

Island Mind

Vulnerable Persons (Safeguarding) Policy

V1 February 24, 2026 (approved by Board of Directors)

1. Introduction

Island Mind's charitable purposes involve improving mental health outcomes through research, public education, policy translation, and the co-design and implementation of evidence-based prevention and early-intervention initiatives. A core element of Island Mind's work is supporting the development of young people to play active, meaningful leadership roles in mental health initiatives, including through its Youth Advisory Board (YAB) and school-based programs.

Island Mind recognises that children, young people, and certain adults may be vulnerable to harm and requires robust safeguarding systems to ensure that all individuals engaged in its activities are protected from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

2. Policy Statement

Island Mind is committed to upholding the right of every person to be safe from abuse, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, or beliefs. The purpose of this policy is to:

- Safeguard and protect children and vulnerable adults (collectively referred to as **Vulnerable Persons**);
- Set clear expectations for behaviour and responsibilities when working with Vulnerable Persons;
- Provide clear procedures for the reporting, management, and escalation of safeguarding concerns;
- Ensure that youth participation and leadership activities are delivered in ways that actively protect mental health, wellbeing, and dignity.

All safeguarding concerns and allegations are taken seriously and will be responded to promptly and appropriately. The welfare of **Vulnerable Persons** is of paramount importance.

3. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all individuals engaged with Island Mind, including:

- Directors and Board members;
- Employees and consultants;
- Volunteers and mentors;
- Youth Advisory Board members (with age-appropriate adaptations);

- Contractors, service providers and organisations working on Island Mind initiatives.

4. Definition of Vulnerable Persons

For the purposes of this policy, Vulnerable Persons include:

- **Children and young people under the age of 18;**
- **Young people aged 18–24** participating in youth leadership, co-design, or peer-led initiatives where additional safeguarding is appropriate;
- **Adults who may be vulnerable** due to disability, mental illness, trauma exposure, or other circumstances that limit their ability to protect themselves from harm.

5. Types of Abuse

Abuse may occur through acts of commission or omission and can take place in family, institutional, community, or online settings. Types of abuse include, but are not limited to:

- **Physical abuse** – causing physical harm;
- **Emotional, verbal or psychological abuse** – intimidation, humiliation, isolation, or coercion;
- **Sexual abuse** – forcing or enticing a person into sexual activity or exposure;
- **Neglect** – failure to provide basic needs, care, supervision, or support;
- **Financial or material abuse** – exploitation or misuse of funds or property;
- **Discriminatory abuse** – harassment or harm based on protected characteristics.

6. Youth Participation and Leadership Safeguards

Island Mind actively supports youth leadership through structured, supported participation rather than informal or ad-hoc engagement. Safeguards include:

- Clear role descriptions and written participation agreements for youth leaders;
- Age-appropriate consent processes, including parental or guardian consent where required;
- Training for youth participants on boundaries, wellbeing, and help-seeking;
- Ongoing adult supervision and mentorship within all youth-led activities;
- Regular wellbeing check-ins and access to additional support where needed;
- Mechanisms for youth to raise concerns safely and confidentially.

Youth participation is designed to empower young people without placing them in inappropriate roles, responsibilities, or emotional burden.

7. School-Based Programs and Interventions

Island Mind works in partnership with schools to deliver research-informed mental health promotion, prevention, and early-intervention initiatives. When operating in school settings, Island Mind will:

- Align activities with existing school safeguarding and child protection policies;
- Ensure appropriate supervision ratios for any activity involving students;
- Avoid unsupervised one-to-one interactions between adults and students;
- Ensure all materials and interventions are age-appropriate and evidence-based;
- Clearly communicate referral pathways where students disclose distress or risk.

Island Mind does not provide clinical services within schools and will not attempt to replace existing counselling, safeguarding, or statutory responsibilities.

8. Prevention: Vetting, Training, and Supervision

a) Vetting

Individuals who may have direct contact with Vulnerable Persons are required to undergo a Bermuda Police Service criminal record check or equivalent background screening.

b) Training

All relevant representatives will receive safeguarding training appropriate to their role, including recognising abuse, maintaining boundaries, and responding to disclosures. Primarily, this will be achieved through undertaking Mental Health First Aid training and becoming SCARS certified.

c) Safeguarding Lead

Island Mind will appoint a **Safeguarding Lead** and Deputy Safeguarding Lead responsible for:

- Receiving and managing safeguarding concerns;
- Liaising with statutory authorities where required;
- Reporting to the Board on safeguarding matters;
- Ensuring carers of Vulnerable Persons are informed of this policy;
- Reviewing and updating safeguarding procedures.

9. Reporting and Responding to Concerns

In line with the Registry General & Charity Commissioners' Vulnerable Persons Policy, Island Mind adopts clear, step-by-step procedures for reporting and responding to safeguarding concerns, including defined internal responsibilities and referral pathways to statutory protection services where required.

All representatives have a duty of care to report concerns or suspicions of abuse, whether past or present. Any concern must be reported promptly to the Safeguarding Lead.

If a disclosure is made:

- The individual must be listened to carefully and taken seriously;
- No promises of confidentiality should be made;
- Immediate steps must be taken to ensure safety;
- The Safeguarding Lead must be notified as soon as reasonably practicable.

In accordance with the Children Act 1998, where a disclosure, allegation, or suspicion of abuse relates to a child or young person under the age of 18, the Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy) must ensure that the matter is reported immediately to the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS – 278 9111). This duty applies regardless of the perceived severity of the concern and cannot be delayed for internal investigation.

Where the concern relates to an adult vulnerable person, the Safeguarding Lead will determine whether referral to Adult Protective Services, the Bermuda Police Service, or other relevant statutory authorities is required and will act accordingly.

All safeguarding concerns will be documented in a secure and confidential manner. Confidentiality will be maintained except where disclosure is necessary to protect the individual, prevent further harm, or comply with statutory reporting obligations.

10. Code of Conduct

All representatives must:

- Treat Vulnerable Persons with dignity and respect;
- Maintain professional boundaries at all times;
- Avoid being alone with a Vulnerable Person where possible;
- Use appropriate language and behaviour;
- Report concerns about others without delay.

Representatives must never:

- Ignore or dismiss safeguarding concerns;
- Engage in inappropriate physical or emotional behaviour;
- Exploit power imbalances;
- Engage in sexualised behaviour or communication;
- Use their role to pursue personal relationships.

Breaches of this Code may result in disciplinary action, termination of involvement, and/or referral to authorities.

11. Review and Governance

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years, or sooner if legislation, best practice, or organisational activities change. The Board of Directors retains ultimate responsibility for safeguarding oversight and is committed to safeguarding and protecting wellbeing.