



## **Aware Confidentiality & Risk Management Policy**

**Confidentiality is very important to Aware.** Information provided by people who avail of Aware's services and programmes service users is to be kept confidential, except in specific circumstances where there is a risk to self or other.

Risk arises:

- When a person has immediate plans to die by suicide.
- When a person has immediate plans to harm others.
- When there is identifiable information that a child or a vulnerable adult\* is at risk of, or has in the past been subjected to, harm/abuse/neglect.

*\* A Vulnerable Person considered to be 'an adult who may be restricted in capacity to guard himself / herself against harm or exploitation or to report such harm or exploitation. Restriction of capacity may arise as a result of physical or intellectual impairment', (Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults at Risk of Abuse: National Policy and Procedures. Incorporating Services for Elder Abuse and for Persons with a Disability 2014:3)*

**Procedures for Volunteers/Training Partners/Staff to follow, having distinguished between suicidal ideation (i.e., thoughts about suicide) and immediate intent to die by suicide.**

- 1) Where a person has immediate plans to die by suicide or plans to harm others.**  
**In this regard, immediate means directly after the current interaction (meeting, call, programme, email).**

If there is a plan to die by suicide, we implement the Aware Confidentiality and Risk Management Policy. This policy is there for the protection of people attending the meeting and for the protection of facilitators. It is important that all facilitators use this policy to ensure that people attending the meeting see the same approach being used at all times. Please ensure that you call 999/112 to deliver professional care and ensure that the emergency services bring the person with an immediate plan to die by suicide to the hospital, as per the Aware policy.

### **1.1) Where a person in the group has immediate plans to die by suicide**

Facilitators will:

- a) Acknowledge what the person has shared e.g., *'From what you shared it sounds like this is a very difficult time for you and that you have thoughts that life isn't worth living,*

- b) Ask if the person is talking about suicide and if they have a plan e.g., *'When you have these thoughts are you talking about taking your own life, are you talking about suicide? If yes, 'have you made a plan to end your life today?'*
- c) Remind the group of the Confidentiality and Risk Management Policy e.g. *'While much of what is said in Aware is confidential, I would like remind the group of the policy we have in place which we spoke about at the opening of the meeting. This is in place so we can work together to keep people safe'.*
- d) Ask the person to remain after the meeting ends *'From what you shared we are concerned that you have made a plan to end your life today, we would ask that you stay after the meeting ends so we can get you further support'.*

Procedure to follow once the meeting ends:

- e) The two facilitators speak with the person – *'Based on what you have shared, we are concerned for your safety. One way for you to keep safe now is for us to ring 999/112 for an ambulance to bring you to A&E'.*
- f) Ask the person for their name, location, and contact number.
- g) Dial 999/112 – dialling 999/112 is the best and safest way to support the person. Ask for the ambulance service and explain your emergency, who you are and give whatever identifiable information you have.
- h) Facilitators debrief after the meeting with particular focus on own self-care and the steps that they will take to obtain additional support if required.
- i) In your debrief, immediately document the incident through the **Volunteer Area** under **Online Forms – Confidentiality and Risk Management Policy**.

\*If the person leaves the meeting early – a facilitator will follow the person from the room, note the direction the person went (noting car registration where possible) and what the person is wearing. Dial 999/112 explaining your concerns for the person and give the information you have.

\*\*If the person leaves a Zoom or Phone In group early, in your debrief, document the incident through the Volunteer Area – under Online Form – Confidentiality Form.

\*\*\* In all formats of our Support and Self Care groups, if a person has started to implement their plan to take their own life (e.g., they have taken medication), explain your concerns for the person's safety, suspend the group, ask for the person's name, location and contact number and dial 999/112 asking for an ambulance who will bring the person to A&E.

\*\*\*\*In the Zoom and Phone In group, if a person does not provide their name, location and contact number, seek to elicit a commitment from the person that they will contact 999/112 or go directly to A&E. In your debrief complete the online form and contact your Service Manager regarding this risk.

## **1.2) 'Harm to Others' Procedures**

### **1.2.1) Where an immediate and imminent risk presents to the group.**

Facilitators will:

- a) Ensure the safety of the group and facilitators.
- b) In Face-to-Face format, suspend the group and ask the person or persons to leave (if they refuse, ask the group to vacate the room).
- c) In Zoom or Phone In format, suspend the group, ask the other attendees to leave and then ask for name, location, and contact number of the person of concern.
- d) Dial 999/112 or local Gardaí station – ask for the Gardaí, explain your emergency, who you are and give whatever identifiable information you have.
- e) Follow Gardaí directions
- f) Facilitators debrief after the meeting with particular focus on own self-care and the steps that they will take to obtain additional support if required.
- g) In your debrief immediately document the incident through the **Volunteer Area** under **Online Forms – Confidentiality and Risk Management Policy**.

