

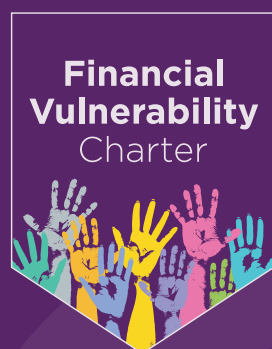


**A SAFE**  
PAIR OF HANDS

# CONSUMER GUIDE

**WE CAN ALL FIND OURSELVES IN VULNERABLE CIRCUMSTANCES AT SOME TIME IN OUR LIVES**

This guide explains how a professional services (personal finance, legal or accountancy) firm or individual who has committed to the Financial Vulnerability Taskforce **Charter** will seek to support you.





# YOUR GUIDE TO THE FINANCIAL VULNERABILITY TASKFORCE AND ITS CHARTER

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## WHAT IS THE FINANCIAL VULNERABILITY TASKFORCE?

The Financial Vulnerability Taskforce is an independent representative body whose ultimate purpose is to promote greater understanding, encourage appropriate behaviours and establish good practice in respect of the delivery of professional services to those who find themselves in vulnerable circumstances.

The Financial Vulnerability Taskforce is part of the Consumer Duty Alliance Community Interest Company.

## WHAT IS ITS CHARTER?

At the heart of this initiative is a Charter which underpins the work of the Taskforce and sets out how professionals who commit to it are expected to work with customers in vulnerable circumstances.

By committing to the Charter, a professional services firm or individual is committing to use their best endeavours to provide you with a service that recognises your unique circumstances and delivers the same outcomes that you would expect if you were not in vulnerable circumstances.

## A SAFE PAIR OF HANDS WHEN YOU NEED THEM MOST

Vulnerability is something that can affect us all; through unexpected events such as illness, loss of employment, divorce or even the sudden acquisition of wealth through inheritance or a lottery win.

While some health issues can lead to permanent vulnerability, fortunately in most cases it is a temporary phenomenon.

But when it happens, you need to be assured that the professionals who support you fully understand its consequences and how best to continue to provide the highest quality service in these changed circumstances.

When professional services firms and individuals commit to the Charter, they agree to abide at all times to its commitments.





# WHAT TO EXPECT FROM PROFESSIONAL SERVICES FIRMS AND INDIVIDUALS WHO COMMIT TO THE CHARTER

You can find out more about the Financial Vulnerability Taskforce and view its Charter at [www.consumerduty.org/about/about-the-fvt](http://www.consumerduty.org/about/about-the-fvt)

## 1. MAKING OUR SERVICES EASIER TO UNDERSTAND

Recognising that many consumers may find it difficult to understand many of the technical and specialist concepts and terms used by professional services, we will take extra care to explain things in an accessible way. We will only proceed once we are satisfied, that you fully understand the implications of the service or advice being given.

## 2. PLACING YOUR INTERESTS ABOVE ALL ELSE

At all times your needs will take priority over the financial interests of our firm and we will always use all reasonable endeavours to provide you with an appropriate, personalised service that takes into account your personal situation and any vulnerable circumstances.

## 3. MAKING OUR SERVICES AND THEIR COST TRANSPARENT

We will ensure that you understand the total cost and nature of our services before, during and after any agreement to deliver them.

## 4. UNDERSTANDING HOW YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES MIGHT MAKE YOU VULNERABLE

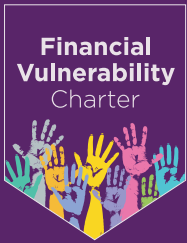
We understand that vulnerability can be physical, mental, emotional or simply the result of a lack of understanding. Being dynamic in nature, it may be short-lived or longer term, sometimes permanent, transient, recurring or fluctuating over time and may be hidden. We will act appropriately and with sensitivity at all times.

## 5. NOT MAKING ANY ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT YOU

All clients will be treated fairly, regardless of their identity, age, gender, race, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, religion or belief and we will guard against making any assumptions about you.

## 6. NOT LABELLING YOU

Using appropriate language is important. For example, as adopters of the Charter we recognise that vulnerability relates to circumstances and not to a category of person and will not seek to label you as a vulnerable person but someone who is currently in vulnerable circumstances.



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# WHAT TO EXPECT FROM PROFESSIONAL SERVICES FIRMS AND INDIVIDUALS WHO COMMIT TO THE CHARTER - continued

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## 7. DEALING WITH YOU SENSITIVELY

We understand that people in vulnerable circumstances are often unaware of their vulnerability and, where they are aware, might not acknowledge it nor wish to be described as vulnerable.

We therefore acknowledge a heightened professional obligation towards those in vulnerable circumstances and the need for raised awareness, greater sensitivity, and additional technical competencies.

## 8. ADAPTING PROCESSES AND MAINTAINING YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY

If you are considered to be in vulnerable circumstances, you will be encouraged to recognise them, safe in the knowledge that business processes and professional services will be adapted where necessary to ensure that you do not suffer detriment at any point.

You can also expect outcomes to be achieved that are at least as good as for those who are not in vulnerable circumstances.

We will also maintain confidentiality and ensure behaviours are fully compliant with all relevant legislation.

## 9. ENSURING STAFF ARE KNOWLEDGEABLE AND APPROPRIATELY TRAINED

We will make sure all members of our firm deal compassionately, empathetically and effectively with those in vulnerable circumstances by raising awareness of vulnerability within our firm and by providing appropriate training in supporting those in vulnerable circumstances.

## 10. TAKING APPROPRIATE ACTION IF YOU ARE IN HARM'S WAY

In those rare situations where it is recognised that a client in vulnerable circumstances may be in immediate danger of significant abuse or harm, or may need immediate support, we will take action to mitigate the risks they face including contacting the appropriate authorities if necessary. Examples of abuse or harm include coercion and control from a third party and scams.

Find out more about the Financial Vulnerability Taskforce at [www.consumerduty.org](http://www.consumerduty.org)