

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy Statement	1
3. Best Practice in Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults	2
4. Definitions of Abuse	3
5. Children’s and Vulnerable Adults’ Rights to be Protected	4
6. Safeguarding Procedure	5
7. Staff Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers	7
8. Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers	7
9. National and Local Policies, Procedures and Contact Information	8
10. Review Date	8

1. Introduction

The Autistic Society Greater Manchester Area (I AM) is committed to the protection of children and vulnerable adults from harm of all kinds. We recognise that all children and vulnerable adults have rights, command our respect and must be treated with dignity.

This policy must be consistently adhered to by all I AM staff and volunteers, to minimise opportunities for children and vulnerable adults to suffer harm.

This policy will be at the forefront of any staff selection and training.

2. Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy Statement

As an organisation I AM is committed to the protection of children and vulnerable adults from harm of every kind and will take swift and diligent action should they suspect a child or young person or vulnerable adult is being harmed in any way.

The individuals using the services of I AM have high dependency levels and, with their parents and carers, rely on the trust, respect and decency of the staff as guardians of their safety and protection.

All staff working at I AM share a responsibility for the safeguarding and wellbeing of all individuals in our care and work together to provide this effectively.

Children and vulnerable adults have a right to protection. It is the responsibility of everyone to ensure this protection. This is particularly true in relation to individuals with autism who, due to their condition, are potentially vulnerable and at higher risk.



SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY

Staff recognise that children and adults have the right:

- To be valued as individuals
- To be treated with dignity and respect
- To be kept safe

We will endeavour to safeguard children and adults by:

- Adopting safeguarding guidelines through a code of behaviour for staff and volunteers;
- Ensuring all front-line delivery and other relevant staff receive training and updates in safeguarding children and vulnerable adults;
- Sharing information about child and adult protection and good practice with staff, volunteers, service users and their families and carers;
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents, carers and service users appropriately;
- Following carefully the procedures for recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers in line with good practice regarding child and vulnerable adult safeguarding.

3. Best Practice in Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

In all interventions the child's or vulnerable adult's welfare must be paramount. This overrides all other considerations.

The complexity of safeguarding requires a comprehensive, coordinated and "working together" approach for all those agencies and professionals who are involved with children and vulnerable adults.

A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and vulnerable adults and respecting the rights and needs of families and carers. Where there is conflict the child or vulnerable adult's interest must always remain paramount.

We as an organisation will endeavour to work with all relevant agencies in the best interests of children, vulnerable adults and their families. We have well-established links with a number of agencies that are involved with children and vulnerable adults e.g. Children and Young People's Services, Social Care, Care Units, Health and Education Professionals. Such inter-agency working requires each agency to have a proper understanding of each other's functions in relation to children and vulnerable adults and to have good communication with each other. It is essential for all staff and volunteers to be aware of the possible signs and symptoms of possible abuse and their responsibility to safeguard children and vulnerable adults. Staff should also have some understanding of safeguarding processes and how they operate.



SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY

Confidentiality

I AM will not pass onto others information of a personal or sensitive nature about the child or vulnerable adult, their life or family to others without their consent, unless not to do so would compromise the safety of the child, adult or other people.

However, the principle that 'the welfare of the child is paramount' means that considerations of confidentiality will not override the right of children or vulnerable adults to be protected from harm. **There is also the Common Law duty to report.** Staff should not promise to keep secrets. Information of a confidential nature will only be communicated on a 'need to know' basis. Written records of a restricted and confidential nature are securely stored.

4. Definitions of Abuse

Children and vulnerable adults may be abused by a family member, a carer (i.e. a person who has actual custody of a child or adult, such as a foster parent or a staff member in a residential home), a peer, an acquaintance or a stranger who may be an adult or a young person. The abuse may be the result of a deliberate act or of a failure on the part of a parent or carer to act or to provide proper care, or both. There are different types of abuse and a child or vulnerable adult may suffer more than one type of abuse.

Categories of abuse of children include:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect

Vulnerable adults may also be subject to these same categories of abuse. Additional categories of abuse are recognised for vulnerable adults:

- Domestic violence
- Financial or material abuse
- Modern slavery
- Organisational or institutional abuse
- Discriminatory abuse
- Self-neglect

Abuse may be a single event or may occur repeatedly over time. Children or vulnerable adults may exhibit signs of being abused but often there are no signs. It is important that staff, volunteers and carers are vigilant and alert to how children and vulnerable adults present. Children and vulnerable adults who have a disability may be particularly vulnerable to abuse as they are more dependent on care and may be less able to tell anyone.

