



## Safer Waves – Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures

Safer Waves is committed to ensuring that children are protected from harm, and accepts our responsibility to safeguard children.

### Legislative Framework

There is no single piece of legislation concerning the safeguarding of children, rather children are protected under a number of acts, including but not limited to:

The Children Act 1989

The Children Act 2004

The Education Act 2011

The Children and Social Work Act 2017

and the Statutory Guidance “Working together to Safeguard Children 2018”

The guide “Working together to Safeguard Children” defines safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children as:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's health or development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

Internationally, relevant conventions include:

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The Maritime Labour Convention 2006

A child is defined as under the age of 18.

### Types of Abuse

As young children are less likely to understand abuse, or to tell an adult what is happening, staff and volunteers should be aware of the warning signs:

**Physical abuse** – hitting, shaking, throwing, kicking, poisoning or any other means of causing physical harm to a child. Look out for bruises and multiple fractures at different stages of healing. Physical abuse can also take the form of a caregiver fabricating or deliberately inducing illness in a child.

**Sexual abuse** – When a child is forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activity. This can involve physical contact or non-contact activities, and could take place online. Signs that a child is being sexually abused can include physical signs such as bruising, bleeding, discharge, STIs and pregnancy, and emotional signs such as bedwetting, nightmares, fear or avoidance of a particular person, displaying sexual behaviour that is age inappropriate.

Staff and volunteers should be aware that the age of consent varies from country to country, so a teenage service user who reports a sexual relationship with another crew member may not legally be able to consent.



**Emotional Abuse** – belittling, ignoring, humiliating, bullying or any other means of emotionally maltreating a child. Children may lack confidence or have emotional outbursts.

**Neglect** – Persistent failure to meet a child’s physical and psychological needs. Signs include poor hygiene, poor appearance, hunger, lethargy, missing school and medical appointments.

**Domestic Abuse** – Children can experience domestic abuse themselves or be witness to domestic abuse between other family members.

**Online Abuse** – cyber-bullying, blackmail, sexting, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, grooming. Children are re-victimised every time abuse is shared or reproduced.

**Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** – A procedure where the female genitals are deliberately cut, injured or changed, without any medical reason for doing so. Illegal in the UK, FGM is most often carried out on children under the age of 15.

**Harmful Sexual Behaviour** – Inappropriate sexual activity between children of different ages.

**Child Trafficking/Modern Slavery** - recruiting, moving, receiving and harbouring children for the purpose of exploitation.

### **How this applies to Safer Waves**

Safer Waves is a support service for seafarers aged 16 and over, worldwide. Our email and online chat support services are completely anonymous, however service users should be aware that if they choose to provide identifying details our safeguarding policy will apply.

The Maritime Labour Convention 2006 prohibits anyone under the age of 16 from working on board. It is however possible that 16 and 17 year olds will make contact with Safer Waves. This policy will apply to those service users.

The Maritime Labour Convention states that unless required for training, under 18s should not work at night. It also states that “the employment, engagement or work of seafarers under the age of 18 shall be prohibited where the work is likely to jeopardize their health or safety”.

If concerns are raised about the well-being of a young person onboard a ship, or a child under 16 is found to be working on a ship, these concerns should be raised with:

- The International Transport Worker’s Federation (ITF)
- Port/ Flag State Maritime Authorities eg. The Maritime and Coastguard Agency in the UK

This policy will also apply to any members of the public at any fundraising events that are held, and it will apply if we are made aware through the course of our work, that any child is at risk of harm, eg, an adult service user makes a disclosure about a child in their care.

In the event of the child living in the UK, the appropriate authorities will be informed, as set out in our procedures below.



In the event of the child being based on land elsewhere in the world, we will seek the advice of seafarer welfare charities working in those countries, including:

International Seafarer's Welfare and Assistance Network - ISWAN  
Mission to Seafarers  
Stella Maris  
Sailors Society

**The key priority is a good outcome for the child**, therefore local knowledge will be sought from the charities above.

If a child is at immediate risk of serious harm, the Emergency Services of that country will be contacted.

### **Safer Recruitment**

Staff and volunteers will be recruited using safer recruitment best practice. We will ensure all necessary checks are completed, including Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks where required.

### **Whistleblowing**

Safer Waves is committed to building a culture of transparency around safeguarding, where all volunteers and staff members feel able to raise concerns and be confident that they will be taken seriously.

No volunteer or staff member shall be victimised if they have reported concerns regarding safeguarding within the organisation. For further details see our Whistleblowing Policy.



## Safeguarding Children – Reporting Procedures

Be aware that children and young people may disclose abuse in a variety of ways, including:

- directly– making specific verbal statements about what’s happened to them
- indirectly – making ambiguous verbal statements which suggest something is wrong
- behaviourally – displaying behaviour that signals something is wrong (this may or may not be deliberate)
- non-verbally – writing letters, drawing pictures or trying to communicate in other ways.

If a child makes a disclosure of abuse:

- Stay calm
- Listen carefully, do not put words in their mouth
- Reassure – tell the child that they have done nothing wrong, and avoid questions that are normally associated with getting into trouble.
- Be supportive – let the child know they are not in trouble, and that you are glad they told you
- Tell them that you will need to tell someone else, and let them know what will happen next
- Write a clear statement of what you have been told, seen, or heard.  
The statement should include:  
Your name and role  
Details of the child  
Details of the concern  
The date and time you were notified  
What you said to the child  
Details of the accused abuser, if known  
If others are at risk  
Any historical information that might be relevant  
Any action you have already taken

This statement can be used as evidence, so it should be factual and clear.

- When you’ve been told something is wrong, don’t go straight to the person that’s been reported. Instead, tell the Designated Safeguarding Lead. If a child is in immediate danger, call the **Police on 999**.



**Types of Report**

In response to a safeguarding concern raised by a volunteer or staff member regarding a UK based child, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will need to produce one of the following types of report, dependent on the circumstances and the location of the child:

- an internal incident report
- a referral report to children’s services
- a referral report to the police
- a report to the Charity Commission or other organisations.

Details of the relevant local children’s services teams can be found online (this will be dependent on where the child is living).

If a child is in immediate danger, call the **Police on 999**.

The **NSPCC** can also be contacted for advice on 0808 800 5000

Once a concern has been referred to an organisation they will decide if it meets their criteria to act, this should be confirmed within 48 hours. If nothing is heard within 48 hours, the DSL must follow up the referral.

As previously mentioned in the Safeguarding Children Policy, when a concern is raised about a child at risk internationally, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will report to the most appropriate organisation. For example, concerns regarding Modern Slavery on board could be reported to the ITF, the Flag state and the Port state at the next port of call, so that inspection of the ship can be arranged.

Policy Reviewed by the Chair of Trustees:

**Dr Genevieve Waterhouse**

**30/01/21**

I confirm that I have read and understood the Safer Waves “Safeguarding Children” Policy and Reporting Procedures

Name .....

Role.....

Signature .....

Date .....

