



Safeguarding Policy (ROI)

NOW Group acknowledges that all Children and Adults at risk have the right to live a life free from abuse and exploitation. We are committed to upholding that right, to ensuring that our policies and procedures are up to date and our staff are trained to ensure the safety of all our service users. We will not tolerate any form of abuse wherever it occurs.

Introduction

Now Group's Policy on Safeguarding of Children and Adults at risk sets out the procedures for NOW Group to ensure the safety of all our participants in ROI. This mirrors the organization's approach to services in Northern Ireland which is based on NI legislation and procedures.

Policy Context

The policy *Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse – National Policy and Procedures 2014*, sets out the requirements for those with responsibility for providing services to older people. The policy notes that 'Effective safeguarding requires that services need to be provided through a person-centred model of care in a collaborative way with shared responsibility between the service users, their families and carers, health and social care professionals, service organisations and society as a whole'. The policy requires all services to have a 'publicly declared 'No Tolerance' approach to any form of abuse and must promote a culture which supports this ethos. All policies and procedures must promote welfare, reflect inclusion and transparency in the provision of services, and promote a culture of Safeguarding' (HSE 2014).

NOW Group's Safeguarding commitment statement below reflects the HSE 'no tolerance' approach to any form of abuse, ensuring that all safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and appropriate to the service provided.

NOW Group's Safeguarding Policy Statement

Our Commitment to Safeguard

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights; it can take many forms. The staff and volunteers in NOW Group are committed to practice which promotes the welfare of children and 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 and children 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.

We will endeavour to safeguard children and adults at risk by:

- Adhering to NOW Group's safeguarding policy and ensuring that it is supported by robust procedures
- Carefully following the procedures laid down for the recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers
- 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 carers and adults at risk appropriately
- Ensuring general safety and risk management procedures are adhered to
- Promoting full participation and having clear procedures for dealing with concerns and complaints
- Managing personal information, confidentiality and information sharing; and

<i>Issue Date: Sept 2024</i>	<i>Distribution: All Staff</i>
<i>Review Date: Sept 2026</i>	NOW Group Safeguarding Policy (NI)

- Safeguarding adults at risk by implementing a code of behaviour for all involved with the organisation, including visitors.

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

**Key Definitions –
Vulnerable Person**

The policy considers a Vulnerable Person as ‘an adult who may be restricted in capacity to guard himself/herself against harm or exploitation or to report such harm or exploitation. This may arise as a result of physical or intellectual impairment and risk of abuse may be influenced by both context and individual circumstances. Because of his or her vulnerability, the individual may be in receipt of a care service in his or her own home, in the community or be resident in a residential care home, nursing home or other setting.’ (HSE 2014)

Definitions of Abuse

The policy defines abuse as ‘any act, or failure to act, which results in a breach of a vulnerable person’s human rights, civil liberties, physical and mental integrity, dignity or general well being, whether intended or through negligence, including sexual relationships or financial transactions to which the person does not or cannot validly consent, or which are deliberately exploitative. Abuse may take a variety of forms.’ While the definition does not include self-neglect this is addressed by the HSE in section 3 of *Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons – Policies and Procedures* (HSE 2014)

The following information and guidance around different forms of abuse has been taken directly from the policy and will be used in NOW Group to inform staff training and awareness.

Who May Abuse?

Anyone who has contact with a vulnerable person may be abusive, including a member of their family, community or a friend, informal carer, healthcare/ social care or other worker.

Familial Abuse

Abuse of a vulnerable person by a family member.

Professional Abuse

Misuse of power and trust by professionals and a failure to act on suspected abuse, poor care practice or neglect.

Peer Abuse

Abuse, for example, of one adult with a disability by another adult with a disability.

Stranger Abuse

Abuse by someone unfamiliar to the vulnerable person.

Self-Neglect

The ROI policy highlights the HSE commitment to responding to concerns around self-neglect – “The Health Service Executive is committed to the protection of vulnerable persons who seriously neglect themselves and is concerned with vulnerable persons where concern has arisen due to the vulnerable person seriously neglecting his/her own care and welfare and putting him/herself and/or others at serious risk” (HSE 2014).

