**SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

**Introduction**

Diverse Leap is a small charity formed on 16 December 2021 with the aim of supporting people who are experiencing the symptoms of depression (or other mental health disorders). This aim is achieved through the provision of a place of safety where beneficiaries can be provided with free confidential advice, empathy, signposting to professional sources of treatment and practical support and activities to promote positive mental well-being...As such, volunteers carrying out our charitable purposes are likely to be in regular, and in some cases ongoing, contact with vulnerable adults (and potentially children[[1]](#footnote-1)). This policy covers Diverse Leap’s approach to protecting children and adults at risk who come into contact with the Charity; it applies to all volunteers, including trustees.

**Safeguarding Commitment**

Diverse Leap believes that everyone has the right to protection from abuse and is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of everyone engaged in the breadth of its activities, including our volunteers. The Charity also has a zero-tolerance stance to any form of abuse. The Designated Trustee for Safeguarding within Diverse Leap is the Chair (Dr Richard Castle).

It is recognised that many of our trustees and volunteers will have contact with people who may be distressed or anxious. The Charity thus undertakes to provide as safe an environment as possible for its volunteers and beneficiaries. Diverse Leap also recognises that children, young people and vulnerable adults are at particular risk of abuse within society and is committed to ensuring that these groups are protected during interaction with the Charity or participating in our activity programmes.

Any suspicions or allegations of abuse or inappropriate behaviour will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately. When a child or vulnerable adult is judged to be at risk (due to an abusive or harmful situation), confidentiality may be breached by contacting an appropriate third party (normally the Police, NHS or Social Services).

**Policy Scope**

This document outlines the statutory guidelines and the principles underpinning our Safeguarding Policy. This includes the provisions of the Mental Capacity Act to ensure that informed consent is obtained before interventions are provided by accredited mental health professionals[[2]](#footnote-2). Additionally, this document details both the processes for recruiting trustees and volunteers and also the procedures to be followed if there is any concern about possible abuse, self-harm or suicidal ideation.

**Statutory Guidance and Principles**

Safeguarding is essentially about keeping children and adults at risk safe from abuse, and about an organisation’s responsibility to promote and protect the welfare of vulnerable groups, including those at risk of suicide or self-harm.

Children

Within England, the definition of a child applies to any person under the age of eighteen. Government Statutory Guidance[[3]](#footnote-3) (Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2015) defines “Safeguarding” in respect of children as:

* Protecting children from maltreatment,
* Preventing impairment of children’s mental or physical health or development,
* Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care, and
* Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Adults at Risk/Vulnerable Adults

Within England, the terms “Adults at Risk” and “Vulnerable Adults” is defined as a person aged eighteen or over who:

* Is, or may be, in need of community care services due to mental or other disability, age or illness, and
* Is, or may be, unable to take care of themselves, or
* Is unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation, including self-harm or suicide.

The Care Act (2014) outlines the following aims of Safeguarding in respect of Adults at Risk:

* Prevent harm and risk of abuse or neglect to adults with care and support needs,
* Stop abuse or neglect wherever possible,
* Safeguard adults in a way that supports them in making choices and having control about how they want to live,
* Promote an approach that concentrates on improving life for the adults concerned,
* Raise public awareness so that communities and organisations, alongside professionals, play their part in preventing, identifying and responding to abuse and neglect,
* Provide information and support in socially, culturally and linguistically accessible ways to help people understand the different types of abuse, how to stay safe and what to do to raise concern about the safety and wellbeing of an adult, and
* Address what has caused abuse or neglect.

Safeguarding is not, therefore, simply a matter of protection against sexual exploitation, or other forms of abuse whilst children or adults at risk are in contact with Diverse Leap volunteers, activities or interventions. Whilst this aspect is critical, our Charity must also ensure that we are pro-active in addressing signs of abuse or neglect and that, where appropriate, action is taken to report concerns. Furthermore, we need to promote wellbeing and empower our beneficiaries, and particularly those in vulnerable groups, to make choices which improve their life outcomes.

**Definitions of Abuse or Neglect**

**Abuse** covers any deliberate act which results in an individual (or a group of individuals) being injured (either physically or mentally), put at risk of injury, or damaged in such a way that they fail to meet their potential. Forms of abuse include:

* Physical Abuse,
* Sexual Abuse or Exploitation (coercion, manipulation or deception to force a child or vulnerable adult into sexual activity),
* Psychological Abuse (exposing an individual to behaviour which may result in psychological trauma, including anxiety, chronic depression and post-traumatic disorders),
* Financial or Material Abuse,
* Human trafficking or Slavery,
* Discriminatory Abuse (on the grounds of race, gender, age, disability, religion, beliefs, appearance, sexuality or cultural background), and
* Organisational Abuse (systematic poor practice or standards of care).

**Neglect** refers to an ongoing failure to meet the basic needs of a child or adult at risk, particularly when there is an assumed duty of care towards the individual.

