

Vetlife Safeguarding Policy

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	VETLIFE
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1. Purpose:

This Policy applies to all personnel within the Charity including staff, and volunteers. For the purposes of this Policy, the term ‘personnel’ or ‘staff’ will relate to all remunerated roles within the Charity including agency staff and consultants. The term ‘volunteers’ will apply to all volunteers including trustees.

The purpose of this Policy is:

- 1.1. to protect all children and young people (anyone under the age of 18 across the UK and 16 in Scotland) and adults at risk who come into contact with Vetlife. This includes those to whom we provide support (Beneficiaries), as well as our donors. This also includes the children of adults who use our services;

- 1.2. to protect Vetlife's personnel and all those who come into contact with the Charity from harm;
- 1.3. to provide all staff, volunteers and those who come into contact with the Charity with the Safeguarding Policy and to ensure that it is clear how to apply it.

2. Safeguarding Adults at Risk

- 2.1. An adult at risk is anyone aged 18 (16 in Scotland) or over, who:
 - has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and
 - is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect;
 - 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.

3. Declaration of Intent:

Vetlife will:

- abide by, and keep up to date with all relevant safeguarding legislation and guidance;
- treat all children, young people and adults at risk with respect and celebrate their achievements;
- carefully recruit and select all personnel whether paid or unpaid;
- respond to concerns and allegations appropriately;
- adopt the recommendations of the SAFEcic Safeguarding toolkit;
- ensure adequate insurance is in place to cover individuals and the activities involved with their work.

4. Recognition of Safeguarding within Vetlife:

- 4.1. Safeguarding is paramount. Children and young people and adults at risk have rights of protection. We have a duty of care to our staff, volunteers and all those who come into contact with the Charity, and will do everything we can to provide a safe and caring environment to the people who use and provide our services.
- 4.2. All children and adults at risk, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.

- 4.3. Some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.

5. Statement of Commitment:

- 5.1. Vetlife is committed to ensuring that adults at risk and children who are in contact with the Charity and use its services, are not abused, and that working practices minimise the risk of such abuse and are in line with current statutory guidance;
- 5.2. Vetlife is committed to supporting all staff and volunteers and protecting them from harm.

6. Vetlife Safer Recruitment:

- 6.1. We are committed to safe recruitment in line with the relevant legislation and guidance from government, the Charity Commission and any relevant Regulatory Authorities for recruiting all staff, paid or unpaid. We do this by:
 - advertising vacancies with a clear commitment required to safeguarding;
 - assigning detailed job descriptions to all posts;
 - obtaining full personal details including fitness to work with children, young people and adults at risk by application form (not CVs) with particular relevance to previous work with children, young people and adults at risk;
 - always taking up two written references, one from the most recent employer;
 - undertaking all interviews face to face, (in person, or online), based on the job description;
 - ensuring at least one person on each interview panel will have undertaken Safer Recruitment training;
 - having sound procedures and recording for interviewing to ensure we are satisfied and can evidence that the applicant is appropriate and suitable.
- 6.2. A personal declaration form for relevant criminal convictions records, working agreement and Code of Conduct will be signed by all personnel upon appointment. In addition, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons requires disclosure of information about criminal convictions for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses, which provides some measure of screening. Those with RCVS registration are checked online for their registration details: date, status and name/s registered.
- 6.3. All trustees and Area Representatives are subject to appropriate levels of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks (across the UK) or Disclosure Scotland/Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme upon appointment.
- 6.4. All ID is checked and when original ID is checked a UV light is used. The PRADO website is used as necessary.
- 6.5. All those in paid roles are subject to Right to Work in the UK checks.

- 6.6. A single central record of all personnel files is maintained in a secure online workspace.
- 6.7. HR files are retained for 5 years for all office and admin personnel, and 10 years, or until normal retirement age, for anyone in regulated activity and enhanced DBS checked (or PVG Scotland).
- 6.8. All personnel will complete safeguarding training, within three months of joining, and at least once every two years at a level relevant to their job roles.
- 6.9. The trustee for Safeguarding, the relevant Lead for the Charity, the relevant Lead for the Helpline and the Deputy Lead for the Charity undertake safeguarding training as appropriate.
- 6.10. All personnel are regularly supervised as relevant to job role.

7. Rehabilitation of Ex-Offenders

- 7.1. The [code of practice](#) published under section 122 of the Police Act 1997 advises that it is a requirement that all registered bodies and those in receipt of certificate information must treat DBS applicants who have a criminal record fairly and not discriminate automatically because of a caution, conviction or other information revealed.
- 7.2. The code also obliges registered bodies to have a written policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders.
- 7.3. Vetlife's Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy is provided to DBS applicants at the outset of the recruitment process.

