

## Safeguarding Policy

### 1. Introduction

Nurse Lifeline is committed to the safety and welfare of all who come into contact with our services, whether this is the charity Trustees, volunteers, or those who access the services provided.

It is the policy of Nurse Lifeline to fully comply with all the requirements of the Charity Commission. The Charity Commission states that safeguarding should be a key governance priority for all charities, regardless of size, type, or income, and not only those charities working with children or vulnerable adults. It also stipulates that it is essential for charity Trustees to have, and implement, safeguarding policies and procedures and that the policies and procedures must be adequate and appropriate for the charity's particular circumstances.

This policy describes the safeguarding practices that are in place within the charity and ensures that all those who represent the charity are aware of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding, and that all those who access the services provided through the charity understand how safeguarding concerns will be managed.

### 2. Commitment to safeguarding

Those who receive services provided by the charity or are beneficiaries of the charity, are referred to in this Policy as our **'Service Users'**.

We are committed to working in their best interests, to promote their welfare, and to put in place safeguards and measures to protect them. In providing peer-support platforms to Service Users, we will endeavour, at all times, to minimise risk to them and to ensure that they are as safe as the charity can make them.

We aim to protect all of our Service Users from any act or behaviour of any member of staff or volunteer of this charity which, whether deliberately or unknowingly on the part of that member of staff or volunteer, gives rise to harm or ill treatment.

Such harm or ill treatment includes abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, discriminatory, institutional or organisational, financial or material), neglect, or impairment of the health or development of the charity's Service Users.

We recognise that we have a duty to act on reports or suspicions of abuse or neglect. We adopt a "zero-tolerance" policy of abuse within the charity.

We ensure that risk assessments are undertaken for all activities and appropriate controls applied.

We work in partnership with local / national agencies to put in place appropriate procedures for reporting, making referrals, and accessing training and specialist support, as and when required.

### **3. Safe recruitment**

To aim to protect our Service Users, we will seek to recruit Trustees, staff and volunteers using appropriate procedures, safeguards and checks.

All volunteers working for the charity as call handlers must be registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council, (the professional regulator for nurses and midwives in the UK, and nursing associate in England) and therefore are expected to comply in full to the regulator's codes of practice for professional behaviour.

References are obtained for all staff posts and volunteer roles prior to appointment.

We provide an induction programme for all new volunteers, Trustees and staff, and provide appropriate training and ongoing/refresher training at regular intervals, to enable all volunteers, Trustees, and staff, to undertake their roles safely, effectively and confidently. Evidence of external safeguarding training within civilian health professional roles will be sought from volunteers. The induction will make it clear to them that they have an obligation to implement this Policy and to learn about protection issues and their related responsibilities.

We will use the Disclosure & Barring Service ("DBS") checks to help us to assess suitability of a candidate for a particular volunteer or staff role in accordance with our approach to risk management.

We will regularly review our recruitment and other human resources procedures in response to changes in legislation and systems external to the charity, e.g., DBS and barring list checks.

### **4. Safeguarding our service users**

Through our peer led phone service, individuals calling the service may be suffering from some form of anxiety or emotional stress. We ensure that our volunteers undergo training in call handling which includes training in recognising risk factors, and skills and techniques for dealing with distressed callers. In addition, we provide them with tools and resources which include signposting resources to support those in need.

Safeguarding algorithms are in place to guide our call handlers through the process of identifying and acting on a safeguarding concern.

When our call handlers are concerned about the safety of a Service User (i.e., due to harm they may cause to themselves, harm they may cause to others, or harm they may be at risk of from others), our call handlers will talk to them and encourage them to find a way to keep themselves and others safe.

Through the provision of our peer led phone service we do not routinely collect personal data however, if we have a safeguarding concern about a Service User or someone in their care, e.g., we are concerned that their safety is in immediate danger or someone in their care is in immediate danger, we will encourage them to collaborate with our call handlers in order to get them the help and assistance they may need.

We will ask the Service User to consent to providing us with a name, contact number and address so we can help support them. We will fully explain who we may share their contact details with so that we can get them the emergency help that they need.

There may be occasions where our call handlers feel that the Service User is not in the right state of mind to be able to make decisions that will keep themselves or others safe in their current situation. In emergency situations, where the telephone number is identified in our call handling system, we may need to use the telephone number to get emergency assistance to them. Any contact details obtained are only used to manage emergency safeguarding situations and are not used for any other purpose.

Triggers that may cause us concern for the immediate safety of a Service User or others, may be where a Service User has described a situation that clearly puts them at risk to themselves or others, or where a Service User becomes unconscious whilst they are on the call.

In addition, if a service user tells us about potential harm that could be caused to a child in their care, or a vulnerable adult, we may need to contact other relevant services.

