

Safeguarding Policy

You My Sister

Ratified by Board of Trustees:	Aug 27 th 2020
Date of Implementation:	Aug 27 th 2020
Reviews:	Annually
Date of last Review:	April 1 st 2024
Responsibility for Implementation:	Director
Trustee safeguarding lead:	John McCormack
Safeguarding Training provider:	John McCormack and Elephant in the Room

In the event of any questions or concerns please contact You My Sister at i@youmysister.org.uk

1. PURPOSE

To set out the approach of You My Sister in relation to protecting the participants using its services from abuse.

2. RELATED POLICIES & PROCEDURES

- Data Protection Policy
- Disciplinary Policy

3. INTRODUCTION

This document contains a policy statement (Part One) and procedural guidance (Part Two). The functions of each are set out briefly below:

Part One – Policy Statement

The policy statement sets out our aims and objectives in tackling protection from abuse. It outlines the organisation's approach and its guiding principles.

Part Two – Procedural Guidance

The procedural guidance sets out the necessary requirements that staff will be required to undertake in handling protection from abuse issues. It sets out the specific tasks involved and identifies who is responsible for carrying them out.

PART ONE – POLICY STATEMENT

1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 1.1 We are committed to protecting all who use our services from abuse. We will not tolerate any kind of abusive behaviour regardless of the age, status or position of the perpetrator and the age, status or position of the person experiencing the abuse.
- 1.2 Abusive behaviours include, but are not limited to, the following:
- Physical or sexual violence
 - Sexual, racial or any other harassment
 - Bullying
 - Threatening, intimidating or aggressive behaviour or language
 - Emotional or psychological abuse (which may include humiliation and degradation) including verbal insults
- 1.3 We are committed to providing a service delivery environment which is free from abuse. We will therefore:
- Ensure that staff, volunteers, service users and trustees maintain appropriate boundaries at all times.
 - Operate confidential reporting systems so that anyone who suspects that abuse is taking place or is concerned about it can report it.
 - Take action against staff, volunteers, service users and Trustees who use their positions, or any influence, power or authority they may have to abuse others or the organisation.
- 1.4 In upholding this commitment to an abuse-free environment, we will provide training, support and supervision to staff along with clear policies and procedures to which they must work.
- 1.5 In turn, staff will provide the necessary support to service users to assist them to uphold an abuse-free environment.

PART TWO – PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE ON SAFEGUARDING

2. APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES FOR STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

- 2.1 All staff and volunteers must be aware of and follow the guidelines on appropriate professional boundaries as set out in Appendix One.
- 2.2 All staff and volunteers will receive training about these boundaries and discussion of them will form part of regular support and supervision sessions.

3. REPORTING ABUSE

- 3.1 Anyone who suspects or knows that abuse is taking place must raise their concerns by reporting to their Manager and/or Trustee safeguarding lead by emailing i@youmysister.org.uk
- 3.2 You My Sister will work hard to create an environment where anyone feels able to report abuse or suspected abuse.

4. TAKING ACTION AGAINST ABUSE – Allegations against members of staff, volunteers, Trustees or patrons

- 4.1 Report any concerns to You My Sister at i@youmysister.org.uk
- 4.2 If the allegations are about a member of staff other than the Director, the Director and/or Trustee safeguarding lead will investigate. If allegations are against the Director, the Trustee safeguarding lead will investigate. If the allegations are against the Trustee safeguarding lead, the Director will investigate.
- 4.3 The person(s) under investigation will be suspended immediately with pay (where applicable) so that a thorough investigation can be made according to our Disciplinary Policy and Procedures.
- 4.2 Should the investigation determine that there is a case to answer, the individual in question will be subject to disciplinary action, as set out in the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. The police may also be contacted to pursue legal action if appropriate.
- 4.3 Should the investigation determine that there is no case to answer, the individual investigated will be offered additional support and supervision to assist them in returning to their role.

5. TAKING ACTION AGAINST ABUSE – Allegations against service users

- 5.1 Report any concerns or allegations to You My Sister at i@youmysister.org.uk
- 5.2 Within 24 hours of reporting, receipt of the report will be acknowledged.
- 5.2 Within 48 hours, an investigator (Director or Trustee safeguarding lead) will be appointed to investigate the allegations or concerns.

- 5.3 Within the next 3 days the Investigator will speak to the person who has made the allegation and speak separately to the alleged abuser(s), recording comments made by both parties. Witnesses may also be approached. A record of each person's statement will be made and sent to each individual to be signed off. If no feedback is received within a reasonable timeframe, the prepared statement will be viewed as accurate.
- 5.34 Within 5 days of statements being signed off, the Investigator will prepare a report based on the statements and with the aim of this being as objective and factual as possible. The report will be given to the Trustees, and a decision will be made on the appropriate action to be taken within the next 10 days.
- 5.4 If allegations of abuse are made against a service user, You My Sister reserves the right to stop that service user from using or taking part in any services provided until an investigation is carried out.
- 5.5 Should the investigation fail to find that there is a case to answer, the service user will be permitted to continue using or taking part in any services provided.
- 5.6 Should the investigation find that there is a case to answer, You My Sister may suspend the service user from continued use of our services and may notify the police as appropriate.

6. TAKING ACTION AGAINST ABUSE – Allegations against visitors

- 6.1 Should a visitor to any of You My Sister's projects be subject to an allegation of abuse, they will be excluded from the project until an investigation has been carried out. We may involve the police in such an investigation if deemed appropriate.

