

# *Trust In Care*



*Policy for the Health  
Service on Upholding the  
Dignity and Welfare of  
Patients/Clients and the  
Procedure for Managing  
Allegations of Abuse against  
Staff Members*



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

## Policy Statement

The majority of staff working in the health service are highly motivated and caring individuals who are committed to providing the highest possible standards of care. We as health service employers have a duty of care to provide staff with the necessary supervision, support and training to enable you to deliver a high quality service and to protect you from situations which may leave you vulnerable to allegations of abuse or neglect.

The objectives of the Trust in Care policy are twofold. Firstly, it aims to promote a safe and caring environment in all health care settings where the dignity of patients and clients is paramount and they are afforded the highest possible standards of care. Secondly, it aims to safeguard staff by providing effective supervision, support and training and a safe system of work.

The following is an overview of the main provisions of the policy for staff.

**Definition of abuse** Under this policy, abuse is considered to be any form of behaviour that violates the dignity of patients/clients. Abuse may consist of single acts or repeated acts. It may be physical, sexual or psychological/emotional. It may take the form of isolated incidents of poor or unsatisfactory professional practice at one end of the spectrum, through to pervasive ill treatment or gross misconduct at the other. Repeated instances of poor care may be an indication of more serious problems within the organisation for which the individual employee cannot be held accountable.

**Abuse Prevention** All staff will be made aware of the standards of care expected of them and any protocols to be followed when interacting with patients/clients. Staff will be given guidance where appropriate on areas relevant to their work such as:

- Challenging behaviour
- Personal and Intimate Care
- Conducting examinations
- Appropriate physical contact
- Control and Restraint
- Medication
- Handling of patients' money and personal possessions
- Boundaries of social interaction with patients

You can help to maintain high standards of care by reporting inappropriate behaviour or concerns that the dignity of patients/clients is being undermined.

## *Procedure for Receiving a Complaint of Abuse*

If you receive a complaint of abuse you should take the following steps:

- Encourage the patient/client to give as much detail as possible but avoid asking leading questions
- Do not press the patient/client for details beyond that which s/he is willing to disclose
- Do not promise to keep the information a secret
- Report the complaint to your line manager as soon as possible



- While you are obliged to report your concerns about the welfare of patients/clients or complaints of abuse you are not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred

If you make a complaint or express concerns that abuse may have occurred please be assured that:

- You will be taken seriously
- You will be protected from the risk of reprisals or intimidation
- Complaints made in good faith will not have any adverse legal consequences
- You will be informed of what action has been taken and its outcome

## *Follow On Action*

A patient/client who has been the victim of abuse and, where appropriate, his/her family will be provided with assistance and counselling to ensure their full recovery from the trauma suffered as a result of the incident.

Assistance will be made available to staff who have been affected by the allegation to help them to come to terms with what has happened and to restore a normal working environment.

The staff member against whom the allegation is made will be advised of what will happen next and his/her right to due process.

In cases where a complaint is not upheld, the reputation and career prospects of the staff member against whom the complaint was made will not be adversely affected.