8. Adherence to policy:

Vetlife will ensure adherence to this Policy by:

- 8.1. appointing a member of the Board as Trustee for Safeguarding ; appointing a member of senior management staff as Lead for Charity Safeguarding; appointing a member of office staff as Deputy Lead for Safeguarding, and appointing the Helpline Manager as Safeguarding Lead for the Helpline;
- 8.2. making all personnel aware of what abuse is and how to identify it;
- 8.3. consistently reviewing and updating Policies and procedures to help prevent abuse happening in the first place;
- 8.4. providing a clear system of reporting concerns as soon as abuse is identified or suspected;
- 8.5. referring any safeguarding concerns to external agencies without delay;
- 8.6. preventing harm and abuse with a safer recruitment and selection process; along with carrying out safeguarding risk assessments;
- 8.7. referring any staff member or volunteer to the DBS or Disclosure Scotland / PVG scheme when advised by social services to do so;

- 8.8. reporting “serious and notifiable incidents” to the Charity Commission (where the criteria are met);
- 8.9. reviewing this Policy annually and/or when legislation changes;
- 8.10. reviewing a written overview safeguarding report, provided by the relevant Lead for Charity Safeguarding and the relevant Lead for Helpline Safeguarding as a standing agenda item at every Board meeting.

9. Responsibilities of the relevant Leads & Deputy for Safeguarding

The Terms of Reference for the Trustees, Lead and Deputy for Safeguarding provides a comprehensive list of responsibilities (See Annex B). These include:-

- 9.1. protecting all personnel and all those who come into contact with the Charity from harm;
- 9.2. monitoring and recording concerns;
- 9.3. making referrals to external agencies such as the police or social services without delay;
- 9.4. liaison with other relevant agencies;
- 9.5. ensuring Safeguarding training is completed by all personnel.

10. Responsibilities of All Personnel

- 10.1. Where alleged abuse of Beneficiaries is reported to, or witnessed by Vetlife volunteers or Staff they have a duty to identify that abuse and to report it to the relevant Leads and/or Deputy for Safeguarding (contact details on Page 1 above). This includes historical or non-recent abuse.
- 10.2. In the unlikely event that the Vetlife Leads and/or Deputy cannot be contacted, and the matter is urgent, it should be reported to the Social Services of the appropriate local Council, or Multi- Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), or the police. This should be done with the consent of the Beneficiary, unless they lack capacity, or if it is felt the matter relates to a child or young person who may be put at further risk if parental consent is sought.
- 10.3. Where concerns exist about the welfare of a child or an adult who may be at risk, all personnel in the Charity are expected to share those concerns with the relevant Lead or Deputy for Safeguarding as soon as possible.
- 10.4. Where beneficiaries are the subject of an allegation of abuse:
 - 1.1.1. if a criminal offence is thought to have taken place, the police will be informed. If a serious criminal offence has been witnessed, or there is an emergency the police will be contacted on 999 immediately;

- 1.1.2. the Executive Trustees will undertake a risk assessment to determine whether it is safe for the Beneficiary to continue to use the services of Vetlife;
- 1.1.3. if the Executive decide that such continued use is unsafe, support will be arranged with other external services.

2. Terrorism

- 11.1 The Honorary Secretary will report suspicions or beliefs about terrorist financing offences as soon as is reasonably practicable to the [National Crime Agency](#) or a police officer.

If concerned about an imminent threat to life and property, all personnel are expected to contact the police immediately. Charity Trustees and personnel are under a positive legal duty to report any belief or suspicion of terrorist financing offences to the police. If they do not, they may commit a criminal offence.

3. Staff Allegations

- 3.1. Concerns about the behaviour of staff or volunteers in the organisation will be referred without delay to the relevant Lead (or Deputy in their absence), who will contact the social care services and, for child concerns in England and Wales, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO/DO), or the police, if it is considered that a crime may have been committed.

4. Whistleblowing

- 4.1. Whistleblowing is when someone raises a concern externally about a person or practice within the organisation, which will affect others in an illegal and/or harmful way.
- 4.2. Our charity promotes the sharing of any concerns regarding the safeguarding of children, young people and adults at risk as soon as possible with the relevant Lead or Deputy for Safeguarding.
- 4.3. If individuals reporting their concerns within Vetlife do not feel they have been acted upon then we support their right to report these concerns to social care services, or to MASH in some areas, the [Charity Commission](#), the LADO/DO, or to the [NSPCC Whistleblowing Helplines](#) or the police, if it is thought that a crime may have been committed.

5. Data Protection

- 5.1. We will treat any personal information by which an individual can be identified (i.e. name, address, email etc.) in accordance with the provisions of Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018), and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and will not share information with any third party, except where required by law.

6. Confidentiality

- 6.1. This policy is in line with government guidance about confidentiality and this policy will be made available to all personnel and everyone who comes into contact with the Charity.
- 6.2. We fully endorse the principle that the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk, override any obligations of confidentiality we may hold to others. No one working or involved with our Charity can promise absolute confidentiality. Individual cases will only be shared or discussed on a “need to know” basis.
- 6.3. In cases of disclosure of abuse by children, adults at risk, parents or carers, all personnel are obliged to share the information with the relevant Lead (or Deputy in their absence), who will refer concerns to social care services, or the police in an emergency.