The policy points out that it is critical that the rights of vulnerable persons to lead as normal a life as possible are recognized. In particular deprivation of the following rights may constitute abuse:

<i>Issue Date: Sept 2024</i>	<i>Distribution: All Staff</i>
<i>Review Date: Sept 2026</i>	NOW Group Safeguarding Policy (NI)

- Liberty
- Privacy
- Respect and dignity
- Freedom to choose
- Opportunities to fulfil personal aspirations and realise potential in their daily lives
- Opportunity to live safely without fear of abuse in any form
- Respect for possessions

People with disabilities and older people may be particularly vulnerable due to:

- diminished social skills
- dependence on others for personal and intimate care
- capacity to report
- sensory difficulties
- isolation
- power differentials

Adults who become vulnerable have the right:

- To be accorded the same respect and dignity as any other adult, by recognising their uniqueness and personal needs.
- To be given access to knowledge and information in a manner which they can understand in order to help them make informed choices.
- To be provided with information on, and practical help in, keeping themselves safe and protecting themselves from abuse.
- To live safely without fear of violence in any form.
- To have their money, goods and possessions treated with respect and to receive equal protection for themselves and their property through the law.
- To be given guidance and assistance in seeking help as a consequence of abuse.
- To be supported in making their own decisions about how they wish to proceed in the event of abuse and to know that their wishes will be considered paramount unless it is considered necessary for their own safety or the safety of others to take an alternate course, or if required by law to do so.
- To be supported in bringing a complaint.
- To have alleged, suspected or confirmed cases of abuse investigated promptly and appropriately.
- To receive support, education and counselling following abuse.
- To seek redress through appropriate agencies.

Underpinning principles

Vulnerable persons have a right to be protected against abuse and to have any concerns regarding abusive experiences addressed. They have a right to be treated with respect and to feel safe. NOW Group's Safeguarding Policy is guided and informed by the underpinning principles contained within the policy as below

- Human Rights
- Person Centeredness
- Advocacy
- Confidentiality
- Empowerment
- Collaboration

<i>Issue Date: Sept 2024</i>	<i>Distribution: All Staff</i>
<i>Review Date: Sept 2026</i>	NOW Group Safeguarding Policy (NI)

1. We will respect the right of all our participants to be safe and secure. We will treat all participants equally and ensure that their rights in respect of confidentiality and privacy are respected.
2. We will support our participants to make informed choices by providing them with information and training relevant to their learning level to help them understand how best to keep themselves free from harm and to be able to recognise potential risk of harm while supporting them to make their own decisions in respect of exposure to risk
3. It is NOW Group policy to involve participants in all decisions relating to their participation in our services. We take full account of their views and where relevant the views of others who have an interest in their safety and wellbeing.
4. We will work from the assumption that our participants have the ability to give or withhold consent and will support participants by providing information they need to make informed choices and provide support with communication where needed. We will pay regard to the particular needs of those who lack the capacity to consent and will intervene against his or her wishes only in particular circumstances paying due regard to the law and taking advice as required from relevant statutory bodies.
5. We will work in partnership with the relevant statutory and regulatory bodies including the HSE and relevant CHO to ensure that NOW Group participants receive a continuum of protection in line with statutory requirements.
6. We will provide advocacy support to help people seek information and explore and understand their options and support them to make their own decisions. We will support people to represent their own views and enable them to be involved in decisions that would otherwise be made for them by others.

Prevention

We will endeavour to prevent harm through education of our participants to raise their awareness of abuse, how to protect themselves from abuse and how to report instances of abuse where they may occur. We will create an open but confidential environment where participants feels safe, trust is generated and therefore they feel able to disclose issues or share concerns with our staff. All participants will receive training as part of their induction into the service to raise their awareness about potential abuse and to empower and support them to report abuse by providing details of the safeguarding team and range of support available. An easy read leaflet will be provided for participants.

Protection

NOW Group safeguarding team, led by the Safeguarding Champion will follow robust reporting procedures and work with the relevant statutory agencies to take action where a disclosure is made. All relevant staff will be fully trained to be aware of signs of abuse and will take action based on the five principles above.

