



**Contact (Morpeth Mental Health Group) Ltd.
Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable Adults Policy
(Revision Three January 2026)**

**This Policy has been developed to meet the needs of Contact Morpeth
Mental Health Group Ltd.**

**It will be reviewed annually and amended in line with any new / updated
legislation or best practise.**

**The Policy provides a framework for the creation of a safe environment
within our premises and for any activities / services undertaken as part of
the work of the Charity.**

**Contact Morpeth Mental Health Group Ltd.
7 Greys Yard, Oldgate, Morpeth Northumberland NE61 1QD
Tel: 01670 510652
Email: contact@contactmorpeth.org.uk**

**Registered Charity No: 1124547
Company No: 06182748**

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Introduction

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility

Contact Morpeth Mental Health Group is committed to the safeguarding and protection of all Vulnerable Adults and children who attend our centre and / or our events, work or volunteer for Contact and that the needs of people when they are vulnerable is paramount.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable adults – and in particular protecting them from significant harm – depends upon effective joint working between agencies and professionals that have different roles and expertise.

Some of the most vulnerable adults and children and those at greatest risk of social exclusion, will need co-ordinated help from health, education, social care, the voluntary sector and other agencies.

Contact (MMHG) fully agree with the following statement;

As members of Contact (MMHG) we are concerned with the wholeness of each individual. We seek to safeguard all members who are vulnerable and give them protection.

The policy, the related procedures and the Code of Good Practice, which follow, establishes the roles and responsibilities of staff, in relation to the protection of vulnerable adults, with whom their work brings them in contact. Although Contact does not directly work with young people, it is within our remit to ensure that any situations which maybe overheard or witnessed, which may affect the well-being of a child, will be acted upon.

Policy description

Contact (MMHG) recognises the serious issue of the abuse of vulnerable children and adults and recognises that this may take a variety of forms. It acknowledges the effects these may have on people and their development. It accepts its responsibility for ensuring that all people are safe in its care and that their dignity and right to be heard is maintained. It accepts its responsibility to support, listen to and work for healing with survivors, offenders, communities and those who care about them.

Contact (MMHG) is committed to train all staff, trustees and volunteers to:-

- Be alert to potential indicators of abuse or neglect
- Be alert to the risks which individual abusers, or potential abusers may pose to vulnerable adults
- Share and help to analyse information so that an assessment can be made of the individuals needs and circumstances
- Contribute to whatever actions are needed to safeguard and promote the individual's welfare

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- Take part in regularly reviewing the outcomes for the individual against specific plans
- Work co-operatively with parents and / or other carers unless this is inconsistent with ensuring the individual's safety
- safeguard and promote the wellbeing of the children and vulnerable adults with whom Contact works
- To ensure that all employees and others covered by this policy understand the context within which checking with the Disclosure and Barring Service takes place
- To provide all employees with guidance on how they should behave if they suspect that a child or vulnerable adult may be experiencing, or be at risk from abuse or harm.
- To guide employees on how to respond to - and report - concerns
- To ensure compatibility with other Contact policies

Who should adhere to this policy

This policy applies to all paid employees, seconded staff, trustees, volunteers, mentors, students, agency workers, contract, and unpaid staff working on behalf of Contact in any capacity and in any setting. Young members, young people on work experience and any children or young adults involved in the work of Contact should be made aware of Contact's safeguarding policies and procedures.

Those with specific communication needs because of language or disability should have access to information in appropriate forms to ensure their understanding. This policy relates to all children from unborn up to 18 years of age and includes children with whom Contact has indirect contact with, for example children known to adults with whom Contact works directly.

This policy also relates to vulnerable adults who need to be safeguarded from harm. In project proposals and tenders, Contact's Safeguarding policies should be mentioned and attached where appropriate. Project information leaflets for children and vulnerable, parent/carers and local agencies should all have a statement on safeguarding with contact details as appropriate.

