Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

Change History			
Version	Date	Summary of Change / Reasons	Author(s)
1.0	October 2015	Initial Version. This Policy replaces SER-HL-002 from 1st December 2015	Sophie Lapham
1.1	November 2016	Updates to job titles, inclusion of equalities statement	Sophie Lapham
1.1	June 2017	Policy reviewed by Safeguarding Panel; no changes made	Karen Robinson
1.2	December 2018	Updates to job titles and responsibilities; added UNICEF reference; updated reference to Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)	Sophie Lapham
1.3	August 2019	Update to job title of Deputy Safeguarding Lead Officer	Sophie Lapham
1.4	April 2021	Review of wording and some small changes to better reflect the range of services; addition of mandatory training for all staff; updates to job titles	Sophie Lapham

Referenced Documents	
No.	Reference No. & Title
1	FR-DP-002 Confidentiality Policy
2	SL-HL-003 Safeguarding Procedures Part 1: Recognising Risk and Taking Action
3	SL-HL-015 Safeguarding Procedures Part 2: Responding to Concerns/Reports about Misconduct or Abuse by Staff, Volunteers or Trustees

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1   Policy statement

Missing People is committed to the principle and practice of safeguarding. It is the responsibility of all employees and volunteers at Missing People to play a key role in safeguarding all children, young people and vulnerable adults with whom we come into contact.

Missing People's vision is that every missing person is found safe. We offer a lifeline to the 176,000 people who run away and go missing each year. For those left behind, we search and provide specialised support to end the heartache and confusion. It is through these services that we aim to safeguard and protect children and adults.

We recognise that being able to recognise risk to children and vulnerable adults effectively and take appropriate action is a vital part of the work we do as an organisation.

Missing People offers a pledge of confidentiality to the users of our services (Reference 1: Confidentiality Policy). Confidentiality is the foundation on which our services are built, as it allows people to trust us. It is only through building a relationship of trust that we are able to help someone to stay safe. However, the safety and welfare of the individual is of prime importance, which means that Missing People will consider disclosing information about a service user *without their agreement*, where there is sufficient reason to believe

- that they are at significant risk of serious harm, or
- that their life, or someone else's life, is in danger.

Missing People recognises the significant and vital role that it plays in protecting children and vulnerable adults from harm and promoting their wellbeing. We believe that all children and adults have the right to live without fear, abuse, harm, exploitation or intimidation. The organisation is committed to safeguarding all children and vulnerable adults, irrespective of age, ability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, and any other protected characteristics as stated by Equality Act 2010.

The impact of abuse and neglect of any child or young person, either physically, emotionally or sexually, can have a major long-term effect on all aspects of their health, development and well-being. Everyone involved in working with children has a duty to:

- Prevent abuse and neglect
- Identify those children at risk
- Promote children's welfare, health and development
- Act to prevent them from harm

Similarly, adult safeguarding aims to stop abuse or neglect wherever possible, and to support adults to make choices and have control about how they want to live.

2   Principles and context

2.1 Principles

Missing People's Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy is based on the following principles:

Grounded in the needs of missing people and their families and our knowledge of the vulnerabilities that they face.

True to the ethos of our services. We offer confidentiality in order to build a relationship of trust, and aim to empower our service users. We respect a person's right to be missing and we work with them to keep them safe. We have a culture of listening to children and vulnerable adults and taking account of their wishes and feelings, both in individual decisions and the development of services.

Strategic – the Policy will help Missing People achieve our vision that every missing person is found safe. We help to find vulnerable missing people and we provide help and support to children and vulnerable adults who contact us.

We operate in the following ways, in order to deliver effective safeguarding:

- **Oversight** – we have clear roles and responsibilities for safeguarding at every level of the organisation.
- **Support** – staff and volunteers are given training and supervision appropriate to their role, and are able to access the On Call Manager 24 hours a day.
- **Accountability** – staff and volunteers keep records of all work with vulnerable people and any concerns about safeguarding or decisions made.
- **Internal information sharing** – we understand that a child or vulnerable adult may share different pieces of risk information with different people within the organisation and we ensure that we are able to "join up the dots".
- **Multi-agency working** – we recognise that as an organisation we are not able to keep people safe on our own, and we share relevant information with statutory agencies when needed.
- **Best practice** – we are compliant with good practice frameworks relating to safeguarding, and as an organisation we ensure that we keep our knowledge current.
- **Scrutiny** – with the help of our Safeguarding Panel of experts, we monitor the effectiveness of our Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and act on any learning.
- **Safer recruitment** – we carry out relevant checks before allowing staff and volunteers to work regularly with children and vulnerable adults.

Whistleblowing – we have clear whistleblowing procedures for staff and volunteers and we foster a culture where everyone feels free to speak up about any concerns.

Responsibility - we have clear procedures for dealing with complaints against staff or volunteers who work with children and vulnerable adults, including the disclosing of allegations with the relevant authorities.

2.2 Context

2.2.1   UN Convention on Rights of the Child

Our philosophy and approach to safeguarding children are grounded in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, and support Article 34 – the right to protection from sexual abuse; Article 39 – the right to special help for children who have been abused; Article 16 – the right to privacy, and Article 12 – the right to be involved in decisions that affect them.

A child's basic rights include:

- Protection against all forms of discrimination and punishment
- Survival and development
- Protection from abuse and neglect
- Education, housing, healthcare, and all forms of mental and physical well-being

We also believe that "Every child has the right to a voice on matters that affect them and to have their views taken seriously – in accordance with their age and maturity. (UNICEF, 2009)"

2.2.2   Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)

Working Together to Safeguard Children - A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children promotes a child-centred approach to safeguarding where safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and everyone who works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe.

