

PALMERSTON AND LITCHFIELD SENIORS ASSOCIATION INC. (PLSA)

RESPECTFUL INTERVENTION - POLICY AND PROCEDURE

PURPOSE OF POLICY

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to assist Seniors at events/activities; whereby the PLSA endeavour to ensure Seniors enjoy a social outing whilst accepting assistance where required through a relationship of trust; ensuring self-determination, dignity, self-fulfilment, and that their well-being is maintained at all times during participation in community events/activities.

DEFINITION

In regard to the definition of elder abuse; this is defined by Australian Common Law and what is commonly considered abuse to a reasonable person, such as physical, verbal, financial, sexual or emotional.

Elder Abuse is usually referring to an intentional act by a caregiver or another person in a relationship involving an expectation of trust that causes or creates a risk of harm to an older Adult/Senior. (An older adult is defined as someone age 60 or older).

WHAT IS ABUSE?

Some Senior people require additional care and support. Much of this care is provided in the community by informal carers. In the case of the PLSA this care may be administered by Committee Members or Endorsed Volunteers at events/activities that we may be administering.

This could be seen as a single/repeated act or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which may cause distress to a Senior person. It can be in various forms which may include:

- Financial Abuse.
- Psychological/Emotional Abuse.
- Social Abuse.
- Physical Abuse.
- Sexual Abuse.
- Verbal Abuse.
- Neglect or simply reflection; an intentional or unintentional act/s.

(United Nations Population Division 2002)

The PLSA, in providing events/activities or services for Seniors in the Palmerston and Litchfield regions are unlikely to come across or be involved with some aspects of what may be considered elder abuse normally. Therefore, this policy and procedure concentrates primarily on the following possibilities but is not limited to these:

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- Social Abuse.
- Physical Abuse.
- Verbal Abuse.
- Neglect.

Social Abuse – may be the preventing a person from having social contact with family and friends or accessing social activities.

This may include:

- Exclusion from events – to slow to move or to higher maintenance, therefore exclude Seniors.
- Failure to allow a Senior to express their point of view.

Some signs may include:

- Withdrawal from social activities.
- Unpleasantness toward other Seniors.
- Personal abuse toward persons who may be seen to be responsible.
- Appearing ashamed.

Physical Abuse – may be the inflicting of pain or injury to a Senior which might include slapping, hitting or restraining a Senior.

This may include:

- Pressurising, intimidating, or bullying.
- Treating Seniors like a child.
- Preventing Seniors from making their point.
- Name calling or humiliating Seniors.

Some signs may include:

- Depression, shame.
- Feeling helplessness.
- Maybe passive or angry.
- Cringing or acting fearfully.

Verbal Abuse – may be the inflicting emotional distress to a Senior which might include screaming, shouting or embarrassing a Senior.

This may include:

- Shouting and hurting Seniors.
- Threatening the removal of access to events/activities or services.
- Humiliating Seniors.

Some signs may include:

- Failure to attend social functions.
- Unexplained paranoia or excessive fear of a person in authority or a group of other Seniors.
- Tearfulness.

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Neglect – may be the intentional or unintentional failure by a Committee Member or Endorsed Volunteer to provide necessary assistance to a Senior who may require some assistance.

This may include:

- Leaving a Senior in an unsafe location.
- Failure to help because the Senior has indicated they do not require additional assistance (Reference: Work Health & Safety (National Uniform Legislation Act)).
- Intentionally allowing a Senior to struggle when it is not necessary.

Some signs may include:

- Senior falls at an event/activity or during a service unnecessarily.
- Senior struggles to operate successfully at an event/activity or during the provision of a service.
- Abandonment or left unattended for long periods of time at an event/activity or during the provision of a service.
- Under medication or over medicated – not coherent.

OTHER DOCUMENTATION

This document should not be addressed singularly. It should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Work Health & Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011, As in force at 01 February 2020.
- OF23.0 – Association Membership Application (New/Renewal).
- OF28.1 - Incident Report Form.
- OF28.2 – Witness Report Form.

DO WE DISCLOSE ANY INFORMATION TO OUTSIDE PARTIES?

We maintain your personal information. However, it may be disclosed to trusted third parties who assist us to conduct/deliver events/activities or services for Seniors that we organise, so long as these parties keep your information confidential. This may include providing information to Police and relevant authorities where and if required in the interest of the Senior.

This information is managed in accordance with OF12 – Privacy Policy.

However, non-personal information relating to statistics, events attended may be used for marketing, promotion, grants/sponsorship, advertising, and feedback.

PROCEDURES

Our action includes a five-tier plan. These tiers include:

- 1) Education – Building Awareness of senior abuse.
- 2) Permission / Approval.
- 3) Walking through Action.
- 4) Summation.
- 5) Reporting / Recording.

