

# YMCA EXETER

## SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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### 1. Policy Statement

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- 1.1. YMCA Exeter believes that every person has the right to live a life free from abuse and free from the fear of abuse. In particular, we recognise the welfare of all children and vulnerable adults as being of paramount importance to the organisation regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs.
- 1.2. Recognising that children and vulnerable adults are at particular risk of abuse, this policy sets out our approach to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults from abuse. Our primary aim is to prevent abuse where possible but, if the preventative strategy fails, we will ensure procedures are used to deal effectively with incidents of abuse.
- 1.3. We will work with partner agencies, both statutory and voluntary, to protect children and adults at risk of abuse, based on respect for an individual's human rights. We will adhere and follow the guidance of the "Working Together to Safeguard Children" 2018.
- 1.4. We will operate within the framework of the South West Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures as determined by the South West Safeguarding and Child Protection Group (SWSCPG - <http://www.online-procedures.co.uk/swcpp/>), the Devon Safeguarding Adults Board (DSAB - <https://new.devon.gov.uk/devonsafeguardingadultsboard>) and the Devon Safeguarding Children Board (DSCB - <http://www.devonsafeguardingchildren.org>).
- 1.5. This policy together with related procedures are based on the above websites, the Home Office/Department of Health document "No Secrets", and "Safeguarding Adults: A Multi-Agency Policy for the Protection of Vulnerable Adults from Abuse (rev. 2010)" jointly published by Devon County Council, Devon and Cornwall Constabulary and NHS Devon.
- 1.6. Our Safeguarding Policy and Procedures will comply with all relevant legislation and regulation, in particular the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (SVGA) as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 (POFA), the Mental Capacity Act 2005, the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (ROA) as amended, and Guardianship (Missing Persons) Act 2017.
- 1.7. Our staff, Board and volunteer recruitment procedures shall comply with safer recruitment best practice to minimise the risk of inappropriate individuals being appointed to positions where they may have opportunity to exploit children or vulnerable adults.
- 1.8. The aim of this policy statement is to set out guiding principles regarding safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults that apply to every part of YMCA Exeter's operations.
- 1.9. Day-to-day implementation of this policy shall be by means of Operational Procedures and Guidance Notes drawn up by the Safeguarding Officer(s), which shall be made available to all relevant persons.

### 2. Scope

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- 2.1. This policy applies to all employees, agency staff, Board members, contractors, volunteers or any other person working on behalf of YMCA Exeter, whether paid or unpaid.

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### 3. Definitions

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- 3.1. For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:
- 3.2. **“Child”** or **“Children”** refers to any person aged under 18 years of age.
- 3.3. **“Vulnerable Adult”** refers to a person over the age of 18 who may be considered vulnerable. There is however now no longer any legal definition of “vulnerable adult”. For the purposes of this Policy we will use the term “vulnerable adult” to mean an adult “who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness, and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation”<sup>1</sup>.
- 3.4. **“Regulated Activity” with regard to children** is defined by PVGA as amended by POFA, and includes teaching, training, instructing, caring for or supervising children, or providing advice/ guidance to children on their physical, emotional or educational well-being. Therefore, most YMCA Exeter positions which work with under 18s will engage in Regulated Activity. Regulated activity with children also includes care-related activities, and activities in certain specified establishments including schools, children’s homes, children’s centres, and detention centres. The full definition is complex – refer to the DBS website.
- 3.5. **“Regulated Activity” with regard to adults** is defined by PVGA as amended by POFA, and now has a much narrower definition than prior to POFA. No current YMCA Exeter work with adults is deemed Regulated Activity, although some service users may be in receipt of regulated activity by others (e.g. healthcare, social care, etc.). For definition of Regulated Activity with adults, refer to DBS guidance.
- 3.6. **“Safeguarding Officer”** refers to the YMCA Exeter staff member with overall responsibility for overseeing all matters related to safeguarding (see below).
- 3.7. **“Staff”** refers to both paid employees and volunteers.
- 3.8. **“Board”** refers to appointed Trustees of City of Exeter YMCA Housing Association and YMCA Exeter Community Projects.
- 3.9. **“Disclosure and Barring Service” (DBS)** refers to the service formed by the merger of the Criminal Records Bureau and the Independent Safeguarding Authority.
- 3.10. **“Safeguarding Incident”** refers to any occurrence, or alleged/suspected occurrence that may be significantly detrimental to a child or vulnerable adult. It may be one-off, or a series or pattern of events. It may involve abuse (see below), or may be where there is significant risk of harm without third party involvement, such as self-harm or suicidal thoughts/acts (although often these are related to abuse).
- 3.11. **“Safeguarding Disclosure”** refers to when concern is raised about the possible abuse of a child or vulnerable adult. This may take the form of a victim reporting someone has abused them, a person reporting the abuse of a third party, or someone (staff or another person) reporting they are concerned that a child or vulnerable adult may be being abused even though no abuse has been witnessed or alleged. All safeguarding disclosures must be treated seriously.