7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- 7.1 The organisation will keep a log of all allegations of abuse that are made, along with the accompanying monitoring forms and records relating to the allegations.
- 7.2 An internal report will be created annually outlining all allegations of abuse that have been made and providing details of all action taken.
- 7.3 All documentation relating to an allegation of abuse will be treated and destroyed in accordance with You My Sister's Data Protection Policy.

APPENDIX ONE

APPROPRIATE PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES – CODE OF CONDUCT

As a member of staff, volunteer or Trustee of You My Sister you must follow the guidelines below which set out the professional boundaries it is expected you will maintain.

You are expected to remain alert to these issues at all times and to discuss them openly and proactively at support and supervision sessions, where these exist. If urgent concerns arise, you are expected to raise them with management or the Trustee safeguarding lead.

All Trustees and all staff, volunteers and external providers who deliver a service to vulnerable beneficiaries are expected to have up-to-date DBS checks (or equivalent).

1. You must maintain a professional relationship with service users at all times. This means that you must not form a sexual or personal relationship with service users.

- Part of your role is to *befriend* service users but this does not mean that you 'become friends' with them.
- You need to be aware that service users may develop strong or close feelings about you but you have a responsibility to manage this within the boundaries of your role as a professional.
- To allow your relationship to develop beyond the boundaries of a professional one would be to abuse your relationship with the service user, given the power imbalance between you.

2. You must not initiate or respond to any unprofessional physical contact towards or from service users.

Our services operate online, however if it is possible staff, volunteers, Trustees or service users might, on occasion, see each other in person (eg at conferences or events). In this case:

- No contact should be made which could reasonably be perceived as sexual.
- No contact should be of such force that it causes harm.
- All contact should be within the boundaries of what is considered fair and reasonable in the circumstances.
- You should not act in such a way that you put yourself or others in a position of danger. Retreat from physical danger is always the favoured option.
- No action should be taken that could reasonably be perceived as threatening.

3. You must not impose your own personal, cultural, religious, philosophical or other beliefs on service users.

- You must operate within our value systems.
- You must be sensitive to the cultural needs and differences of service users.

- You should not seek to persuade or influence a service user in terms of your own personal beliefs.
- Where directly asked for a personal opinion or belief from a service user, you may state this whilst making it clear that it is your own personal view. You should remain aware of the imbalance of power in your relationship with a service user before acting in this way. You also need to be aware of your own prejudices before offering a personal view.
- It should be noted that evidence-based information is not seen as a 'belief', rather a statement of fact.

4. You must act in a way that promotes and safeguards the wellbeing and interests of service users, staff members and the organisation at all times.

- There may be times when you feel that there is a conflict between the interests of these various parties.
- You are therefore expected to raise any such issues in support and supervision sessions or more immediately with a colleague or the Trustees when this arises.

5. You must not disclose any personal information to service users relating to yourself or other colleagues without the prior consent of that person.

6. You must not give your home telephone number or address to service users.

7. You must not lend money to service users.

- You must not lend your own money or make personal gifts.
- You must not lend the organisation's money.

8. You must not borrow money or property from service users.

9. You must not witness wills for service users or act as a named executor.

10. You must not act as a God parent for a child of a service user.

11. You must not sell or buy property from service users.

12. You must not accept free services from service users where such services would normally be charged for.

13. You must not give service users gifts.

14. You must declare gifts from service users.

- You must never solicit gifts from service users or their families.
- If you are offered a gift you may accept it where to refuse it would give offence. However, you must declare the gift and explain to the service user the policy and procedure for dealing with gifts and that you will declare the gift to Management.

- If the gift is deemed inappropriate, you may be instructed to return the gift.
- Alternatively, gifts may be donated to charity.

15. You must declare gifts from service providers or firms with which You My Sister works.

- You My Sister has contact with other firms, organisations and individuals and the utmost discretion must be exercised if gifts or hospitality is offered.
- You must always declare such gifts and offers of hospitality and explain the organisation's policy on gifts and hospitality.
- You may be instructed to decline the gift or offer of hospitality if it is deemed inappropriate.
- If the gift is inexpensive, it may be accepted (with authorisation of your manager or the Trustees). Where possible, it should be shared amongst staff/volunteers and/or service users.

16. All interactions with service users outside the workplace must be conducted on a professional basis.

- You must not arrange to meet service users when not in work.
- If a chance meeting occurs, you must bear in mind your professional relationship at all times and inform your manager of any significant conversation or contact.
- If a chance meeting occurs when outside of work and in a social context, you have the right to choose whether to engage with the service user or not.

17. You must not take your friends or family into the workplace.

- This applies at all times except in exceptional circumstances and then only by the prior arrangement with Management (for example where childcare arrangements have broken down unexpectedly).

18. You must not take your family or friends on outings with service users.

19. You must not take service users into your own home.

20. You must not consume alcohol or drugs on duty or be unfit for work through the consumption of alcohol or drugs.

- During social events with service users which have been arranged by You My Sister or during chance encounters in which you have decided to engage with a service user you may consume alcohol in moderation.

- However, you should always remain fit for work.

21. You must not take any action that could undermine the position of any staff member or the organisation in the eyes of service users.

- You are expected to support decisions and actions that have been made within the organisation's policies and procedures.
- You should not discuss or denigrate other staff, team member, service user or other services with service users.
- This does not supersede your right and your responsibility to raise issues of concern through this policy.

22. Relationships between employees

- We do not encourage the formation of relationships between employees because this can cause tensions and conflicts within an organisation or a team.
- However, we recognise that relationships can develop and in this event you must declare this to the Management.
- Where a relationship does exist, you must conduct it outside the workplace.
- You must ensure that your relationship does not impinge on your work in any way.
- You may not directly supervise or be supervised by the person with whom you are having a relationship.

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