

# WORKING IN THE COMMUNITY WITH VULNERABLE ADULTS

## Street work

Places of worship and organisations work often with those who live and work on the street or provide soup and support to homeless people or contact with sex workers (prostitutes). Safety at work is the responsibility of both employers and employees and The Suzie Lamplugh Trust has published a guide for people involved in this kind of work. Listed below are guidelines for the safety of all those working on the street:

- Ensure that your organisation liaises with relevant agencies including statutory agencies informing them of the work you are doing
- NEVER give money. It could be used for the purchase of drugs/alcohol and in the case of sex workers may be construed as payment for illegal activity leading to a criminal prosecution
- Be aware of the geography where you are working e.g. is it known as a drug dealing or high crime area, are there isolated areas?
- Avoid wearing jewellery, taking handbags and any other unnecessary accoutrements. Keep wallets and purses in secure pockets
- Be sure any vehicle you are using has sufficient fuel and is in good working order
- For workers' personal safety, ensure that the leadership is aware where you are. Have a mobile phone and agree a time to 'clock-off' either by returning to the place of worship or by a phone call to a designated person
- Don't show people your mobile phone and never divulge personal details (address etc.). If you have to give a contact number then give the number for the place of worship
- Work in pairs where possible

Have a risk assessment policy covering:

- the threat or actual physical abuse
- psychological consequences of an interaction (e.g. actual or threatened violence)

- being in a compromising situation, in which there might be accusations of improper behaviour
- health and safety issues such as infectious illness and accidents

### **Preventing financial abuse and safeguarding the integrity of the worker**

People who work with vulnerable adults in the community can become involved in aspects of their personal finance. For example, they may be asked to collect their pension or benefits or do shopping or banking transactions on their behalf. When conducting a home visit, money may be lying about. It is therefore important to consider how to protect both the vulnerable adult and the worker from accusations of financial mismanagement or dishonesty.

- Ensure that receipts are always given for purchases
- Don't move any money which may be left around (e.g. when cleaning)
- Ideally two people should be involved when handling money
- Occasionally people may offer gifts including monetary gifts to those who help or care for them. We would advise that these gifts should be declined if at all possible. Where this is not possible without causing offence, all gifts and offers of gifts should be reported to the leader of the group and recorded. If specific guidelines are already in place these must obviously be followed.