



## **SAFEGUARDING AND VULNERABLE PERSONS POLICY**

### **Introduction to safeguarding for vulnerable persons/at risk adults**

Safeguarding means protecting an adult's right to live in safety as well as their health, wellbeing and human rights and enabling them to live free from abuse and neglect. The most common forms of abuse are physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological or emotional abuse, financial and material abuse, organisational abuse, discriminatory abuse or neglect.

### **Scope and purpose of policy**

This policy relates to all those coming into contact with HostNation and its services, including its beneficiaries, volunteers, staff and Trustees. It explains HostNation's commitment to maintaining high standards when it comes to protecting them from any form of abuse arising from the conduct of HostNation staff, volunteers and Trustees or the design and implementation of HostNation's services and activities.

The purpose of this policy is to set out clear safeguarding guidelines for HostNation staff and Trustees as well as to outline effective safeguarding reporting pathways within the organisation. Upon being matched, volunteers are sent a separate document which outlines our guidelines and their safeguarding responsibilities.

### **Safeguarding in the context of HostNation**

Safeguarding policies are required to protect children (under 18) and vulnerable or at risk adults. HostNation does not accept referrals of persons with serious mental health needs or in need of care, or those aged under 18. Referrers are made aware regularly of our referral criteria, (also clearly indicated on our referral form)

However, refugees and asylum seekers can still be **at risk** of abuse or neglect. Not speaking or understanding English well, unfamiliarity with cultural norms, lack of knowledge of their rights, fear of being deported and psychological factors can also make refugees and asylum seekers more vulnerable.

HostNation is primarily an introductory service putting socially isolated asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in need of friendship, in contact with local volunteer befrienders offering friendship. We aim to create interactions between two different populations (UK residents and those seeking refuge) who have problems intersecting. This is an altruistic, social arrangement, not a contractual obligation and there is no payment nor are volunteer befrienders expected to provide any professional services. Whilst we have liability insurance that covers befrienders during the first three months of 'active' befriending, we do not take responsibility for any relationships formed as a result of using our online services.

- We design and undertake our programmes and activities in a way that protects people from risk of harm that may arise from their coming into contact with HostNation services.
- We comply with UK GDPR regulation with regard to the use and storage of personal data held on the database.
- We abide by our privacy policy and only use personal data for the purpose of making a match and delete all identifiable personal data 12 months after the end of the three-month befriending period unless the person consents to being matched again.

The HostNation team remain in close contact with befrienders and befriendees and both parties are informed of their responsibility to contact one of the team should they have any concerns regarding their well-being or safety. Confidentiality will be maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns (apart from criminal actions).

### **Safeguarding of HostNation beneficiaries, befrienders and staff**

#### **Recruitment, Training, Guidance**

#### **Staff and Trustees**

In our commitment to keep all those we work with safe from harm, we implement sensible safeguarding procedures when recruiting, managing and deploying staff and Trustees.

- All staff are required to attend bespoke refugee safeguarding training
- All staff and Trustees are required to follow the safeguarding measures contained in this policy document and in the comprehensive HostNation Handbook (for staff and Trustees). At their induction, these are sent to new Trustees along with the Charity Commission's safeguarding video and guides.
- A member of the Board and a member of the management team are the appointed leads for safeguarding issues. Both undergo Level 3 Safeguarding for Charity Leads training provided by the NCVO (gold standard for safeguarding leads).
- All new staff must provide a current DBS and two employment references.

## **Volunteers**

- At registration all volunteers are required to fill in a detailed screening and profiling questionnaire; they must also upload their passport photo page for an ID check, and supply two references. Each applicant is called to discuss the role at length in order to assess their suitability as a befriender.
- We welcome DBS-checks, however we do not insist that all befrienders have one, as we do not accept referrals of those under 18 or in need of care. Because of the nature of activities engaged in as a befriender, our volunteers are not eligible for an enhanced or standard DBS check.
- References are followed up and checked before volunteers can be matched.
- They are also required to participate in online training where they are provided with training on safeguarding principles and processes, guidance on boundaries and understanding trauma, supporting refugees/asylum seekers and best practice.
- The training is conducted by HostNation's training lead who is also our safeguarding lead and has herself received safeguarding level 3 training and trauma-informed practice training.
- Upon being matched, volunteers are sent a safeguarding guide which instructs them on their safeguarding responsibilities and includes contact details of the safeguarding lead at HostNation and explains how to report a safeguarding concern.

