**Name of Policy: Beyond Words Safeguarding Adults & Vulnerable People Policy**

**Date of Issue:** 1st April 2021

**Next Review Date:** 1st April 2024

1. **Aims, Purpose & Principles**

This document contains Beyond Words’ policy, procedures and guidelines for Safeguarding Adults and Vulnerable People. It takes into account national policies, including the following:

* 1. Statement of Government Policy on Adult Safeguarding (Department of Health, August 2013)
  2. Guidance on developing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse (Department of Health, 2000)
  3. SCIE Report 39: Protecting adults at risk - London multi-agency policy and procedures to safeguard adults from abuse (2011)
  4. Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005
  5. The Care Act 2014 and the Social Services Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014 – in particular, Provisions 43-45 of the Care Act and Part 7 of the Social Services Wellbeing Act.

Safeguarding of adults is shaped by 6 principles:

* Empowerment - Presumption of person led decisions and informed consent.
* Prevention - It is better to take action before harm occurs.
* Proportionality – Proportionate and least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.
* Protection - Support and representation for those in greatest need.
* Partnership - Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.
* Accountability - Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

Beyond Words recognises every adult’s right to live free from abuse in accordance with the principles of respect, dignity, autonomy and privacy. Beyond Words will do all that it can to ensure the safety of everyone with whom we work.

A copy of this policy will be issued to each member of staff (including those who are currently employed as well as new employees as part of their induction). The policy will be kept up to date and the way in which it has operated will be reviewed every two years.

All subcontractors including trainers, facilitators and consultants contracted to work for Beyond Words and volunteers will be required to comply with this policy which will be made available to them. Copies of this policy will be freely available to any other interested party.

The specific arrangements for the implementation of the policy and the personnel responsible are set out below.

The purpose of this policy is:

* to ensure that Beyond Words’ staff and volunteers understand their responsibility to report any concerns they have about actual or potential abuse;
* to enable Beyond Words to respond promptly and effectively to allegations of abuse that come to our notice;
* to provide information, instruction and supervision for employees;
* to ensure all employees are aware of procedures and guidelines for Safeguarding Adults & Vulnerable People and to give them adequate training
* to review and revise our safeguarding processes both as necessary and at regular intervals.

1. **Definitions**

*Vulnerable Adults*

A vulnerable adult is any person aged 18 or over 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 or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

*Abuse*

Abuse can be behaviour, acts which causes harm or distress to the vulnerable person, either as a single instance or over a period of time, and may occur either online or offline. In some cases it may have happened some time ago and only recently been disclosed or become apparent.

Abuse can be physical, psychological / emotional, sexual, neglect, discrimination or institutional.

People may be abused by family, carers, friends, acquaintances, strangers or even another vulnerable adult.

**Who needs to follow this policy?**

Beyond Words’ employees (including full and part time staff, interns, and consultants), volunteers (advocates and others) and Trustees, as well as external partners and champions working with Beyond Words must make sure that they are familiar with the purpose and contents of this policy and follow it whenever applicable.

1. **Responsibilities**
2. **The Board of Trustees will:**

make sure that this policy is reviewed every two years, or as soon as possible after any significant change in legislation or official guidance

review this policy after any incident of reported abuse to ensure that the policy remains fit for purpose

check regularly, through internal audit and other means, that this policy is being complied with

respond appropriately and promptly to any issue or incident reported to them by the Chief Executive

respond promptly to incidents reported to them from any source to ensure an open culture where potential institutional abuse may be acted upon

ensure that the organisation develops and maintains a culture of openness, trust, vigilance and responsiveness at all levels in its approach to tackling abuse both outside and within the organisation

1. **Day-to-day responsibility – the Board of Trustees will:**

be responsible for ensuring this policy (and risk assessment) is put into practice and is delegated to the Chief Executive who will:

Make a report on any incidents or a nil report to each meeting of the Board of Trustees

make sure that any immediate needs of the alleged victim are dealt with, that the victim is safe, that emergency medical treatment is arranged if necessary and that no evidence of injuries, sexual assault or other evidence is lost

ensure that the person reporting the abuse is informed (and kept informed) of what the plan of action will be

clarify the facts available and stated, but not to investigate further

make sure the relevant local authority department is informed immediately

make sure that a proper written confidential record is made of the incident and of the investigation while ensuring that the person reporting the incident is clear about the steps that will be taken going forward. The vulnerable person’s own words should be used as much as possible and fact must be separated from reported opinion. This written document may be used in any legal action. Each page should be signed with a note of when and there the statement was written

alert the Board of Trustees to any safeguarding issue or incident

make sure that all staff and volunteers receive mandatory Safeguarding Adults and/or (where appropriate) Safeguarding Children & Young People training at least once every three years, so that they can recognise and respond to actual or suspected abuse

make sure that staff and volunteers are aware of and work in line with this policy

make sure that as far as possible staff and volunteers are protected from harassment by repeated and unfounded allegations of abuse from vulnerable persons or a third party and that any allegation made against an employee or volunteer is treated seriously but in a sensitive manner

ensure that induction training is provided for all new employees or volunteers.

(Note: if the Chief Executive is absent, their responsibilities pass to their deputy, line manager or volunteer co-ordinator to whom the suspected abuse is reported)

1. **Employees and volunteers**

All employees and volunteers have the responsibility to co-operate with the Chief Executive and the Board of Trustees to achieve a safe and respectful work environment and to take reasonable care of themselves and others. Employees and volunteers will ensure that they:

* are aware of the contents of this policy and follow its requirements, including the guidelines regarding contact with vulnerable people
* are aware of local authority policies and procedures in place for safeguarding adults & vulnerable people in the local authority areas where they work and to follow these procedures where relevant
* remember that all the parties involved have rights which should be respected and balanced against each other (in line with the Human Rights Act 1998)
* immediately inform their line manager if they have witnessed any form or sign of abuse.

1. **Transport**

If a vulnerable adult is travelling in a personal staff vehicle as part of their involvement with a Books Beyond Words project, it is desirable (where possible) to have more than one adult or staff person in the vehicle. If it is not possible to have more than one person accompanying the vulnerable adult, then in these cases the driver must hold a valid DBS disclosure and a proper risk assessment should be carried out as necessary. Some young people may decide to travel unaccompanied, but this may only be permitted with the express prior agreement of their parent, guardian or carer.

1. **Disclosures of Abuse**

A staff person or volunteer may receive information from a third party which indicates the possibility of abuse, or they may have concerns themselves.

Any suspicion of abuse, however uncertain, must be reported immediately (following the reporting procedures set out below). The alleged abuser(s) must not be confronted or alerted.

The person who discloses abuse may ask for the information to go no further. However, they must be made aware that all cases of alleged abuse will be followed up by Beyond Words and information will be shared only on a need to know basis. The person making the disclosure / allegation should be clearly informed about the process that will be followed and kept up to date with the progress of the organisation’s response.

1. **Reporting Suspected or Actual Abuse**

If an employee or volunteer becomes aware of abuse, or suspects that it may be occurring, they must report it immediately to the Chief Executive (or in their absence to their deputy), line manager or volunteer co-ordinator.

If suspicions of abuse are raised in good faith, employees and volunteers will be supported, regardless of whether or not the allegation is proved subsequently.

If abuse or suspected abuse is reported to a Line Manager or Volunteer Co-ordinator, they must immediately inform the Chief Executive.

The manager or co-ordinator to whom the abuse, or suspicion of abuse, is reported must immediately report it to the appropriate Social Services Duty Officer, or ensure that it is reported to Social Services or, specifically Adult Social Services (or for more urgent cases the Police) by the Manager or Chief Executive.

It is then the responsibility of Social Services or the local Adult Social Services (or for more urgent cases the Police) to investigate the alleged abuse. If a staff person or volunteer becomes aware of any further information relevant to their investigation, this must be reported immediately to their Line Manager or Co-ordinator, who must inform the relevant contact at Social Services or the local Adult Social Services (or for more urgent cases the Police) as soon as possible.

1. **Whistleblowing**

If a staff person or volunteer knows or suspects that abuse is taking place which involves someone connected to Beyond Words, in any capacity, they must report it immediately, following the procedures in the Responsibilities section (above).

If they feel unable to report abuse or suspected abuse to a member of staff, they should contact the Chair or a member of the Board of Trustees to ensure an open culture where potential institutional abuse may be acted upon.