Key Concepts and Definitions

The management committee of Contact (MMHG) recognises that the protection and safety of vulnerable adults is everyone's responsibility. Contact defines a vulnerable adult based on the Law Commission's definition – *"that a person who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself against significant harm or exploitation."*

- **Vulnerable Adult** – any adult aged 18 or over who, by reason of mental or other disability, age illness or other situation is permanently or for the time being unable to take care of her or himself, or to protect her or himself from significant harm or exploitation
- **Vulnerable Child** – any individual under the age of 18
- **Safeguarding and protection of vulnerable adults and children from maltreatment** – preventing impairment of their health and ensuring safe and effective care
- **Adult protection** – is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare, This refers to the activity which is undertaken to protect specific adults who are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm, including neglect

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- **Child protection** – is a part of safeguarding which Contact adhere to even though we do not have direct work with children. We will still act upon any cases which offer cause for concern over a child be it directly or indirectly, action or conversation.
- **Abuse and neglect** – may occur in a family, in a community and in an institution. It may be perpetrated by a person or persons known to the vulnerable individual or by strangers, by an adult or by a young person. It may be an infliction or harm or failure to prevent harm.

Legal Framework

Everyone has a right to be safeguarded from abuse or neglect. There is a legislative framework in place in place to safeguard children and vulnerable adults through The Children Act 1989 (as amended by section 53 of the Children Act 2004) and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006. Further guidance that sets out the requirements and expectations on professionals to work together to effectively safeguard children include Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015), Safeguarding Disabled Children: Practice Guidance (2009) and What to do if you're worried a child is being abused (2015) (Department for Education 2015).

Contact (MMHG) does not have a statutory duty to comply with the key arrangements listed in Working Together, however it should have in place arrangements that reflect the importance of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, as well as vulnerable adults. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is illegal in England and Wales under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003. It is a form of child abuse and violence against women. While the duties under the Act are limited to regulated health & social care professional and teachers, non-regulated practitioners also have a responsibility to take appropriate safeguarding action in relation to any identified or suspected case of FGM.

Contact Morpeth Mental Health Group Process

In relation to vulnerable adults, the approach Contact (MMHG) will take is based on, and reflects, the principles of relevant legislation and guidance relating to the protection of vulnerable adults.

- The welfare of the vulnerable adult is the paramount consideration
- All vulnerable adults, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religious belief and sexual orientation, have a right to protection from harm or abuse.
- Any concerns regarding any individual must be reported directly to the Chairperson or the Vice Chairperson.

In relation to safeguarding of children:- All staff, volunteers, trustees or anyone working on behalf of Contact shall be observant and attentive to any conversations or actions which may imply, act or seem to be harmful acts upon young people. As Contact does not work directly with young people, they may be present at events etc, even if a conversation is overheard which reflects the above statement the following actions should be taken:

- Any concerns regarding any individual must be reported directly to the designated leads.

What constitutes abuse?

Abuse is a deliberate act of ill-treatment that can harm or is likely to harm a person's safety, wellbeing and development. Abuse can be physical, sexual or emotional. Abuse may not, however, fall easily into these categories and staff/associates are not expected to be experts in the field. Neglect also constitutes abuse but can be defined as failing to provide or secure a child or vulnerable adult with the basic needs required for physical safety and wellbeing.

Contact (MMHG) recognises that a person's welfare is paramount and that all children and vulnerable adults - regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief and sexual orientation or identity - have the right to protection from all types of harm and abuse.

Categories of abuse children and vulnerable adults can experience abuse in a number of ways. Forms of abuse that may affect children and vulnerable adults include:

- Abuse of trust
- Child sexual exploitation
- Child Trafficking
- Discriminatory abuse
- Domestic violence or abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Financial or material abuse
- Grooming
- Harmful sexual behaviour
- Modern slavery
- Neglect
- Online abuse
- Organisational or institutional abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Psychological or emotional abuse
- Radicalisation of children or vulnerable adults
- Self-neglect
- Sexual Abuse

These categories can overlap and an abused child or adult often suffers more than one type of abuse. Disabled children and young people are particularly vulnerable to abuse in any form. Safeguards for disabled children are essentially the same as for non-disabled children. Staff must maintain high standards of practice, remain vigilant to the possibility of a child being abused and minimise situations of risk.