Prevention of abuse depends on good observation and on knowledge of the child or vulnerable adult as an individual. Safeguarding is about being alert to the possibility of abuse and preventing situations where it



SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY

could happen. The importance of being aware of children's and vulnerable adults' particular needs and capabilities is that it enables staff to be more responsive to an individual's reactions and situations where they may be suffering abuse but are unable to tell anyone.

WARNING SIGNS

Often children or vulnerable adults may not say directly that they have been abused but may show signs that can indicate they are subject to abuse. There may be other reasons for these behaviour but if an individual is showing one or more of these behaviours the possibility of abuse should be considered.

- Changes in the child or vulnerable adult's behaviour
- Change in routines
- Actual physical injuries
- Change in mood / withdrawn
- Change in eating / sleeping patterns
- Acting in an inappropriate sexual way
- Regression in behaviour
- Increased levels of anxiety
- Seeming to keep a secret
- Unreasonable fear of certain people or places

These signs and symptoms should be used as a guide and not a checklist because there may be a reasonable explanation for a particular behaviour. Importantly, individuals who are being abused may show no signs of abuse. Diagnosis of abuse is rarely straightforward and is often complex and frequently involves multi-agency assessment. It is not the responsibility of staff or volunteers to determine if a child or adult has been abused. However, the crucial message to staff and volunteers is that if concerns, suspicions or allegations arise action must always be taken – doing nothing is not an option.

5. Children's and Vulnerable Adults' Rights to be Protected

I AM's Safeguarding Policy seeks to reflect the principles of all safeguarding legislation, in particular, the recognition of children's and vulnerable adults' rights. As an organisation we wish to acknowledge and uphold their rights to:

Be safe: Teach children and vulnerable adults that everyone has rights, such as the right to be safe, which should not be taken away.

Protect their body: Children and vulnerable adults need to know that their body belongs to them.

Say NO: Children and vulnerable adults must be told that it is all right to say no to anyone who tries to do something to them that they feel is wrong or makes them feel uncomfortable. Most children and



SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY

vulnerable adults are taught to listen to and obey adults and older people without question; they need to know that it is all right to say NO.

Get help when bullied: Individuals with autistic spectrum condition (ASC) may be particularly vulnerable to being bullied due to the nature of their condition which may lead them to be perceived as “different” or socially disruptive. I AM has a specific anti-bullying policy and all staff and volunteers should be aware of this and follow its provisions should they become aware of, or suspect, bullying of or by members or anyone else.

Tell: Children and vulnerable adults must be confident that staff will not be angry with them when they speak about any incident that frightens, confuses them or makes them feel unhappy.

Be believed: When children and vulnerable adults are told that they can go to someone for help they need to know they will be taken seriously and supported.

Not to keep secrets: Children and vulnerable adults need to know that they should not keep secrets about behaviour that makes them feel uncomfortable – even if someone has told them that they should not tell others.

6. Safeguarding Procedure

Everyone in the organisation, in whatever capacity, has responsibility for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. A vital part of safeguarding is to pass on concerns, suspicions or allegations in a timely and consistent manner. It is the policy of I AM to encourage staff to be proactive and vigilant in sharing concerns and following these reporting procedures.

How to react and what to do

There is not one simple set of rules to follow in responding to these situations.

However, the actions of staff and volunteers who are told of abuse should be guided by the following key points:

DO's and DON'Ts

DO stay calm.

DO listen and hear. Give time to the person to say what they want.

DO reassure that they have done the right thing in telling.

DO record in writing as soon as possible using the exact words used by the individual as far as possible.



SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY

DO NOT panic.

DO NOT ask leading questions.

DO NOT promise to keep secrets.

DO NOT ask the child or vulnerable adult repeat the story unnecessarily.

DO follow our formal Safeguarding Procedure – see below.

