

Youth Link



youthlink

Adults at Risk of Harm and in Need of Protection Policy

2025/2026

Aims

Staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers in Youth Link are committed to best practice which promotes the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk and protects them from harm.

We wish to ensure that all who use Youth Link services engage in an enjoyable and safe environment, in which they feel respected and valued. Staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers in Youth Link accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause harm to vulnerable groups and recognise their pastoral responsibility to undertake whatever is necessary to safeguard and promote service users' welfare and safety. In addition, Youth Link is committed to reviewing the policy, procedures and practices at regular intervals.

Youth Link will not tolerate the abuse of adults in any of its forms and is committed to safeguarding adults with care and support needs from harm.

This policy outlines the steps Youth Link will make to safeguard an adult with care and support needs if they are deemed to be at risk. This policy sets out the roles and responsibilities of Youth Link in working together with other professionals and agencies in promoting the adult's welfare and safeguarding them from abuse and neglect.

Youth Link will ensure that decisions made will allow adults to make their own choices and include them in any decision making. Youth Link will also ensure that safe and effective working practices are in place.

This policy is intended to support staff and volunteers working within Youth Link to understand their role and responsibilities in safeguarding adults. All staff and volunteers are expected to follow this policy.

The key objectives of this policy are for all employees and volunteers of Youth Link to:

- have an overview of adult safeguarding
- be clear about their responsibility to safeguard adults
- ensure the necessary actions are taken where an adult with care and support needs is deemed to be at risk

Under the Human Rights Act 1998, everyone has the right to live free from abuse and neglect.

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/human-rights/human-rights-act>

Copies of this policy will be available on Youth Link website. Youth Link will not tolerate the abuse of adults in the organisation and staff and volunteers should be made aware of how this policy can be accessed.

What is Safeguarding adults?

'Safeguarding means protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, while at the same time making sure that the adult's wellbeing is promoted including, where appropriate, having regard to their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs in deciding on any action. This must recognise that adults sometimes have complex interpersonal relationships and may be ambivalent, unclear or unrealistic about their personal circumstances.'

All adults should be able to live free from fear and harm. But some may find it hard to get the help and support they need to stop abuse.

An adult may be unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation due to many reasons, including their mental or physical incapacity, sensory loss or physical or learning disabilities. This could be an adult who is usually able to protect themselves from harm but maybe unable to do so because of an accident, disability, frailty, addiction or illness.

Youth Link adheres to following the six key principles that underpin safeguarding work:

- Empowerment
- Prevention
- Proportionality
- Protection
- Partnership
- Accountability

Youth Link will not tolerate the abuse of adults and staff and volunteers should ensure that their work reflects the principles above and ensure the adult with care and support needs is involved in their decisions and informed consent is obtained. Youth Link should ensure that the safeguarding action agreed is the least intrusive response to the risk. Partners from the community should be involved in any safeguarding work in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse. Youth Link should be transparent and accountable in delivering safeguarding actions.

What is Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP)?

MSP means a case should be person-led and outcome-focused. The individual should be involved in identifying how best to respond to their safeguarding situation by giving them more choice and control as well as improving quality of life, wellbeing and safety.

Youth Link will not tolerate the abuse of adults and will ensure that adults are involved in their safeguarding arrangements and each individual is dealt with on a case by case basis. As adults may have different preferences, histories and lifestyles, the same process may not work for all.

Who do adult safeguarding duties apply to?

Adult safeguarding duties apply to *any* adult who:

- has care and support needs, and
- is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse and neglect, and
- is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect, because of those needs.

Who do I go to if I am concerned?

The Designated Officers for safeguarding duties and their Area of Responsibility for Youth Link are as follows:

Designated Officers 2025/2026 and Areas of Responsibility:

Name	Job Title	Contact Number	Area of Responsibility
Joe McKeown	Chief Executive Officer	07485 339448	Senior Designated Officer – all areas
Dermot Kelly	Trustee	028 9032 3217	All areas
Debbie Byrne	Training & Development Officer	07485 339440	All areas

All staff and volunteers should contact the appropriate person named above for any concerns/queries they have in regard to safeguarding adults. A log of the concern must be kept.

The Senior Designated Officer will be responsible to make decisions about notifying adult social services if required and consider alternative actions, where necessary.

The Senior Designated Officer will also ensure that the Adults at Risk of Harm and in Need of Protection policies and procedures are in place and up to date. They will ensure a safe environment is promoted for staff and volunteers and adults accessing the service. The Senior Designated Officer will ensure the organisation is up to date with safeguarding adults training.

What should I do if I am concerned?