The Role of the Management Committee

The management committee is responsible for the protection of vulnerable child / adults within Contact. It has designated Rhona Dunn (Chairperson) rhonadunn@gmail.com 01670 510652 and Mary Kendall (Vice Chairperson) 01670 510652 marytreasurer@contactmorpeth.org.uk to oversee this on its behalf. This will include ensuring the implementation and monitoring of this policy.

In relation to recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers, this will also include ensuring that all undergo an enhanced disclosure by the Disclosure and Barring Service. Criminal disclosures are made regardless of when they were committed or whether they were of major or minor consequence, including spent convictions under the rehabilitation of Offenders Act, and references taken which refer to candidates' suitability to work/have contact with vulnerable child / adults.

It is also the responsibility of the management committee of Contact (MMHG) to ensure that staff and volunteers are aware of, and understand, the importance of implementing this policy and the related procedures and code of good practice.

Management recognises that if vulnerable adults are to be truly protected, it is essential that everyone working with vulnerable adults contribute to the work of those with direct responsibility. The procedures that follow recognise and are consistent with that objective.

As a responsible body we cannot, and should not, restrict our sense of duty to those vulnerable adults we identify as our service users. Staff, through their work, come into contact with a number of vulnerable adults each and every year. By being vigilant and acting where concerns exist, we can play an important part in their protection.

Confidentiality

In operating this policy, staff must also be aware that, in order to protect vulnerable adults, in some circumstances it will be necessary to share what might normally be regarded as confidential information. The following principles should be adhered to:-

- Information will only be shared on a need to know basis
- Information will only be shared when it is in the best interest of the service users
- Confidentiality must not be confused with secrecy
- Informed consent should be obtained but if this is not possible, and other vulnerable adults are at risk, it may be necessary to override it.

Code of Good Practice

Guidance in the form of a Code of Good Practice has also been developed to provide staff with ideas, which not only will help to protect vulnerable adults, but will also help to identify any practices, which could be mistakenly interpreted and perhaps lead to false allegations of abuse. Staff should familiarise themselves with this, if it is necessary to carry out practices contrary to it, only do so after discussion with, and the approval of the designated leads.

Remember, the first priority should always be to ensure the safety and protection of children and vulnerable adults and this it is the responsibility of all staff and volunteers to act on any suspicion or evidence of abuse or neglect.

Appendix i

Vulnerable Child / Adults Code of Good Practice

This Code has been developed to provide you with advice that not only will help to protect vulnerable adults, but will also help you and your colleagues identify any practices which could be mistakenly interpreted and perhaps lead to false allegations of abuse. The reference to staff includes both paid and unpaid personnel and the term vulnerable adults will be used when referring to centre users and vulnerable child to any attending the centre or activities or any conversations overheard which raises concern over a child

Good practice will also protect Contact (MMHG) through reducing the possibility of anyone using their role to gain access to vulnerable child / adults, in order to abuse. If in doubt, consider how an action or activity may be perceived as opposed to how it is intended.

Wherever possible, you should be guided by the following advice:

If it is necessary to carry out practices contrary to it, you should only do so after discussion with, and the approval of designated leads.

- Do not divulge personal information to a vulnerable adult and never invite a vulnerable adult to your home without the knowledge and consent of the carers and Chair / Vice chairperson.
- Develop a culture in which staff members feel comfortable enough to point out inappropriate attitudes and behaviours to each other.
- Do not engage in, or allow, any sexually provocative games involving or observed by vulnerable child / adults, whether based on talking or touching.
- Never make suggestive remarks or discriminatory comments to a vulnerable child / adult.
- Do not engage in, or tolerate, any bullying of a vulnerable child / adult, either by vulnerable adults or other people.
- Do not engage in, or tolerate, inappropriate physical activity involving vulnerable child / adults.
- Respect all vulnerable child / adults, regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, disability or sexual identity.
- Avoid 'favouritism' and singling out 'trouble makers'.
- Never trivialise abuse.
- Never let allegations by a vulnerable child / adult go unreported, including any made against you.

