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Title **Safeguarding Children, Young People & Vulnerable Adults Policy**

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Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy

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Policy Statement

MERMAIDS is committed to the safeguarding and protection of all children, young people and vulnerable adults and recognise that the needs of children, young people or of people when they are vulnerable is paramount and that they have equal rights of protection. We have a duty of care when they are in our charge and will do everything we can to provide a safe and caring environment whilst they attend our activities. We also recognise that we also have a duty of care toward children and young people who are in contact with Mermaids by any method including, but not limited to, the telephone helpline, the charity's website or via email.

We recognise the serious issue of the abuse of children, young people and vulnerable adults and understand that this may take the form of physical, emotional, sexual, neglect and financial. We acknowledge the effects these may have on people and their development and we accept responsibility for ensuring that all children, young people and vulnerable adults are safe in our care and that their dignity and right to be heard is maintained.

The purpose of this safeguarding policy is to ensure procedures are in place and that people are clear about roles and responsibilities for children, young people and vulnerable adults in our care and engaging in our activities. We will use this policy to ensure that we provide a safe environment where there is informed vigilance as to the dangers of abuse.

Mermaids appoints Krystyna Hebb as the safeguarding lead for the organisation and support her in her role which is to:

- Support and advice all staff and volunteers
- Provide a point of reference to advise on safeguarding issues
- Liaise with the safeguarding deputies who are Ian Thompson and Susie Green
- Promote safeguarding best practice within the organisation with the support of the CEO and Trustees.

Safeguarding Lead and Deputy

Our lead for children, young people and vulnerable adults safeguarding is

Name: **Krystyna Hebb**

Contact details: **07484772840** Email: **krystyna@mermaidsuk.org.uk**

Our deputy is

Name: **Ian Thompson**

Contact details **07460783607** Email: **ian@mermaidsuk.org.uk**

If for any reason you are unable to make contact with Krystyna or Ian please contact Mermaids CEO

Susie Green

Contact details: **07973531508** Email: **ceo@mermaidsuk.org.uk**

Their role is to oversee and ensure that our safeguarding children, young people and adults policy is fully implemented and that we attain SAFE standards. These details will be made available to all adults, children and parents/carers via the charity's website, through training and through a handbook available at activities. This includes ensuring they and all staff receive child protection training as appropriate. The deputies should be available to support or cover for the nominated lead. They will also handle any complaints or allegations against the nominated lead if appropriate.

Why do we need a Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy?

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility; for services to be effective each person and organisation should play their full part. For services to be effective they should be based upon a clear understanding of the needs and views of children.

"No child or group of children must be treated any less favourably than others in being able to access services which meet their particular needs" Equality Act 2010

Government guidance is clear that all organisations working with children, young people, families, parents and carers have responsibilities and that all children and young people should be enabled to:

- be healthy
- stay safe
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution
- benefit from economic well-being

Mermaids Charity will:

- Have a commitment to safeguarding at all levels of the organisation
- Have robust and clearly communicated procedures for safeguarding children and young people
- Have procedures for dealing with allegations against, and concerns about, staff & volunteers
- Treat all children, young people and vulnerable adults with respect and dignity as we celebrate their individuality, diversity and achievements.
- Will promote a culture of listening to children, young people and vulnerable adults.

- Commit itself to respond without delay, and appropriately, to any allegation or cause for concern that a child, young person or vulnerable adult may have been harmed, whether at one of our activities or in another context. We also commit ourselves to challenging the abuse of power by anyone in a position of trust
- Have agreements about working with other organisations and agencies including cooperating with the police and local authority in their investigation
- .Use safe recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers working with children & young people
- We will carefully select and train all those with any responsibility within Mermaids, in line with Safer Recruitment principles, including the use of criminal record disclosures and registration with the relevant vetting and barring schemes.
- We commit ourselves to the provision of support, advice and mandatory induction training for all workers, whether they are paid or voluntary, that will ensure that people are clear and confident about their roles and in so doing enable each person to fully understand their responsibilities and accountability. Each member of staff, paid or volunteer will receive regular supervision and reviews.
- Ensure positive ways of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable
- In all these principles we will follow legislation, guidance and recognised good practice.
- adopt the recommendations of the SAFE CIC safeguarding toolkit.

Rigorous Recruitment

We adhere to the Local Safeguarding Children Board (SCB) Key Standards for Recruitment and SAFE guidelines for recruiting all staff, paid or unpaid by obtaining full personal details and application forms with particular relevance to previous work with children and young people.

