



Autism NI (PAPA)

**Safeguarding
Vulnerable Adults**

Updated May 2008

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VULNERABLE ADULT POLICY STATEMENT

We in AUTISM NI (PAPA) are committed to practice which protects Vulnerable Adults with Autistic Spectrum Disorder from harm.

Autism is a disability which disrupts the development of social and communication skills. The term "Autistic Spectrum Disorder" is used because Autism varies from person to person. Regardless of an individual's level of functioning, all individuals with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder will have problems in the areas of communication, social skills and imagination.

"AUTISM NI (PAPA) is committed to the protection of Vulnerable Adults with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and will take swift and diligent action should they suspect a Vulnerable Adult is at risk of being harmed in any way."

We will endeavour to safeguard vulnerable adults by:

- Adopting vulnerable adult protection guidelines through a code of behaviour for staff and volunteers;
- Sharing information about vulnerable adults protection and good practice with vulnerable adults, parents, staff and volunteers;
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately;
- Following carefully the procedures for recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers;
- Providing effective management for staff through supervision (e.g. arranging to see staff and volunteers at regular intervals), support and training regarding child protection and vulnerable adults will be provided annually at Autism NI's Strategic Planning weekend. This will be provided by an external organisation, the Volunteer Development Agency. Training will also take place at a local level on a recurrent basis.

We are also committed to reviewing our policy and good practice at regular intervals (at least annually).

DEFINITION OF VULNERABLE ADULT

“A person aged 18 years or over who is, or may be, in need of community care services or is resident in a continuing care facility by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness or who is, or may be, unable to take care of him or herself or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.”

Adults who “may be eligible for community care services” are those whose independence and well-being would be at risk if they did not receive appropriate health and social care support. They include adults with physical, sensory and mental impairments and learning disabilities, howsoever those impairments have arisen. They also include informal carers, family and friends who provide personal assistance and care to adults on an unpaid basis.

“Any adult at risk of abuse, exploitation or neglect should be able to access support to enable them to live a life free from violence and abuse.”

Source: Regional Adult Protection Policy and Procedural Guidance – Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults, September 2006.

The following statements underpin the implementation of activities related to the protection and safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults and are applicable to vulnerable people aged 18 years or over and includes older people, people with a learning, physical or sensory disability and people with mental illness or dementia:

- agencies and organisations will work co-operatively in the identification, investigation, treatment and prevention of abuse of vulnerable adults;
- a consistent response will be made to vulnerable adults when concerns are raised whether these are reported through complaints procedures, inspection or registration activity, as a result of whistle-blowing or as a result of disclosure on the part of vulnerable adults or their carers;
- action will be co-coordinated against alleged perpetrators to ensure that parallel processes are dovetailed including prosecution, disciplinary action and removal from, or notification to, professional registers and similar bodies;
- there is a responsibility to share information on a “need to know” basis so that effective decisions are made and appropriate and preventative action taken.

A coordinated approach in Northern Ireland will require the adoption and implementation of agreed regional procedures by Trusts. Such a process will need to include the strengthening of relationships with all providers of services and compatibility with the statutory responsibilities of other agencies and to policies already in force with them, in particular the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA).

This guidance is for all staff, regardless of employing organisation and sector, who provide health or personal social services to vulnerable adults in any setting or context.

DEFINITION OF ABUSE

“The physical, psychological, emotional, financial or sexual maltreatment, or neglect of a vulnerable adult by another person. The abuse may be a single act or repeated over a period of time. It may take one form or a multiple of forms. The lack of appropriate action can also be a form of abuse. Abuse can occur in a relationship where there is an expectation of trust and can be perpetuated by a person/persons, in breach of that trust, who have influence over the life of a dependant, whether they be formal or informal carers, staff or family members or others. It can also occur outside such a relationship.”

Forms of abuse can be categorised as follows:

- physical abuse (including inappropriate restraint or use of medication);
- sexual abuse;
- psychological abuse;
- financial or material abuse;
- neglect and acts of omission;
- institutional abuse; and
- discriminatory abuse.

Incidents of abuse may be multiple, either to one person in a continuing relationship or service context, or to more than one person at a time.