Staff and volunteers at Youth Link who have any adult safeguarding concerns should:

1. Respond

- Take emergency action if someone is at immediate risk of harm/in need of urgent medical attention. Dial 999 for emergency services
- Get brief details about what has happened and what the adult would like done about it, but do not probe or conduct a mini-investigation
- Seek consent from the adult to take action and to report the concern. Consider whether the adult may lack capacity to make decisions about their own and other people's safety and wellbeing. If you decide to act against their wishes or without their consent, you must record your decision and the reasons for this.

2. Report

- Name the person to whom staff/volunteers need to report any potential safeguarding concerns. This will usually be the organisation's designated safeguarding lead (see above)

3. Record

Any disclosure, allegation or suspicion of abuse must be taken seriously, recorded, and reported as outlined below:

The Safeguarding Reporting Form that should be used for internal purposes is found in Appendix 4 of Youth Link's Safeguarding Policy.

Where staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers in Youth Link have cause for concern regarding possible abuse or neglect, or if an adult at risk has made a disclosure to them, the following action should be taken:

- Maintain detailed and dated written records of all available information relating to the cause for concern or the disclosure and any subsequent action – this will be retained by the appropriate organisation(s).
- Where a written agreement has been made with the commissioning organisation to operate within their safeguarding procedures first and foremost, then the Youth Link staff member, volunteer or casual worker will in the first instance inform the Designated Officer in the commissioning organisation and subsequently inform Youth Link's Designated Officer.
- This protocol is to be followed during all aspects of the programme delivery e.g. onsite delivery, residential etc.
- Where a written agreement has not been made with the commissioning organisation, or where course participants are recruited directly by Youth Link, then the Youth Link staff member, volunteer or casual worker will follow Youth Link recording and reporting procedures and will contact Youth Link's Designated Officer, who will subsequently decide in each instance, what information is appropriate to pass on to the commissioning organisation and will also then decide whether or not to report the incident further.

4. Refer

In making a decision whether to refer or not, the Designated Safeguarding Officer should take into account:

- (1) the adult's wishes and preferred outcome
- (2) whether the adult has mental capacity to make an informed decision about their own and others' safety
- (3) the safety or wellbeing of children or other adults with care and support needs
- (4) whether there is a person in a position of trust involved
- (5) whether a crime has been committed

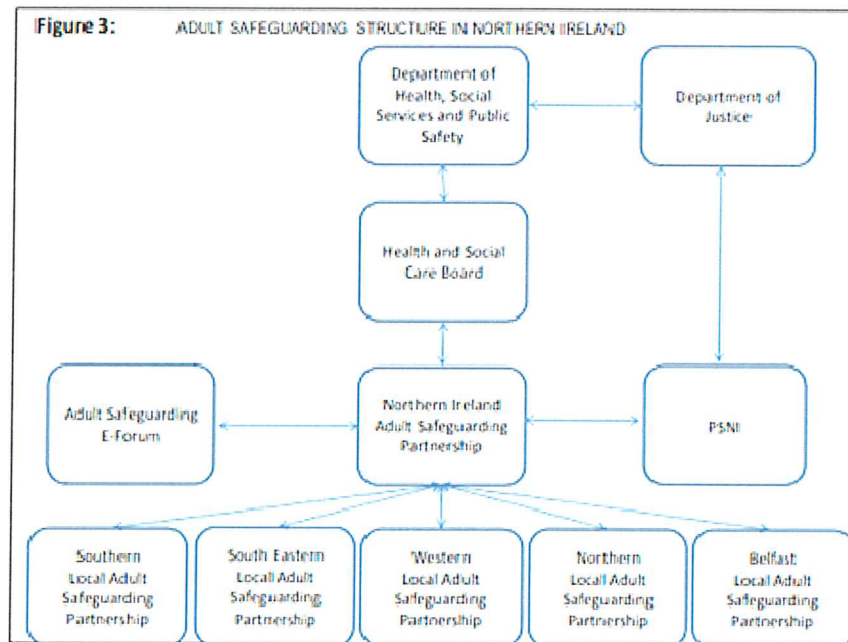
This should inform the decision whether to notify the concern to the following people:

- o the police if a crime has been committed and/or
- o relevant regulatory bodies such as Ofsted, Charities commission
- o service commissioning teams
- o family/relatives as appropriate (seek advice from adult social services)

The Designated Safeguarding Officer should keep a record of the reasons for referring the concern or reasons for not referring.

Incidents of abuse may be one-off or multiple and may affect one person or more. Staff and volunteers should look beyond single incidents to identify patterns of harm. Accurate recording of information will also assist in recognising any patterns.