We always take up two written or documented verbal references and insist that any appointment, where staff have direct and/or unsupervised access to children and young people, will only be confirmed subject to a satisfactory DBS check at the appropriate level.

At interview we have sound procedures and recording to ensure we are satisfied, and can evidence that the applicant is appropriate and suitable. At least one person on each interview panel will have undertaken Safer Recruitment Training.

Induction & Training

In line with SAFE recommendations we have a clear induction and training strategy. All new staff with direct contact with children and young people will undertake SAFE child protection training before they are allowed to handle calls on the Helpline.

Confidentiality

We have a clear policy in line with SAFE recommendations about confidentiality and information sharing and these details will be made available to all adults, children, parents and carers through the charity's website, through training and through a handbook available at activities.

We fully endorse the principle that the welfare of children and young people override any obligations of confidence we may hold to others. Individual cases will only be shared or discussed on a "need to know" basis. Information pertaining to a child or young person's gender identity of transgender status, will only be disclosed if directly relevant to the matter causing concern.

Under "whistleblowing" anyone in our organisation may refer direct to either children's social care services or the police if they are concerned that a child is at risk of harm and this policy is not being adhered to. All media enquiries will be handled by Susie Green, CEO of Mermaids.

Celebrating Children's Achievements

We are keenly aware of the legal requirement to maintain confidentiality and protect the identity of children and young people. Where appropriate, and with the support and prior agreement of parents and families, we aim to celebrate the achievements of all children and young people through awards and selective engagement in media productions and publications. We are particularly sensitive to the needs of gender variant, gender questioning, and transgender children and their families.

Handling Disclosures of abuse

A disclosure may be made verbally or through play or through the behaviour by a child, young person or an adult and it is important for everyone to remember the following:

If you are concerned about a child it is important that this information is communicated to the lead and/ or deputy for child safeguarding. The types of abuse a child may be subjected to are detailed in appendix 1, Recognising Abuse.

You may become aware of suspected or likely abuse by:

- Your own observations and concerns;
- Being told by another person that they have concerns about a child;
- The child tells you;
- The abuser tells you.

Other concerns may be:

- Children living away from home or gone missing
- Peer abuse including bullying
- Transphobic harassment and hate crime
- Race and racism
- Radicalisation
- Gang membership
- Violent extremism
- Sexual exploitation
- Female genital mutilation
- Forced marriage
- Concealed pregnancy
- Child trafficking
- E Safety

Remember:

- Do not delay.
- Do not investigate.
- Make careful recording of anything you observe or are told on the appropriate recording forms.
- Refer immediately to the Safeguarding lead person or deputy.

Concerns relating to emotional wellbeing

Due to the group of people that Mermaids aim to support, there will be times when children and young people give cause for concern, in relation to their emotional wellbeing. They may also give reason to believe that the child or young person is at risk of physical harm. The protocol for acting on such concerns is outlined below.

Responding to Concerns

We ensure and emphasise that everyone in our organisation understand and know how to share any concerns immediately with the Safeguarding lead and deputy. We do this through the charity's website, through training and through a handbook available at activities. Everyone including both the lead and deputy for child safeguarding will deal with concerns using the following:

Step 1**If you are worried a child has been abused because:**

- You have seen something
- A child says they have been abused
- Somebody else has told you they are concerned
- There has been an allegation against a member of staff
- There has been an anonymous allegation
- An adult has disclosed they are abusing a child
- An adult has disclosed they were abused as a child

Important: Any consultation should not delay a referral. In an emergency dial 999

**Consult
Monitor & Record
(Sign/date/time)**

Step 2 (within 24 hrs)

Your organisation should have a policy for child protection. Talk to the Lead Person for Child Protection or their Deputy.

Step 3

S/he (or anyone else if not available) should refer the concern to Children's Social Care Services and/or the police (in an emergency) and follow up the referral in writing within 24 hours**.

*** In cases of allegations against a person with a "duty of care", the LADO will coordinate the next procedural steps.*

Handling Allegations / Dealing with Complaints / Disciplinary & Grievance Procedures

We have clear policies in line with SAFE recommendations about handling allegations and dealing with complaints will be made available to all adults, children, parents and carers as necessary by training and application to the info@mermaidsuk.org.uk email address.

We are mindful that the three procedures may confuse the next appropriate steps to take. We are clear that, in any case where a complaint has been made with regards to any inappropriate or poor practice, we will discuss the situation with children's social care services before making an open decision about the best way forward. It is the responsibility of the child protection lead and/or deputy to ensure that these procedures are rigorously adhered to. In the case that the child protection lead is implicated, the deputy should be informed. In the exceptional circumstances that both are involved, it is the duty of the person concerned to contact children's social care services direct.