Any or all types of abuse may be perpetuated as the result of deliberate intent and targeting of vulnerable people, negligence or ignorance.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A set of commonly agreed principles underpins this regional procedural guidance. Such principles flow from respect for the rights of vulnerable adults who are entitled to:

- privacy;
- be treated with respect and dignity;
- lead an independent life and be enabled to do so;
- be able to choose how to lead their lives;
- the protection of the law;
- have their rights upheld regardless of ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, impairment or disability, age and religious or cultural background; and
- have the opportunity to fulfill personal aspirations and realize potential in all aspects of daily life.

INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

These principles assume that vulnerable adults have the right to:

- be accorded the same respect and dignity as any other adult, by recognising their uniqueness and personal needs;
- be given access to knowledge and information which they can understand to help them make informed choices;
- information about, and practical help in, keeping themselves safe and protecting themselves from abuse;
- live safely, without fear of violence or abuse in any form;
- have their money, goods and possessions treated with respect, and to receive equal protection for themselves and their property through the law;
- guidance and assistance in seeking help as a consequence of abuse;
- be supported in making their own decisions about how they wish to proceed in the event of abuse and to know that their wishes will only be over-riden if it is considered necessary for their own safety or the safety of others;
- be supported in bringing a complaint under any existing complaints procedure;
- be supported in reporting the circumstances of any abuse to independent bodies;
- have alleged, suspected or confirmed cases of abuse investigated urgently;
- receive appropriate support, education, counseling, therapy and treatment following abuse;
- seek legal advice or representation on their own behalf;
- seek redress through appropriate agencies;
- have their rights respected and to have their family, informal carers or advocates act on their behalf as appropriate.

INTER AGENCY WORKING

Autism NI will actively work together with other agencies in terms of our responsibilities towards vulnerable adults. Autism NI will actively promote the empowerment and well-being of vulnerable adults. Autism NI will ensure the safety of vulnerable adults by integrating strategies, policies and services relevant to abuse within existing procedural frameworks. Autism NI staff in designated and nominated positions will attend vulnerable adult policy training annually.

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

Autism NI will not pass onto others information of a personal or sensitive nature regarding vulnerable adults. However, it should be recognised that in order to protect vulnerable adults it may be necessary, in some circumstances, to share information that might normally be regarded as confidential. Autism NI cannot promise to keep secrets but information of a confidential nature will only be communicated on a “need to know” basis.

REPORTING PROCEDURES

Everyone in the organisation, in whatever capacity, has responsibility for safeguarding vulnerable adults. A vital part of safeguarding vulnerable adults is to pass on concerns, suspicions or allegations in a timely and consistent manner. It is the policy of Autism NI (PAPA) to encourage staff to be proactive and vigilant in sharing concerns and following these reporting procedures.

- a) Autism NI (PAPA) has two designated officers. The Chief Executive Officer will act as the principle designated officer and where circumstances dictate the Chairperson of the Board of AUTISM NI (PAPA) will act as the designated officer. Out of normal office hours the Chief Executive Officer may be contacted on 07799 411 841, email arlene@autismni.org. The Autism NI (PAPA) office contact details are:

Autism NI (PAPA)
Donard
Knockbracken Healthcare Park
Saintfield Road
BELFAST
BT8 8BH
Tel: 028 9040 1729
Fax: 028 9040 3467
Email: info@autismni.org

- b) Role of the Designated Officer.

Each designated officer will have responsibility for:

- reporting suspected, alleged or confirmed incidents of abuse;
- ensuring that all families/carers, staff and volunteers are aware of the reporting procedures;
- working alongside all agencies involved with a report of alleged or actual abuse.

- c) Reporting Suspected Abuse

Anyone within the AUTISM NI (PAPA) organisation who may have cause for concern regarding abuse must take the following action:

- Immediately notify the designated officer and confirm the notification on the appropriate pro forma (Appendix 1). Any other relevant information should also be submitted.

