



Adult Support and Wellbeing Programme

Code of Conduct and the Procedures

Please see the below practices. By agreeing to join the session, you are agreeing to behave in line with our code of conduct. This Code of Conduct has been developed in line with AsIAM's anti-bullying, complaints and safeguarding of vulnerable adults' policies. If you would like to receive a copy of these policies, please contact us at adultgroups@asiam.ie and we would be happy to accommodate your request.

We also ask that you note that this is a working document which will continue to be refined and developed in lines with the ongoing, ever-evolving needs of the adult autistic community.

Note on the core function and aims of the Adult Support and Wellbeing Programme:

The Adult Support and Wellbeing Programme's primary function is to provide spaces for autistic adults in Ireland to come together, communicate and have fun. This programme is not therapeutic, nor can we provide support in place of medical attention.

Though these groups are intended to be enjoyable spaces, at times, community members may discuss or raise topics that some may find upsetting. The support these peer groups offer is only support. If you have any significant issues or are seeking medical advice, please speak to your GP. If you ever feel you are in a mental health crisis and need urgent help, please refer to the following for additional advice and support. Please note: AsIAM staff members and external facilitators are not able to be any participant's emergency contact.

- Samaritans – 116123
- Bodywhys: 01 – 2107906
- Txt support – <https://text50808.ie/> – 50808
- Aware: 1800 80 48 48 – Depression
- AsIAM – information line regarding other services: 0818 234 234/ support@asiam.ie

General Charter:

The Adult Support and Wellbeing Programme is designed to reduce social isolation in autistic adults, whilst also empowering the community to build friendships, seek support and express their experiences.



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To do this, we foster safe environments, and it is therefore the utmost importance that all our community members, staff and volunteers are treated with respect, kindness and empathy.

We require that all participants of the programme to please treat all facilitators, volunteers, and other participants, with respect always, avoiding any physical, emotional, or verbal abuse or rudeness.

We also require that all participants avoid the discussion of sensitive or inappropriate topics in the groups. Though each community member's definition of what can be defined as 'sensitive' or 'inappropriate' may vary, each community member has a duty to remain respectful of another's boundaries when they are expressed, even if they differ from our own.

Inappropriate or sensitive topics may include but are not limited to:

- Addiction or substance abuse.
- Self-harm, eating disorders etc.
- Suicide, suicidal ideation etc.
- Discriminatory language, hate speech or slurs.
- Religion.
- Politics.
- Finances.
- Appearance or weight-based remarks.
- Assault, abuse, or criminal behaviour.
- Sex, sexual jokes, or remarks.

Code of Conduct Key Points:

1. Do not disclose information shared in confidence at a meeting or other activity to anyone outside AsIAM, including the names or contact details of members.
2. Treat all AsIAM property (including the venues they use) with respect and care.
3. No illegal drugs or drunken behaviour is allowed at meetings or AsIAM events, whether online or in-person.
4. To maintain the core principles of Understanding, Respect, Acceptance and Safety.
5. If a member is found to disrespect the guidelines above, they may be asked to leave by the group facilitator.

6. If a member has concerns over the conduct of another member these can be raised with the facilitators of the AsIAM group in-private.

IRELAND'S NATIONAL AUTISM CHARITY

7. No member is authorized to record, take pictures of or screenshot an online or in person meeting. All members are asked to respect the privacy of each individual.
8. Do not discuss any group member who is not present.
9. You have the right to ask respectful questions and the right to refuse to answer. All other members also share this right.
10. Avoid interrupting another group member who is speaking, instead, we strive to give all members our interested and respectful attention. The group facilitator will clarify appropriate ways to contribute to the conversation (via the 'hands up' function on Zoom, for example).
11. Respect other members' decisions regarding their communication methods. For example, some community members may choose to remain silent throughout the group, or communicate via the Chat, when using Zoom.

Removal or Suspension from a Group:

AsIAM's Adult Support and Wellbeing Programme is an ever-evolving programme which aims to provide an environment that is both safe and agreeable to its members and therefore, AsIAM understands that there may be events when a participant can no longer be permitted to attend any groups hosted by the programme, for the safety and wellbeing of the other participants. Should a participant behave in a way that violates the Code of Conduct, the incident will be logged by the AsIAM team, and further action will be taken where appropriate. This incident may be logged in both or one of the following mediums:

- 1) An incident report form may be filled out for internal review and storage within AsIAM.
- 2) A Cause of Concern form may be filled out to inform our Safeguarding Liaison Person of the incident or complaint, and to seek advice regarding further actions.

A participant may receive up to three verbal and/or written warnings that if their behaviour has and continues to violate the code of conduct, they will be removed from the group. Should an individual receive three warnings (written and/or verbal), they will be permanently removed from the Adult Support and Wellbeing Programme Groups.

The removal of a participant from the programme will be done at the discretion of the Adult Support and Wellbeing Team. Further to this, should an individual choose not to engage with the process of warning from the team, the Adult Support Team will temporarily suspend all access to the groups until such time as the situation is satisfactorily resolved.