7. Information Sharing

- 7.1. Timely and accurate written records play an essential role in safeguarding individuals, who may have suffered, are suffering or at significant risk of suffering harm. It is important that records are shared at the appropriate time with the necessary organisations. Within this Charity, the decision to share written information, and with whom, will be undertaken by the relevant Lead or the Deputy for safeguarding.

8. Supervision, Support & Training

- 8.1. The Vetlife Board undertake to provide effective management for all personnel through supervision, support and training.
- 8.2. We have a clear induction and training strategy with clear job descriptions and responsibilities and all relevant procedures. All new staff and volunteers will receive induction training as soon as possible and sign to record they have:
 - received and understood this policy;
 - been given any relevant resources;
 - understood the commitment to safeguarding training.
- 8.3. We agree a probationary period of 3 months for office staff, with clear goals, and then provide appraisals at regular intervals of 6 months with the relevant line manager.
- 8.4. Helpline volunteers are mentored for a period of 6 months from when they start on rota and complete individual supervision at a minimum of once every two years. Debriefing is compulsory at handover after every shift. Ad hoc individual supervision is arranged as desired by the volunteer and optional group supervision is offered 3-4 times per year.
- 8.5. Area Representatives are required to attend individual supervision and on-going training at least once every two years. Ad hoc individual supervision is arranged as desired by the volunteer and optional group supervision is offered at least once per year.
- 8.6. Trustees attend annual appraisals with the Vetlife President.

8.7. Staff working directly with at risk groups will also undertake the free online government training for PREVENT/Channel and FGM.

9. Working Practices

9.1. **Consent:** When consent is required for any care, activity or intervention, unless it is an emergency, we will:

9.1.1. obtain consent from the individual if of sufficient age and or understanding;

9.1.2. where relevant, ensure we fulfil our obligations under Child Care Law in terms of parental responsibility and Mental Capacity Legislation on supporting, where possible, the individual's right to make their own decisions. Any decisions made should be the least restrictive and recorded.

9.2. **Lone and One-to-One Working:** We will avoid lone working and one to one working whenever possible to protect both individuals.

A risk assessment will always be undertaken to ensure:

- the care or activity provided is suitable for one to one working;
- the lone worker has been recruited, trained and supervised to undertake this particular role;
- that health and safety issues have been identified and recommendations followed;
- safeguards are in place to protect individuals' rights to safe working practice;
- safeguards are in place in relation to strategies for emergency situations;
- accurate and relevant written recording is maintained following any care and activity, signed and dated.

9.3. **Home Visits:** Home visits will only be made when necessary and booked by the organisation.

Each home visit will be undertaken in line with the safeguarding code of conduct within this policy; be carefully planned and recorded and include:

- who is being visited;
- the purpose of the visit;
- who will carry out the visit;
- the time expected to carry out the visit;
- who will also be present during the visit;
- members of staff paid or unpaid, and others;
- any physical contact which may be required.

All home visits will be made in a polite and friendly manner. Personal relationships or showing favouritism must not happen.

Any safeguarding concerns raised and any untoward incidences, such as no access or a child being at home alone, should be followed up, recorded and managed in line with this Safeguarding Policy.

10. Codes of Conduct

10.1. We aim to provide a safe environment free from discrimination, upholding and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion. We undertake to:

- treat all children and young people and adults at risk with respect and dignity;
- ensure that their welfare and safety is paramount at all times;
- maintain professional boundaries both face to face and when using technology;
- ensure any intimate touch required, to carry out care, treatment or training is within relevant guidelines and is safe and appropriate. Intimate touch and care, when required, will always be part of a plan, agreed with the individual concerned, their parents or carers;
- always listen to individuals and take account of their wishes and feelings;
- always act in a professional way and not accept bullying, swearing or other disruptive behaviour;
- liaise openly with parents and carers;
- only use physical contact if absolutely necessary;
- avoid being alone with children, young people and adults at risk whenever possible;
- listen to, and act upon, any disclosures allegations, or concerns of abuse;
- participate in approved safeguarding training at appropriate levels;
- ensure restraint is only used as part of an agreed plan by staff trained in the use of the particular restraint or as an emergency action to protect from harm. All use of restraint will be reported and recorded by the member of staff and/or volunteer concerned to the relevant Lead or Deputy lead for safeguarding and to the relevant manager;
- follow our Safeguarding Policy at all times.

11. Recognising Abuse in Children Young People and Adults at Risk

11.1. The following list is for guidance only. It is important to be observant, listen to what is being said and record. e.g. is what you are observing and being told about an injury consistent with the injury?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Abuse related to faith or belief ● Alcohol and Substance misuse ● Breast Ironing ● Bullying ● Carrying offensive weapons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Financial or material abuse ● Forced marriage ● Gambling ● Hate and "mate" crime ● Gangs ● Hazing and initiation rites
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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Child criminal and sexual exploitation including County Lines ● Child on child abuse, including sexual violence and upskirting ● Concealed pregnancy ● Criminal exploitation ● Discriminatory ● Domestic violence, including "honour" based abuse ● Emotional ● Exploitive use of technology ● Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hoarding ● Modern slavery ● Neglect and acts of omission ● Online safety ● Organisational or institutional ● Psychological ● Physical ● Radicalisation ● Self-neglect ● Sexual abuse and exploitation ● Trafficking |
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12. Handling Disclosures

12.1. When a disclosure is made by a child, young person or adult at risk it is important to remember to:

- take what you are being told seriously;
- stay calm and reassure;
- do not investigate;
- do not delay and always:-
 - seek advice from the relevant Lead or Deputy for Safeguarding;
 - make a careful recording of anything you are told or observe, date and sign.