The Northern Ireland Adult Safeguarding Partnership (NIASP) and five Local Adult Safeguarding Partnerships (LASPs) were established under the Adult Safeguarding in Northern Ireland, Regional and Local Partnership Arrangements (2010). They are collaborative partnerships with a responsibility for adult safeguarding in Northern Ireland. The partnerships are tasked by DHSSPS, with the support of the DOJ, with the delivery of improved adult safeguarding outcomes by way of a strategic plan, operational policies and procedures and effective practice, which will be developed and implemented in accordance with this policy. An outline of the structure is provided in Figure 3 below.



RESPONDING TO ADULTS WHO DISCLOSE CHILDHOOD ABUSE

There are an increasing number of adults disclosing abuse that took place during their childhood. Such disclosures may come to light during the provision of pastoral support.

Where such a disclosure is made it is essential to establish whether there may be current risk to any child or young person who may be in contact with the alleged abuser revealed in the disclosure. This is important even where the children/young people about whom there may be a concern are still to be identified.

When a retrospective disclosure is made by an adult to a staff member or volunteer it should be reported to the Safeguarding Team in the same way as if a child made a disclosure.

The Safeguarding Team must consult with Relevant Statutory authorities in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland, Tusla and seek advice as to whether a report should be made. If making a report to Tusla the Retrospective Abuse Report Form should be used which is available on the Tusla website www.tusla.ie

The DSO can be consulted in regard to the disclosure of retrospective child abuse. If a Retrospective Abuse Report Form is submitted to Tusla, the DSO must be informed.

It is recommended when working with adults, to let them know that if a child protection issue arises and if the alleged abuser is identifiable staff/volunteers are obliged to pass the information on to statutory agencies in Northern Ireland and/or Republic of Ireland, as the alleged abuser may still pose a risk to children.

What are your roles and responsibilities?

All staff, management, trustees and volunteers at Youth Link are expected to report any concerns to the named person for safeguarding. If the allegation is against one of Youth Link members, volunteers, trustees or directors, seek advice from Youth Link Designated Safeguarding Officer. If the allegation is against the Designated Safeguarding Officer, seek advice from the Northern Ireland Adult Safeguarding Partnership.

The Designated Safeguarding Officer should be responsible for providing acknowledgement of the referral and brief feedback to the person raising the original concern. Feedback should be given in a way that will not make the situation worse or breach GDPR guidelines. If the police are involved, they should be consulted prior to giving feedback to the referrer to ensure any criminal investigation is not affected.

The local authority will decide on who will lead on a safeguarding enquiry should it progress to that stage. The named organisation should not conduct its own safeguarding enquiry unless instructed to do so by the local authority.

Staff and volunteers should ensure that the adult with care and support needs is involved at all stages of their safeguarding enquiry ensuring a person-centred approach is adopted.

Complaints procedure

Youth Link promotes transparency and honesty when things go wrong. All staff and volunteers should apologise and be honest with service users and other relevant people when things go wrong.

If a staff or volunteer or any other member of the organisation is unhappy with Youth Link decision about the safeguarding concern, refer them to Youth Link complaints policy and procedures which can be accessed via the website.

Youth Link is committed to ensuring that staff and volunteers who in good faith whistle-blow in the public interest, will be protected from reprisals and victimisation. Youth Link have a whistleblowing policy which is included in the staff handbook.

Why is it important to take action?

It may be difficult for adults with care and support needs to protect themselves and to report abuse. They rely on you to help them.

Confidentiality and information sharing

Youth Link expects all staff, volunteers, trustees to maintain confidentiality at all times. In line with GDPR guidelines, Youth Link does not share information if not required.

It should however be noted that information should be shared with authorities if an adult is deemed to be at risk of immediate harm. Sharing the right information, at the right time, with the right people can make all the difference to preventing harm. For further guidance on information sharing and safeguarding see: <https://www.scie.org.uk/care-act-2014/safeguarding-adults/sharing-information/keymessages.asp>

Training, awareness raising and supervision?

Youth Link ensures that all staff and volunteers receive basic awareness training on safeguarding adults as they may come across adults with care and support needs who may be at risk of abuse. Those adults may report things of concern to staff or volunteers who should be equipped with the basic knowledge around safeguarding adults and be confident to identify that abuse is taking place and action is required. All staff and volunteers should be clear about the core values of Youth Link and commitment to safeguarding adults.

It is also useful to discuss training with staff who have attended training sessions to ensure they are embedding this in practice.

Similarly, staff and volunteers may encounter concerns about the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. For more information about children and young people's safeguarding, refer to Youth Link Safeguarding Policy which can be accessed on our website www.youthlink.org.uk.

Prevent

Radicalisation and extremism of adults with care and support needs is a form of emotional/psychological exploitation. Radicalisation can take place through direct personal contact, or indirectly through social media.

If staff are concerned that an adult with care and support needs is at risk of being radicalised and drawn into terrorism, they should treat it in the same way as any other safeguarding concern.

