**When to report**

All disclosures, suspicions or observations of abuse are to be immediately (1 hour) reported to the Designated Person or, in her/his absence, the General Manager:

* In the event that the abuse is in the process of happening and is observed by a staff member, it is their duty to immediately put a stop to it, ensure the safety of the individuals involved and then inform their Line Manager without further delay. The Line Manager must then inform the Designated Person immediately.
* No discussions or meetings are to be held with or by any staff in relation to the allegation without the prior consent of the Designated Person.

**What happens when an allegation is reported to the Designated Person**

1. The Designated Person will immediately establish that the individuals concerned are safe and if necessary will take any and all steps to ensure same.
2. The Designated Person then makes contact with the relevant HSE representatives and Gardai to obtain consent to conduct a preliminary investigation.
3. Once agreement with the HSE and Gardai is confirmed the Designated Person will meet with the staff and individuals involved with the allegation. These meetings will be held in private and may include the Line Manager as an observer.
4. All information and meetings related to an allegation are private and confidential and may not be discussed with anyone other than the Designated Person or the relevant authorities.
5. If it is established within the preliminary investigation that there are reasonable grounds to indicate that the abuse has occurred, the Designated Person will contact the HSE and Gardai to agree next steps.
6. The next steps for the Designated Person may include all or some of the following:
   1. Informing next of kin.
   2. Informing staff members who are involved.
   3. Suspension of alleged perpetrator, in case of employee or service recipient, for the duration of investigation. In case of all others appropriate actions will be taken including the option of denial of access.
   4. Completion of reports.
   5. Referral to HSE for formal investigation.
   6. Referral to Gardai for formal investigation
   7. Agreement with HSE/Gardai for changes in Supervision/Service Provision in relation to alleged victim/perpetrator for the duration of investigation.
   8. Recommendations for changes in Supervision/Service Provision in relation to the conclusions of the preliminary and final investigations.
7. All liaison with respect to the investigation will occur between the Designated Person and the relevant authorities only.
8. Any meetings with persons attached to the service will be arranged by the Designated Person who will also be in attendance on behalf of the organisation unless otherwise agreed by her/him and the relevant authorities.

**Definition of Abuse**

A single or repeated act or a lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust that causes harm or distress to a vulnerable adult or violates their human and civil rights. *(HSE 2011)*

**Categories of Abuse**

* Physical Abuse

A non-accidental infliction of physical force that results in bodily injury, pain or impairment.

* Sexual Abuse

The direct or indirect involvement of a vulnerable adult within sexual activities to which they have not consented.

* Psychological/Emotional Abuse

The use of threats, humiliation, bullying, swearing, and other verbal conduct, or any other form of emotional cruelty that results in emotional or physical distress.

* Financial/Material Abuse

The unauthorised or improper use of funds, property or any other resources belonging to an individual.

* Neglect or Acts of Omission

A breach of duty or carelessness that results in injury or the violation of rights.

* Institutional Abuse

Where inappropriate practices or systems are employed within facilities that deny residents’ rights of choice, privacy and independence.

* Discriminatory Abuse

When values, beliefs or culture result in a misuse of power that denies mainstream opportunities to some groups or individuals. This includes racism, ageism, sexism and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.