



# SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Version 2023.12 – approved by the Board on 07.12.2023

Date of adoption	1 <sup>st</sup> February 2019
Revision date	December 2023
Date of next revision	2026
Ownership	Executive Director

## Table of contents

<b>I. Introduction.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>II. References .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>III. Definitions .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>IV. Scope.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>V. Expected behaviours.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>VI. Implementation of the Safeguarding Policy.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>VII. Commitment statement.....</b>	<b>7</b>

## I. Introduction

The CHS Alliance's capacity to deliver on its mission depends on the ability of its people to uphold and promote the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct.

The CHS Alliance has a **zero-tolerance** approach to any form of violence, harm, abuse, or exploitation, including of a sexual nature, towards any individual. Therefore, measures are in place to prevent and minimise such risks against any individual, to respond to any forms of violence, abuse or any other misconduct and to safeguard the reputation of the organisation.

The CHS Alliance, as an organisation, believes that:

- ◆ Any form of violence or abuse towards individuals is unacceptable, is a violation of their rights and will not be tolerated.
- ◆ All people have the right to protection from violence, abuse and exploitation, and recognises its responsibility to ensure that any staff, volunteers, Board members and others working with or representing the CHS Alliance are clear about the standards of behaviour and practice required of them when in contact with individuals, and in particular those who are vulnerable.

The staff of the CHS Alliance are personally and collectively responsible for upholding and promoting the requirements outlined in this policy. In support of this approach, all staff are required to **report immediately** any suspected or alleged case of abuse that relate to official duties.

### Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to provide a framework ensuring that all CHS Alliance staff:

- ◆ Are aware of the problems of violence, abuse and exploitation
- ◆ Are clear that the CHS Alliance takes a zero-tolerance approach to violence, abuse, exploitation and harassment, in particular of a sexual nature. It also takes a zero-tolerance approach to inaction on reports of these areas, so all reports will be followed up and any breaches may be subject to disciplinary action.
- ◆ Protect individuals, with emphasis on those who are vulnerable, from violence, abuse and exploitation, through good practice
- ◆ Respond appropriately when abuse is witnessed, discovered or suspected
- ◆ Report all concerns about possible abuse

It aims to ensure that everyone is protected from all forms of violence, abuse or exploitation, in all actions carried out by CHS Alliance staff, that preventive actions are put in place and that accountability is fully ensured.

## II. References

This Policy must be read in conjunction with other policies of the CHS Alliance:

- ◆ Staff Rules and Regulations
- ◆ Code of Conduct

### III. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions shall apply:

- ◆ **Vulnerable individuals:** individuals at greater than normal risk of abuse because they may be unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves against harm or exploitation. This may be due to their condition, circumstance, or environment. They may be individuals deemed to be at risk due to their gender, age, sexual orientation, mental or physical health, disability or as a result of disasters or conflicts. Children are a specific category of vulnerable individuals.
- ◆ **Child:** any individual under the age of 18, irrespective of local country definitions of when a child reaches adulthood (age of consent is a separate issue and is defined locally).
- ◆ **Abuse:** any act or omission that results in harm to a vulnerable person. Abuse is generally accepted to usually fall into one of four categories: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect, but may occur in any form.
- ◆ **Physical abuse:** any non-accidental act or behaviour causing injury, trauma, or other physical suffering or bodily harm. This may take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving, or grabbing. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures. Alternative terms sometimes used include physical assault or physical violence and may also include sexual abuse. Physical abuse may involve more than one abuser, and more than one victim.
- ◆ **Emotional abuse:** behaviour that causes psychological trauma or stress. It can take the form of name calling, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating or isolating.
- ◆ **Sexual abuse:** an actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. For examples of behaviours considered as sexual exploitation and abuse please refer to the CHS Alliance's Code of Conduct.
- ◆ **Violence:** encompasses all acts that involve the intentional use of power or verbal or physical force, threatened or actual, against anyone that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in actual or potential harm to the person's health, survival, development, or dignity. Possible forms of harm include injury; death; disability; decreased psychological, psychosocial, or mental health.
- ◆ **Neglect:** is the failure to care for someone, the failure to provide or ignoring the need for basic necessities of life (where they are available).

#### IV. Scope

This Policy applies to all CHS Alliance staff. It should be implemented and respected by all staff of the CHS Alliance at any level and in any location. The word “staff” includes the following:

- ◆ Employees
- ◆ Volunteers
- ◆ Interns and trainees
- ◆ Board members
- ◆ Consultants
- ◆ Other people working on behalf of or representing the CHS Alliance

It also applies to the CHS Alliance’s members, partners, contractors and suppliers in the sense that staff shall report any concerns involving them by using the procedures outlined in this policy.

