Chapter 10: Keeping vulnerable people safe

Duty of care for vulnerable people

As you go about your daily duties as a security operative, you will come across and have to deal with a whole range of people, be they customers of the premises or members of the public. Anyone who comes into the premises you work at may be or become vulnerable while you are carrying out your duties, so it is important to understand that you have a duty of care to them.

Duty of care: a moral or legal obligation to ensure the health, safety and welfare of others.

People may not always appear to be vulnerable, as a security operative it is best practice to ensure a duty of care for everyone.

Vulnerable people

As part of customer service and your role in protecting people from harm, you need to be aware of any people who may fall under the category of vulnerable people (people who may be at risk from harm). The following are factors that may put a person at more risk than others:

Drink/drugs

- Reduced inhibitions and the appearance of being over-friendly
- Uncoordinated movement increasing the risk of them hurting themselves
- Displays of aggression
- A change in perception of their own abilities and limitations
- Decreased ability to make informed decisions

Alone or receiving unwanted attention

- Apparently separated from friends and looking distressed
- Receiving apparently unwanted attention from others
- Being followed or threatened

Potential victim of domestic violence

- Victims of domestic violence can be at an increased risk of assault and harm

Young people

- Particularly children (those under the age of 18)

As a security operative, you need to carefully consider the implications for vulnerable children and young adults either using, passing or leaving venues or sites. You need to consider things like whether they require medical attention, whether they have friends or family nearby and whether they have all of their belongings with them. Think about whether they appear to be under the influence of drink or drugs, how old they are, who they are with, and whether it appears that they are being followed or harassed.

Other vulnerable people could also include those that:

- have a mental illness
- have learning disabilities
- have physical disabilities
- are elderly
- are acutely ill
- have invisible disabilities (physical, mental or neurological conditions that limit a person's movements, senses or activities and are invisible to the onlooker)

Indicators of child sexual exploitation

There are certain indicators that a child is being sexually exploited such as:

- children and young people in the company of older people or antisocial groups
- acting in an inappropriate and sexualised way
- being intoxicated
- arriving and departing a location with different adults
- getting into and out of several different cars

You must be vigilant at all times if you suspect a child is being sexually exploited, you must report it immediately and follow the organisation's policies and procedures.

Actions towards vulnerable people

In your professional judgement, if they appear to be vulnerable, you need to consider what help they might need. For example:

is there a relative or a friend close by to help them?

can you telephone anyone to come and help them?

can you call for a licensed taxi to take them home?

are there any local safe havens or other local initiatives such as those run by the St John Ambulance nearby?

can local street pastors or street marshals help them?

do you need to call the emergency services?

referral to other national or local initiatives (i.e. 'Ask Angela')

If in any doubt whatsoever, report as soon as possible to your supervisor, the police or call Crimestoppers.

Sexual predators

As a security operative, you need to be able to identify the behaviours that may be exhibited by sexual predators. It is important to remember that sexual predators don't look just one particular way but are all genders, shapes and sizes. Their behaviours could include:

- close monitoring of vulnerable people, e.g. someone looking lost or alone
- buying drinks for people who are already intoxicated or gifts for vulnerable people who may appear easy to groom
- suspicious behaviour around certain times and venues, e.g. loitering near a school at lunchtime or waiting for someone to pass by who looks vulnerable
- inappropriate use of technology, e.g. phones for upskirting (a photograph taken, usually without consent, underneath a woman's skirt or dress)

Indicators of abuse

There are several identifying indicators of abuse that security operatives can look out for, these can include:

- restricting freedom of individuals, e.g. the victim is not allowed to talk to anyone on their own
- unexplained bruising
- lack of confidence and insecurity – this may be someone you know that you have noticed has changed from a lively outgoing person to someone who is withdrawn
- change of personal circumstances, including cleanliness and general appearance



Allegations of sexual assault

Security operatives regularly wear uniforms. Some people find this reassuring and may choose to tell the operative about the abuse that they have been subjected to. This is called a disclosure.

Every organisation has a policy on what action to take if a member of staff or customer discloses information to you. You must follow the procedures when dealing with allegations of sexual assault. You must in the first instance:

- safeguard the victim by making sure they have a safe space to stay that is separate from the assailant
- inform your manager or your supervisor as soon as possible
- notify the police
- record and document all information at the first opportunity

Anti-social behaviour

As a security operative, you should always try to be positive and productive in your attitude when dealing with members of the public that are demonstrating anti-social behaviour.

You should:

- follow your organisation's policies and procedures
- speak to the person
- explain the situation and the risks of the anti-social behaviour
- explain the consequences if the anti-social behaviour continues
- remain calm
- ensure that your colleagues know about the situation and that you have back-up if needed
- remain vigilant
- conduct high-profile patrols
- promote early intervention
- use positive, non-aggressive communication
- promptly report incidents
- accurately record incidents
- liaise with police and other appropriate agencies