



# SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PROCEDURES



Updated October 2021

YOUBELONG UGANDA

# **Safeguarding Policy and Procedures**

This document is seen as a working document open to  
regular review

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## **Introduction**

YouBelong is a registered NGO in Uganda, with a mission to strengthen the public health system in Uganda, with mental health care. Engagement by the YouBelong Uganda staff and other authorised persons, with persons experiencing severe mental illness, their families, and others in the community who might be a part of YouBelong activities, is the context for this policy and its procedures.

This policy is written with two themes in mind. The safeguarding of all who are employed or authorised to be a part of YouBelong Uganda activities, and the safeguarding of all who YouBelong engages with, in the course of its mission.

A Human Rights perspective underpins this policy, with particular reference to the human rights of children and persons with disabilities, such as persons with severe mental illness, neurological disorders, and alcohol and substance use disorders.

YouBelong Uganda, is committed to the ongoing provision of Safeguarding education, training, and professional development of its personnel.

YouBelong Uganda promotes a continual development of a culture of care and safeguarding for all associated with the organisation. A culture in which all personnel/patients/service users feel that their human rights are respected, the level of professional care is of the highest standard, and all staff and volunteers can work in an environment of safety and mutual support.

Uganda is a patriarchal society, and as such, girls and women, have significant barriers to their wellbeing in family and community. Gender Based Violence, and other forms of abuse against girls and women, are disproportionately high, compared to males. As such, extra vigilance is given in this safeguarding policy, to gender specific safety from abuse.

This Policy is to be provided to all personnel at YouBelong Uganda, and this Safeguarding Policy is to be a part of the induction of new personnel to the organisation, and must be agreed to in all employment contracts.

Comments, review, discussion, are welcomed on a regular basis, to inform all work practices, so that this document is seen as a living document and that it will continue to grow and enhance Safeguarding as integral to the life and practices of YouBelong Uganda (YBU).

A copy of this Safeguarding Policy document is to be provided to all personnel of YouBelong, and a copy is to be made available for review at the YBU offices.

## **Safeguarding Policy Principles**

The principles in this policy are based upon the principles enunciated key documents such as:

- 1) The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- 2) The United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008)
- 3) International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (1976) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)
- 4) United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990)
- 5) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979)
- 6) International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)
- 7) International Labour Organization Conventions on Child Labour (1973) No. 138 on Minimum Age and Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour
- 8) African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990)

## **Overarching Values**

This document is underpinned by the overarching values of the inherent and equal human dignity of every person; special care for children and people who are vulnerable through physical, mental, or neurological disability; the right to privacy of a patient's/service user's medical information; the right of YBU personnel and service users to be protected from physical abuse, sexual abuse, financial abuse, emotional abuse, and any form of bullying, harassment, or manipulation.

## **Mandatory Compliance**

This safeguarding policy document is an official document of YouBelong Uganda, approved by the Board of Management of YouBelong Uganda, and the trustees of the organisation.

Besides all employed personnel, this policy also applies to all students, interns, volunteers and any other personnel who may, from time to time, operate at the offices or undertake field work, or any other activity, with the approval of authorized officers of YBU. Authorised officers of YBU, are noted as the CEO, the Technical Director, the Team Leader, the Senior Social Worker.

## **The Law in Uganda**

Ugandan laws are to be adhered to, with particular note of laws with regards to child protection and engagement with persons with disabilities in Uganda. If the standards outlined in this policy are stronger than local legislation, then such policy will be followed.

## **Some Important Definitions and Terms**

### **1. Bullying**

Is any offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour. It involves the misuse of power and can make the person being bullied feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated, undermined or threatened (WELLCOME TRUST).

### **2. Child or young person**

A child or young person is regarded to be any person under the age of 18 years.

### **3. Child Abuse**

Child abuse includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, neglect, bullying, discrimination, child labour, and domestic violence.

### **4. Financial abuse**

Financial abuse occurs when a vulnerable person, or their family, is coerced in some form to provide a payment to a person who has duties within an organisation, to facilitate a service or preferential treatment, or in order to secure what could be described as normal or ordinary care. Financial abuse may also involve forms of corruption, including embezzlement.

### **5. Harassment**

Is any unwanted physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for them. It may be persistent or a single incident. (WELLCOME TRUST).

### **6. Neglect**

Is the persistent failure or the deliberate denial to provide a child or vulnerable adult with clean water, food, shelter, emotional support or love, sanitation, supervision or care to the extent that the person's health and development are placed at risk.

### **7. Other authorized personnel**

For the purposes of this policy, other authorised personnel within an organisation refers to volunteers, students, interns, consultants, contractors, caretakers, and any person designated as such, by the CEO or delegate of the organisation.

### **8. Physical abuse**

Physical abuse occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or vulnerable person. This may take any form of physical treatment including but not limited

to slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving or grabbing. The injury may take any form including but not limited to bruises, cuts, burns or fractures.