#### V. Expected behaviours

The CHS Alliance is committed to the protection of the people it works with from any violence, harm, abuse and exploitation. Whilst violence, abuse and exploitation can occur anywhere, it is accepted that as an international humanitarian organisation, affected people and communities may be particularly vulnerable in this respect.

It is important for all staff in contact with children and other individuals to:

- ◆ Be aware of situations which may present risks and manage these
- ◆ Plan and organise the work and the workplace so as to minimise risks
- ◆ Ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised, welcomed and discussed
- ◆ Ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged and is systematically reported
- ◆ Talk to individuals - particularly those who are vulnerable - about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns
- ◆ Empower individuals - particularly those who are vulnerable – discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem

In general, it is inappropriate to:

- ◆ Spend time alone with children and other persons, particularly those who are vulnerable, away from others
- ◆ Take children or other individuals to your home, especially where they will be alone with you

Staff must never:

- ◆ Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse anyone
- ◆ Develop physical/sexual relationships with vulnerable individuals
- ◆ Develop relationships with individuals which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive
- ◆ Act in ways that may be abusive or may place individuals at risk of abuse

Staff **must** avoid actions or behaviour that could be construed as poor practice or potentially abusive. For example, they should never:

- ◆ Use language, make suggestions or offer advice, which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive

- ◆ Behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative
- ◆ Have an individual with whom they are working stay overnight at their home/in their hotel room unsupervised
- ◆ Sleep in the same room or bed as a vulnerable individual with whom they are working
- ◆ Do things for vulnerable individuals of a personal nature that they can do for themselves
- ◆ Condone, or participate in, behaviour of individuals which is illegal, unsafe or abusive
- ◆ Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade individuals, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse
- ◆ Discriminate against, show differential treatment towards, or favour particular individuals to the exclusion of others

## **VI. Implementation of the Safeguarding Policy**

Breaches of the expected behaviours outlined above can be considered misconduct and may be subject to investigation and possible disciplinary action.

The CHS Alliance will meet its commitment to protect any individual, with a specific emphasis on people in vulnerable situations, from any form of violence, harm, abuse, or exploitation through Awareness, Prevention, Reporting and Responding:

### **Awareness**

The CHS Alliance shall ensure that this Policy, its standards, the reporting framework and other relevant and related policies are shared and communicated to any staff at induction and periodically at staff meetings so that they are fully aware of such documents; of the risk of violence, abuse, and exploitation against anyone, especially against people in vulnerable situations; and of their responsibilities and obligations.

In addition, managers are responsible for explaining the CHS Alliance Code of Conduct which includes an outline of the appropriate and expected standards of behaviour. Managers will support staff to understand and adhere to the Code of Conduct in their day-to-day activities and ensure that they sign it to confirm their understanding.

The CHS Alliance's Code of Conduct is supported by this policy and a number of other policies – see References. The Code and its related policies are reinforced by a disciplinary procedure which ensures that all matters are investigated and dealt with appropriately.

