



Child Protection & Vulnerable Adults Policy Statement

Ensuring your Safety



M.E Support Northern Ireland Child Protection & Vulnerable Adults Policy Statement

M.E Support Northern Ireland is committed to practices, which protects children, young people & vulnerable adults from harm. We believe that every child, young person & vulnerable adult regardless of age, has at all times and in all situations, a right to feel safe and protected from situations or practice that results in a child, young person or vulnerable adult being physically or psychologically damaged. We believe it is the responsibility of those in charge to care for and help to develop children/young people & vulnerable adults by creating an environment in which individual needs are met.

We Implement child protection guidelines as laid out by the Belfast Health Board's Area and Child Protection Committee procedures in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Children Order 1995.

We endeavour to safeguard children/young people & vulnerable adults by:

1. Adopting child/young people/vulnerable adults protection guidelines through a code of behaviour for members and volunteers;
2. Sharing information about children/young people and vulnerable adults protection and good practice with children/young people/ vulnerable adults, parents, members and volunteers
3. Working in partnership, sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know and involving parents and children/young people vulnerable adults / appropriately;
4. Following carefully the procedures for selection of volunteers;
5. Managing members and volunteers through supervision, support and training

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice at regular intervals



Definitions of Abuse (as outlined) in Our Duty to Care

The following is an extract from “Co-operating to Protect Children” volume 6 of the Children (NI) Order Regulations and Guidance which provides guidance on inter-agency co-operation for the protection of children.

“Anyone may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or failing to provide proper care. Children may be abused in many settings: in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them, or more rarely, by a stranger. Disabled children may be particularly vulnerable to abuse.

There are different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one type of abuse.

Physical Abuse – physical abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering.

Emotional Abuse – emotional abuse is the persistent ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child’s emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Over-protection can also be a form of abuse.

Sexual Abuse – sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect – Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child’s physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate foods, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision. It may also include neglect of or unresponsiveness to a child’s basic emotional needs.

Bullying – Bullying in itself is not a form of abuse, but a child who is bullied may be suffering any of the types of abuse defined above. It may take many forms but the main types are:

- Physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft);
- Verbal (e.g. sectarian/racist remarks, name calling);
- Indirect (e.g. spreading rumours)

The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated.

It can cause considerable distress to children to the extent that it affects their health and development or, at the extreme, causes them significant harm. In these circumstances bullying should be considered as child abuse and treated as such.



To accommodate our code of conduct we institute the following practices:

- Sharing information about child protection/vulnerable adult and encouraging members/volunteers to develop awareness of child protection issues and engage in appropriate training.
- Reviewing our policy and what constitutes good practice at regular intervals.
- Ensuring everyone involved with children is made aware of the behavioural standards in place and what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

Code of conduct

- No foul or abusive language or behaviour.
- No bullying
- Respect for others
- Meetings with individual children/young people/vulnerable adult should take place as openly as possible.
- Staff and volunteers are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with children, young people/vulnerable adult. However, there may be occasions when physical contact is unavoidable such as:
 - A distressed child/young person/vulnerable adult may need comfort and reassurance such as a parent would give;

In all cases, physical contact should only take place with the consent of the child or young person/vulnerable adult.



- If a child/young person/vulnerable adult touches you in an inappropriate place record the incident and report it to another adult. While the incident could be purely innocent or horseplay, efforts should be made to inform the child that this behaviour is not acceptable in a manner that does not intimidate the child/young person.
- **Never keep suspicions of abuse by a colleague to yourself. Inform the appropriate designated person Chairperson Antoinette Christie, of your suspicions.**

If a complaint is made management should be informed immediately and a record of that meeting logged.

Parents

Parents remain responsible for their child's own welfare and they should be assured that their children are involved with credible organisations and aware of the nature of relationships with adults with whom they form friendships. In support of this we:

- Publish information about our activities, our child protection policy and the name of the designated person to contact in the event of a concern;
- Provide parents with accurate information along with our guidelines and seek their consent for their children's participation in activities/outings.

Members and volunteers

Accurate information will enable and empower staff and volunteers to deal with emergencies and child protection issues, and will encourage them to pass concerns to the appropriate person within the organisation.

Other appropriate bodies such as funders are provided with child protection information as appropriate.



Reporting Procedures

All Committee members must be familiar with M.E Support Northern Ireland's reporting procedures and the need for clear, factual and accurate reporting, which distinguishes between fact, opinion and hearsay

1. Member/volunteer reports accurate factual information to the Chair Person
2. Chair Person reports accurate factual information to the appropriate body:
 - Social services
 - NSPCC
 - Police

Record the discussions accurately and as soon as possible after the event. Remember to be factual and accurate and clearly distinguish between fact, opinion and hearsay.

All complaints/allegations shall be dealt with in accordance with the organisations policy and procedures however the Chair person may consider that complaints of a lesser nature i.e. bullying, cheating etc may be handled internally without outside involvement. It must be emphasised that each case will be thoroughly investigated and remedied to the satisfaction of the involved parties.

REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE **IMPORTANT CONTACTS**

Chairperson: Antoinette Christie
Email: Antoinette.christie@mesupportni.com
Phone: 02895215650