**SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

**1. Introduction**

1.1 This policy applies to all staff, including anyone working on behalf of AbilityNet, for example, volunteers and subcontractors.

Note: all uses of the word ‘staff’ in this document refers to employees, subcontractors and volunteers.

1.2 AbilityNet is committed to supporting and promoting the welfare of all its staff and is committed to promoting good practice in relation to safeguarding.

1.3 AbilityNet recognises that within the course of their activities its staff may come into contact with adults who are vulnerable adults.

1.4 In implementing this policy, AbilityNet will remain mindful of its duty of care and other legal obligations, such as those it owes under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, the Data Protection Act 2018, Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, Equality Act 2010, Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

1.5 This policy is designed to assist AbilityNet to seek to achieve the commitments set out above and to take reasonable steps to safeguard those who are vulnerable and who come into contact with AbilityNet by ensuring there are guidelines and procedures for identifying risk, reporting concerns and that appropriate action is taken.

1.6 This policy sets out how AbilityNet may deal with safeguarding issues and the type of action taken to manage matters and provide support. Example of the type of situations which may result in AbilityNet implementing this policy may include where:

* an adult raises an allegation of abuse, harm or other inappropriate behaviour;
* an adult expressing that they may harm themselves;
* there are suspicions or indicators that an adult is being abused or harmed or at risk of abuse or harm. (The indicators of abuse or harm or risk of abuse can

be very difficult to recognise and it is not an AbilityNet staff member’s responsibility to decide whether an adult has been abused or harmed or subjected to harm, but only to raise concerns that they may have).

1.7 AbilityNet will take all safeguarding concerns seriously and will report concerns promptly.

1.8 AbilityNet has processes in place to check the suitability of those working on its behalf whose duties and responsibilities involve contact with adults who may be vulnerable. AbilityNet is committed to seeking to ensure that appropriate suitability checks are carried out in relation to staff and those working on behalf of the Charity. Currently our Accessibility and Assessor Consultants, Assessor Subcontractors and Volunteers have criminal record checks every 2 years and ID documentation checks are carried out for new employees, subcontractors and volunteers as part of the recruitment process.

1.9 Risk assessments are carried out where deemed necessary - for example, before a client home visit (volunteer programme, DSA and WPA assessments); for AbilityNet homeworkers and AbilityNet offices.

**2. Safeguarding Officer**

2.1 The Head of HR will act as the Charity’s Principal Safeguarding Officer. The HR Assistant is the Charity’s Deputy Safeguarding Officer. The safeguarding officers will:

* act as a point of contact for those who have safeguarding concerns, receiving information and recording those concerns;
* acting upon concerns as appropriate in the circumstances, for example making external referrals to social services or police
* monitoring the implementation of this policy

**3. Dealing with Safeguarding Concerns**

3.1 If a safeguarding issue is raised the matter should be reported to a Safeguarding Officer without delay. If in any doubt as to whether a safeguarding concern should be reported, liaise with a Safeguarding Officer in the first instance for guidance.

3.2 If a Safeguarding Officer considers the matter raised to be a safeguarding issue they will take the necessary action, for example, will report it to the appropriate body such as the local council or police.

3.3 If a member of staff makes a referral to social services, police etc, then they must notify the AbilityNet Safeguarding Officer that a referral has been made as soon as reasonably practicable.

3.4 The Safeguarding Concern Form (Appendix 1) should be completed by the individual raising the concern.

**4. Allegations made against staff**

4.1 Risk Assessment

4.1.1 AbilityNet will ensure that any allegations made against staff will be dealt with swiftly.

4.1.2 In such circumstances where an allegation has been made AbilityNet may consider it more appropriate to implement this policy and procedure in dealing with the matter rather than an alternative policy and procedure, e.g.

disciplinary procedure. In such cases AbilityNet will deal with matters by assessing the potential risks in the following way.

4.1.3 A Safeguarding Officer will be responsible for ensuring that appropriate risk assessments are carried out which seek to identify the risks posed by a particular member of staff and consider the appropriate way to manage such risks and may involve other members of AbilityNet staff in collating information.

4.1.4 A Safeguarding Officer will decide the exact process to be followed in the circumstances of the case with due regard to fairness. However, it is anticipated that, where appropriate, information and concerns will be shared with the member of staff (who is thought to pose a risk), and the member of staff will be given the opportunity to (in person or in writing) respond to the information and concerns. The Safeguarding Officer may invite the member of staff to a meeting to discuss the concern that has been raised. The member of staff will have the ability to respond to any issues raised and has the right to be accompanied to this meeting by a colleague or union representative.

4.1.5 Following this process, the Safeguarding Officer (with the CEO) will determine whether or not the member of staff poses any risk and if so what the risks are and how these should be managed for example under the following action plan:

4.1.6 The outcome of the risk assessment process may be as follows (this is not an exhaustive list):

* No action to be taken;
* Notifying the member of staff’s manager/supervisor that conditions must be met to allow them to continue working
* Make a referral to an external agency e.g. the police or social services;
* Take action under an alternative procedure e.g. disciplinary
* Not to provide further assistance to the person who made the allegation if it is found their allegation was found to be frivolous or vexatious
* Suspension of member of staff to allow further investigation to take place

4.1.7 The Principal Safeguarding Officer (or nominee) is responsible for ensuring that a record of the risk assessment process and the outcome of the risk assessment is made. They (or nominee) is responsible for monitoring the

 matter/and or conducting further assessments, taking into account up-to-date information, if they reasonably consider this necessary and appropriate.

**5. Recording and Retention of Information**

5.1 AbilityNet is committed to maintaining confidentiality and Safeguarding issues will be shared in confidence only with a limited number of senior staff (Head of HR, CEO and relevant line manager). All allegations/concerns will be recorded with the HR department. The information that is recorded will be kept secure and will comply with data protection.

5.2 Written records of any safeguarding concerns will be retained for as long as is necessary of the purpose for which it is obtained or as legally required or lawfully permitted.

**6. Training**

6.1 All staff whose roles and responsibilities include regular contact with adults who are potentially vulnerable, or carrying out related risk assessments, will receive training and guidance appropriate to their role. All staff will be made aware of this policy and related guidance.

**7. Referral**

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

* AbilityNet’s Safeguarding Guidelines which is located on the Charity’s Intranet
* For volunteers: Volunteer Handbook – Visit Guidelines section

**8. Review**

8.1 The Head of HR is responsible for overseeing and updating this policy particularly with respect to the legal obligations. This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis and updated as appropriate.

**9. Further assistance**

8.1 Further information on this policy is available from the HR department:

Tel: 0118 909 5278/5563 or Email: hr@abilitynet.org.uk

**Appendix 1 – Safeguarding Concern Form**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name of vulnerable adult: | Gender: |
| The vulnerable adult’s account: |
| Time, date, location or other relevant information: |
| Description of the safeguarding issue: |
| Any other observations/information: |
| Action taken: |
| Signed: | Name (print): |
| Position: | Date:  |

Please continue onto another page if necessary, ensuring it is securely attached to the safety concern form.

Please send this form to a designated Safeguarding Officer – the Head of HR or HR Assistant: hr@abilitynet.org.uk or AbilityNet, HR Department (to be opened by HR department only), c/o Microsoft Campus, Thames Valley Business Park, Reading, RG6 1WG. Tel: 0118 909 4030