1. Our prime concern must be the interests and safety of children and vulnerable adults. In urgent situations where immediate action is required, ensure that the individual is safe while you are taking action.
2. On every occasion that any member of staff or volunteer has reason to suspect that any child or vulnerable adult has suffered abuse, or is at risk of suffering abuse, report to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) using I AM's Incident Reporting procedure and form.
3. It is important that an accurate record of all that has occurred is kept, stating the facts of the incident (using the child or vulnerable adult's words), time, explanation and action taken. This should be recorded on I AM's Incident Report Form which will be retained in accordance with the Incident Reporting procedure.
4. On no account should staff make physical examinations or pursue enquiries beyond the initial statement.
5. Having been informed the CEO will if appropriate complete the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Referral Form, submit it to the relevant Local Authority Social Care team within Greater Manchester (see links in section 9) and take any further necessary steps.
6. Social Care in accepting the referral become responsible for determining what action is to be taken, including advising parents. It is not the responsibility of I AM staff to make enquiries or to notify parents when abuse is suspected.
7. The CEO will arrange for the individual's record on I AM's database to be flagged as being subject to a report, to ensure that future staff are aware that a report has been made. The copy of the Incident Report and if completed the Multi-agency Safeguarding Referral Form should be filed in accordance with the Incident Reporting procedure.
8. Should the disclosure or suspicion involve a member of I AM's staff or trustees, the CEO must refer the matter to the relevant Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) (see list of contacts in "I AM



SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY

Safeguarding, Whistleblowing and Complaints Policies: Lead Contacts”). In exceptional circumstances, the staff member made aware of the allegation must report the matter directly to the Chair of the Board of Trustees, who will report as above.

9. In the absence of the CEO refer all issues immediately to the senior member of staff on duty who will advise on the most appropriate course of action and/or contact the appropriate persons.

7. Staff Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers

- All I AM staff and volunteers must complete an application form and references will be taken.
- All staff must provide several types of evidence of ID, including a birth certificate. If the name on the birth certificate does not match current ID evidence of change of name must be provided (e.g. marriage certificate, copy of deed poll).
- All I AM staff and volunteers in positions of direct contact with children and vulnerable adults are required to have an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check in place which has been approved in line with the Equal Opportunities Policy and Recruitment Policy.
- Good practice guidelines are in place especially to ensure the safety and welfare of individuals using I AM services.
- All staff and volunteers will follow a full induction programme, including training on I AM’s Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.
- All staff and volunteers will be expected to adhere to all I AM’s policies and procedures.
- All staff will follow an ongoing programme of supervision and appraisal.
- Staff where appropriate will attend external child and vulnerable adults safeguarding training programmes at the time of recruitment and every three years (or less at management discretion) thereafter. This applies to trustees, all staff working in front-line roles or in regular direct contact with service users regardless of hours worked (e.g. key workers and support workers and their line managers), and support staff (e.g. finance and administration) working 14 hours per week or more. Training undertaken in other roles or employment may be acceptable, subject to proof of content and completion and providing it has taken place in the last two years before recruitment or is updated at no more than three-yearly intervals.
- All staff, volunteers and parents will have access to a complaints procedure.
- All staff will have a written job description.
- All staff will have a probationary period of six months.
- All volunteers will have a probationary period of three months.

8. Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers

Staff and volunteers are bound at all times by the I AM Code of Conduct for staff and volunteers (see separate Code).

Staff and volunteers may occasionally be requested to provide care of a personal nature for service users, particularly if they are very young or have other disabilities. I AM is not set up to offer personal care of this nature and these tasks should be avoided if possible (e.g. if the individual has a parent or carer available to



SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY

do this instead) and if essential should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the individual and their parents or carers. If an emergency arises requiring this type of care parents or carers should be fully informed, preferably immediately or if not as soon as reasonably possible afterwards.

9. National and Local Policies, Procedures and Contact Information

For details of who to contact in connection with safeguarding matters, please see separate list (I AM Safeguarding, Whistleblowing and Complaints Policies: Lead Contacts)

Information sources for safeguarding Children

The following documents provide information and guidance about child safeguarding:

- https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5fd0a8e78fa8f54d5d6555f9/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_inter_agency_guidance.pdf
- A summary of the key legislation and guidance is available on the website of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-protection-system/england>

Information sources and making a safeguarding referral for a vulnerable adult

The following national website gives more information about safeguarding vulnerable adults:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-policy-protecting-vulnerable-adults>

10. Review Date

This safeguarding policy and procedure was approved by the Board of Trustees of I AM on 8th December 2020.

Reviewed and updated: Nov 23