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<sup>1</sup> Definition from Home Office/Department of Health publication, “No Secrets: Guidance on developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse”.

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## 4. Prevention of Abuse

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4.1. YMCA Exeter takes all reasonable measures to prevent abuse of children and vulnerable adults from occurring. Measures taken include:

- Full use of “Safer Recruitment” practices to minimise the risk of unsuitable individuals being appointed to positions where they may be able to abuse children or vulnerable adults (see Section 5 below).
- All staff, Board members and volunteers to receive safeguarding training appropriate to their role in accordance with recommendations of DSCB and DSAB, both during induction as part of rolling refresher training programme.
- Where there is significant risk that service users may present a risk to other service users, risk assessments will be carried out to (a) identify individuals who may pose a risk to others, and (b) identify individuals who may be particularly vulnerable to abuse.
- Where possible, measures will be taken to enable potentially harmful individuals to access YMCA Exeter services without them posing significant risk to other service users or staff, for example by separating different client groups. Where this is not possible, those who present a risk to others will be excluded from the relevant services.
- Constant vigilance by staff to identify behaviours that may lead to abuse, for example unusual “friendships” that may be the grooming of vulnerable individuals by potential abuser(s).

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## 5. Safer Recruitment

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5.1. Recruitment of staff, volunteers and Board must be carried out in accordance with best practice in safer recruitment as set out by the SWSCPG website and relevant legislation and regulation. The recruitment process will include safeguards at every stage of the application process including advertising, shortlisting, references, interviews and DBS checks for relevant positions. These safeguards shall be set out in the **Staff Appointments Policy**, **Board Appointments Policy** and the **Volunteer Policy** to ensure they are followed by managers involved in recruitment.

5.2. It is an offence under the terms of SVGA for someone who is barred from working with children or vulnerable adults to seek to carry out Regulated Activity. YMCA Exeter will refer any barred person who applies for a post involving Regulated Activity to the DBS. Similarly, it is an offence to knowingly employ a barred person to engage in Regulated Activity, and under no circumstances shall YMCA Exeter employ a barred person to such a position.

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## 6. Responsibilities

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### 6.1. General Responsibilities

6.1.1. Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone in the organisation.

6.1.2. All concerns or allegations regarding the safeguarding of Children or Vulnerable Adults must be treated with the utmost seriousness and in accordance with YMCA Exeter Policy and Procedure. It is important to note that, whilst the vast majority of work carried out by YMCA Exeter with vulnerable adults (as defined by SVGA prior to POFA) is now not considered Relevant Activity under POFA, almost all abuse of adults constitutes a criminal offence and must be dealt with accordingly.

6.1.3. All staff (including volunteers) must comply fully with this Policy, all associated Operational Procedures, and other relevant Policies and Procedures. It is the staff member's responsibility to ensure that he/she has read and understood all relevant Policies, Procedures and Guidance Notes and that, if for any reason he/she is unclear of his/her responsibilities with regard to safeguarding, he/she must seek clarification from his/her manager.

## **6.2. Safeguarding Officers**

6.2.1. YMCA Exeter take the responsibility of safeguarding with the upmost importance. The Safeguarding Officers have overall responsibility for all matters related to safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. The Joint Chief Executives are the Safeguarding Officers for the organisation. These responsibilities include:

- Ensuring that Safeguarding Policies and Procedures are reviewed regularly as specified below, and that they are fully compliant with relevant legislation, regulation and any specific contractual obligations.
- Ensuring that Staff, Board and Volunteer Recruitment Policies and Procedures are in accordance with safer recruitment best practice.
- Ensuring that clear guidance on Professional Boundaries is available to all staff and volunteers.
- Ensuring that concise and clear Safeguarding Procedures are in place, and that all staff and volunteers are given sufficient induction and ongoing training to ensure they fully understand these procedures, including how to identify possible abuse.
- Advising staff and managers in how to handle specific safeguarding incidents and disclosures, including a clear system of how to report concerns as soon as abuse is identified or suspected.
- Keeping a log of all safeguarding incidents and disclosures, together with all relevant reports.
- Setting safeguarding training requirements for staff, and keeping a log of such training and when refresher training is due.
- Reporting to the Board the number of incidents and disclosures, their essential nature, any identified trends, and steps taken to address any shortcoming in operational procedures.
- Ensure that all staff, not just those working with children and vulnerable adults, are given appropriate induction, information, instruction and training, updates and refresher training as necessary to ensure they are able to deal with safeguarding incidents and disclosures, and to ensure they do not put themselves at risk of false allegations of abuse.

## **6.3. Designated Managers**

6.3.1. Designated Managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that staff and volunteer recruitment is carried out in accordance with safer recruitment best practice and relevant YMCA Exeter Policies and Procedures.
- Ensuring that all staff in their department understand and fully comply with all Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and have completed the safeguarding training as specified by the Safeguarding Officer.
- Put procedures and working practices in place that minimise the risk of abuse, including abuse by staff or volunteers. Procedures and working practices should also seek to minimise the risk of false allegations of abuse.
- Ensuring that their staff are able to identify signs of abuse, and fully understand their responsibilities should they become aware of a safeguarding concern.
- Ensuring that the initial response to any safeguarding incident or disclosure by project staff is appropriate and in accordance with Safeguarding Procedures.
- Ensuring that any safeguarding concern is properly recorded and reported to the Safeguarding Officer within the timescale prescribed in the Safeguarding Procedures.

- Ensuring that any safeguarding concern is dealt with appropriately and in a timely manner in accordance with the Safeguarding Procedures in consultation with the Safeguarding Officer.
- Ensuring that the Safeguarding Officer is kept fully informed regarding the process of dealing with a safeguarding incident or disclosure.
- Ensuring that a final report and all relevant paperwork are passed to the Safeguarding Officer for final signing off once a safeguarding incident or disclosure has been satisfactorily dealt with.

#### **6.4. All YMCA Staff**

6.4.1. All Staff (including volunteers) are responsible for:

- Reporting any safeguarding incident or disclosure to the appropriate person(s) in a timely manner, in accordance with Safeguarding Procedures.

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## **7. Other Relevant Policies, Procedures and Guidance**

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- 7.1. For the sake of clarity, this Policy document has been kept concise. This section outlines other relevant Policies, Procedures and Guidance relevant to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. It is the responsibility of all staff to be familiar with the content of all these documents.
- 7.2. **Safeguarding Procedures** – These are operational procedures giving clear and detailed instruction on matters related to safeguarding, including the action to be taken if a staff member becomes aware that a child or vulnerable adult may be being abused in some way, or otherwise at risk.
- 7.3. **Professional Boundaries Guidance Notes** – these provide clear and detailed guidance in plain English as to what behaviour is and is not appropriate in the way staff and volunteers relate to children and vulnerable adults.
- 7.4. **Staff Appointment Policy and Procedures** – these explain how YMCA Exeter appoints new staff, and includes safer recruitment procedures.
- 7.5. **Volunteer Policy** – relates particularly to recruitment, management and support of volunteers, including matters related to safeguarding.
- 7.6. **Lone Working Policy and Procedures** – these explain how YMCA Exeter staff are expected to behave when working alone, both to protect themselves from harm (including false allegations or misunderstandings related to safeguarding), and to protect children and vulnerable adults from the risk of harm from lone-working staff.
- 7.7. **Guidance Notes for Lone Workers** – these provide clear and detailed guidance in plain English as to how the Lone Working Policy and Procedures are reflected in day-to-day work.
- 7.8. **Whistleblowing Policy and Procedures** – these explain what you can do if you have no trust in YMCA managers to deal effectively with safeguarding or other serious matters, including if you think they may be directly implicated.

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## **8. Review**

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- 8.1. This Policy shall be reviewed at least once every year and shall be ratified by the full Board.
- 8.2. Safeguarding Procedures and Professional Boundaries Guidance Notes shall be reviewed at least once every three years by the Safeguarding Officer(s).
- 8.3. Reviews shall also be carried out in the event of a change in legislation, regulation or if shortcomings are identified through ongoing monitoring (including following a safeguarding incident or disclosure).

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This policy was reviewed and ratified by the full Board on **15<sup>th</sup> July 2019**.

Signed on behalf of the Board by the Chair:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_