming behaviors, cultural competence etc

Safe Environment and Relationships

Our focus on safety will include the following:

- Staff to be alert to signs of abuse, neglect and exploitation
- Staff have the skills and understanding to listen, communicate and respond effectively to d/Deaf and disabled people who may have communicative and cognitive disabilities
- Risk Assessments - will be undertaken to identify and mitigate potential hazards in the vulnerable adult's living situation or/and their relationships with carers and family members
- We plan and provide support for safe, quality caregiving (eg mitigate caregiver stressors, arrange respite, training, whānau support) and for vulnerable adults to exercise choice and control in their life to the greatest extent possible.
- Supervision - we ensure adequate supervision of staff and volunteers who are working directly with vulnerable individuals
- Safe Practice policies and training will guide staff working with vulnerable adults.

Feedback and Complaints

- Feedback - clients/whānau will be encouraged to provide feedback throughout our relationship with them. They are informed about the Feedback and Complaints process and will be supported to access Independent Advocacy when necessary (eg Health and Disability Advocacy Service).
- Complaints will be addressed promptly and transparently with appropriate actions taken to resolve the risk of recurrence.

Continuous Improvement

- Feedback from vulnerable people, their whānau, families, and other stakeholders will be used for service planning and improvement purposes.

Compliance

Social Sector Accreditation Standards - Levels 2 & 3, Community wellbeing & Clientcentred services.

NZS 8134:2021 Our Rights, I am protected from abuse 1.5.1-1.5.6

Helpful links

[Please visit this policy on our policy to view these links.](#)

People First New Zealand Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Protection of older people against abuse and neglect

Crimes Act 1961 ss151

Child protection

Review

Date: November 2024

Next review: by October 2026