### **1.2.2) Where a person reports that they are planning to harm another person, outside the group.**

Facilitator will:

- a) Remind the group of the Confidentiality and Risk Management Policy
- b) In Face-to-Face group, explain your concern, ask the person to remain after the meeting, after the meeting ask the person for their name and contact number.
- c) In Zoom or Phone In format, suspend the group, ask the other attendees to leave and then ask for name, location, and contact number of the person of concern.
- d) Dial 999/112 asking for the Gardaí and report your concerns.
- e) Facilitators debrief after the meeting with particular focus on own self-care and the steps that they will take to obtain additional support if required.
- f) In your debrief immediately document the incident through the **Volunteer Area** under **Online Forms – Confidentiality and Risk Management Policy**.

## **2) Where a child or vulnerable adult is at risk of harm/abuse/ neglect.**

This policy is in place so we can all work together in our community to keep children and vulnerable adults safe.

### **2.1) Where there is identifiable information that a child or a vulnerable adult is currently at risk of harm/ abuse/ neglect.**

**\* the vulnerable adult may be the person attending the group.**

Facilitators will:

- a) Acknowledge what has been said in the meeting
- b) Remind the group of the Confidentiality and Risk Management Policy and its implications
- c) Ask the individual to stay behind after the meeting as you would like to outline how Aware will proceed with the information disclosed as it is concerning
  - \*Do not ask for additional information at this time within the group.

\*If the person leaves the meeting do not follow. Complete the online form in the Volunteer Area providing the information disclosed.

Procedures to follow after meeting:

- d) Ensure that both facilitators meet with the person immediately when the group finishes.
- e) Remind the person again about the Confidentiality and Risk Management Policy and its implications and how Aware will proceed with the information.
- f) Ask the person for their name, location and contact number, alongside identifiable information; including name of person(s) who is alleged to have abused the child or vulnerable adult; the name of the child or vulnerable adult, address, contact numbers if they have this information. Gather as much identifiable information as possible.
- g) Inform the person that you are obliged to report directly to the Gardaí and to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) in Aware. The DLP will inform TUSLA/HSE of the disclosure(s) made.
- h) Direct the person to Aware's DLP if they wish to discuss the issue further.
- i) Given there is current risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult report immediately to the Gardaí, ring 999/112 or local Garda station.
- j) Facilitators debrief after the meeting with particular focus on own self-care and the steps that they will take to obtain additional support if required.
- k) In your debrief immediately document the incident through the **Volunteer Area** under **Online Forms – Confidentiality and Risk Management Policy**.

## **2.2) Where there is identifiable information that an adult has been harmed/abused/neglected retrospectively (as a child, under 18 years).**

Facilitators will:

- a) Acknowledge what has been said in the meeting.
- b) Remind the group of Confidentiality and Risk Management Policy
- c) Ask the person to stay behind after the meeting to discuss this further.  
 \*Do not ask for additional information at this time within the group.  
 \*If the person leaves the meeting do not follow. Complete the online form in the Volunteer Area providing the information disclosed.

Procedures to follow after meeting:

- d) Ensure that both facilitators meet with the person immediately when the group finishes.
- a) Remind the person of our Confidentiality and Risk Management Policy and that potentially there may be children at current risk of harm, abuse, or neglect. We take these issues very seriously.
- b) Ask the person if they wish to give identifying information (name, location and contact number) which will be passed on to the DLP who will report this to TUSLA.

- c) Give the person the contact details of the DLP ([confidentiality@aware.ie](mailto:confidentiality@aware.ie)) if they wish to know whether this report is being sent to the TUSLA and a list of other relevant support service contact details such as the HSE National Counselling Service 1800 234 111, Rape Crisis Centre 1800 778 888 and One in Four 01-6624070.
- d) If the person chooses not to give any details to Aware, encourage the person to contact TUSLA directly themselves as there may be children currently at risk of harm, abuse, or neglect from the alleged perpetrator(s).
- e) Facilitators debrief after the meeting with particular focus on own self-care and the steps that they will take to obtain additional support if required.
- f) In your debrief immediately document the incident through the **Volunteer Area** under **Online Forms – Confidentiality and Risk Management Policy**.

If a child is at risk, it is possible that the Garda may wish to interview the facilitators.

#### **Designated Liaison Person:**

- Designated Liaison Person (DLP): The Designated Liaison Person can be contacted via the main Aware office on 01 – 661 7211 or via email [confidentiality@aware.ie](mailto:confidentiality@aware.ie) (during office hrs only)
- Please note that a Designated Liaison Person (DLP), who is a member of staff, has been appointed by the Board to take responsibility for reporting child protection or vulnerable adult concerns to TUSLA/HSE and to act as the liaison person for reported incidents to the Gardaí.

#### **Additional Points:**

- Familiarise yourself regularly with the Aware Confidentiality and Risk Management Policy, always have a hard copy at the ready.
- The volunteer is responsible for informing the DLP of concerning information. The volunteer does not have responsibility for what, if any, information is sent to TUSLA or HSE nor what follow up or steps are taken by TUSLA or HSE.
- Volunteers are encouraged to practice self-care techniques. If additional support or advice is required, contact your service manager.