Taking cognisance of the safeguarding continuum (fig 1) we will ensure that safeguarding is owned at all levels within the organisations from participants to Board of Directors. The following sets out the activities and responsibilities at each level.

<i>Issue Date: Sept 2024</i>	<i>Distribution: All Staff</i>
<i>Review Date: Sept 2026</i>	NOW Group Safeguarding Policy (NI)

Safeguarding in NOW Group - ownership at all levels

<p>Board of Directors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Overall responsibility for ensuring that the Safeguarding policy is implemented and that the organisation complies with statutory requirements •Management of risk through the organisational risk register •Appointment of a Board Safeguarding Representative
<p>CEO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Directing and approving the development of NOW Group's Safeguarding Policy •Ensuring that the policy is implemented at all levels within the organisation •Ensuring that the policy is regularly reviewed.
<p>Service Manager & Safeguarding Champion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Supporting the implementation of the policy throughout NOW Group •Ensuring that the policy is updated in line with new recommendations or legislation •Maintaining the safeguarding log, and ensuring reports are made to HSC as relevant •Providing reports to Board and CEO •Overseeing mandatory training on safeguarding, risk and code of conduct
<p>Safeguarding Officers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Receive and consider concerns from staff •Consult with HSC Trust and/or PSNI •Ensure completion of relevant forms and ensure reporting is compliant with organisational and statutory guidance
<p>Staff and Volunteers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Attend safeguarding training and ensure full compliance with NOW Group safeguarding policy and procedures •Be vigilant at all times and build appropriate relationships with NOW Group participants where they feel safe to disclose if they may be at risk •Strive to prevent adults being at risk of harm through providing them with appropriate training and information to enable them to make informed choices to protect themselves from harm.
<p>Participants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Participate in induction, annual safeguarding training and other information sessions •Have opportunity to discuss any concerns with key worker or other relevant NOW Group staff at an early stage to enable us to provide appropriate support and intervention.

Issue Date: Sept 2024

Distribution: All Staff

Review Date: Sept 2026

NOW Group Safeguarding Policy (NI)

Implementation of the policy

1. NOW Group's safeguarding policy statement is clearly communicated to all staff, volunteers and relevant stakeholders and everyone involved with the organisation is made aware that the policy exists, what it aims to achieve and the steps that will be taken to achieve those aims.
2. NOW Group's safeguarding policy is supported by robust procedures and guidelines for staff and volunteers.
 - a. There is a written procedure for staff/volunteers for responding to, recording and reporting concerns about actual or suspected adult abuse to a member of NOW Group's Safeguarding Team.
 - b. There is a procedure for the Safeguarding Team to report concerns about actual or suspected adult abuse to the appropriate authorities.
 - c. There is a procedure for reporting and responding to allegations made against staff and volunteers
 - d. There is a system to communicate the reporting procedure to staff/volunteers to ensure they are familiar with it.
3. All NOW staff will receive mandatory training on safeguarding practice and procedures relevant to their level of contact with participants including training via the HSE portal. This includes ensuring that all staff/volunteers are aware of what is meant by adult abuse, where abuse can occur and who can abuse. All staff are aware of the risks of disclosure around suicide and have completed Suicide Awareness Training.
4. NOW Group's Safeguarding Policy, procedures, guidelines and Code of Behaviour will be subject to regular review to ensure that they are fit for purpose; and at least once every three years.
5. The safeguarding policy is supported by a Code of Behaviour (see appendix 1) for all involved with the organisation, including visitors. The Code of Behaviour is communicated to all staff and volunteers on induction and is reviewed regularly with staff through NOW Group's mandatory training programme. Any breach of this code will be addressed through the disciplinary policy.
6. The safeguarding policy is integral to and supported by other organisational policies and procedures e.g. Health & Safety, Bullying and Harassment and Equal Opportunities, aimed at promoting safe and healthy working practices.
 - a. There is a Safeguarding Team which will be overseen by NOW Group's Safeguarding Champion in conjunction with the respective Service Manager who has responsibility for overseeing effective implementation of the safeguarding policy and procedures throughout the organisation.?
 - b. NOW has a whistleblowing policy and procedure.

<i>Issue Date: Sept 2024</i>	<i>Distribution: All Staff</i>
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