



MS Together Safeguarding Policy for Working with Vulnerable Adults

Date ratified: 23/01/2024

Date last reviewed: MAS 04-12-24

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidelines and procedures for safeguarding vulnerable adults who interact with **MS Together**. The charity is committed to creating a safe environment, preventing harm, and promoting the well-being and dignity of vulnerable adults involved in its activities, services, and events.

2. Definition of Vulnerable Adults

A **vulnerable adult** is defined as any person aged 18 or over who, by reason of illness, disability, mental health condition, or other factors, is unable to care for themselves or protect themselves from significant harm or exploitation. This includes, but is not limited to, individuals who may:

- Have learning disabilities or physical disabilities.
- Experience mental health issues or substance misuse.
- Be elderly or frail.
- Be at risk of abuse or exploitation.

3. Policy Principles

MS Together is committed to the following safeguarding principles:

- **The welfare of the vulnerable adult is paramount:** The safety, health, and well-being of the individual will always take priority.
- **Respect and dignity:** All vulnerable adults should be treated with respect and dignity, ensuring they have the right to make informed choices and decisions.
- **Zero tolerance of abuse:** **MS Together** has a zero-tolerance approach to any form of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- **Prevention:** The charity will work proactively to prevent abuse, through staff training, awareness campaigns, and risk assessments.
- **Confidentiality:** Information regarding any safeguarding concerns will be handled confidentially and shared only with those with a legitimate need to know, in line with data protection laws.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Safeguarding Lead

The **Safeguarding Lead** (appointed by the charity) is responsible for overseeing the safeguarding of vulnerable adults and ensuring that all policies and procedures are followed.



- Act as the main point of contact for safeguarding concerns.
- Ensure staff and volunteers are trained and aware of their safeguarding responsibilities.
- Maintain confidential records of concerns, incidents, and actions taken.

4.2 Staff and Volunteer Responsibilities

All staff and volunteers have a duty to:

- Treat vulnerable adults with respect and dignity.
- Be alert to signs of abuse or neglect and act promptly to report any concerns.
- Follow the reporting procedures outlined in this policy.
- Complete safeguarding training as required.
- Never engage in behavior that could be seen as abusive or exploitative.

5. Types of Abuse

Abuse can take many forms. Staff and volunteers should be familiar with the following types of abuse:

- **Physical Abuse:** Inflicting physical harm, including slapping, hitting, or rough handling.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Any sexual contact or behavior that is non-consensual or exploits a vulnerable adult.
- **Emotional or Psychological Abuse:** Threatening, belittling, or coercing a vulnerable adult, causing emotional harm.
- **Neglect:** The failure to provide necessary care, assistance, or attention, leading to harm or distress.
- **Financial Abuse:** Exploiting a vulnerable adult for financial gain, such as taking advantage of their finances, possessions, or assets.
- **Discriminatory Abuse:** Treating a person unfairly based on their race, age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics.
- **Institutional Abuse:** A failure in services provided, where organizational systems or attitudes cause harm or neglect.

6. Reporting Procedures

If a staff member, volunteer, or any individual within the charity has concerns about the welfare of a vulnerable adult, they must follow the steps outlined below:

6.1 Reporting Concerns

- **Step 1:** Report concerns to the **Safeguarding Lead** or designated safeguarding person as soon as possible, ideally within 24 hours. If the Safeguarding Lead is not available, report to the CEO or a Trustee. To report a concern, please email safeguarding@mstogether.org
- **Step 2:** If there is immediate danger or risk of harm, contact **emergency services** (e.g., 999 or 112) immediately.



- **Step 3:** Document all concerns, including dates, times, and any observations. Record what was said, what actions were taken, and who was informed.
- **Step 4:** The **Safeguarding Lead** will assess the situation, determine the appropriate response, and refer the matter to external authorities (e.g., local safeguarding boards, police, or social services) if necessary.

6.2 Confidentiality

All safeguarding concerns will be kept confidential, but information may be shared if needed to protect the individual or others from harm. In serious cases, the Safeguarding Lead will inform the CEO (and, if appropriate, the Chair of Trustees), sharing only what is necessary for decision-making and governance in line with data protection.

6.3 Complaints

If you wish to make a complaint that is not a safeguarding concern, please refer to MS Together's **Complaints Procedure**.

7. Recruitment and Training

7.1 Recruitment Procedures

- **MS Together** follows safe recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers working with vulnerable adults. This includes:
 - **DBS checks** (or equivalent) for all relevant staff and volunteers.
 - A detailed **interview process** to assess suitability for working with vulnerable adults.

7.2 Safeguarding Training

- All necessary staff and volunteers must complete **mandatory safeguarding training** at the start of their employment/volunteering.
- **Refresher** training will be conducted when needed to ensure staff and volunteers remain up to date with safeguarding procedures and legislation.
- Training will include recognizing signs of abuse, reporting concerns, and how to support vulnerable adults effectively.

8. Monitoring and Review

- MS Together will monitor its safeguarding practices to ensure they are effective and in line with the law.
- This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary to reflect changes in legislation or best practices.
- Feedback from staff, volunteers, and vulnerable adults (where appropriate) will be considered during reviews.