Should the AsIAM Adult Support team view an individual's behaviour as posing a health and safety risk to either the individual themselves, or others, they reserve the right to remove any individual from the group(s) on a permanent basis, and without warning. Facilitators and volunteers trained by AsIAM also reserve the right to deny access to a group to any participant, should they consider their behaviour to be of concern, a health and safety risk, and/or inappropriate and damaging to the wider welfare of the group.

Should an individual engage with the Adult Support and Wellbeing Team, listen to all concerns raised and satisfactorily resolve their behaviour after a warning has been issued, they will be welcomed to rejoin the groups after a cooling off period of a duration of two to three group sessions.

Group Chats, Communication Outside of the Adult Support Groups:

AsIAM's Adult Support and Wellbeing Programme understands the importance of friendship and connection to all autistic adults across Ireland, and therefore acknowledge that adults who attend the groups may wish to remain in contact when no longer in attendance of the groups. AsIAM acknowledges the autonomy of every adult in this regard. However, AsIAM will not run, set-up or maintain any form of group chat, or communication beyond the groups and as such, cannot monitor the ongoing within such spaces. We ask that every adult who chooses to take part in the programme use their own discretion to make decisions that ensure their comfort, safety, and happiness.

Support Workers:

AsIAM acknowledges that the needs to the autistic adult community are varied and change frequently throughout the course of one's life. We ask that any adults who require support in attending any of the groups let us know in advance, to allow AsIAM to communicate with this support worker and provide additional guidelines.

Member's Suggestions and Ideas Procedures:

AsIAM's Adult Support and Wellbeing Programme is an ever-evolving programme which aims to provide an environment that is both safe and agreeable to its members and therefore, AsIAM remains open to all suggestions which may improve the experience of the participant.

Suggestions can be sent directly to the Adult Support and Wellbeing Officer (jennifer@asiam.ie) and must include what they're hoping to achieve and, in the process, make the conditions favourable for both facilitators and participants. All suggestions relating to this procedure will be documented and will be discussed with the wider group, given the permission of the individual offering suggestion. The Adult Support and Wellbeing Programme prioritises community-led development, and therefore will consult the adult autistic community regarding any possible changes or adjustments to the running of the groups.



Submitting a Concern as a Community Member:

In the first instance all concerns may be raised with the AsIAM Adult Support facilitator of the group. However, if the individual would prefer, they can directly contact the Adult Support and Wellbeing Officer (jennifer@asiam.ie). Depending on the seriousness of the situation and the appropriateness, concerns or complaints may be raised with someone with a duty of care, for example a guardian or an external support worker. The Adult Support and Wellbeing Officer may speak directly to the group facilitator regarding details, if an incident has occurred. The AsIAM Adult Support and Wellbeing team may arrange an appropriate meeting with participants to discuss the concern or complaint and decide on an agreed course of action. The concern or complaint and the action taken to resolve it will be recorded via the Adult Support and Wellbeing Programme Incident Report Form.

Friendships & Relationships

Whilst the Adult Support and Wellbeing Programme endeavours to reduce social isolation for autistic adults nationwide, our primary aim is to offer peer support and wellbeing spaces that are both comfortable and enjoyable. We recognize that adults attending the groups may form connections with one another, and we respect the autonomy of every individual adult to do so. However, the Adult Support and Wellbeing Programme will not tolerate reports or incidents of inappropriate behaviour from one participant to another. This behaviour includes, but is not limited to, sexual comments, manipulative behaviour, verbal or physical abuse and explicit bullying.

Participants are not authorised to share Zoom links to access online groups with other members of the community, or anyone else. This is asked in order to protect the integrity and privacy of all attending members. To do so would be in direct violation of our Code of Conduct.



Important Notes Regarding the Code of Conduct for Attending Groups via Zoom (Online Groups):

Please see the below practices. By agreeing to join the session via Zoom, you are agreeing to adhere to the guidelines herein.

Practices

- Aim to speak with honesty, kindness and empathy when addressing the group. We do not tolerate the use of hate speech, sexual language or topics, violent language or inappropriate topics of discussion within the groups.
- Listen carefully to yourself and each other, avoiding interrupting.
- Respect your own and others' viewpoints, especially when these viewpoints may differ.
- These groups are confidential and therefore, we ask that you do not reveal the identities of the other participants or discuss any information shared within the group when not in attendance of the relevant session.
- We ask that you do not share any personal information (phone numbers, email addresses etc.) within the group setting.
- When you are not speaking, we ask that you keep your microphone on mute to avoid background noise that might be distressing for other members.

Logistics

The sessions will run via Zoom, you will need a computer or device with a reasonable Wi-Fi Connection.

Cameras and microphones are not required. We encourage all participants to take part to the degree that they are most comfortable with. Participants can also use the 'chat' function in Zoom to communicate, should they prefer.