Working Together to Safeguard Children states that voluntary organisations should have appropriate arrangements in place to safeguard and protect children from harm. Charity trustees are responsible for ensuring that those benefiting from, or working with, their charity, are not harmed in any way through contact with it.

2.2.3   Care Act 2014 – statutory guidance for implementation

The *Care Act* guidance states that in any organisation, there should be adult safeguarding policies and procedures. It sets out the aims of adult safeguarding and promotes six key principles to underpin all adults safeguarding work: empowerment, prevention, proportionality, protection, partnership, and accountability.

3   Definitions

3.1 Children and Young People

Missing People recognises a child as a person under 18 years of age.

3.2 Vulnerable Adults

Missing People recognises a *vulnerable adult[1]* as an adult who

- has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs), and
- is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect, and
- as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either abuse or neglect

A person's vulnerability may be permanent and temporary and this may include people with mental health problems, people with suicidal feelings or ideation, people who misuse drugs or alcohol, people who have been exploited and/or trafficked, people who have been radicalised, and victims of forced marriage.

At Missing People, we consider that a person's status as missing, or having a loved one missing, can make them vulnerable or increase their vulnerability to harm or exploitation.

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[1] Care Act 2014 – Statutory Guidance for Implementation

3.3 Abuse

The abuse and neglect of children are forms of maltreatment – a person may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. There are four main categories of child abuse and neglect: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. Abuse may consist or a single act or repeated acts. Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it.

Categories of abuse and neglect of adults include:[2]

- Physical abuse
- Domestic violence
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological abuse
- Financial or material abuse
- Modern slavery
- Discriminatory abuse
- Organisational abuse
- Neglect and acts of omission
- Self-neglect

3.4 Safeguarding and significant harm

Safeguarding involves

- the action we take to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm
- the protection of those adults who, without support to be able to challenge and change harmful or abusive situations, become vulnerable, and at risk of harm/abuse.

Significant harm is "the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of the child", as defined in the *Children Act 1989*. The local authority will determine whether the harm or likely harm suffered by the child is significant by comparing the child's health or development with that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child. Significant harm is ill treatment or impairment of health or development, and it can be as a result of witnessing the ill-treatment of another person.

Significant harm is the threshold for a child protection investigation, whereas safeguarding is early intervention.

4   Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Staff and volunteers

All staff and volunteers must have a working knowledge of the Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedures and must recognise their individual responsibilities for safeguarding and protecting children and vulnerable adults. They must complete Safeguarding Basics training during their induction and repeat this annually. All staff who manage or deliver frontline services to vulnerable people must complete initial and annual refresher safeguarding training.

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[2] Care Act 2014 – Statutory Guidance for Implementation

4.2 Board of Trustees

Missing People's trustees hold ultimate responsibility for safeguarding governance and practice in the organisation.

The Board appoints a Chair of Missing People's Safeguarding Panel; the Chair has safeguarding expertise and their role is to provide oversight of the safeguarding policy and practice within Missing People. The trustees delegate their operational responsibility to the Chief Executive who appoints the Director of Services as the Missing People Safeguarding Lead Officer. A Deputy Safeguarding Lead Officer is also appointed to act in the Director of Services' absence.

4.3 Chair of Safeguarding Panel

This role is held by a trustee with safeguarding expertise. The duties of the role are:

- To chair the Safeguarding Panel, which audits and evaluates Missing People's safeguarding practices
- To report to the Board on Missing People's safeguarding practices
- To provide advice and guidance to the Director of Services and assist with the annual review of Missing People's Safeguarding Policy

4.4 Safeguarding Lead Officer

This role is undertaken by the Director of Services. The duties of the role are:

- To take the lead role to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to safeguard children and vulnerable adults who come into contact with Missing People
- To promote the safety and welfare of children and vulnerable adults throughout the organisation
- To act as a central point of contact
- To be responsible for ensuring policy, procedures and training are kept up to date
- To ensure an out of hours response to safeguarding concerns is available at all times
- To alert the Chief Executive to any complaints made against a member of staff or volunteer

4.5 Deputy Safeguarding Lead Officer

This role is shared by the Head of Helpline and Reconnections, and the Head of Support Services, who deputise for the Safeguarding Lead Officer when needed.

4.6 Designated Safeguarding Officers

In addition to the Director of Services, the Head of Helplines and Reconnections and Head of Support Services, the following staff are Designated Safeguarding Officers:

- Head of Digital Communities (member of On Call Team)
- Helpline Manager (member of On Call Team)
- Family Support Manager (member of On Call Team)
- Senior Helpline Coordinators (members of On Call Team)
- Senior Family Support Coordinator (member of On Call Team)
- Service Manager – Criminal Exploitation (member of On Call Team)
- Service Development Manager (Hertfordshire)

5   Information Sharing

Our Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Procedures set out in detail Missing People's approach to dealing with concerns about a service user, and working safely with vulnerable people. They include processes for identifying and managing risk, and responding to risk and disclosure (Reference 2). The Procedures cover the situations in which the organisation may share information about a service user (Reference 2), staff member, trustee or volunteer with the relevant authorities (Reference 3).

6   Ensuring Effectiveness

Missing People makes sure that its staff, volunteers and trustees understand the Safeguarding Policy.

Safeguarding training and annual refresher training are provided to all staff and volunteers who come into contact with vulnerable people.

Missing People monitors the effectiveness of its Safeguarding Policy and Procedures through regular proactive case review and scrutiny by its Safeguarding Panel.

The Policy is reviewed annually.