

**Safeguarding Adults at Risk**

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| **Version Control** |
| **Approved by the Management Committee on 16th December 2021** | **Reviewed** | January 2024 |

1. **Introduction**

MYMY: Mind Yourself and Your Mate is committed to ensuring that adults at Risk of Harm (and/or any adults in need of protection) who may use our services are not abused and that working practices minimise the risk of such abuse.

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights; it can take many forms. The staff and volunteers in MYMY are committed to practice which promotes the welfare of adults at risk and safeguards them from harm.

Staff and volunteers in our organisation accept and recognise our responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues that cause adults harm, and to establish and maintain a safe environment for them. We will not tolerate any form of abuse wherever it occurs or whoever is responsible. We are committed to promoting an atmosphere of inclusion, transparency and openness and are open to feedback from the people who use our services, carers, advocates, our staff and our volunteers with a view to how we may continuously improve our services/activities.

This policy ensures that MYMY is clear on the requirements and that if abuse happens, it can be identified and dealt with.

MYMY has two nominated Adult Safeguarding Champions. MYMY volunteers and committee members directly involved with adults at risk have been vetted through Access NI to ensure they are not barred from working in a regulated activity with adults. Access NI provides a criminal record disclosure service in Northern Ireland (http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni). Background checks allow for safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups, including children and adults at risk.

**2.0 MYMYs Commitment to Safeguard Adults at Risk of Harm**

We will safeguard the adults we work with and care for by:

* Adhering to our adult safeguarding policy and ensuring that it is supported by robust procedures;
* Carefully following the procedures laid down for the recruitment and selection of MYMY staff and volunteers including a full application and interview process before being involved in activities;
* Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training;
* Implementing clear procedures for raising awareness of and responding to abuse within the organisation and for reporting concerns to statutory agencies that need to know, while involving adults at risk and their carers appropriately;
* Ensuring general safety and risk management procedures are adhered to;
* Promoting full participation and having clear procedures for dealing with concerns and complaints;
* Safeguarding adults at risk by implementing a code of behaviour for staff and volunteers.

MYMY will review our policy, procedures, code of behaviour and practice at regular intervals, at least once every three years.

**3.0 Definitions**

**3.1 Definition of An Adult at Risk**

An adult in need of protection is a person aged 18 years or over whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

1. Personal characteristics AND/OR
2. Life circumstances

**3.2 Definition of An Adult in Need of Protection**

An adult in need of protection is a person aged 18 years or over whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

1. Personal characteristics AND/OR
2. Life circumstances AND
3. Who is unable to protect their own well-being, property, assets, rights or other interest AND
4. Where the action or inaction of another person or persons is causing or is likely to cause him/her to be harmed.

**3.3 Why Do We Need to Protect Adults at Risk?**

Adults at risk have the right to live their lives free from abuse. Everyone should treat vulnerable people with respect and dignity. They should be able to choose how to live their lives independently and receive support in doing this. Adults at risk are entitled to have their civil and human rights upheld and to live a life free from abuse. They need to be treated with respect and dignity, be able to choose how to live their lives independently. They should be afforded the opportunity to participate in their local community as active citizens.

**4.0 Definition of Abuse**

'Abuse is a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to another individual or violates their human or civil rights.'

* The abuse may be a single act or repeated over time. It may take one form or a multiple of forms. lack of appropriate action can also be a form of abuse. Abuse can occur in a relationship where there is an expectation of trust and can be perpetrated by a person / persons, in breach of that trust, who have influence over the life of the Adult at Risk, whether they be formal or informal carers, volunteers, family members or others. It can also Managing personal information, confidentiality and Information sharing; and occur outside such a relationship.

Abuse can include physical, financial, material, sexual, psychological, discriminatory, emotional abuse and neglect. Abuse can take place in any setting, public or private, and can be perpetuated by anyone.

To protect against abuse, consent needs to be present. For consent to be valid, it must be given voluntarily by an appropriately informed person who can consent to what is being proposed.

Consent is a clear indication of a willingness to take part in an activity or to accept a service which can be signaled verbally, by gesture, by willing participation or in writing. No one can give, or withhold, consent on behalf of another adult (unless special legal provision has been made for this).

**4.1 Forms of Abuse** can be categorised as follows (the list is not exhaustive):

**4.1.1 Physical Abuse**

Including:

Hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, burning, giving a person medicine that may harm them, restraining, disciplining a person in an inappropriate way, confinement.

Possible Signs:

Fractures, bruising, burns, pain, marks, not wanting to be touched, repeated attendance at GP surgery/hospital, delay between injury and seeking medical attention.

**4.1.2 Psychological Abuse**

Including:

Emotional abuse, verbal abuse, humiliation, bullying, the use of threats, provoking fear of violence, shouting, yelling and swearing, blaming, controlling, intimidation and/or coercion.

Possible Signs:

Being withdrawn, too eager to do everything they are asked, showing compulsive behaviour, not being able to do things they used to, not being able to concentrate or focus.

**4.1.3 Financial or Material Abuse**

Including: Stealing from the person, cheating them, using them for financial gain, putting pressure on them about wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, controlling or withholding pension, benefits or access to their personal finance, misusing or stealing their property, possessions or benefits.

Possible Signs:

Having unusual difficulty with finances, not having enough money, being too protective of money and things they own paying bills, not having normal home comforts.

**4.1.4 Sexual Violence and Abuse**

 Including: Direct or indirect sexual activity where the vulnerable adult cannot or does not agree to it, stalking, grooming, inappropriate touching, indecent exposure, showing pornography and/or being involved in the production of sexually abusive material .

Possible Signs:

Physical symptoms include genital itching or soreness, genital bruising or bleeding, having a sexually transmitted disease, complaining of stomach and/or abdominal pain, using bad language, not wanting to be touched, behaving in a sexually inappropriate way, changes in appearance, sexual behaviour and/or language.

**4.1.5 Neglect or Acts of Omission**

Including: Withdrawing or not giving the help that an adult at risk needs, so causing them to suffer.

Possible Signs:

Having pain or discomfort, being very hungry, loss of weight, feeling pain/discomfort, thirsty or untidy, failing health, untreated medical needs, lack of hygiene, changes in behaviour.

 **4.1.6 Discriminatory Abuse**

Including: Abusing a person because of their ethnic origin, religion, language, age, sexuality, gender or disability.

Possible Signs:

The person is not receiving the care services they require, their carer is overly critical or makes insulting remarks about the person, the person is made to dress differently from how they wish.

Incidents of abuse may be multiple, either to one person in a continuing relationship or service context, or to more than one person at a time.

Any or all types of abuse may be perpetrated as the result of deliberate intent and targeting of adults at risk people, negligence or ignorance.

A set of commonly agreed principles underpins this regional procedural guidance. Such principles flow from respect for the rights of vulnerable adults who are entitled to:

* privacy
* be treated with respect and dignity
* lead an independent life and be enabled to do so
* be able to choose how to lead their lives
* the protection of the law; have their rights upheld regardless of ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, impairment or disability, age and religious or cultural background could fulfil personal aspirations and realise potential in all aspects of daily life.

If abuse occurs, adults at risk of harm also need to be assured that they will be protected by the law and have their civil and human rights upheld in any investigation that takes place.

**5.0 Responsibilities**

It is important that all concerns about possible abuse, however trivial, should be reported. A concern may come from any person who has knowledge or a reasonable suspicion that an adult at risk has been, or is at risk of, being abused.

Everyone working with adults at risk has a duty to report suspected, alleged or confirmed incidents of abuse. In a situation where a volunteer or committee member has concerns, they should report this immediately to their designated officer.

MYMY will ensure that appropriate measures are in place to report when an abuse has taken place and to ensure that the rights of vulnerable adults are protected. Once an abusive situation is identified, the Adult Safeguarding Champion fills in the incident report and proceeds accordingly. The Adult Safeguarding Champion will take the steps to report abuse to the relevant authorities. All incident reports are presented to the committee on a need-to-know basis.

MYMY has two Adult Safeguarding Champions who are responsible for Adult Protection.

MYMY staff, volunteers and committee members have a duty to identify abuse and report it. They may see or hear something happen.

* An adult may disclose an allegation to them.
* A colleague, family member or somebody else may tell them something that causes concern.
* They may notice injuries or physical signs that cause concern.

MYMY Staff, volunteers and committee members have a duty to report to the designated officer all identified abuse or suspected abuse.

MYMY will report all allegations to the appropriate bodies and agencies.

MYMY regards breach of any of the above as a matter of gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal or action against the members involved including reporting the matter the relevant authorities.

1. **Support for Staff, Volunteers and Committee members**

Staff, volunteers and committee members will receive a copy of this policy. According to the role and responsibilities of the volunteers and committee members training will be provided appropriately. Training will include induction, definition of adult at risk, reporting of incidents and allegations of abuse and yearly refresher.

The role of the staff, volunteers and committee members is supportive not investigative.

The ASC is there to support the staff, volunteers and committee members who report incidents of suspicions of potential abuse. Other support may take the form of support provided by work colleagues or support or counselling provided by an outside body if required.

Staff, volunteers and committee members themselves may also be the subject of an allegation of abuse. While support will be offered, MYMY will ensure that Social Services and/or PSNI are given all assistance pursing any investigation. Suspension and/or discipline may be implemented.

1. **Reporting and Monitoring**

Reporting procedures will be in accordance with current regulations and requirements. If an allegation of abuse, neglect or harm is made, the volunteer or committee member will immediately report the matter to the Adult Safeguarding Champion.

The Adult Safeguarding Champion will record and report the incident accordingly.

A formal written record of the allegation will be completed along with notification of the actions completed by MYMY including contacts with other agencies and PSNI.

MYMY will also inform the Independent Safeguarding Authority. All agencies will be informed of the outcome of all actions taken by MYMY as required..

The implementation of this policy will be monitored and reviewed by the committee. This policy will be reviewed on a yearly basis.

Records of training will be kept and reviewed by MYMY.

1. **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is crucial to all our work and relationships and the MYMV confidentiality policy should be adhered to except that the welfare of adults is paramount and takes precedence over it. Do not keep concerns relating to potential abuse of adults to yourself. Confidentiality may NOT be maintained if the withholding of information will prejudice the welfare of the adult.

1. **Contact information**

Allegation of the alleged abuse which occurred when the person is over 18 years old falls under the Protection of adults at Risk and needs to be reported to the Adult Safeguarding Champions, who will take the necessary steps of investigating and reporting.

**Adult Safeguarding Champions: Donna Owens and Deborah Boden**

**Seek advice from Health and Social Care**

Adult Safeguarding
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