For more information about Prevent see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance>

Review

Youth Link will review this policy on an annual basis with all staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers. The date of each review and the staff involved will be recorded for Good Practice and Information purposes. The Executive Council will endorse any amendments to the Adult's at Risk of Harm and in Need of Protection Policy on an annual basis.

Date of Next Policy Review with Executive Council – March 2026

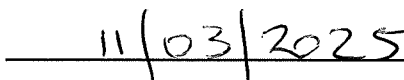
Signed:

_____

Chairperson:

Gillian Gilmore

Date:

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Appendix 1

What are the types of safeguarding adults abuse?

The Care and Support statutory guidance sets out the 10 main types of abuse:

- Physical abuse
- Neglect
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological
- Financial abuse
- Discriminatory
- Organisational
- Domestic violence
- Modern Slavery
- Self-neglect

However, you should keep an open mind about what constitutes abuse or neglect as it can take many forms and the circumstances of the individual case should always be considered.

What are the possible signs of abuse?

Abuse and neglect can be difficult to spot. You should be alert to the following possible signs of abuse and neglect:

- Depression, self-harm or suicide attempts
- Difficulty making friends
- Fear or anxiety
- The person looks dirty or is not dressed properly,
- The person never seems to have money,
- The person has an injury that is difficult to explain (such as bruises, finger marks, 'non-accidental' injury, neck, shoulders, chest and arms),
- The person has signs of a pressure ulcer,
- The person is experiencing insomnia
- The person seems frightened, or frightened of physical contact.
- Inappropriate sexual awareness or sexually explicit behaviour
- The person is withdrawn, changes in behaviour

You should ask the person if you are unsure about their well-being as there may be other explanations to the above presentation.

Who abuses and neglects adults?

Abuse can happen anywhere, even in somebody's own home. Most often abuse takes place by others who are in a position of trust and power. It can take place whether an adult lives alone or with others. Anyone can carry out abuse or neglect, including:

- partners;
- other family members;
- neighbours;
- friends;
- acquaintances;
- local residents;
- people who deliberately exploit adults they perceive as vulnerable to abuse;
- paid staff or professionals; and
- volunteers and strangers

Raising a Safeguarding concern

You are informed or become aware of possible abuse or neglect

Gather information,

- How does the adult wish for the concern to proceed
- What changes/support would they like as a result of this concern being raised?

RESPOND

Take action to ensure the immediate safety and welfare of the adult (and any other person/child at risk)

Consider:

- Does medical attention need to be organised? (dial 999)
- Is urgent police presence required? (dial 999)

REPORT

Has a crime been committed? If so, does it need to be reported?
(dial 101 unless there is an immediate risk, in which case dial 999)

Preserve forensic evidence (if any)

REFER

Decide whether to raise a safeguarding concern, and if so, take action
Do this:

- Immediately where the concern is urgent and serious
- Within the same working day for any other concerns

RECORD

Document the incident and any actions or decisions taken

REFER

Ensure key people are informed
For example, Responsible safeguarding lead, relatives as appropriate

SUPPORT

Provide support or feedback for the person identifying the safeguarding concern

Adult Protection Gateway Teams:

Contact the local PSNI on their 101 number or their 999 number if there is immediate danger.

If you prefer, you can also speak to your GP or any other health care professional, and they will contact the service on your behalf.

Belfast Trust

The Team operates an open referral system so anyone can contact us directly:

During normal working hours (9am – 5pm) - **Tel. 028 9504 1744**

Regional Emergency Social Work Service (5pm – 9am) – **Tel. 028 9504 9999**

South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust

Contact South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust on **028 92 501227**

Contact the **Out of Hours Regional Emergency Social Work Service** (5pm-9am Mon-Fri & 24 hrs at weekends and Bank holidays)

Contact the **Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority** on **028 90 517500** if the concern is about a residential or nursing home, a day-care facility or a hospital.

If you have a concern about a vulnerable adult who you think is being abused and they are unable to protect themselves contact: Linda Johnston, Trust Lead in Adult Safeguarding

Level 5, Lisburn Health Centre, Linenhall Street, Lisburn BT28 1LU **Telephone:** (028) 9250 1227 / (028) 9504 9999 (Out of Hours, 5pm-9am)

Email: linda.johnston@setrust.hscni.net

Southern Health & Social Care Trust

During office hours 9-5pm Monday to Friday; Adult Protection Gateway Service **028 3756 4423**

Out of hours (5pm-9am, weekends and bank holidays) - Regional Emergency Social Work service – **028 9504 9999**.

Northern Health & Social Care Trust

Contact the Northern Trust Adult Protection Safeguarding Team on 028 9441 3659 or email adultsafeguarding@northerntrust.hscni.net.

If it is out of normal working hours, contact the Emergency Social Work Service on **028 9504 9999**.

