**Safeguarding Guidelines**

1. **Code of Conduct for Working with Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

It is important to plan the work of an organisation that has contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults in such a way as to minimise situations in which abuse may occur. Therefore, at AbilityNet all Trustees, Employees, Sub-Contractors, and Volunteers that have regular one-to-one contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults should adhere to the following code of conduct to ensure safety both for themselves and the young person.

1. **Personal Code of Conduct**

* Respect all individuals whatever their age, developmental stage, ability, sex, sexual orientation or ethnicity
* Place the safety and wellbeing of a child, young person or vulnerable adult first
* Form appropriate professional relationships with children, young people and vulnerable adults. These should be based on mutual trust and respect

1. **Guidelines for working with Children, Young Person and Vulnerable Adults**

* Always conduct meetings with children, young people or vulnerable adults either with Parent/Carer, another Employee, Sub-Contractor or Volunteer present or in an open environment (e.g. leave office door open and do not hold meetings when lone working i.e. when others are out of eyesight/ earshot)
* If physical contact is necessary e.g. for demonstration purposes, ensure it takes place only with the full consent of the child, young person or vulnerable adult, its purpose is clear and that the activity is easily observed by others. If it is not possible for your activity to be observed by someone else then physical contact should not take place at this time and another meeting should be arranged
* When on your own do not use touch as a form of communication, even to comfort a child, young person or vulnerable adult who is distressed
* Consider your expected behaviour in certain situations and what might be considered unacceptable, e.g., inappropriate language, doing things of a personal nature for a child, young person or vulnerable adult

1. **Reporting channels if you have concerns**

**Abuse:**

* If an individual discloses information to you about a possible abuse situation you must report their disclosure.
* Inform the person that you cannot guarantee confidentiality and that you are obliged to pass the information on to ensure that they are suitably supported.
* A child or young person (under 18) cannot refuse for this referral to occur if they have made an allegation of abuse.
* At the time of disclosure (or as soon as possible following the disclosure) make accurate factual notes for your reference.
* In the first instance please report this to an AbilityNet Safeguarding Officer (Head of HR or HR Assistant) who will provide the necessary advice.
* You will be required to complete A Safeguarding Concern Form which is within the Safeguarding Policy Appendix 1
* At the time of disclosure (or as soon as possible following the disclosure) make accurate factual notes for your reference.
* Refer to AbilityNet’s Safeguarding Policy for further guidance on process to follow with regards to disclosure.

1. **Risk to self or others**

* If you consider an individual to be at risk of causing harm to themselves or to others you must report this.
* If the individual presents as already having harmed themselves or others, or if you believe they are intending to do so immediately, try to remain with them and call the appropriate emergency services. **Do not place yourself at risk**.
* If you consider an individual to be at risk of harming themselves or others but you do not consider this risk to be immediate (for example, if they express an intention to do so at some point in the future that you consider to be genuine), contact a Safeguarding Officer who will be able to advise you of what action needs to be taken.

1. **Making a Home Visit**

* Give some thought before you arrive as to what exit strategies you could use if you felt uncomfortable or threatened
* Consider setting up a buddy system with someone so they know your plans
* Ensure you have a means of communicating with others, e.g. mobile phone
* Conduct your own risk assessment on the door step before you enter. If you feel at all uncomfortable or unsure, make an excuse and leave. Trust your instincts. Also, please read AbilityNet’s’, ‘Home Visit Risk Assessment’ which is available on AbilityNet’s internal network: NetSuite, or can be obtained from your main contact within AbilityNet
* Have available to hand AbilityNet’s Personal Safety Procedure – Maureen Code Word System which is available on AbilityNet’s internal network: NetSuite. or can be obtained from your main contact within AbilityNet
* Be mindful of the fact that you are entering someone else’s territory
* As you enter, make a note of how the door opens and closes s that you can leave quickly, if necessary
* Give the client an idea of how long the meeting will take and try to adhere to this

|  |
| --- |
| **Avoid actions or words which may appear**  **judgemental, aggressive or an invasion**  **of privacy or space** |

It is important that lone workers give particular consideration to their safety.

