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Positive Risk Taking Policy

Introduction

This Positive Risk Taking Policy has been developed to ensure that there is a consistent approach to the identification, assessment and management of risk across all Foresights Services. This will ensure that staff and volunteers are clear about their responsibilities, users of services and their families are fully involved in any decisions that are made, and vulnerable adults are safeguarded. The policy will apply to any situation where a disabled adult, child or young person is supported by our services and there is a need to assess and manage potential risks. This could be at the centre or in the community.

For many people risk is an accepted part of life. But disabled adults and older people are often discouraged from taking risks. Either because of their perceived limitations or fear that they or others might be harmed, resulting in criticism or compensation claims against health, social care and other community based services.

Changes in disability, social care and health policy now mean that disabled adults and older people are being actively encouraged to increase their independence by, for example, travelling independently, and by being fully involved in mainstream society through education, work and leisure. For disabled people, moves away from a medical model to a social model of disability now means there is an emphasis on the discrimination and exclusion created by social and cultural barriers. This contrasts with a prior emphasis on the 'problems' resulting from people's impaired bodies or minds or learning ability.

For some services, approaches to risk have in the past been concerned with avoiding potentially harmful situations to adults who use services and staff. Now to support people to travel independently or take part in everyday activities means accepting there are risks that cannot be avoided but can be minimised and prepared for. This policy is concerned with setting out the approach that Foresight expects its staff and volunteers to adopt towards the issue of risk when they work with disabled adults and older people.

When implementing this policy in day-to-day practice, Foresight recognises that any positive risk-taking approach must be balanced with its responsibilities to implement the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements or policy and practice arising from legal requirements in relation to Safeguarding Children and Adults, care standards and health and safety legislation.

What is positive risk-taking?

Positive risk-taking is: weighing up the potential benefits and harms of exercising one choice of action over another. Identifying the potential risks involved, and developing plans and actions that reflect the positive potentials and stated priorities of the service user. It involves using available resources and support to achieve the desired outcomes, and to minimise the potential harmful outcomes. It is not negligent ignorance of the potential risks...it is usually a very carefully thought out strategy for managing a specific situation or set of circumstances.' (Steve Morgan, 2004)

For community based services, this means:

- being empowering
- working in partnership with adults who use services, family carers and advocates
- developing an understanding of the responsibilities of each party
- helping people to access opportunities and take worthwhile chances
- developing trusting working relationships
- helping adults who use services to learn from their experiences
- understanding the consequences of different actions
- making decisions based on all the choices available and accurate information
- being positive about potential risks
- understanding a person's strengths
- knowing what has worked or not in the past
- where problems have arisen, understanding why
- ensuring support and advocacy is available to disabled adults and older people, particularly if things begin to go wrong for someone
- sometimes tolerating short-term risks for long-term gains
- through regular reviews gradually withdrawing inappropriate services that create dependency
- having an understanding of the different perspectives of disabled adults and older people, family carers, practitioners, advocates and services
- developing person-centred and transition planning for both young people and adults to support their involvement and that of their families and schools in decision-making alongside practitioners
- ensuring staff use the guidance, procedures and risk assessment / management tools adopted by their Service, and receive appropriate support and supervision from their immediate line manager

This information is also available in other formats, languages and picture format upon request.