

**Policy on Autonomy and Independence**

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Spectrum Days, Old Coach Road, Droitwich, Worcestershire WR9 8BB. Tel: 01905 773725

[WWW.spectrumdays.co.uk](http://www.spectrumdays.co.uk/) Charity No: 1151711

# AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

**Policy Statement**

The following 7 Core Principles to Support “Self Care” as defined by the Department of Health, have the objectives of helping health and social care staff to support people who wish to remain independent.

The Core Principles, developed by Skills for Care and Skills for Health, are as follows:

* Ensure that individuals are able to make informed choices to manage their own care needs.
* Communicate effectively to enable individuals to assess their needs, and develop and gain confidence in self care.
* Support and enable individuals to access appropriate information to manage their self care needs.
* Support and enable individuals to develop skills in self care.
* Support and enable individuals to use technology to support self care.
* Advise individuals how to access support networks and participate in the planning, development and evaluation of services.
* Support and enable risk management and risk taking to maximise independence and choice.

This charity seeks to ensure that these principles are appropriately reflected in their policies and practice in promoting autonomy and independence.

This document outlines the policy of this charity in relation to promoting its members’ autonomy and independence.

Definition:

Autonomy is the right or condition of self government.

Independence is self determination, self reliance, and self support.

**The Policy**

This charity seeks positively to promote the autonomy and independence of our members. We recognise that the capacity for independent action of our members has often been undermined by illness, disability and failing mental capacity and that insensitive action by workers can reinforce dependence. We therefore strive to help members make their own decisions and to support them in controlling their own lives. We aim always to balance the protection of members from unnecessary risks with the promotion of independence and choice, in accordance with Department of Health guidance *Independence, Choice and Risk: a guide to best practice in supported decision making*. <https://lx.iriss.org.uk/content/independence-choice-and-risk-guide-best-practice-supported-decision-making>

**Care Needs Assessment**

We recognise that the tone of the relationship between this charity and a service user is often set by the initial contact and that the care needs assessment or pre-admission assessment, which must be undertaken before we start to provide a service, can in itself be a process that endangers a potential service user’s sense of being in control. We do everything we can to empower our members from the very outset of our dealing with them.

**Information**

Making users aware of what is going on in their care is an important contributor to them feeling independent. We therefore provide good, thorough and up-to-date information about our service and other facilities, both at the beginning and throughout our contact with a service user. We would provide information in formats and languages which make it accessible to the individuals to whom it is addressed.

**Choice**

We recognise that choice is important for members and we advance these principles throughout our operations. We ensure that every service user who receives our service has positively opted to use our charity. We provide members with the opportunity to exercise choice about the workers with whom they interact and will change the worker when the service user requests it. We are particularly sensitive to matching workers and members where issues of gender, culture or ethnicity play a role.

**Care and Support Workers**

The support workers providing care and support on a day-to-day basis aim to carry out their tasks in co-operation with members in ways that do not deny the possibility for the member to exercise their own discretion, initiative and control. We realise that this principle is particularly difficult to uphold where members have disabilities or lack of capacity is an issue.

We value risks as an essential part of a fulfilling lifestyle. Workers support members in taking reasonable risks, without obviously endangering their health or safety, and subject to a thorough risk assessment recorded in the Care Plan.

We know how disempowering it can be for the member not to understand fully what is going on. Wherever possible, workers communicate with members in their first or preferred language.

**Personal Finances**

Where requested, we provide support to members in controlling their own financial affairs, always respecting the privacy and confidentiality of documents to which we have access.

**Personal Files**

We provide facilities for members to see their personal files in accordance with Data Protection legislation and inform them of the access to files which may be required by inspectors.

**Limitations to a Service user’s Chosen Lifestyle or Human Rights**

Although we try to respect the lifestyle choices of members , in exceptional circumstances we may be obliged to intervene to prevent a service user from harming themselves or becoming a danger to someone else. On these rare occasions, our workers will act with respect for human rights, within our legal responsibilities and this charity’s policy on restraint and in the best interests of the service user and others closely involved.

**Members who Lack Mental Capacity**

We continue to respect the rights of members who have been assessed as lacking capacity to make certain decisions, or, who are thought to lack that capacity, by considering their best interests at all times.

We do this by ensuring that we implement fully the *Mental Capacity Act 2005* Code of Practice, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/9/contents> in relation to maintaining members’ autonomy and independence. This entails involving them as fully as possible in every decision concerning their care and the services this charity provides.

**Dealing with Members’ Relatives and Carers**

We try to relate to members’ relatives and carers where this is appropriate, treating them as partners in providing care. To ensure that such relationships do not undermine the autonomy of the service user, however, we insist on having the service user’s permission before dealing with anyone on their behalf or releasing confidential information to others.

**Advocacy**

We provide information when requested about the availability of independent advocates and self-advocacy schemes, and are quite willing if required to communicate with members’ advocates.

**Related Policies**

Accessible Information and Communication

Advocacy

Assessment of Need and Eligibility

Care Planning and Support

Data Protection Legislative Framework (GDPR)

Dignity and Respect

Mental Capacity Act 2005

Relatives Friends and Carers

**Training statement**

At the core of our Induction Programme, self-care and management of members’ own care and support, forms the basis of all training. This is to ensure that all staff promote the principles of independence and self-determination for all our members.