20.2 A disclosure may come from someone telling you:

- they have or are being abused;
- they have concerns about someone else;
- they are themselves abusing or likely to abuse someone else.

13. Responding to Concerns

- 13.1. We ensure and emphasise that everyone in our organisation understands and knows how to share any concerns immediately with the relevant Lead or Deputy for Safeguarding. Everyone, including both the relevant Lead and Deputy for Safeguarding will deal with concerns using the following steps shown in Chart 1.

14. Record Keeping

- 14.1. At all times when required, and especially where there is a safeguarding concern, we are committed to keeping records which are:

- recorded on a safeguarding incident form;
- of sufficient details of child, young person or adult at risk to identify individual who is subject of concern and any significant others;
- accurate and factual/based on fact, as a true record of:
 - what has been monitored/observed
 - what has been said and by whom
 - what has given cause for concern
 - what action has and/or will be taken including the reason for those actions
 - the reason stated for no action being taken and by whom
- non-judgmental;
- timely within 24 hours;
- signed and dated by the writer and co- signed by the relevant Lead or Deputy;
- shared as appropriate by the relevant Lead or Deputy for Safeguarding;
- stored safely and securely by the relevant Lead or Deputy for Safeguarding.

15. Handling Allegations/Dealing with Complaints/Disciplinary & Grievance Procedures

- 15.1. Our policies and procedures are in line with the statutory guidance, the Charity Commission's guidelines, (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-serious-wrongdoing-at-a-charity-as-a-worker-or-volunteer>) our disciplinary, complaints and grievance procedures. These will be made available to everyone.
- 15.2. Where a complaint or allegation has been made with regards to any inappropriate behaviour or poor practice, the relevant Lead or Deputy will, in all cases, discuss the situation with social care services (the LADO/DO with regards to children England & Wales only) and/or the police before making an open decision about the best way forward.
- 15.3. In the case in which the relevant Lead is implicated, the Deputy should be informed. In the exceptional circumstances that both are involved, the person concerned will inform the Trustee for Safeguarding if there is a belief that the concern has not been taken seriously or acted upon then any one can “Whistleblow” via email to the Charity Commission: whistleblowing@charitycommission.gov.uk
- 15.4. With regard to disciplinary and grievance procedures, we will take no steps until we have fully discussed and agreed a strategy with social care services and/or the police, (the LADO/DO, with regards to children England & Wales only). Any investigation will override the need to implement any such procedures. Our management are responsible for making referrals to the relevant:
 - criminal records service;
 - Regulatory Authority;
 - professional body.

16. Bullying and Harassment

- 16.1. Bullying and harassment can take many forms and include:
 - physical violence including threats; verbal assaults; taunts; the destruction of property; extortion; unwanted sexual interest or contact;
 - indirect forms of bullying including ignoring a person and the withdrawal of friendship, malicious gossip and spreading rumours, abusive or oppressive graffiti, the use of social media, electronic messages and websites.
- 16.2. It is often motivated by prejudice against certain groups for example on the grounds of race, religion, gender and disability.
- 16.3. Whether directed at children, young people, adults at risk, staff, volunteers, parent and carers, bullying and harassment, physical and/or emotional abuse will not be tolerated. All such behaviour will be treated as a safeguarding concern when aimed at children, young people and or adults at risk.
- 16.4. We will:
 - provide a culture of equality and respect for all with zero tolerance to any form of bullying or harassment;
 - report all incidents of bullying or harassment observed or disclosed, to the relevant Lead or Deputy;

- take immediate steps to stop the behaviour and mitigate the effects of bullying and harassment;
- record all incidents with observations and witness statements, and action taken, signed, timed and dated.

17. Online Safety Code of Conduct

17.1. We expect everyone in our Charity to adhere to our Online Safety code of conduct to:

- use the internet and other forms of communication in a sensible and polite way;
- only access websites, send messages or access and use other resources that will not hurt or upset anybody;
- seek permission if I want to use personal information or take photographs of other people;
- report any concerns to the relevant Lead or Deputy;
- be clear that we cannot maintain confidentiality if there is a concern about the welfare of a child, young person or adult at risk.