Further steps - taken by the Designated Officer:

- (a) The designated officer will collate the information and immediately pass it on to the Social Services Trust. The initial notification will be by telephone and will be followed up with the appropriate Confirmation of Notification of Abuse the next working day. (See Appendix 2).
- (b) Where the designated officer is notified outside office hours, referrals to the appropriate Social Services duty officer will be by way of telephone contact. Where a case is referred in this way, appropriate written confirmation of referral should follow the next working day.
- (c) Should a member of staff or volunteer be suspected of any form of abuse a decision will be made by the management board of AUTISM NI (PAPA) in consultation with Social Services as to the form of action required to safeguard children. Autism NI has a complaint and disciplinary policy in place. This policy outlines a clear action plan and timeframe for response. Copies are available from Autism NI central office.

How to react and what to do

There is not one simple set of rules to follow in responding to these situations. However, the actions of your staff and volunteers who are told of abuse should be guided by the following key points:

Dos		DON'Ts
<p>Stay calm.</p> <p>Listen and hear. Give time to the person to say what they want.</p> <p>Reassure that they have done the right thing in telling.</p> <p>Record in writing what was said as soon as possible.</p> <p>Report to someone else in the organisation.</p> <p>Record your report.</p>	and	<p>Do not panic.</p> <p>Do not ask leading questions.</p> <p>Do not promise to keep secrets.</p> <p>Do not inquire into details of the abuse.</p> <p>Do not make a vulnerable adult repeat the story unnecessarily.</p>

Under no circumstances should any individual member of staff or volunteer or the organisation itself attempt to deal with the problem of abuse alone. It is important that everyone in the organisation is aware that the person who first

encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred. That is a task for the professional agencies following a referral to them regarding a concern about a vulnerable adult. The primary responsibilities of the person who first suspects or is told of abuse is to report it and to ensure that their concern is taken seriously.

STAFF RECRUITMENT and SELECTION of VOLUNTEERS

Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adult (NI) Order (2003)

This new legislation came into effect on the 1st April 2005. This legislation introduces the term “regulated position”. A regulated position is where an individual in the course of their normal duties cares for, trains, advises, counsels, supervises or is in sole charge of children, as well as supervisors/managers of individuals in regulated positions.

A new system (ACCESS NI) for the disclosure of an individual’s criminal history has been established by the Northern Ireland Office. Autism NI is a registered body with ACCESS NI and we will make applications through this mechanism as part of our employment and recruitment decision making process. ACCESS NI was established by a joint programme between the NI Office, the Dept of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, the Department of Education and the Police Service in Northern Ireland. ACCESS NI enables Autism NI to make more recruitment decisions by providing criminal history information about anyone seeking paid or unpaid work in certain defined areas such as working with children or vulnerable adults. ACCESS NI is part of central government and operates under the provision of part v of the police Act 1997.

All Autism NI staff in a regulated position are required by law to have a Protection of Vulnerable Adult NI and protection of Children NI check to be carried out. Autism NI is a “registered body” with ACCESS NI. Autism NI will identify the type of “disclosure check” required for the post and will request that any potential employee complete a disclosure application form.

POCVA introduced a whistle-blowing facility aimed at addressing situations where a child care organisation or an accredited organisation fails to comply with the legislation. This means that an employee, director or member of the governing body of a child care organisation can report to the Department that their organisation or any other child care organisation has failed to comply with their duty, either to refer individuals to the Department or to carry out required checks.

A. Staff Recruitment

Autism NI has an open recruitment policy. Application Forms seek the following information from prospective staff:

- Past experience and job history.
- Qualifications.
- Indicate their interests and any other voluntary activities in which they are involved.
- Supply the names of two referees, who are not family members, for written references.

- Declare past convictions and cases pending.
- Declaration of and previous or pending prosecutions, convictions, cautions or bind over orders, should they be employed. (Appendix 4)
- They are asked to provide two forms of written evidence of identification at interview.
- They will be asked to confirm membership of the relevant professional body where the post requires a particular professional background e.g. social work or nursing

All references for prospective staff will be checked.

All prospective staff will have an interview with a panel of no less than three members.

All staff will have posts confirmed in writing.

All staff will follow a full induction programme, including training on Autism NI's Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults Policies and Procedures.

All staff will be expected to adhere to all AUTISM NI (PAPA)'s policies and procedures.

All staff will follow an ongoing programme of supervision and appraisal and some staff where appropriate will attend external child protection training programmes. All staff, volunteers and parents will have access to a complaints procedure.

