

ACSYL Policy: Safeguarding

Principles

1. Emphasis on assets, not deficits

Our approach to safeguarding, as to all of our work, is asset-based rather than deficit-based. Many people in our client group live unnecessarily narrow lives because those caring for them tend to emphasise meeting needs, solving problems and avoiding risks. To quote the late Judith Snow, pioneer and communicator extraordinaire: “The problem with most kinds of planning around people who are vulnerable, either because they are labelled physically, behaviourally or mentally disabled, is that we focus on what's wrong with the person or with their family. As we focus on what's wrong with them, we end up with ways to try and fix them but with no way to move forward in that person's life. Often you end up getting stuck.”

We all flourish by building on our strengths and doing more of what energises us. Everyone has something unique and valuable to give, and ACSYL delights in empowering clients to design their lives around what they enjoy and would like to contribute to their community.

2. Safety in numbers

ACSYL is inspired by these words from Ted Kuntz, Chair of PLAN (Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network) in Canada: "Safety and security is dependent upon the number of relationships a person has. The more relationships, the safer they are. The fewer relationships, the more vulnerable they are."

This principle was emphasised on the 29th September 2016 at a Gloucestershire-wide conference whose theme was *How Can We Promote Inclusion by Facilitating Friendship and Assistance for Disabled People?* Chris Haynes, who was then Gloucestershire County Council's Lead Commissioner for learning disabilities, noted that it is dangerous for individuals to be supported only by people who are paid to be there: that situation can lead to Winterbourne (where institutionalised mistreatment occurred in the absence of independent monitoring).

Practicalities

1. ACSYL provides ongoing guidance in this area for all circle members.
2. The facilitator and other circle members are responsible for promoting the focus person's well-being. This includes
 - nurturing his/her health, happiness, development, learning and growth
 - recognising his/her right to be treated with dignity and respect at all times
 - encouraging him/her to express choices and make decisions
 - listening to him/her with eyes and ears, recognising that all behaviour is communication, and just because someone can't speak it doesn't mean they have nothing to say
 - working to achieve a healthy balance between choice and safety: protecting the focus person from harm while recognising his/her right to have a full and satisfying life
 - building strong friendships with the focus person and with each other in order to provide a robust and empowering support system

- responding promptly to accidents, complaints, and incidents of alleged or suspected abuse – reporting them to ACSYL management without delay

3. Where there are safeguarding and/or duty-of-care issues, ACSYL shares information with 3rd parties as appropriate.

4. All facilitators have up-to-date DBS checks. The same applies to other circle members in cases where the focus person and/or family request it.

5. Careful record keeping is part of ACSYL's safeguarding procedure. It protects clients, facilitators and the company.

Policy Owner: ACSYL Management

Signed by ACSYL MD:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Forke', is written over a faint, illegible printed name.

Date: 26th August 2020

Date of next review: August 2021