Outcomes from the vulnerability workshop
SPSO Conference 2023

This document provides an overview of the ideas discussed by delegates who attended the vulnerabilities workshop at the SPSO Conference on 16 November 2023.

Please note that this document is not official guidance from SPSO. It is a thematic analysis of the ideas generated by conference delegates on the day.

Communication and language:
- Not speaking English as a first language
- Verbal or written cues from the customer
- Listening and asking the right questions
- Take a person-centred approach

Indicators of vulnerability:
- Acknowledge everyone will likely experience vulnerability at different points in their life
- Vulnerability is fluid and can be situational
- Look at previous involvement or history of vulnerability
- Consider known characteristics of the customer
- Ask the customer what adjustment they may need

Delegate feedback on how to identify people experiencing vulnerability

Context of the complaint:
- Look at the specific circumstances around the complaint
- Look at internal records and previous history
- Consider where the customer was referred from? Could this indicate a vulnerability?

Staff awareness and training:
- Ensure staff have appropriate training to identify vulnerabilities
- Staff trained to understand the vulnerabilities that exist and how they are defined
- Open discussion with other staff or stakeholders who have had an interaction with the customer

Person-centred approach:
- Ask the person what support they may need
- Listen and take time to communicate
- Make the person feel comfortable
- Use the customers preferred method of communication
- Identify what matters to the customer
- Consider and make reasonable adjustments
- Ensure equal access to your service
- Telephone calls can be more useful than emails
- Create a culture which acknowledges everyone can experience vulnerability

Respectful communication:
- Build trust and maintain confidentiality
- Be non-judgemental and treat with respect
- Communicate with empathy
- Be open and honest
- Clearly communicate boundaries

Delegate feedback on how to support people experiencing vulnerability

Knowledge and signposting
- Have resources available for vulnerable customers
- Ensure effective signposting to advocacy, third sector or peer support groups
- Take a trauma-informed approach

Staff awareness and training:
- Support staff with skills for handling difficult conversations
- Be consistent with your approach
- Be proactive and report risks
- Staff should feel empowered and comfortable asking for help and/or support

Consent and transparency:
- Consider GDPR and data protection laws
- Always seek consent and agreement with customer about who information is shared with
- Work with confidentiality in mind
- Be open and transparent about your organisations data recording

Recording Systems
- Use alerts on case management systems to flag vulnerabilities
- Ensure ICT systems have appropriate permissions for data sharing
- Maintain accurate and up to date records
- Utilise a call recording system

Delegate feedback on how to record and share information about people experiencing vulnerability?

Organisational Policies and Process:
- Use a privacy notice to explain who information may be shared with
- Have clear guidelines on what is recorded, how and by whom
- Processes for recording should be when necessary, relevant, and proportionate
- Put in place a Information Sharing agreement