All staff will have a written job description.

All staff will have a probationary period of six months.

All staff will have an annual appraisal.

B. Volunteer Selection

All volunteers in direct contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults before appointment are required by law to have a Protection of Vulnerable Adult (POVA) NI check and /or Protection of Children NI Service (POCNI) check processed through Access NI as part of the recruitment decision making process.

In addition, an Autism NI (PAPA) application form should be completed for our records (Appendix 3) and an Autism NI (PAPA) volunteer reference form (Appendix 4) completed by all those interested in volunteering prior to undertaking any work with Autism NI (PAPA). An interview will take place with a panel of at least two members. All Volunteers will have an induction regarding expectations, policies and procedures, including Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults Policies and Procedures, and an annual review. All volunteers will have a trial period of three months.

GENERAL SAFETY AND MANAGEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Branch activities, events and fun days: -

1. Parents/legal carers should **always** attend events with their child.
2. The primary responsibility for the child or vulnerable adult rests with the parent/legal carers.
3. Only members of the Branch or Autism NI Central Office should attend.
4. A register should be kept of all those who attend on any given day: -

Name _____
Address _____
Emergency contact numbers _____

5. An accident book should be in place to record any untoward event.

Please refer to the checklist on Appendix 6 regarding safety at activities, events and fun days.

Please refer to Appendix 7 regarding guidelines on taking photographs.

VULNERABLE ADULTS PROTECTION – AWARENESS and TRAINING

All committee members must attend awareness sessions at the Branch annually (see Appendix 8 for an outline of the presentation).

In addition, training and advice delivered by an external training organisation, the Volunteer Development Agency, will take place annually at the Autism NI Strategic Planning weekend.

EMERGENCY OUT OF HOURS NUMBERS

Belfast and South Eastern Health and Social Care	028 9056 5444
Northern Health and Social Care	028 9446 8833
Western Health and Social Care	028 7134 5171
Southern Health and Social Care	028 3888 4444

REFERENCES

Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults
Regional Adult Protection Policy and Procedural Guidance, September 2006

Choosing to Protect
A Guide to using the Protection of Vulnerable Adults, Northern Ireland ((POVA
NI) Service, April 2005 (revised February 2007)

Law Commission for England and Wales 1995
(Mental Incapacity, Report no. 231, London HMSO)

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Autism NI (PAPA)

VULNERABLE ADULT REFERRAL

NAME OF VULNERABLE ADULT.....

DATE OF BIRTH

NAME OF PARENT/CARERS.....

.....

HOME ADDRESS AND TELEPHONE NO.....

.....

.....

.....

SOURCE OF INFORMATION

NAME OF SOCIAL WORKER (if applicable)

ADDRESS AND TELEPHONE NO

.....

.....

NATURE OF REFERRAL (Give precise details of concerns; any physical/
behavioural signs; dates and times of specific incidents)

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

ACCOUNT OF IMMEDIATE ACTION TAKEN

.....

.....

.....

.....

NAME OF INDIVIDUAL MAKING REFERRAL.....

DATE AND TIME REFERRAL PASSED TO CHIEF EXECUTIVE.....

SignedDate.....

Appendix 2

HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD

Restricted Information

**CONFIRMATION OF NOTIFICATION OF SUSPECTED/ADMITTED/KNOWN ABUSE OF A
VULNERABLE ADULT TO SOCIAL SERVICES**

This form should be completed on the information readily available and should not be delayed on the basis of incomplete information.

VULNERABLE ADULT'S SURNAME_____

VULNERABLE ADULT'S FORENAME(S), D.O.B._____

PRESENT LOCATION _____

PARENT/GUARDIAN'S SURNAME_____FORENAME(S)_____

ADDRESS_____TEL NO_____

GP'S NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

Professional Agencies known to be involved with the family (Name, Address, Tel no.)