### **9. Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse is actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, including inappropriate touching, by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. Examples of this include the use of a child or vulnerable person for sexual gratification by an adult, or such inappropriate sexual behaviour between staff, or other authorised persons, with a patient/service user.

### **10. Vulnerable person (adult)**

Is a person aged 18 years or older who may need health and/or care services because of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is unable, or may be unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation (NHS England, 2017). All service users of YBU are defined as vulnerable persons.

### **11. Education/training**

In-service training in Safeguarding will be carried out for all personnel of YouBelong. Initial information about Safeguarding will be given at the point of new staff induction.

The input of staff/personnel of YBU is encouraged, to continue to refine this document of policies and procedures, as well as suggestions on further education/training, and initiatives to ensure that YBU maintains high quality Safeguarding policies and procedures.

### **12. Safeguarding**

Safeguarding is defined as taking all reasonable means to prevent harm from occurring, to protect especially, vulnerable adults and children from harm and to respond appropriately when harm does occur (UK Collaborative on Research Development).

### **13. Safeguarding Officer**

A member of the YBU personnel will be appointed as the YBU Safeguarding Officer. This person will take a lead role in ensuring that this policy and procedure are widely known by all YBU personnel, and that the policy and procedures are discussed at team meetings, at least once a quarter. The YBU personnel are encouraged to provide feedback to the CEO, about the policy and its ongoing development, through the Safeguarding Officer.

## **Reporting/Responding to concern of possible abuse, or allegations or complaints of abuse**

A policy document such as this, is without depth unless a process is incorporated, in order to respond to any complaint that falls under the mandate of this Safeguarding Policy.

The need to report and make a complaint, in line with this document, arises in the following instances:

- Abuse is observed or suspected
- An allegation of abuse is made to a member or YBU personnel
- A child/vulnerable adult/staff member discloses abuse

If a staff member/service user/family member, or other person makes a complaint of abuse, the CEO or delegate of YBU are the approved persons to receive the complaint. If a staff member of YBU wishes to make a complaint, the CEO or delegate must be informed as quickly as possible preferably within 24 hrs of receipt of such information. If the CEO or delegate are not available, or if it is preferable to the complainant, the Chair of the Board of Management of YBU, is to be contacted and complaint forwarded.

It is important that the process of determination of a complaint of abuse is expedited and concluded as quickly as possible for the good order of all concerned, particularly a victim of abuse.

The Principles of Confidentiality, Respect, and Care, particularly for the person making the complaint, are of paramount importance and are to be seen in all aspects of this policy and its implementation.

### **The Complaints Process**

- 1) The first issue is to determine the proper locus of response to the knowledge of, or complaint of abuse. In a criminal matter or suspected criminal matter, this may mean referral to LCI or the police, within the Ugandan legal framework.
- 2) If the information or complaint refers to an external body, such as a hospital, and does not involve any YBU personnel, then ONLY the head of the external body should be provided with the information, as quickly as possible.
- 3) If the information or complaint is such that an internal process should be commenced to investigate the complaint, then the following process should be followed.
- 4) The CEO or delegate, through the Chair of the Board of Management, formally appoints a member of the Board of Management to receive the complaint, and to interview all



persons involved in the complaint in order to gather information upon which to make a referral to the Board of Management for a determination of the complaint.

- 5) Confidentiality, and the principle of natural justice must apply. During such investigation the person who made the complaint must be provided with appropriate care. The person complained against, must be accorded fairness and natural justice during proceedings.
- 6) The safety and security of the complainant is to be assured during the complaint and investigation stage. If the complainant is a staff member, this may mean transfer of the complainant from a particular work position, or paid leave, to maintain their safety, or it may mean the transfer of the alleged perpetrator, or paid leave, if the alleged perpetrator is a staff member, for the perceived safety of persons, whilst the investigation process takes place. If this occurs, no inference is to be drawn of the guilt or innocence of the person complained about, until the whole complaints process is complete.
- 7) If the alleged perpetrator is a person outside the authority of the organization, then information about the complaint should be provided to an appropriate person of authority attached to the alleged perpetrator, if this is possible. If the matter is of a criminal nature, the appropriate legal authorities are to be contacted as per point 1.
- 8) If the matter is within the authority of the Board of Management of YBU, it is to receive a report and make a determination based on the principle of probability.
- 9) The decision of the Board of Management is given to the CEO for implementation.
- 10) Following a decision regarding the complaint, implementation of the decision needs to be made in an expedited manner, and this might include sanctions against the perpetrator, if they are determined to be guilty of the complaint, and if this is in the remit of YBU (i.e. the person is a member of staff or an authorized person of YBU). Supportive action for the ongoing wellbeing and safety of the person abused is to be enacted.
- 11) Following the determination of a complaint, and the implementation of the results of investigation, a review conducted by YBU should be undertaken to determine if any further safeguarding actions need to be put in place in the organization.