17.2. Why do we need to include Online Safety?

Recent advances of the internet, mobile phones and other electronic technology has made access to information and communication increasingly easy for everyone. This is especially so for those who cannot always go out to socialise and rely on websites for social networking, watching films, downloading music, buying lottery tickets, gambling, shopping etc. Government guidance is clear, that all organisations working with children, young people adults at risk, families, parents and carers have responsibilities. It is also important to remember, children, young people and adults at risk can also abuse and such incidents fall into the remit of this policy

17.3. What are the Risks?

There are many potential risks including:

- accessing inappropriate or illegal websites;
- receiving unwanted or upsetting texts, e-mail messages or images;
- being “groomed” by another with a view to meeting the child, young person or adult at risk for their own illegal purposes including sex, drugs or crime;
- viewing or receiving socially unacceptable material such as inciting hatred or violence;
- sending bullying messages or posting malicious details about others;
- ignoring copyright law by downloading e.g. music, videos, homework cheat materials etc.;
- overspending on shopping and gambling sites;
- being at risk of identity fraud for money transactions;
- inappropriate relationships or prostitution.

17.4. What else might be of concern?

A person who:

- befriends a child, young person or adult at risk on the internet or by text messaging;
- has links to children, young people and/or adults at risk on their social media pages especially if they work in a position of care such as a sports coach or care worker;
- is secretive about what they are doing and who they are meeting.

17.5. What do I do if I am concerned? (See Chart 2)

If you have any concerns, speak to the relevant Lead or Deputy for Safeguarding.

Remember:

- do not delay;
- do not investigate;
- seek advice from the relevant Lead or Deputy;
- make careful recording of anything you observe or are told.

18. Policy Review

- 18.1. All personnel are required to read this document once a year and confirm that they have read, understood and will comply with it.
- 18.2. Trustees of Vetlife undertake to keep up to date with any new legislation and guidance in order to execute their leadership and advisory role as members of the Board of Trustees of Vetlife.

19. Photography & Filming Guidance

- 19.1. The use of photography is really important BUT it is vital to remember that photography can be used and distributed inappropriately including on the Internet and social media.

It is therefore important to be clear about:

- explaining to everyone why caution is necessary;
- the purpose of photos e.g. the individual's own record, media and publicity etc;
- the content required when using a professional photographer;
- seeking consent for any publication or media use;
- publishing only limited details alongside individuals' photos in newspapers etc;
- taking photographs openly;
- the suitability of clothing e.g. swimsuits;

- all those taking official photos at public events, signing a registration form, which includes the reason, use and storage of all photographs and films.

19.2. The above guidance applies to any photographic and filming equipment including camera phones, digital or video cameras. This equipment and who it belongs to should also be recorded on the registration form.

20. Public Events and Visiting Speakers

20.1. We will always ensure events are risk assessed and we are committed to:

- ensuring that those who run events have the expertise, knowledge and skills to do so properly;
- completing a risk assessment which involves identifying risks and the means of reducing or eliminating those risks for all activities or events;
- risk assessing any changes being made to activities or events;
- having a written plan in place if event or activity has to be cancelled;
- having a written plan in place in case of emergency including contact numbers;
- implementing the required actions identified by the risk assessment process and reviewing the effectiveness of these on a regular basis.

21. Buildings and Venues

21.1. Safeguarding risk assessments will be carried out on all buildings and venues used by our organisation or by the host's venue management, such as schools.

21.2. The safeguarding risk assessment should cover:

- access especially how people enter and leave the building;
- signing in protocol;
- use of keys;
- toilets and changing rooms;
- any outside space;
- car parks;
- any other relevant issues.

22. Ethical Fundraising

22.1. We are committed to our fundraising being:

- **Legal:** All fundraising must meet the requirements of the law;
- **Open:** Fundraisers must be open with the public about their processes and must be willing to explain (where appropriate) if they are asked for more information;

- **Honest:** Fundraisers must act with integrity and must not mislead the public about the cause they are fundraising for or the way a donation will be used;
- **Respectful:** Fundraisers must demonstrate respect whenever they have contact with any member of the public.

23. Direct work with at risk groups

23.1. We do not work with any young people and, other than the above activities and the Helpline Self-Determination Policy (Annex C), we carry out no other direct work with adults.

This Safeguarding Policy must be reviewed annually:	
DATE OF CURRENT REVIEW:	Jun 25
DATE OF LAST REVIEW:	Apr 24
DATE OF NEXT REVIEW:	Jun 26

Chart 1: Responding to Safeguarding Concerns

If you are worried a child, young person or adult at risk has been abused because:

- you have seen something;
- someone says they have been abused;
- somebody else has told you they are concerned;
- there has been an allegation against a colleague;
- there has been an anonymous allegation;
- an adult has disclosed that they were abused as a child;
- a child, young person or adult say they are abusing someone else.

