Vulnerable People’s Policy

Introduction

MQ: Transforming Mental Health is a registered charity in England and Wales (1139916) & Scotland: (SC046075) and a registered company in England and Wales (7406055). We are committed to the safeguarding of any person coming into contact with MQ and respect their right to confidentiality.

At MQ there are many people we come into contact with, who are at high risk of being vulnerable. This policy explains how MQ exercises its responsibility to minimise harm to an individual. We wish to clearly mitigate such risk by being considerate and aware of the potential harm people may do to themselves or cause to those around them. Furthermore, specific roles whereby people are coming into regular contact with people will receive formal safeguarding training.

Anyone without authority trying to gain access to vulnerable people or their records is acting illegally, and MQ will take this very seriously.

MQ’s accountability

MQ believes that safeguarding is everybody’s business and that MQ must play an active role in the prevention, detection and reporting of any concerns relating to a person’s vulnerability.

As part of MQ’s induction process, all staff and volunteers will receive basic training relating to this policy and safeguarding regulatory practices to protect vulnerable people, as appropriate for MQ.

Where MQ staff are responsible for communicating with people about their mental health experiences or those who support our cause as a result unfortunate circumstances, more in-depth training and support will be provided by MQ.

MQ commits to equipping their staff to flag any concerns of vulnerability and know the processes in place to raise this more officially. In addition, we also believe that it is important to protect the wellbeing of our own staff and have in place a ‘wellbeing allowance’.

What this policy covers

Contained within this policy are the following areas which you can read:
1. **Useful information**

1.1 **What is the objective of this policy**

This policy highlights MQ’s commitment to doing all that can be reasonably expected to reduce the risk of harm and/or abuse to an individual who comes directly into contact with MQ.

1.2 **What ‘vulnerable’ means**

For MQ, ‘vulnerable’ is when someone is:

a) exposed to an environment which may put them at risk of harm by another person in ways that undermine their ability to escape it (e.g. financial, emotional, physical abuse)

b) when a person is sharing that they are experiencing hardship and their decision making is questionably not in their best interest

c) when the communication with an individual is confused and uncomprehensible which evokes a concern of their immediate wellbeing

1.3 **Why does MQ require this policy**

Although MQ does not provide mental health services nor victim support, MQ believes that it should put measures in place to ensure the safeguarding of all individuals coming into contact with MQ.

We commit to playing an active part in reporting abuse and/or harm that we become aware of by highlighting this to the appropriate local services.

Safeguards against poor practice, harm and abuse need to be an integral part of all aspects of our work which comes into contact with all individuals.
We should achieve this by providing safeguarding training to the appropriate staff, maintain close partnerships between local organisations, communities and individuals.

By identifying key areas, MQ can put appropriate measures in place to improve the way we communicate and develop effective support.

2. Website

Any information that you provide us with falls under our Data Protection and Privacy policy which is accessible [HERE]. We will never share your details and sensitive information with anyone outside of MQ for their own purposes.

a. MQ website

When accessing the MQ website, we take full responsibility for ensuring that your experience is safe and secure. We would like to provide you with the opportunity to share your experiences and get involved in ways that work for you.

b. Sharing your personal story

When wishing to engage with MQ (for instance, by sharing your story) you will be required to complete and sign permission forms. This will help us to record your choice of how and what we share publicly.

Note that you are always able to withdraw your consent, but we cannot guarantee that all articles and social media posts will be deleted outside of MQ's remit.

c. Feedback

We welcome your feedback on how to make your experience with MQ better. When providing critical feedback this can help us to learn, grow and develop, however, we do not condone the use of profanities to express oneself and therefore we may hide these comments from public view. We would also do the same if we felt that comments could cause offence to the wider audience.

d. Social Media
When you are using social media which is not directly linked to MQ, then MQ cannot take responsibility for this. We can advise that you only share what you are genuinely comfortable with or not.

3. **Fundraising purposes**

It is a lovely gesture when people wish to give to MQ, and especially to support the advancement of research into mental illnesses. However, MQ commits to putting you at the centre of decisions we make to accept donations.