Appendix ii

Vulnerable Child / Adults Procedures – Part One

Procedure to be followed if you think a child or a vulnerable child / adult may be at risk of abuse, is being, or has been, abused either by:

- A member of staff / volunteer
- A member of their family
- Any other person, including another vulnerable adult

Please contact the Designated Leads
Rhona Dunn rhonadunn@gmail.com or
Mary Kendall marytreasurer@contactmorpeth.org.uk
on 01670 510652

The management committee of Contact (MMHG) is responsible for ensuring that all staff and volunteers, for whom they are responsible, are aware of, and understand, the importance of implementing these procedures. Even though the overwhelming majority of vulnerable adults with whom you will come into contact through your work are likely to experience a perfectly safe and happy life.

It is recognised as well, that a percentage of the vulnerable adults that you will come into contact with will, through the nature of their experiences, demonstrate behaviours that might be indicators of abuse. Many factors associated with disadvantage can also result in a vulnerable adult's behaviour being affected, thereby making the identification of abuse more difficult. You are not expected to suddenly become expert in the protection of vulnerable adults, nor are you expected to investigate abuse. You are, however, expected to comply with these procedures.

Staff, who for any reason, become concerned that a vulnerable adult may be at risk of abuse, is being, or has been, abused must immediately report that concern to the designated leads.

They will discuss your concerns with you to clarify their cause and obtain all the known relevant information. This will then be forwarded to the appropriate Local Authority /Social Services Department stating that it concerns vulnerable adult protection.

Northumberland County Council - One Call Phone: 01670 536400

Email: onecall@northumberland.gov.uk

Should the concern relate to the designated leads, you should contact another member of the management committee.

Appendix iii**Vulnerable Child / Adults Procedures Part Two*****Procedures to be followed if a vulnerable child / adult tells you that they are being, or have been, abused:***

Vulnerable adults will occasionally disclose abuse to an individual they have come to feel they can trust. This happens for many reasons but the important thing to remember is that if they do tell you, they are doing so in the hope that you will act to stop it happening, even if they ask you not to do anything with the information.

Vulnerable adults may feel as if they are betraying someone they are close to and whom they love. It is not unusual for a vulnerable adult to love the abuser but want the abuse to stop, especially when that person whom they perceive to be able to influence decisions concerning their future. Either way, it takes great courage for a vulnerable adult to talk about abuse and your response can be crucial.

It is important to remember too, that it can be more difficult for some vulnerable adults to tell more than for others. Vulnerable adults who have experienced prejudice and discrimination through racism may well believe that people from other ethnic groups or backgrounds don't really care about them. They may have little reason to trust those they see as authority figures and may wonder whether you will be any different.

Vulnerable adults with a disability will have to overcome barriers before disclosing abuse. They may well rely on the abuser for their daily care and have no knowledge of alternative sources.

If a vulnerable adult discloses abuse to you in the course of your work, it is important to react appropriately.

Do	Do Not
• Remain calm and receptive • Listen without interrupting • Only ask questions of clarification if you are unclear what the vulnerable adult is saying • Make it clear you take them seriously • Acknowledge their courage in telling you • Tell them they are not responsible for the abuse • Let them know you will do what you can to help them and, where possible, get their consent to inform your Chair / Vice chairperson and local Social Services Department	• Allow your shock or distaste to show • Probe for more information/ask other questions • Make assumptions or speculate • Make negative comments about the abuser • Make promises you cannot keep • Agree to keep the information secret

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It is, therefore, essential that everything possible be done to protect the vulnerable adults who place their trust in us. If a vulnerable adult tells you that they are being, or have been, abused, you must:

- Make an immediate record of what the vulnerable adult has said, using their own words
- Follow the instructions for reporting to the Designated Lead as set out in procedure one
- Tell them that you will have to inform the Designated Leads and that, if appropriate, the relevant authorities will also have to be informed

REVISION HISTORY

Document Review

In accordance with good practice it has been agreed by the Contact Morpeth Mental Health Group Trustees that all Governing Policies will be reviewed every year and the administration will bring any major changes to the sight of the committee for reflective change. The date of ratification of the Policy Revision will be recorded below together with details of any substantial change to the Policy.

REVISION THREE – January 2026 - Original Document issued to Trustees

6th Feb 2025 Last Revision

Next Revision January 2027

Signed:



Chairperson