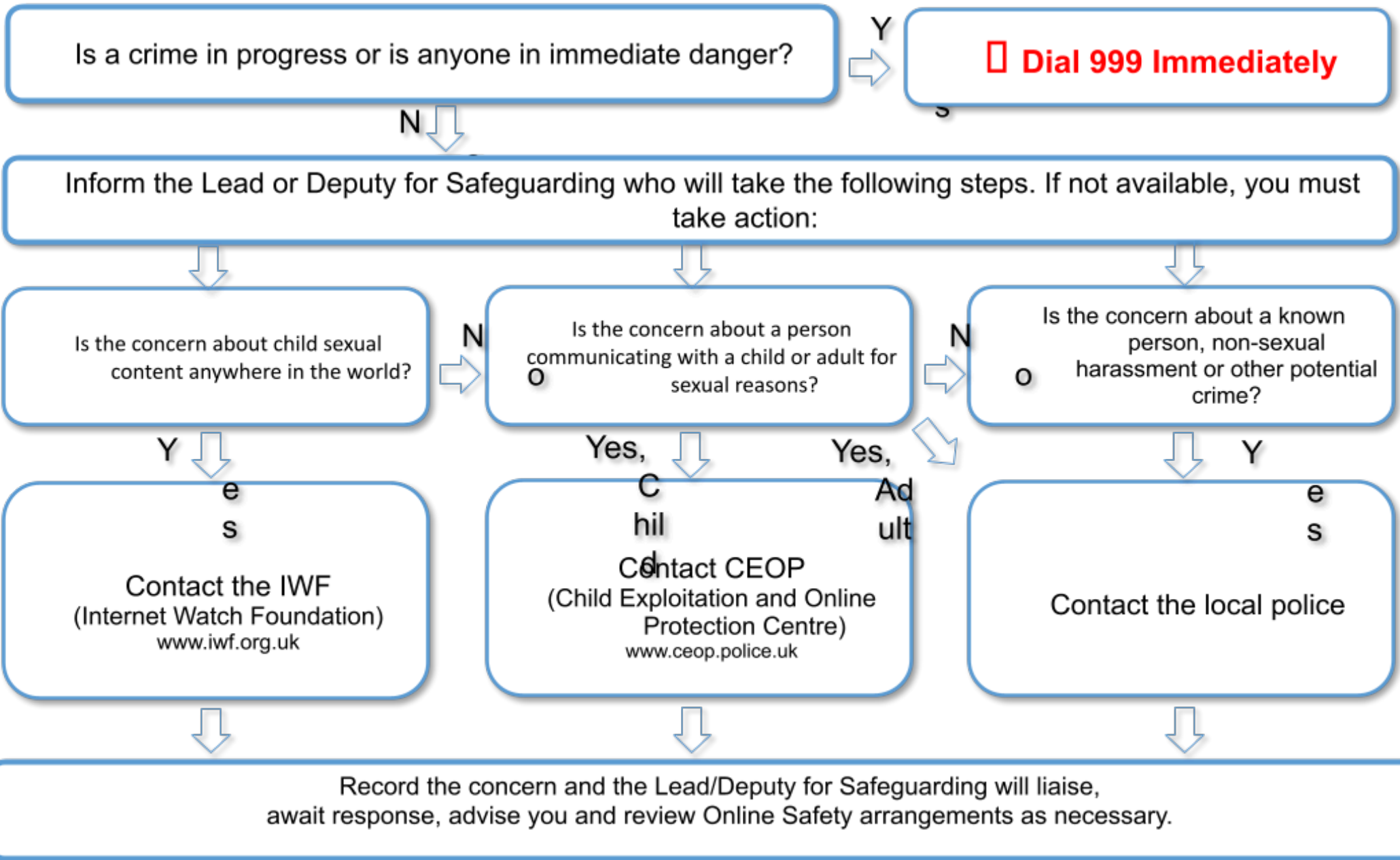
- Check our Safeguarding Policy for guidance.
- Talk to the relevant Lead or Deputy for Safeguarding without delay.
- If they are implicated, then report to Trustee for Safeguarding.

- The Lead, Deputy or Trustee for Safeguarding should refer the concern to the relevant adult or children's social care service and/or the Police and follow up the referral in writing within 24 hours.
- For England & Wales only in cases of allegations against a person with a "duty of care", towards a child the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO/DO) will co-ordinate the next procedural steps.
- Under "whistle blowing", anyone can refer directly to the police or social care services, the LADO/DO, NSPCC or the Charity Commission if they are concerned the organisation is not managing safeguarding concerns appropriately. They can also get support from the charity Protect.

- **Consult, Monitor and Record**
- **Sign/Date/Time**
- **Include name and role.**

- **When the concern is about the welfare of a child or adult at risk from schools, colleges, health providers, GP practices, prisons or social care settings, you should refer to that organisation's Lead for Safeguarding in the first instance.**
- **Inform the relevant Lead or Deputy that you have referred a concern.**