Reason for Referral

ACTION ALREADY TAKEN Referred by telephone to_____on_____

Parents advised of referral? YES/NO (NB **discussion will take place with Social Services to agree sharing of information with parents and vulnerable adult prior to doing so to avoid either placing a vulnerable adult at increased risk or compromising a criminal investigation.**)

Vulnerable Adult advised of referral? YES/NO

SIGNATURE OF PERSON REFERRING_____DESIGNATION_____

ADDRESS_____

DATE_____

-----Detach here and return to AUTISM NI (PAPA)-----

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

VULNERABLE ADULT'S NAME(S) & D.O.B. _____

ADDRESS_____

I ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF YOUR NOTIFICATION IN RESPECT OF ABOVE NAMED

Signature_____Designation_____

Address of Social Services Office_____

Date _____

Appendix 3

AUTISM NI (PAPA) VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM

Name of Bureau/Agency you are registered with _____

Contact Details _____

Unit _____ Date of Birth _____

Surname _____ Place of Birth _____

Forename(s) _____ National Insurance No. _____

Previous Surname/Maiden Name (if applicable) _____

Address _____

Previous Address(es) within the last 5 years

Please give details of any relevant employment

Any other experience, including interests and hobbies

How often are you available? Daily, Weekly, Fortnightly, Monthly

When are you available?

	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							

Do you have transport? _____

Do you give us permission to contact you regarding details of your police check? YES/NO
 Please give names and addresses of two referees (N.B. If working with Vulnerable Adults one referee will be contacted directly.):

(1) _____ (2) _____

 Signed _____

 Date _____

Appendix 4

VOLUNTEER REFERENCE FORM

_____ has expressed an interest in becoming a volunteer, and has given your name as a referee.

If you are happy to complete this reference, all the information contained on the form will remain absolutely confidential and will only be shared with the applicant's immediate supervisors should they be offered a volunteer position. We would appreciate you being extremely candid in your evaluation of this person.

1. How long have you known this person?

2. In what capacity?

3. What attributes does this person have that would make them a suitable volunteer?

4. How would you describe their personality?

5. Please rate this person on the following? (please tick one)

	Poor	Average	Good	V/Good	Excellent
Responsibility					
Maturity					
Self Motivation					
Can Motive Others					
Commitment					
Energy					
Trustworthiness					
Reliability					

As an organisation committed to the welfare and protection of vulnerable adults, we are anxious to know if you have any reason at all to be concerned about this applicant being in contact with vulnerable adults.

Yes No (please tick)

If you have answered 'yes' we will contact you in confidence.

Appendix 5

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLARATION FROM ALL STAFF & VOLUNTEERS WORKING WITH VULNERABLE ADULTS

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of a Caution or of a Bound Over Order?

YES NO

If YES, please state below the nature and date(s) of the offence(s):

SIGNED DATE

NAME

Any surname previously known by

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

DATE OF BIRTH PLACE OF BIRTH

You are advised that under the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 as amended by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) (Amendments) Order 1986 you should declare all convictions including 'spent' convictions.

Appendix 6

A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

Risk Assessment – Activities/Fundays/Residentials

Check that the venues have the following in place: -

- Insurance
- Fire Procedures
- Safety and suitability of equipment
- Transport
- Accident and Incident Books
- Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults Policy
- Adequate Supervisory Ratios
- Residential – consider sleeping arrangements.
- Risk assessment plans for individuals where appropriate

Appendix 7

GUIDELINES ON TAKING PHOTOGRAPHS

- Establish the type of images that appropriately represent the organisation.
- Think about the level of consideration you give to the use of images of young people/vulnerable adults in publications, for example, the processes involved in choosing appropriate images for the Autism NI Newsletter.

Rules to Remember

- If the young person/vulnerable adult is named, avoid using their photograph.
- If a photograph is used, avoid naming the young person/vulnerable adult.
- Seek parental consent for the use of all images for any medium.

Guidelines for the Use of Photographic Filming Equipment

- Provide a clear brief about what is considered appropriate in terms of content and behaviour.
- Issue the photographer with identification, which must be worn at all times.
- Inform young people/vulnerable adults and parents that photographer will be in attendance at an event and ensure they consent to both the taking and publication of films or photographs.
- Do not allow unsupervised access to young people/vulnerable adults or one to one photo sessions at events.
- Do not approve/allow photo sessions outside the events or at a young person/vulnerable adults's home.

If parents or other spectators are intending to photograph or video at an event they should also be made aware of your expectations.