

Gordon Brown Law Firm LLP

RESPECT AND DIGNITY FOR THE VULNERABLE AND ELDERLY

Purpose

The firm has adopted equality, diversity and inclusion as a core value and seeks in all of its policies and procedures to be a genuinely inclusive organisation and to integrate the principles of equal treatment, promotion and diversity into all aspects of the firm's day to day life.

The firm is committed to continuous improvement of all its services to ensure it meets the needs of its stakeholders and actively seeks feedback from clients to support this aim.

In addition the firm is committed to providing a positive environment in which the firm's clients are treated with dignity, respect and courtesy.

Aim of the Policy

This policy is intended to set out the values, principles and policies underpinning the Firm's approach to its clients and their respective interests and to outline how the firm identify and support:

- Vulnerable new clients who are seeking the services of Gordon Brown Law Firm LLP.
- Existing clients of Gordon Brown Law Firm who are, or who may become vulnerable and require a service of the firm.

Definition

"Clients who require additional support to access the services offered by the firm, to make informed decisions and to maintain their maximum independence."

Code of Conduct

The firm has a duty to provide excellent levels of client care and to ensure its members act at all times in a professional and competent manner and in the best interests of the firm's clients.

Personal integrity is central to the firm's service offering. Each member of the firm acts as the client's trusted advisor and integrity should characterise all professional dealings with clients, the court, other lawyers and the public.

Every member of the firm must act in good faith and do their best for each client. More importantly they must observe the duty of confidentiality to the client and the obligation with regard to conflict of interests. The following points must be adhered to:

1. Members must not discriminate unlawfully or victimise or harass anyone, in the course of their professional dealings.
2. Members must provide services to clients in a way that respects diversity
3. Members must make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled clients, employees or managers are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to those who are not disabled.

4. Members must act with honesty and integrity and only act in the best interest of the client, respecting their dignity and taking into the account a need for a holistic approach towards problem solving.
5. Members must be mindful of the client's well-being at all times.
6. Members must afford elderly / vulnerable clients the opportunity to be accompanied by a trusted friend, family member or advocate.
7. Members must be mindful of the risk of potential abuse, financial or otherwise to the firm's clients and take relevant action if abuse is suspected and / or confirmed.
8. Members must be sensitive to the needs of the firm's vulnerable and elderly clients and to:
 - a. be aware of any potential difficulties with hearing and or vision, ensuring communication strategies are identified in advance or as soon as reasonably practicable e.g. the use of hearing loops, trained sign language employees, braille, translators etc;
 - b. adapt the pace and duration of client meetings, according to the needs of the individual client.
 - c. take all practical steps to maximise decision making potential for those compromised by physical, emotional or mental difficulties.
 - d. ensure ease of access to the firm's offices.
 - e. ensure reception staff are trained and equipped to support the elderly / vulnerable.

Vulnerability

Anyone can experience vulnerability at some point in their lives. In terms of identifying vulnerable groups who access our services the following list provides examples of vulnerable groups. It is not intended to be exhaustive:

- The Elderly.
- Alzheimer sufferers
- Deterioration in mobility due to accident or illness.
- Deaf Blind Community.
- Physical or sensory impairment.
- Clients with communication difficulties.
- Those suffering with acute periods of illness including physical or mental health.
- Lesbian, gay or bisexual people.
- Victims of Domestic Violence.
- Clients whose first language is not English.

Supporting Vulnerable Clients

To provide excellent client care we firstly need to understand our client's needs. We use our client profile to address these needs. Thereafter we use a variety of innovative ways to tailor our services to ensure they meet the needs of all of our clients:

- Home visits for the elderly / immobile or infirm.

- Induction loops in reception areas.
- Portable induction loop to use in meetings rooms / client's homes.
- Staff training.
- Chaperoned visits.
- The use of a translator for customers whose first language is not English.
- The use of British Sign Language trained employees for customers who are hearing impaired or deaf.
- Information via email to enable clients to use "spoken text" software on their personal computers.