

## Vulnerable Customers

Everyone can be vulnerable at some point in their lives. Some groups may be more prone to vulnerability than others but don't make any assumptions – and, if you think someone is in a vulnerable situation, have a think about what you can do to help. It doesn't always mean prioritising someone's matter or treating them differently, but you do need to be sensitive to their needs, ensure anything relevant is recorded appropriately and provide the support or assistance that they might need.

- Employees should always be on the lookout for customers who are more vulnerable, and should learn how to deal with difficult, sensitive situations even if they don't happen often
- If a customer volunteers information about their personal life, then acknowledge it – show empathy, not sympathy, and listen to them
- Ensure that you maintain boundaries between you and the customer: manage their expectations, inform them of the limits of the help you can offer and do not become emotionally attached
- Remember that, under the Equality Act 2010, we need to ensure that we make reasonable adjustments so if a customer does mention something, ask them “is there anything we can do to support you/is there any way we can adapt the way we communicate with you?”
- Sometimes, customers may be in very desperate situations – they might feel helpless, depressed or suicidal and we may not be the best people to help: if you think someone else is better placed to give them support, then feel free to offer them their details. You can find a list on the next page
- If you are genuinely concerned for someone's immediate welfare, then speak with your manager about the situation and they will decide whether there is anything further we should do
- If you're ever not sure what to do, or how we can help someone, speak to your manager

### Useful phone numbers

The Samaritans: 116 123

Age UK: 0800 169 2081

Mind: 0800 123 3393

Citizens Advice Bureau: 0345 404 0506