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Education – Building Awareness of Senior Abuse

The PLSA will work with relevant organisations to provide a workshop for all Committee Members relevant Endorsed Volunteers to identify, recognise and understand how to report where necessary Senior abuse.

This workshop will be mandatory for all Committee Members and endorsed volunteers and will be conducted annually.

It may be delivered by an appointed agency.

The aim of the workshop will be to build awareness and actions to ensure Senior abuse does not occur at PLSA events/activities or where services are conducted.

Permission / Approval

It is recognised that not all Seniors may either require assistance or like to receive assistance at events/activities or during the provision of services provided by the PLSA.

However, it is recognised through experience by the Committee Members that some Seniors do need and like assistance from time to time. To ensure that Committee Members and Endorsed Volunteers do not however overstep the mark; the PLSA has amended its OF23 - Association Application Form as of 01 January 2025 to include a statement which states:

- **In signing this form, you agree to accept assistance from a PLSA Committee Member.**

It should be noted that Committee Members or Endorsed Volunteers may still be required to help Seniors as regulated by the Work Health & Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulations 2011 to ensure that we maintain our Duty of Care in accordance with the Act. This will ensure that no negligence occurs on behalf of the Association.

Notwithstanding the above, unless in an emergency situation a Committee Member or Endorsed Volunteer MUST always speak to the Senior concerned and reiterate/ask if they would require any assistance prior to assisting the Senior.

If the Senior still says “NO”, the Committee Member or Endorsed Volunteer MUST still be cognisant of their Duty of Care under the Work Health & Safety Act (National Uniform Legislation) 2011 and may be required to aid the Senior under these circumstances.

Walking through Action

During the process of assisting a Senior, talk to the Senior and explain what actions you are going to take to assist them. Ensure the Senior is satisfied with the actions you propose. The description of how you and perhaps a colleague are going to assist the Senior will build trust and assure the Senior that you are not going to undertake any unintentional outcome.

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The actions you will take will leave the Senior feeling self-determined, confident of the assistance to be provided and the Senior will have self-fulfilment, and their dignity will be sustained.

Summation

Having concluded the assistance for the Senior, briefly sum up the actions taken to assist them and if possible, outline how the actions can be carried out in future whereas much assistance might not be required.

This may mean that the Senior disembarking a bus/boat last and does not hold up other Seniors. It may mean that the assistance provided can be more dignified if there are less people sightseeing or standing around humiliating the Senior who requires additional help to undertake the event/activity or service being provided.

Reporting/Recording

If a Senior or onlooker believes that some indiscretion may have occurred, the Senior or onlooker should seek to discuss the matter with a Management Team Member in the first instance. If it is felt the matter should be taken further the Senior or onlooker can request to complete the appropriate form:

- 1) OF28.1 - Incident Report Form.
- 2) OF28.2 – Witness Report Form.

If the Senior or onlooker believe the matter was a minor indiscretion, the forms should be returned to the President or Vice President for an immediate review.

If the minor indiscretion was carried out by the receiving officer, seek out the assistance of another Management Team Member for discussion and review.

The matter should be discussed with the Senior or onlooker and all information recorded for further processing.

If the matter can be resolved and was a misunderstanding/misinterpretation, the outcome should be recorded and the matter discussed confidentially at the next Management Team meeting before closing the file.

In the event that the matter is of a more serious nature, the Senior, the onlooker or the PLSA may wish to report the matter to Police in which case the PLSA will make available through the Management Team all documentation associated with the preliminary investigation, along with the OF28.1 - Incident Report Form and OF28.2 – Witness Report Form which were completed at the time. All documentation will remain confidential. The privacy of clients (Seniors, onlookers, Committee Members or Endorsed Volunteer) must always be protected if you are discussing the case with other agencies that do not necessarily have a direct impact on the case at the time.

At no stage should any media release be made available from the Association.

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The PLSA will in this case take no further action directly between the parties and await an outcome following the Police investigations and any subsequent action.

The PLSA may be called upon to provide emotional support to the Senior concerned, the Committee Member or Endorsed Volunteer. It will be necessary to listen to the Senior, Committee Member and or Endorsed Volunteer, acknowledging what they have to say and ensure they are feeling safe.

All support associated with the case should be recorded for future reference.

When investigating initially, determine whether ***“at the time – was the action taken reasonable under the circumstances”***; as this may have a bearing on future investigations, reporting, or outcome at a later time. It maybe, the action taken at the time may be justifiable in the case of an emergency or to ensure that Duty of Care was not compromised.

Notwithstanding the above, wherever possible try to ensure that any action taken does not cause more harm or undermine the rights of the Senior, Endorsed Volunteer or Committee Member. Above all, maintain where possible the self-determination and dignity of the parties concerned.

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