

NOW



Safeguarding Policy (NI)

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 NI. This mirrors the organization's approach to services in the Republic of Ireland which is based on ROI legislation and procedures.

Policy Context

The policy is informed by the following:

Adult Safeguarding, Prevention and Protection in Partnership (July 2016) Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and Department of Justice

Adult Safeguarding Operational Procedures (September 2016) Northern Ireland Adult Safeguarding Partnership

Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (DoH, August 2017)

The policy ***Adult Safeguarding, Prevention and Protection in Partnership (2016)*** emphasises that safeguarding is everyone's business and aims for a cross departmental approach as safeguarding is the business of all: individuals, communities, service providers and government departments. It looks at safeguarding as a continuum, encompassing activity which prevents harm from occurring in the first place and activity which protects adults at risk where harm has occurred or is likely to occur without intervention.

The policy introduced a change in terminology, moving away from the concept of vulnerability and introducing the concept of an adult being at 'risk of harm' placing the responsibility for harm caused on to those who perpetrate it (DHSSPS 2016). The policy states:

'Adult Safeguarding is based on fundamental human rights and on respecting the rights of adults as individuals, treating all adults with dignity and respecting their right to choose. It involves empowering and enabling all adults, including those at risk of harm, to manage their own health and well-being and to keep themselves safe. It extends to intervening to protect where harm has occurred or is likely to occur and promoting access to justice. All adults at risk should be central to any actions and decisions affecting their lives'

The primary responsibility for safeguarding children and young people and promoting their welfare rests with their parents and carers. They provide help, support and protection to their children. Extended family, friends, neighbours and the wider community can help parents and carers to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children.

Those who work with children, young people or families, in whatever capacity, have a particular responsibility to promote their welfare and ensure they are safe.

At NOW Group we adhere strongly to these principles as outlined in the following policy statement.

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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
- 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

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'¹.

The main forms of abuse are -

- Physical abuse
- Sexual violence and abuse
- Psychological/emotional abuse
- Financial abuse
- Institutional abuse
- Neglect
- Exploitation

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Related definitions include - Domestic violence and abuse, human trafficking and hate crime. The DHSSPS Adult Safeguarding policy does not include self-harm or self-neglect within the definition of an adult in need of protection but acknowledges that each case will require a professional HSC assessment to determine an appropriate response and to ascertain if it is a manifestation of third party abuse which the adult feels unable to disclose.

Harm

Harm is the impact on the victim of abuse, exploitation or neglect. It is the result of any action whether by commission or omission, deliberate, or as the result of a lack of knowledge or awareness which may result in the impairment of physical, intellectual, emotional, or mental health or well-being.¹

A Child

The Children Order defines a 'child' as a person under the age of 18.

Child Protection

Child protection refers specifically to the activity that is undertaken to protect individual children or young people who are suffering or are likely to suffer significant harm.

Adult at risk of harm

An '**Adult at risk of harm**' is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

- a) **personal characteristics**
- and/or**
- b) **life circumstances**

Personal characteristics may include, but are not limited to, age, disability, special educational needs, illness, mental or physical frailty or impairment of, or disturbance in, the functioning of the mind or brain.

Life circumstances may include, but are not limited to, isolation, socio-economic factors and environmental living conditions.

Adult in need of protection

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

- a) **personal characteristics**
- and/or**
- b) **life circumstances**
- and**
- c) who is **unable to protect** their own well-being, property, assets, rights or other interests
- and**
- d) where the **action or inaction of another person or persons** is causing, or is likely to cause, him/her to be harmed'²

¹ Adult Safeguarding, Prevention and Protection in Partnership (2015) DHSSPS & DOJ

² 'Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership' (2015) DHSDPD & DOJ

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Underpinning principles

NOW's Safeguarding Policy is guided and informed by the five underpinning principles contained within the regional safeguarding policy Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership (DOH & DOJ 2015) as cited below

(1) A Rights-Based Approach: To promote and respect an adult's right to be safe and secure; to freedom from harm and coercion; to equality of treatment; to the protection of the law; to privacy; to confidentiality; and freedom from discrimination.

(2) An Empowering Approach: To empower adults to make informed choices about their lives, to maximise their opportunities to participate in wider society, to keep themselves safe and free from harm and enabled to manage their own decisions in respect of exposure to risk.

(3) A Person-Centred Approach: To promote and facilitate full participation of adults in all decisions affecting their lives taking full account of their views, wishes and feelings and, where appropriate, the views of others who have an interest in his or her safety and well-being.

(4) A Consent-Driven Approach: To make a presumption that the adult has the ability to give or withhold consent; to make informed choices; to help inform choice through the provision of information, and the identification of options and alternatives; to have particular regard to the needs of individuals who require support with communication, advocacy or who lack the capacity to consent; and intervening in the life of an adult against his or her wishes only in particular circumstances, for very specific purposes and always in accordance with the law

(5) A Collaborative Approach: To acknowledge that adult safeguarding will be most effective when it has the full support of the wider public and of safeguarding partners across the statutory, voluntary, community, independent and faith sectors working together and is delivered in a way where roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability are clearly defined and understood. Working in partnership and a person-centred approach will work hand-in-hand.

We will deliver on these principles by ensuring the following

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 relevant Health and Social Care Trusts and the Education and Training Inspectorate to ensure that NOW Group participants receive a continuum of protection in line with statutory requirements.

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Safeguarding in NOW Group - ownership at all levels



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Implementation of the policy

1. NOW'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'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'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 receive mandatory training on safeguarding practice and procedures relevant to their level of contact with participants.
4. NOW'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 for all involved with the organisation. 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's Safeguarding Champion, who has responsibility for overseeing effective implementation of the safeguarding policy and procedures throughout the organisation.
 - b. NOW has a whistleblowing policy and procedure.

Operation Encompass

We are an Operation Encompass organisation. Operation Encompass is an early intervention partnership between local Police and our organisation, aimed at supporting children who are victims of domestic violence and abuse. As an organisation, we recognise that children's exposure to domestic violence is a traumatic event for them.

Children experiencing domestic abuse are negatively impacted by this exposure. Domestic abuse has been identified as an Adverse Childhood Experience and can lead to emotional, physical and psychological harm. Operation Encompass aims to mitigate this harm by enabling the provision of immediate support. This rapid provision of support within our organisation means children are better safeguarded against the short, medium and long-term effects of domestic abuse.

As an Operation Encompass organisation, when the police have attended a domestic incident and one of our participants is present, they will make contact with NOW Group at the start of the next working day to share this information with a member of our safeguarding team. This will allow NOW Group's safeguarding team to provide immediate emotional support to this child as well as giving the designated officer greater insight into any wider safeguarding concerns.

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This information will be treated in strict confidence, like any other category of child protection information. The information received on an Operation Encompass call from the Police will only be shared outside of the safeguarding team on a proportionate and need to know basis. All members of the safeguarding team will complete online Operation Encompass training, so they are able to take these calls. Any staff working with participants will be made aware of Operation Encompass and the need to pass these calls on with urgency to a member of the Safeguarding team.

Legislation and Codes of Practice relating to Safeguarding in Northern Ireland

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007
Health and Social Care Act 2008
The Human Rights Act 1998
The European Convention on Human Rights
UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
The UN Principles for Older Person's (1991)
DHSSPS Code of Practice on Protecting the Confidentiality of the Service User Information (2009)
Data Protection Act 2018
Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (DoH, August 2017)
United Nations Convention on the Rights Of the Child (UNCRC)
The Domestic Abuse Information Sharing with Schools etc. Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022

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