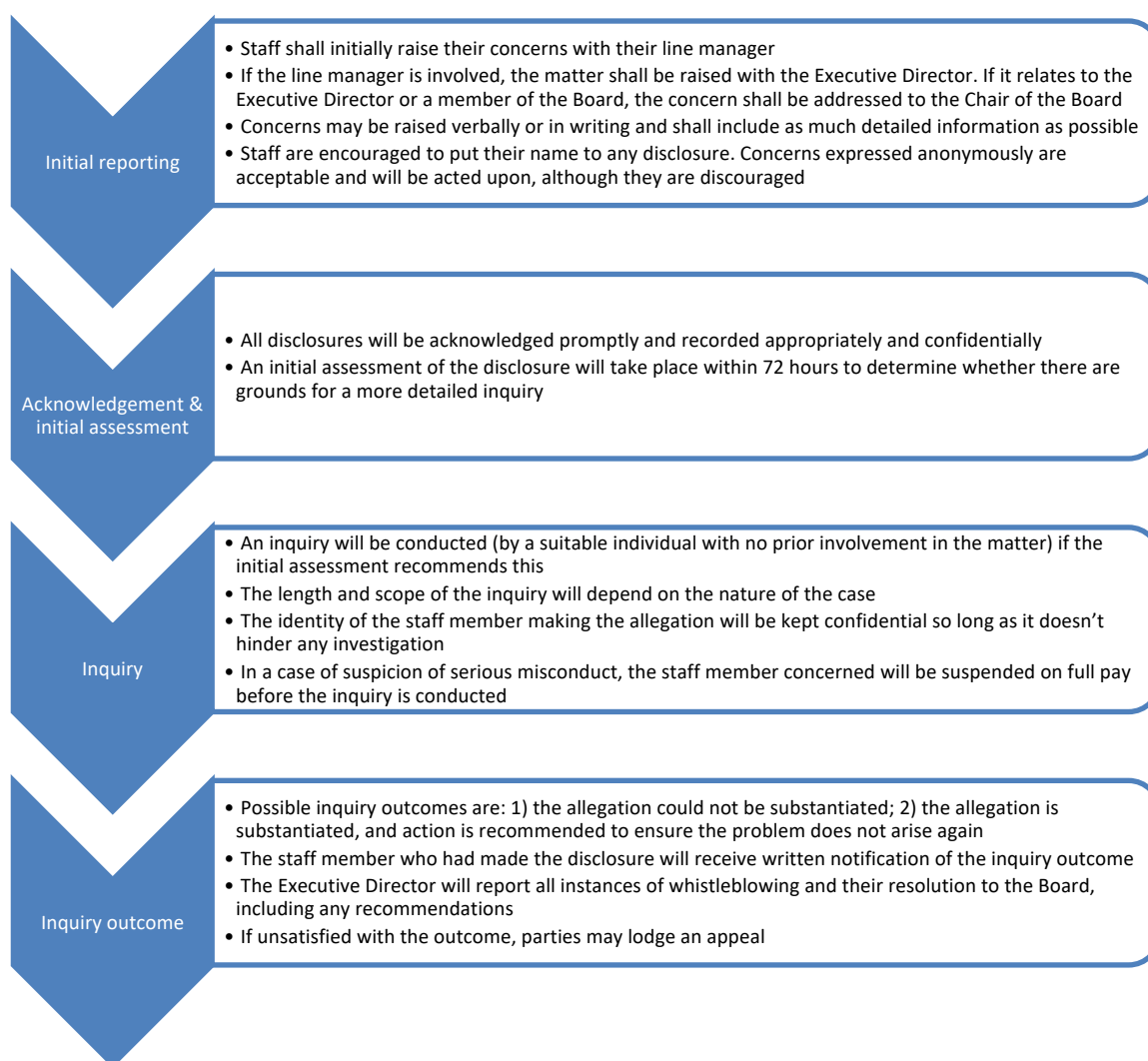
### **Prevention**

The CHS Alliance shall seek to minimise the risks to individuals in the course of its work. It operates rigorous recruitment and selection processes to ensure there is no known reason why a candidate should not be employed. A key part of the pre-employment clearance process is the requirement of at least two satisfactory references checks from previous employers, which include specific questions regarding a candidate's suitability to work with and represent the CHS Alliance. Further checks are made through the scrutinising of employment history for any gaps or irregularities, including use of the misconduct disclosure scheme, and the verification of professional qualifications. Successful candidates are also asked to provide proof of identity and to sign a declaration of previous criminal convictions. Once employment has commenced, staff are subject to a 3-month probationary period to further assess their suitability.

## Reporting procedures

It is mandatory for all staff to report any suspected or witnessed incidents or concerns relating to this Policy. The CHS Alliance shall ensure that all staff: report any concerns relating to violence, abuse, exploitation against anyone; have clear knowledge of appropriate referral mechanisms, and; are clear on what steps to take where concerns arise regarding violence, abuse, exploitation of individuals, including their safety or integrity.

Where a staff member develops concerns or suspicions about a fellow staff member regarding any of the areas above, he or she should refer to the Conduct and Whistleblowing sections of the CHS Alliance Staff Rules & Regulations for guidance on how to proceed. These sections are also available on the CHS Alliance website for non-staff representatives of the CHS Alliance. By way of summary, the key stages of the Whistleblowing reporting process are:



The CHS Alliance appoints a Board Safeguarding Focal Point, who will receive notification of when an incident or concern has been raised under this policy and whether an investigation has been launched. In addition, incidents or concerns (subject to a risk assessment) may also be reported to the relevant police force and/or child protection authority.

## **Responding**

The CHS Alliance views breaches of this Policy, the Code of Conduct and related policies as serious matters. It shall ensure that appropriate action is taken to support and protect any individual where concerns arise regarding possible violence, abuse or exploitation.

This includes taking such concerns very seriously, ensuring that appropriate action is taken, including effective and proper investigation, supporting victims/survivors as appropriate, holding people accountable, and if necessary co-operation with relevant national and local authorities

The consequences of any breaches of this Policy by staff may result in disciplinary action, including possible dismissal from employment, volunteer/internship, contractual relationship or Board membership. In its relations with contractors and suppliers, the CHS Alliance shall exert due diligence and cease any relation with a contractor or supplier acting in breach of this policy.

## **VII. Commitment statement**

I acknowledge that I have read and understand the CHS Alliance Safeguarding Policy. I agree and commit to following the guidelines and principles as well as procedures contained within it.

I understand that it is my ongoing responsibility to report any violation of the Safeguarding Policy and to disclose any circumstances that may be an actual, potential or perceived violation of it.

Employee signature:

Date:

Employee Name (print letters):

Please complete and sign this form and return it to the HR Manager and keep a copy of the Safeguarding Policy for yourself.