Chart 2: Online Safety Referral Flowchart – Child and Adult



Annex A: Safeguarding Principles

1. Empowerment - People being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent.

- 2. Self-determination** – adults have the right to make their own decisions and may choose to stay in a situation where they may be at risk of harm. However, regard must be given to any children who may be at risk, and refer to childrens’ services as appropriate. It may also be necessary to raise concerns where the adult is unable to make decisions regarding safeguarding, or where risks to adults, their families or staff may be escalated. The law will not prevent the sharing of information with other agencies / staff members / practitioners if those likely to be affected consent or; the public interest in safeguarding the adult at risk’s welfare overrides the need to keep the information confidential or; disclosure is required under a court order or other legal obligation.
- 3. Prevention** - It is better to take action before harm occurs. The risk of harm occurring can be mitigated with early recognition of potential safeguarding risks.
- 4. Proportionality** - The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.
- 5. Protection** - Support and representation for those in greatest need. If an incident is reported to you, respond sensitively and appropriately. Listen patiently, stay calm, explain the safeguarding process and what you are going to do. Ask what they would like to happen. Make your report to the safeguarding lead/deputy; protecting any evidence where possible; ensure details are recorded in written form. The Lead/deputy should escalate concerns with the adult’s consent. Should they lack the capacity to consent, it may be justifiable to override confidentiality and share information due to the risk posed to themselves or others.
- 6. Partnership** – This includes working in close partnership with our Beneficiaries, internally with colleagues, as well as other agencies to prevent harm occurring.
- 7. Accountability** - Accountability and transparency in safeguarding practice.

Annex B: Terms of Reference for Vetlife Safeguarding Officers

Terms of Reference for Safeguarding Officers

For the purposes of this document, the term staff shall apply to all roles within the Charity including agency workers and consultants.

1. It is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees to appoint a Trustee for Safeguarding, a Lead for the Charity, a Lead for Helpline, and at least one Deputy for safeguarding for the Charity.
2. The Board of Trustees may suspend or remove the Trustee for Safeguarding should they not complete the required training within the specified timescale, or following the investigation of any allegations of serious misconduct which shall be investigated without delay.
- 3. The key functions of the role of Lead for the Charity are to:**
 - 3.1. ensure that the Vetlife Safeguarding Policy is implemented and adhered to by all staff and volunteers;
 - 3.2. protect everyone who comes into contact with the Charity from harm by ensuring that Policies and service procedures are robust and reviewed regularly;
 - 3.3. ensure that all staff and volunteers receive and complete all relevant safeguarding training within necessary timescales, escalating compliance procedures when required, and are supported in their work;
 - 3.4. monitor and record all concerns raised through any and all of the Vetlife services by all staff, and volunteers;
 - 3.5. make referrals to external agencies such as the police or social services, MASH in some areas without delay;
 - 3.6. make sure serious and notifiable incidents are reported to the Charity Commission as required;
 - 3.7. liaise with external agencies as necessary;
 - 3.8. keep the Board of Trustees up to date with overview written reports at every Board meeting;
 - 3.9. contribute to a regular review of the Risk Register with regard to safeguarding and update it as necessary;
 - 3.10. keep the Trustee for Safeguarding up to date with concerns and actions taken to address those concerns;

- 3.11. undertake training within three months of appointment, and every two years thereafter;
- 3.12. seek professional advice if it is needed;
- 3.13. review the Safeguarding Policy annually and/or in line with any changes to legislation.

4. The key functions of the role of Lead for the Helpline are to:

- 4.1. ensure that the Vetlife Safeguarding Policy is implemented and adhered to by all volunteers;
- 4.2. protect everyone who comes into contact with the Charity from harm by ensuring that Policies and service procedures are robust and reviewed regularly;
- 4.3. ensure that all volunteers receive and complete all relevant safeguarding training within necessary timescales, escalating compliance procedures when required, and are supported in their work;
- 4.4. monitor and record all concerns raised through the Vetlife Helpline by all staff, and volunteers;
- 4.5. make referrals to external agencies such as the police or social services, MASH in some areas without delay;
- 4.6. make sure serious and notifiable incidents are reported to the Charity Commission as required;
- 4.7. liaise with external agencies as necessary;
- 4.8. keep the Board of Trustees up to date with overview written reports at every Board meeting;
- 4.9. contribute to a regular review of the Risk Register with regard to safeguarding Helpline;
- 4.10. keep the relevant Lead for Charity Safeguarding up to date with all concerns and actions taken to address those concerns;
- 4.11. undertake training within three months of appointment, and every two years thereafter;
- 4.12. seek professional advice if it is needed;
- 4.13. review the Safeguarding Policy annually and/or in line with any changes to legislation.

5. The key functions of the role of Deputy shall be to:

- 5.1. assist the relevant Leads in their role by supporting them in the provision of their key responsibilities to the Charity;
- 5.2. provide cover in the relevant Lead's absence by undertaking all responsibilities of the relevant Lead;
- 5.3. undertake safeguarding training within three months of appointment and every two years thereafter;
- 5.4. follow the reporting procedure to escalate issues raised in circumstances in which it is not deemed appropriate to report concerns to the relevant Lead;

6. The key functions of the role of Trustee for Safeguarding shall be to:

- 6.1. oversee all safeguarding operations for the Charity;
- 6.2. provide cover in the absence of the relevant Lead and the Deputy by undertaking all responsibilities of the relevant Lead;
- 6.3. undertake Trustee and standard safeguarding training within three months of appointment and every two years thereafter;
- 6.4. ensure the relevant Lead(s) and Deputy undertake training within three months of appointment and every two years thereafter;
- 6.5. follow the reporting procedure to escalate issues raised in circumstances in which it is not deemed appropriate to report concerns to the relevant Lead or Deputy;
- 6.6. perform a regular review of the Risk Register with regard to safeguarding and update it as necessary.