Where any personal data is shared with a third party, as described above, we will take steps to ensure that the personal data is handled safely, securely, and in accordance with individuals' rights, our obligations, and the third party's obligations under the law.

All reports and logs will be kept securely and confidentially according to the charity Privacy Policy, until or unless it is necessary to share this material with the agencies who can provide support in emergency situations.

The charity is unable to discuss fitness to practice issues. Where a Service User is distressed about a situation in relation to their professional work, and we feel someone has been or may be at risk of harm, we will talk to them and encourage them to contact the support available through their professional governing bodies.

## **5. Leadership and safeguarding responsibilities**

The Board of Trustees are responsible for ensuring safeguarding policies and procedures are in place. They are responsible for understanding their responsibilities in line with the Charity Commission and legal requirements for safeguarding and in particular must ensure the following are in place:

- Appropriate policies and procedures which are followed by all Trustees, volunteers and management roles.
- Appropriate vetting checks are carried out on individuals who work for the charity, as required by their charity role.
- Processes to identify and handle safeguarding concerns.
- A clear system for referring or reporting safeguarding concerns to relevant organisations.
- Management of risks within a charity risk register which is regularly reviewed.
- Ensuring that statutory guidance, good practice guidance, and legislation, relevant to the charity, is followed.
- Ensuring sufficient resources and training in relation to safeguarding for Trustees, management roles and volunteers is in place.

The role of the Charity Manager acts as the operational point of contact for management of safeguarding concerns.

## **6. Awareness of harm and abuse within the charity**

Any reported incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behaviour (inclusive of, but not limited to; physical, psychological, sexual, emotional or financial harm or abuse, and prejudicial attitudes, both deliberate and unintentional) within the charity (directed at members of the charity or Service Users) will be fully investigated and legal action will be taken where necessary. Such incidents may result in an individual being reported to their professional governing body and/ or police services.

Trustees and volunteers who are registrants of the National Midwifery Council are expected to abide by the codes of practice set by the professional governing body and should not act in such a way as to increase the risk of harm to others (inclusive of children or vulnerable adults).

## **7. Reports of possible or actual harm**

The charity supports and encourages all Service Users and volunteers to promptly speak up and contact the Charity Manager where there is a concern (i.e. a worry, issue or doubt about practice or about treatment of a Service User or colleague, or their circumstances), or a disclosure (i.e. information about a person at risk of, or suffering from, significant harm) or an allegation of an incident or a possibility that a volunteer associated with the charity or Service User has caused harm or could cause harm to a person in their care.

Those working for or volunteering for the charity can report, and have a responsibility to report, something that they become aware of if they suspect or discover that it is not right or is illegal, or if it appears to them that someone within the charity is neglecting their duties, putting someone's health and safety in danger, or covering up wrongdoing. They may become aware of any of these things directly from what they see or hear, or from something another person has disclosed to them.

The charity prefers that anyone should initially use internal processes whenever possible to make a report as above to facilitate the correct level of escalation, but this does not prevent them from making a report or referral, in their own right as a private individual, to statutory agencies such as social services or the police.

The charity cannot promise confidentiality to staff or volunteers making an internal report (to the Charity Manager) where it has to be shared with any statutory agencies.

The charity actively encourages its staff or volunteers to raise concerns or to disclose information, which they believe shows malpractice i.e., whistle-blowing (disclosure in the public interest). The charity policy for Raising and Escalating Concerns should be followed.

## **8. Charity safeguarding actions**

Where there is risk of significant harm to any Service User, volunteers or staff, the Charity Manager and Trustees have the power to act as necessary and, in particular, as follows:

- Log all conversations regarding the issue.
- Sign and request signatures on reports and statements.
- Confidentially seek advice from expert sources.
- Share concerns (with consent where required and appropriate) internally with senior staff / Chair of the Board of Trustees.
- Share concerns and make referrals to external agencies such as ambulance, police or social services, as appropriate to the circumstances.

## **9. Communication by the charity about safeguarding and this Policy**

All those working within the charity have an obligation to learn about protection issues and their related responsibilities.

The charity will communicate this Policy (using appropriate methods, formats and language to communicate the content) to all of its Trustees, volunteers, and Service Users. The policy will also be available in the public domain via the charity website.

To encourage everyone involved in the charity to understand the importance of safeguarding, and to assist all staff in learning about protection issues and their related responsibilities, the charity will ensure individuals working for the charity are supported through, policies, guidance, resources, discussions on safeguarding in team meetings and, where required, additional training.

## **10. Implementation of this Policy**

This Policy must be followed by all trustees and volunteers of the charity and must be promoted by all of its Trustees and senior staff.

## **11. Review of this Policy**

This Safeguarding Policy was approved by the Board of Trustees of Nurse Lifeline in April 2020 and was reviewed and updated in May 2021.

The next review for this policy will be April 2022.