It is important that we are diligent about accepting donations, especially as we don’t use face to face fundraising we have to rely on our conversation. Our approach is to have an open and transparent conversation with you and we do not intend to undermine your decision. Nevertheless, we do see it as our responsibility to ensure that you don’t feel compelled or coerced into donating to MQ.

   a. Donations

   If you make a donation to MQ for the first time we may wish to understand what your motivation is for supporting us. This can help us to understand you more and open up a conversation with you.

   Should you not wish to have any further contact from or with MQ, then this can be reflected in your communication preferences and will work in whatever way you’d prefer.

   You can always retract donations from MQ but we always appreciate you to explain this decision to us and help us to improve our practices.

   b. In memory Donations

   Should MQ receive a gift in memory of someone who recently died, we may wish to ensure that the person experiencing bereavement is making an informed decision.

   We only intend to act sensitively and ensure that this decision is in the best interest of everyone involved.

   c. Use of Telemarketing

   MQ sometimes uses a third party agency to conduct telephone marketing for us. This is usually to ask whether people would like to commit to a monthly gift to MQ.
Should someone agree to this but disclose information about their current circumstance which raises concerns, it is important that this is handled with care.

We may ask to delay the decision until the next day and we would be the ones to call you back. You also reserve all rights to cancel any Direct Debit that you set up with us. This is at your discretion and always welcome your feedback to enable us to improve.

4. Events

MQ holds events from time to time, if you are invited to an event, we may ask for your personal and sensitive information. MQ promises to keep such details safe and secure but may need to share it with those directly involved in organising the event.

   e.g. By us knowing of any medical, disability and accessibility requirements we can ensure that the venue is not only suitable but that we are aware of what to do should anything happen

Another example is if you have any allergies or dietary requirements. This important information will help us to include such requirements in our order.

5. Supporter Care
   a. Telephone
   b. Letter communications
   c. Recording vulnerability
   d. Recording lived-experience
   e. Safeguarding your information

Safeguarding includes being aware of the protection of data and security of online computer systems. Any data stored by MQ, including data held on our volunteers, supporters and donors needs to be kept safe.

6. People getting involved with MQ who have lived experience
   a. Young Persons Action Group (YPAG)
   b. Share your story and case studies
   c. Getting involved in mental health research
3 Using your information

3.1 Why is your information important to us

Your information helps us to fulfil the following activities:

- Update and enhance our internal database systems to deliver excellent supporter care and positive experiences with MQ
- Effectively manage relationships that recognises and is responsive to your support, reflecting the information you have shared with us
- Uses your expressions of interest to provide you with the information you need to make informed decisions
- Proficiently manage feedback and/or complaints which are also used in relevant ways to improve best practice
- Minimise any unwanted communications you receive from MQ

3.2 Your information and marketing tools

3.2.1 How we combine and analyse information

We are committed to carefully managing our communications to make sure you only hear from us in a way that is right for you. To help us do this, we may:

- Combine the information we collect about you and analyse what we know about your interests, preferences and potential level of support or donation
- Bring together information from different sources which helps us to better understand our supporters, improve our relationship with you and provide a better experience of interacting with MQ
- Compile information relating to your engagement with MQ (financial and otherwise)
- Collate and analyse information you provide us with to improve our understanding, create bespoke communications and develop effective approaches when
asking for support from like-minded prospect individuals and other organisations

- Use analysis tools which help us to understand how our website is being used and how we can improve the content and operation of it

You can opt out of your data being combined and analysed, more information is provided in the section ‘How you can change your marketing preferences.’

3.2.2 Research and profiling

At times, we may also use publicly available information to help us communicate more specifically with like-minded people who may share the same interests in our work as you do.

In addition to obtaining information from publicly available data sources, we may also work with trusted third parties; such as, Prospecting for Gold and Wealth Watch to highlight people who may be interested in giving a significant gift to MQ.

Such sources anonymise your data so that it does not identify you as an individual. For example, it uses existing information, such as postcodes, to provide demographic information like the average age, income and charitable giving in any given area across the UK.