JD

Apr 2024

These Terms of Reference must be reviewed annually:	
DATE OF CURRENT REVIEW:	Jun 25
DATE OF LAST REVIEW:	Apr 24
DATE OF NEXT REVIEW:	Jun 26

Annex C: Vetlife Helpline procedure for supporting callers (email and phone contacts) who may be experiencing suicidal thoughts

Vetlife supports the veterinary community. We are working for a society where everyone in the veterinary community can access support and where fewer people die by suicide.

As part of this vision, we have a procedure for supporting callers (people contacting the Helpline service) who may be suicidal.

Vetlife's primary preventative action to reduce suicide in the profession is to offer emotional support and a safe, confidential space, including for callers who may be experiencing suicidal thoughts. This is because we know that some veterinary professionals struggle to seek help in crisis because of fears around confidentiality.

This policy aims to enable the veterinary community to feel safe to contact us when they are in distress.

The Policy

People who call Vetlife Helpline (by phone or email) remain responsible for their own lives. Vetlife encourages callers at risk of suicide to access help and support.

Procedures

- All Vetlife Helpline volunteers are prepared and trained to implement the Safeguarding Policy.
- All Vetlife Helpline volunteers are trained in supporting callers who may be suicidal and in safety planning for callers who are experiencing suicidal thoughts.
- Volunteers explore the caller's feelings and build a relationship of trust so that the caller can explore all options.
- If a person (email or phone caller) states or suggests they are thinking about suicide, the person receiving the disclosure should listen empathetically and explore suicidal thoughts (see guidance note 'Using empathetic listening to explore suicidal thoughts').
- In all cases of a person believed to be experiencing suicidal thoughts:
 - If risk to the person appears to be immediate, the volunteer offers empathetic active listening support and encourages the person to call an ambulance for themselves via 999, or to go to a hospital emergency department (formerly known as A&E).
 - If the person appears to be at risk, but risk appears not to be immediate, the volunteer encourages the person to contact their GP for an emergency appointment, or for them to contact mental health services urgently if they have a contact for a mental health team, or for them to contact 111 and ask for mental health help.

- If risk appears present but not in the next few weeks, the volunteer encourages the person to contact their GP or mental health team or 111 contact. The volunteer may also consider offering a Vetlife Health Support referral.
- The volunteer also encourages social support for the person – is there anyone around the person (friends/family) who can be with them?
- If the caller is under 18, or an adult at risk (someone aged 18 or older who has care and support needs, is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect, and is unable to protect themselves from such harm due to those care and support needs), or an adult with dependent children in their care, the Vetlife Safeguarding Team will be alerted and will consider whether a safeguarding referral is necessary.
- With email callers where there can be delays between replies, if a caller appears at immediate or urgent risk, the volunteer on duty will check whether a suicidal caller is able to speak by phone. If the caller agrees the volunteer on phone duty will call the caller, if the caller does not agree we continue to support by email.
- If the person refuses to contact emergency services or healthcare for help and risk still appears present:

If we do not have identifying details for the person (name/location):

- The volunteer should explain to the person we do not have identifying details for them and cannot get help to them and keep encouraging them to call for emergency help themselves.
- The volunteer on duty should alert the Vetlife Helpline Manager on duty as soon as possible.

If we do have identifying details for the person

- The volunteer should immediately contact the Vetlife Helpline Manager on duty who may consider contacting an ambulance for the person if risk appears immediate or urgent and we have identifying details for them.
- If it would unreasonably delay help to contact the manager the volunteer on duty can call 999 and ask for an ambulance for the person.

Guidance note - using empathetic listening to explore suicidal thoughts:

If the person (caller) has said something which might suggest suicidal thoughts but is not clear, (for example has made a statement such as ‘I can’t take this anymore’), the volunteer should ask about whether they have had thoughts of ending their life.

If the caller is not suicidal continue to offer support as usual.

If the caller is suicidal say we are concerned for them and want them to be safe. Explore with the person if the thoughts have got to the stage where they have a plan for ending their life.

If risk appears to be present, follow process above.

Let any caller experiencing suicidal thoughts know that they can contact Vetlife Helpline at any time.

Guidance note – support for volunteers:

After responding to a suicidal caller, the Vetlife Helpline Manager will arrange a check in with the volunteer if appropriate. Peer support is also available for volunteers via shift handover, group supervision, and the volunteer peer support list. Individual supervision can be arranged with Vetlife Health Support. Clinical appointments and support for volunteers are also available via Vetlife Health Support.

Training about supporting people experiencing suicidal thoughts will be offered to all volunteers at Initial volunteer training and at least once every two years in continuing training.

This Vetlife Helpline Policy must be reviewed annually:	
DATE OF CURRENT REVIEW:	Jun 25
DATE OF LAST REVIEW:	Apr 24
DATE OF NEXT REVIEW:	Jun 26