Explaining Organisational Abuse

What is Organisational Abuse?

The Care Act (2014) defines institutional abuse (or “organisational abuse”) as one of the 10 types of harm. It includes neglect and poor care practice within a specific care setting. This could be a hospital or a care home, but also the care received in one’s own home.

Organisational abuse can range from one off incidents to ongoing ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

Organisational abuse can involve one or more abusers

Why might organisational abuse happen?

There is no single cause which results in organisational abuse occurring. However, one or a combination of indicators that organisational abuse is occurring might include organisations where staff are poorly trained, staff are poorly supervised, there is a lack of effective managerial support, lack of professional accountability exists, there is poor communication, organisational culture that does not recognise the actions of individuals or groups of individuals who are abusive, poor professional practice as a result of the structure, polices, processes and practices within an organisation.

Examples of organisational abuse?

Signs that organisational abuse id happening can be difficult to detect. The following list is not exhaustive, but might be indications of organisational abuse:

- Discouraging visits and involvement of family and friends
- Rundown or overcrowded establishment
- Lack of privacy
- Lack of dignity
- No choice offered of food, drink, clothing, activities
- Lack of privacy, dignity and respect for the individual
- Inappropriate use of power or control
- Inappropriate physical intervention
- Inappropriate use of restraints
- Lack of leadership and management
- Insufficient staff and/or high staff turnover
- Failure to respond to complaints
- Food, drink and/or medication left out of reach

- Bed clothes tucked in too tightly
- Wheeled tables locked into chair legs so people cannot stand up

What to do if you suspect organisational abuse is happening within an organisation?

If you suspect that organisational abuse is happening which involves children, make a report to Wigan Council Children's Social Care Team (01942 828300)

If you suspect that organisational abuse is happening which involves adults, make a report to Wigan Council Adult Social Care Team (01942 828777)

The CQC has resources for reporting concerns as a member of staff.

Further reading

Ann Craft Trust: What is Institutional Abuse? Definitions, Signs symptoms

Ann Craft Trust: Why your organisation needs a safeguarding policy and procedures

Care Quality Commission: Contact Us

Care Quality Commission: Report a concern if you are a member of staff

Care Quality Commission: Regulation 13: Safeguarding service users from abuse and improper treatment

Government Legislation: The Children's Homes and Looked after Children (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2013

SCIE: Types and Indicators of Abuse

Wigan Safeguarding Partnership: Safeguarding Policy Template for Community Groups