**Informed Consent**

Diverse Leap volunteers may be asked to provide a beneficiary with talking therapies or other forms of psychological intervention services. Where this is the case, the accredited mental health professional must ensure that valid and informed consent is obtained from, or on behalf of the beneficiary, in accordance with the Mental Capacity Act 2005. Further guidance on the principles underpinning Informed Consent is attached at Annex A and, in cases of doubt, advice should be sought from the Chair who also provides the Clinical and Compliance leads for Diverse Leap.

**Suicide and Self-Harm**

Diverse Leap is committed to providing a confidential service to beneficiaries over the age of 18. It is also recognized that transitory contact may also be initiated by a young adult; should this be the case, the young adult will be signposted to a more appropriate source of support. However, the Charity also has a duty of care towards all those who are in contact with the charity. Therefore, where there is considered to be a risk of harm to an individual (including risk of self-harm or suicide) or to another person, information may be shared with a professional third party (such as the Police, NHS, Ambulance service or social services) without the beneficiary’s consent.

**Data Protection Compliance Statement**

Diverse Leap does not receive or hold any beneficiary data. A single central record of volunteers holding DBS clearances is maintained on the Diverse Leap e-mail account, access to which is restricted to the Board of Trustees.

**Volunteer Recruitment**

As a matter of policy, Diverse Leap has procedures in place to ensure that all reasonable checks are made before appointing a volunteer to a position of trust, or to one in which they are likely to come into unsupervised contact with children or adults at risk. The Charity fully complies with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Code of Practice.

It is also a requirement that those seeking to volunteer with or around vulnerable groups will need to disclose any current involvement with protection agencies (such as the Police) before taking up a position with Diverse Leap. Similarly, if any existing volunteer becomes aware that a protection agency is investigating them, then it must be disclosed immediately to the Founder or Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Additionally, when a professionally qualified individual volunteers to conduct interventions with beneficiaries, proof of accreditation will always be sought before their services are deployed. This accreditation will normally be through registration with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). Additional verification will normally also be sought through the General Medical Council (GMC), the British Psychological Society (BPS) or the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). Volunteers will also be asked to confirm that they hold Professional Liability Insurance and that this covers them for volunteer activity.

All volunteers providing psychological intervention therapy to beneficiaries will be required to sign the Declaration attached at Annex B.

**Photographs of Activities**

As part of our suite of safeguarding measures, Diverse Leap has a definitive policy that photographs which could identify beneficiaries may not be taken without informed consent. As a matter of policy, photographs or digital media images of children are not permitted unless specific approval has been obtained from their parent/carer.

**Promotion of Private Consultations or Services**

Diverse Leap provides services to beneficiaries on both a voluntary and free of charge basis. All volunteers are asked to recognise these principles and, consequently, not to promote their own private services whilst interacting with beneficiaries.

**Actions following Allegations of Safeguarding Breach**

In the event of any volunteer or individual (including a beneficiary) becoming aware of a safeguarding breach, or suspicion that abuse or neglect has taken place, the Diverse Leap Designated Safeguarding Lead is to be informed of the circumstances immediately. In tandem with the Founder, action will be taken immediately to:

* Ensure the Safety of the Beneficiary
* Consider the suspension of the volunteer(s) involved (if appropriate) and to safeguard the welfare of that individual whilst the matter is investigated.
* Investigate the circumstances. If the breach is procedural, or potentially simply due to a misinterpretation, then the incident may be settled internally if all parties are content. If, however, a breach may have resulted in abuse or neglect then care must be taken not to prejudice any subsequent investigation by the Police or Social Services.
* Consider referral of allegations to the Police.

If an allegation is cited against a specific trustee, then the matter is to be referred immediately to another trustee for the action outlined above to be initiated.

Where there is an allegation of abuse against a trustee or volunteer, there are several possible outcomes:

* Concern dismissed, no further action
* Identification and implementation of a simple solution to mitigate risk of repetition
* Evidence of misconduct (including negligence) and consequent removal from provision of volunteer services
* Concern that abuse has taken place and immediate referral to the Police or Social Services.

A volunteer reporting a case of abuse, particularly relating to a child, is likely to undergo an extremely high degree of stress. Diverse Leap will ensure that appropriate support is available for that individual.

Should a volunteer or trustee report any form of personal abuse by a beneficiary which does not require Police intervention, then Diverse Leap will fully investigate the matter, provide support to the volunteer and consider the involvement of Social services. If the relationship between the volunteer and beneficiary has irretrievably broken down, then the beneficiary will be advised of an alternative support pathway.

All instances of reported safeguarding breaches will be registered in a log maintained by the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Access to this log is restricted to the Board of Trustees.

**Complaints Procedure**

If a volunteer or beneficiary raises a safeguarding concern and is unhappy with the proposed course of action, they should discuss their concerns with the Founder or the Chair. If the matter is not resolved, then the volunteer is entitled to ask for an independent investigation by another Trustee. If the volunteer still believes that a beneficiary is at risk then, in any event, they should report the matter to the Police.