1. **Violence and Aggressive Behaviour at Work**

**Definition***:* ‘Any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work’

Violence and aggression at work can be more than just physical assault. It also includes verbal aggression or abuse, threats, intimidation and harassment.

Be aware of your environment. Are you:

* in an area where there is open access to the public?
* in a busy area with little or no information available to waiting customers/clients?
* able to communicate easily and confidentially with customers/clients, or are there barriers preventing this?
* going into someone else’s home or territory?
* working out on the street amongst members of the public?
* visiting a rural or isolated area?
* able to communicate with colleagues or call for back up if threatened?
* able to let somebody know where you are, what you are doing and if your plans change (if lone working or working off base)?

Steps to be taken:

**Step 1:** Identify the tasks or work activities in which there may be personal safety risks, (e.g. working in other people’s homes)

**Step 2**: Identify the personal safety hazards

**Step 3:** Analyse the risk. The following factors should be among those taken into account:

a) Factors to do with the client or members of the public

b) Factors to do with the employee, the interaction and the working environment

**Step 4**: Reducing risks. Look to the action needed to avoid, reduce or control.

1. **PREPARATION**

* Have you got all the information you need before you leave?
* Have you done your own risk assessment?
* What do you know about the place you are going to? Do you know how you will get there?
* Have you recorded where you are going, your contact number and your estimated time of return?
* Remember to take any personal protective equipment supplied by your employer with you?
* Are you aware of how to summon help whilst you are away from the office?
* Are you working within the safety procedures relevant for this working activity?
* Would someone raise the alarm if you did not return when you were supposed too?

1. **AVOIDING RISK**

1. Maintain a constant awareness of client’s/member of the public’s behaviour

2. Be aware of the environment in which you are working

3. Develop a method to assess yourself, your feelings, strengths and weaknesses:

* Follow the procedures laid down by the organisation
* Report any personal safety concerns to line management/safeguarding officer
* Report any incidents to line management/safeguarding officer
* Develop personal strategies for carrying out their duties safely.

1. **AbilityNet Referral Policies & Procedures**

* Safeguarding Policy
* Personal Safety Procedure: Maureen Code Word System

which are available on AbilityNet’s intranet.

If you do not have access to this network, please liaise with your main contact within the organisation or contact the Head of HR.

1. **Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually.

1. **AbilityNet contacts**

* Principal Safeguarding Officer: Mairéad Comerford (Head of HR)
* Deputy Safeguarding Officer: Sarah Govan (HR Assistant)

If you have any concerns or queries arising from reading these guidelines contact AbilityNet’s’ HR department:

Mairéad Comerford/Sarah Govan

Tel: 0118 909 5278 / 5563

Email: hr@abilitynet.org.uk

Address: c/o Microsoft UK Ltd, Thames Valley Park, Reading, RG6 1WG

1. **Useful websites/information**

Please note that if you are talking to someone who you feel needs support you should direct them in the first instance to their GP. There are charities which you can sign-post individuals too for example:

Mental Health

* Mind: [www.mind.org.uk/](http://www.mind.org.uk/)
* Samaritans: [www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help-you/contact-us](http://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help-you/contact-us)
* The Hub of Hope app: <https://chasingthestigma.co.uk/hub-of-hope/>

AbilityNet Advice & Information helpline: 0800 269545

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB): <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>

**Appendix 2 – Dos and Don’ts**

If an adult discloses that they are experiencing abuse or harm or if there is suspicion there is a risk of abuse consider the following:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **DO** | **DON’T** |
| Be supportive | Panic |
| Take what is being said seriously | Delay |
| Remain calm | Promise to keep secrets |
| Reassure them that it was right to tell someone | Ask leading questions |
| Use language they understand | Ask them to repeat the story unnecessarily |
| Explain what will happen next, i.e. that disclosure of relevant information may need to be made to a AbilityNet Safeguarding Officer | Express any opinions about what you are told |
| Write down verbatim immediately what was said, including the time, place and any other observations: sign and date the record | Discuss the disclosure with anyone other than a AbilityNet Safeguarding Officer and other relevant personnel |
| Pass the record to the Safeguarding Officer | Start to investigate |
| Remember you may need support. Seek advice and support for yourself from the HR department. |  |