Children's social care services will manage any investigations, overseen by the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in accordance with Local Safeguarding Children Board (SCB) procedures. These are available on the SCB website.

With regards to disciplinary and grievance procedures, we are very clear that we will take no steps until we have fully discussed and agreed a strategy with the Local Authority Designated Officer, children's social care services and/or the police. Any investigation will override the need to implement any such procedures. Our management are responsible for making referrals to the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS), and the relevant professional bodies of an individual who does or may pose a danger to children and young people. Other organisations will liaise with their LADO and local agencies if such a referral needs to be made.

Record Keeping

All records will be kept electronically and held securely with password protection known only to the lead, Krystyna Hebb, and the CEO, Susie Green. Only the child safeguarding lead and/or deputy will have access and records will be kept only as long as necessary. All records will be destroyed in a suitable manner 6 years after last contact with the child, young person or vulnerable adult.

Normally these records will be passed to children's social care services as soon as possible. All records will be handwritten (and if recorded electronically, kept in a secure area) by the person with the concern within 24 hours, on headed paper or incident sheets and will be factual, non-judgmental. All such records will have a front page listing the papers in chronological order.

It is helpful to record any known details of the child/children or young people involved e.g. name, address, date of birth etc. All records should be factual. It is equally important to record the reasons for making the decision not to refer to children's social care services as when the decision is taken to refer. Always sign, clearly detail name and job role of the person making the record. Date and time these records. See appendix 2.

WHEN THERE ARE CONCERNS about the welfare of any child/young person *all adults* in our organisation are expected to share those concerns with the Lead Person for Safeguarding

She is responsible for:

- monitoring and recording concerns
- making referrals to children's social care services without delay
- liaison with other agencies
- In conjunction with the CEO arranging training for all staff

GOOD PRACTICE

We believe that good practice means that:

- All people are treated with dignity and respect.
- Those who work on behalf of mermaids (paid or volunteer) should not meet or work alone with a child or vulnerable adult where the activity cannot be seen.
- Any Mermaids organised transport of children, young people or vulnerable adults will be checked to ensure the vehicle is suitable, insured and that the driver is appropriate.
- Promotion of safeguarding is recognised as also being in place to safeguard those working with children, young people and adults.

- Workers (paid and volunteer) will be appointed after a satisfactory DBS disclosure.
- Each worker will be expected to undergo basic safeguarding training.
- Each worker (paid and volunteer) will have an annual review with their named supervisor and another worker within the organisation.

KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

- **Vulnerable Adults:** any adult aged 18 or over who, by the reason of mental or other disability, age, illness or other situation is permanently or for the time being unable to take care of him or herself, or to protect him or herself from significant harm or exploitation.
- Safeguarding and protecting children , young people and vulnerable adults from maltreatment, preventing impairment of their health and ensuring safe and effective care.
- Adult/child protection is part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity which is undertaken to protect children/specific adults who are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm, including neglect.
- Abuse and neglect may occur in a family, in a community and in an institution (organisation). It may be perpetrated by a person or persons known to the child, young person or vulnerable adult or by strangers, by an adult or by another child, young person. It may be the infliction of harm or failure to prevent harm.

A separate record for staff and volunteer signatures will be maintained to evidence they have seen and understand this policy

Appendix 1

Recognising Abuse

Physical:

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing significant harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

Emotional:

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone, may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children.

Sexual:

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect:

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);

- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Child Protection Record Sheet

This form should only be filled in with information already known, be careful not to ask leading questions. Fill in factually, it should only be used by people in the voluntary and community sector who would not fill in a CAF (Common Assessment Framework) form. It should be filled out asap, on the same day, and stored in a secure place until forwarded to the appropriate agency.

Name of child (including any names known	
Date of Birth	
Address	
Name of parent or carer and contact details	
Any special needs known; including medical, disability, language etc	
Nature of Concern	
Name and details of any other children in family	
Name and details of any other significant adults in family	

Action Taken	Detail here agency contacted, who spoken to and any timescales/actions given
Lead or deputy person's action and reason for taking it OR Why no action has been taken	Time & Date
Name, job role and signature of concerned person	Time & Date
Name and signature of Lead/Deputy person for safeguarding	
Name of organisation, address and phone numbers/emails	
No of pages	

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION SHEET - IF NEEDED

Name Of Child

Signature:

Position:

Date: