

Safeguarding Policy

Change History			
Version	Date	Summary of Change / Reasons	Author(s)
1.0	October 2015	Initial Version. This Policy replaces SER-HL-002 from 1 st 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
1.5	September 2022	Updated terminology: “adults at risk (of harm)” replaces “vulnerable adults”. New structure of policies and procedures. Change of title.	Sophie Lapham
1.6	October 2023	Contact details for Chair of Safeguarding Panel and Lead Safeguarding Officer added; NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line added	Sophie Lapham
1.7	May 2024	Reviewed and updated legislation references; Chair of Safeguarding Panel details updated	Sophie Lapham

Referenced Documents	
No.	Reference No. & Title
1	FR-DP-002 Confidentiality Policy
2	SER-HL-003 Safeguarding Procedures
3	SER-HL-015 Safeguarding Reference documents

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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 adults at risk of harm with whom we come into contact.

Missing People's vision is that every missing person is found safe. We offer a lifeline to the 170,000 people who run away and go missing each year. For those left behind, we provide specialised support and the chance to connect with others who are missing a loved one. 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 adults at risk 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 adults at risk 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, and to support adults to make choices and have control about how they want to live.

One of Missing People's values is being **grounded** in helping people affected by 'missing' and this means we need to maintain a safe and inclusive culture; staff and volunteers must not exploit their position of trust to harm or abuse the people we are here to support. Staff are encouraged to share any "low level concerns" about a colleague who they think may be acting in a way that is inconsistent with the organisation's values and expectations of conduct. Missing People promotes an open and transparent culture where all concerns are dealt with promptly and appropriately.

2 Policy structure

SER-HL-002	Safeguarding Policy	Sets out Missing People's commitment to safeguarding, key responsibilities and governance framework
SER-HL-003	Safeguarding Procedures	Explains how to identify and respond to safeguarding concerns
SER-HL-005	Safeguarding Reference Documents	Additional information to support the policy and procedures

The majority of Missing People's services support both children and adults and for this reason we have one over-arching set of policy and procedures.

3 Principles

3.1 Principles

Missing People's Safeguarding 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 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 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 adult at risk of harm 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.

3.2 Context

Missing People operates in all four nations of the UK. Whilst legislation and safeguarding procedures for children and adults differ across the nations, each recognises its safeguarding responsibility for children and for adults at risk of harm.

Missing People works within the relevant legislative framework for each nation and follows best practice to safeguard children and adults at risk.

With regard to children, Missing People recognises children's rights as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

3.2.1 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)”

3.2.2 Key legislation and guidance in England

- i. Children Acts 1989 and 2004, and Children and Social Work Act 2017
- ii. Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 - A guide to multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children in England 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.

- iii. Care Act 2014¹

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.

3.2.3 Key legislation and guidance in Northern Ireland

- i. Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2017

Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2017 provides the overarching policy framework for safeguarding children and young people in the statutory, private, independent, community, voluntary and faith sectors. It outlines how communities, organisations and individuals must work both individually and in partnership to ensure children and young people are safeguarded as effectively as possible.

- ii. Adult Safeguarding Policy (Northern Ireland)

The intention of the *Adult Safeguarding Policy* is to improve safeguarding arrangements for adults who are at risk of harm from abuse, exploitation or neglect for the purpose of reducing the prevalence of harm. The policy is for all organisations working with, or providing services to, adults across the statutory, voluntary,

¹ The Care Act 2014 is currently under review (2024)

community, independent and faith sectors. It sets clear and proportionate safeguarding expectations across the range of organisations.

3.2.4 Key legislation and guidance in Scotland

i. National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2023)

The *National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 - updated 2023* describes the responsibilities and expectations for all involved in protecting children and will support the care and protection of children.

ii. Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007

The *Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007* is a law that aims to protect adults who are at risk of harm or neglect. The act defines adults at risk as those aged 16 years and over who are unable to safeguard their own wellbeing, property, rights or other interests.

3.2.5 Key legislation and guidance in Wales

i. Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014

The *Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014* sets out the legal framework for social services and well-being in Wales.

ii. Working Together to Safeguard People

Working Together to Safeguard People is statutory guidance in relation to Part 7 (Safeguarding) of the *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014*.

4 Definitions

4.1 Children and Young People

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

4.2 Adults at risk of harm

Missing People recognises a *an adult at risk of harm* 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 the risk of, or the experience of, 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. Someone who is missing is at increased risk of harm and exploitation.

The context of having a loved one who is missing, can make someone vulnerable or increase their vulnerability to harm or exploitation.

4.3 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 of 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:

- 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

4.4 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.

5 Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Staff and volunteers

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

5.2 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.

5.3 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

The Chair of the Safeguarding Panel is Tina Rosenow; Tina can be contacted via email on nrosenow@hotmail.co.uk.

5.4 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

The Director of Services can be contacted via email on ophie.Lapham@missingpeople.org.uk.

5.5 Deputy Safeguarding Lead Officer

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

5.6 Safeguarding Officers

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

- Head of Digital Communities (member of On Call Team)
- Senior Support Services Manager (member of On Call Team)
- Helpline Manager (member of On Call Team)
- Service Manager – Criminal Exploitation (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)

6 Information Sharing

Our Safeguarding 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 concerns and reports (Reference 2). The Procedures cover the situations in which the organisation may share information about a service user, staff member, trustee or volunteer with the relevant authorities.

7 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.

The NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line can be contacted for child protection concerns on 0800 028 0285.