**Basic Safeguarding Process**

* **In any life-threatening situation, an ambulance (and the Police if necessary) should be called immediately (via 999).** The Founder should also be informed by the fastest possible means.
* If a volunteer is worried about possible abuse, self-harm or suicidal ideation by a beneficiary while undertaking Diverse Leap activities, then the Founder or Chair is to be contacted as soon as possible. If this is not possible, then any individual with such concerns should report the matter to the Local Authority.
* If a volunteer is unsure whether to report an episode, or potentially unsafe working practices, then free confidential advice can be obtained through Public Concern at Work (www.pcaw.co.uk)
* It is important for volunteers to note (unless it is a life-threatening or active abuse scenario) that:
	+ It is their responsibility to inform Diverse Leap of any safeguarding concerns or breaches to ensure careful consideration of the actions to be taken. This may include breaches of confidentiality and how individuals might be protected from further abuse.
	+ It is their responsibility to inform the Founder or Chair as soon as possible (normally on the same day).
	+ The Founder and/or Chair will decide what action, if any, should be taken.

**POINTS OF CONTACT FOR SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS**

Anyone who has any concerns over safeguarding issues should contact Diverse Leap as soon as practical. Under normal circumstances, contact should be made by e-mail to the diverseleap@gmail.com. This account is monitored at least daily. However, in cases requiring immediate intervention, the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Dr Richard Castle, should be contacted via 07939 332695.

This policy is effective from 1 February 2022.

**Endorsed by the Board of Trustees**

**28 January 2022**

**ANNEX A - MENTAL CAPACITY ACT 2005 (INFORMED CONSENT)**

In rare circumstances, Diverse Leap volunteers may be asked to provide professional advice and direct support to beneficiaries who are in a distressed state, either as the result of a pre-existing mental health condition or a diagnosed disorder. Such interventions may include brief telephone or email advice and/or face-to-face psychosocial intervention sessions with an accredited mental health professional. When a beneficiary is provided with psychosocial intervention it is essential that consent is provided either verbally or in writing in advance of the first session.

For consent to be valid, it must be given voluntarily by an appropriately informed person who has the capacity to consent to the intervention. This will normally be the beneficiary, or someone with parental or other legal responsibility for a child, or someone authorized under a Lasting Power of Attorney. Within UK law, people aged 16 and over are entitled to consent to their own medical treatment, and this can only be overruled in exceptional circumstances. This is because, at age 16, children are presumed to have sufficient capacity to decide on their own treatment unless there is significant evidence to suggest that they meet the lack of capacity criteria outlined in the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

Acting on assumptions about a person’s capacity could constitute abuse, however unintentional. The Mental Capacity Act 2005 defines a person who lacks capacity as anyone who is unable to make a decision for themselves because of an impairment, or disturbance, in the functioning of their mind or brain. This incapacity may be permanent or temporary. A person therefore lacks capacity if:

* They have an impairment or disturbance - for example, a mental health condition (such as schizophrenia or dementia), brain trauma, severe learning difficulties or the effects of alcohol or other drugs (prescribed or other) that affects the way their mind or brain works; and
* That impairment or disturbance means that they are unable to make a specific decision at the time it needs to be made.

The Act also requires that all practical and appropriate steps be taken to enable a person to make a decision themselves. These steps include:

* Providing complete and relevant information, including both the risks of any side effects that could emerge and also details of any alternative approaches.
* Communicating in an appropriate way, for instance addressing any linguistic or understanding needs (i.e., braille or sign language).
* Making individuals feel at ease and not applying time pressure to reach a decision.

Diverse Leap fully complies with the requirements of the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

**ANNEX B - DECLARATION BY DIVERSE LEAP VOLUNTEERS**

Please complete this form and return it to Diverse Leap before commencing any mental health interventions with beneficiaries.

Name …………………………………………………………………………………………….

Contact Telephone Number and E-Mail ………………………………………………………

1. I have received a copy of the Diverse Leap Safeguarding Policy. I understand the contents and undertake to comply with the provisions.

2. I hold/do not\* hold Registration with a Professional Body.

 If Applicable, Name of Professional Body and Registration Number

 ………………………………………………………………………………………………

3. I am/am not\* registered with the Health & Care Professions Council.

 If Applicable, Registration Number and Certificate Expiry Date

 ………………………………………………………………………………………………

4. I hold/do not hold\* a valid Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Certificate

 If Applicable, Level of Clearance (Normal/Enhanced) and Date of Issue

 Normal/Enhanced\* ……...........................................................................................

5. I am not currently awaiting a court hearing or am being investigated by the Police, or any other regulatory authority (including professional bodies), for any matter which could call into question my suitability to work with children or adults at risk. Should any investigation be initiated in the future, I undertake to immediately inform the Founder or Designated Safeguarding Lead.

6. I do/do not hold\* personal Professional Liability Insurance and that (if applicable) the policy covers volunteer activity on behalf of Diverse Leap.

Signed………………………………………………………. Date……………………………….

\*Delete as appropriate

1. Diverse Leap services are aimed at adults (i.e., people over the age of 18. However, for the purposes of this policy, it is accepted that some young people may also seek to access services. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This refers to services provided by Diverse Leap volunteers who are also accredited health or social care professionals. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Working Together to Safeguard Children, July 2018 (as amended, December 2020) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)