This knowledge helps MQ to reach out to new supporters who may wish to support us in our goals and mission. For instance, it can help to direct advertisements and other communications to people who share similar interests as you.

We also conduct due diligence on existing and potential supporters to ensure that MQ will not suffer reputational damage. For example, we would not wish to accept a donation from someone who has been at the source of causing people harm, or who is involved in activities which conflict with MQ’s values, vision and mission.

3.2.3 Cookies and Google Analytics

Cookies are text files placed on a computer which collect visitor behaviour information. Google uses cookies and we use their
web analytics service called Google Analytics to help us to monitor how people use our website. It creates statistical reports that allow us to learn more about what people are interested in or what isn’t working so well. This facilitates us to improve interactions. This also helps us to personalise the content and adverts you see.

You can opt-out of cookies but are required to do this proactively by changing the setting in your browser – unfortunately, we cannot control this on your behalf. We do have a cookies policy if you’d like to read more about this.

- You can find out how to turn off cookies by visiting www.aboutcookies.org or www.allaboutcookies.org
- You can always opt-out of Google Analytics cookies by Google’s opt-out tool

3.2.4 Other marketing tools
We may contact you for marketing purposes by post, email, text message or phone. If you have agreed to be communicated with in any of these ways this will be processed so that we can adhere to your preferences.

Where we have consent, we may do digital advertising. For this, information such as your email address or mobile phone number will be sent in an encrypted format to digital advertising networks or social media companies such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or YouTube.

We provide information about how to change your marketing preferences below.

4. Consent

4.1 Why consent is important to both you and MQ

MQ is committed to being clear and transparent about how we might use your data in future when it is provided. We strive to provide practical and easy ways for people to change their contact preferences and information during all interactions.
By disclosing personal information to MQ you are consenting to the collection, storage and processing of information in the manner described in this policy, unless clearly stated otherwise.

MQ will provide all individuals, existing supporters and applicants with the control to manage their contact preferences at the point that information is provided.

There are times when even if you have ‘opted out’ of our communication we may be required to contact you. This is known as “legitimate interest” and applies when we need to convey something of importance to you. This would usually be about something that is directly related to you. We will do our best to have as minimal impact on your personal privacy as possible. For instance, if you are a MQ funded researcher, and we need to update you on your funding, or need to receive information from you about your study.

5. How we protect data

MQ recognises that privacy is important to our supporters, funding applicants and other contacts. The information submitted or collected by MQ will be kept confidential and secure. We will take all reasonable measures to ensure we keep your information secure, accurate and up to date, and store it only for as long as is reasonable and necessary.

Information will be processed only by MQ data controllers, or on our behalf under strictly regulated conditions and in line with the provisions of data protection laws. MQ data controllers are members of staff who have access to our databases or data storage systems and have received data protection training.

We will take all appropriate security measures to ensure any platforms related to MQ have gone through a quality control process to ensure security. However, given the nature of the internet we cannot guarantee complete security.

7. Monitoring vulnerability

7.1 Children and Young People
It’s important that children and young people can share their experience and views on mental health, and we are committed to ensuring real life experience guides our work and priorities.

If a child, or young person under the age of 18, wants to interact with MQ by joining our Young People’s Advisory Group (YPAG) or by sharing their story, we require pre-consent from their parent or guardian.

We believe that it is important to protect and respect the rights of all individuals in relation to their personal data but would seek the parental or guardian consent before featuring photos or the story of a child aged under 18.

7.2 Safeguarding

MQ is committed to protecting all individuals by putting appropriate measures in place which prevents harm or damage.

Our work in mental health does mean that we come into contact with people who may be vulnerable in different ways. MQ takes this responsibility very seriously and we try to ensure that people feel comfortable to raise any concerns should they arise.

We are also committed to training staff whose role is related to working with people from outside of MQ. This can include, donors, YPAG members and case stories.

If you would like to have a copy of our internal Safeguarding Policy please do contact us directly.