## **Making Matches**

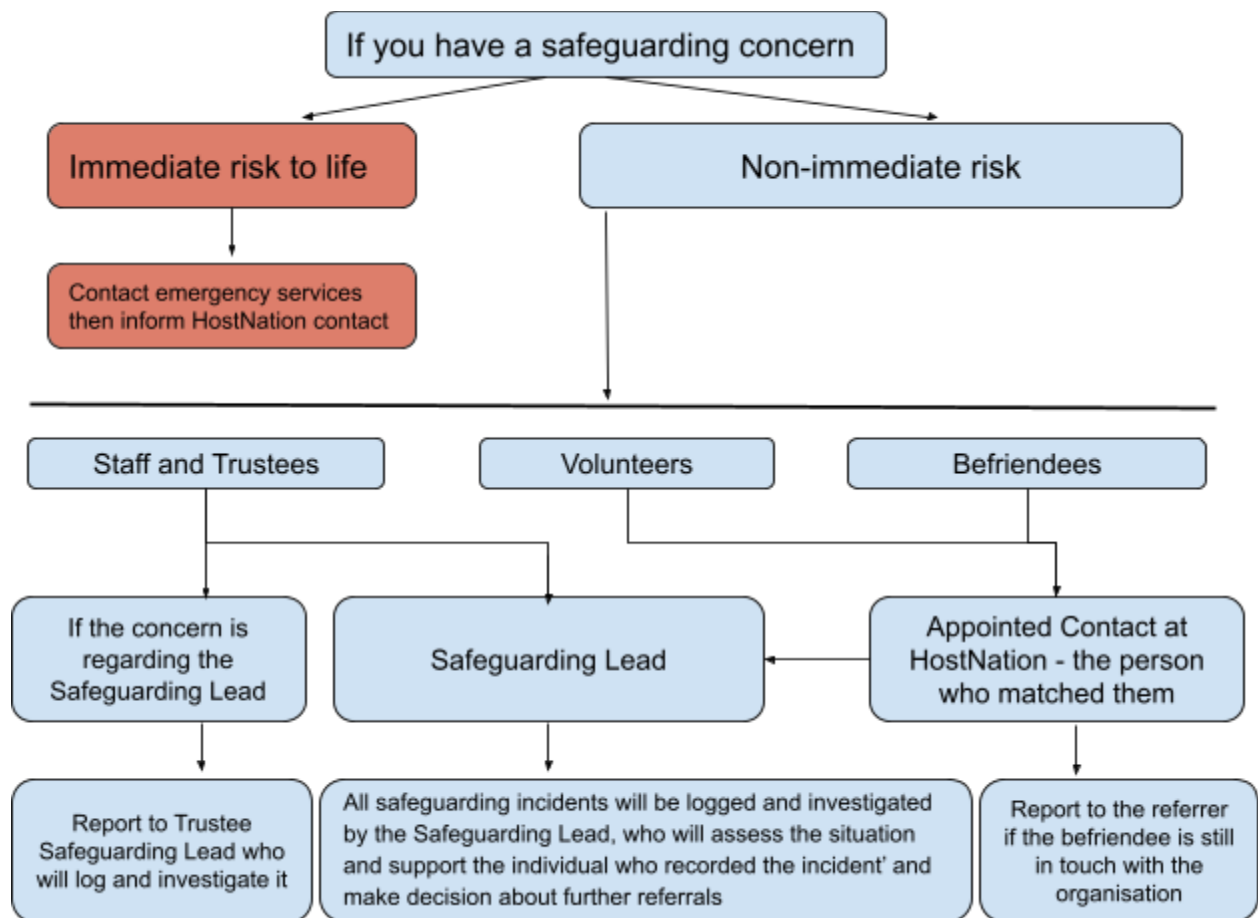
- A referral process is in place to ensure that refugees who are referred to HostNation are stable with regard to their mental health and are not considered a danger to themselves or to others at the time of referral. We also have criteria that exclude those currently in crisis with their case or housing.
- Matches are made and handled with great sensitivity to ensure maximum understanding and empathy.
- When matched, befrienders are provided with further written and online guidance on how to handle sensitive issues and boundaries.
- When a match is agreed, both befriender and befriender are given, in writing, the name, email and mobile number of the HostNation team member responsible for their match (this is usually the HostNation staff member who made the match).
- Female refugees and asylum-seekers are never matched to a male befriender.
- If the befriender has a child or children under 18, they must be accompanied by their parent at all times and not be left alone in the befriender's care without the parent's express consent.
- Consent is always sought before sharing any photographs or quotes on HostNation materials, social media or the website.. Names are changed and no personal details, allowing identification, are attached (unless explicit consent is given to use them).

## **Reporting Safeguarding Concerns**

Appropriate, accessible means of reporting safeguarding concerns are available to staff, beneficiaries and volunteers.

See the flowchart below for the procedure.

- If a befriender has a safeguarding concern regarding their befriender then they are encouraged to report this immediately to their contact at HostNation. They are provided with both email and personal mobile telephone numbers for the team member responsible for safeguarding issues related to their match. Their concern will be logged and investigated by the Safeguarding Lead and appropriate action / support will be provided to the befriender.
- Befrienders must also report any concerns regarding the safeguarding of their befriender to their contact at HostNation. If the case is urgent they should - as outlined in the Befrienders' Guide - contact the emergency services and then report it to their contact at HostNation.
- Where the befriender remains in contact with the referring organisation, HostNation will inform the referrer of any safeguarding issue with, if appropriate, the permission of the befriender.
- Befrienders are also instructed to contact the member of staff who matched them if they have any safeguarding concerns regarding themselves.
- After the end of the initial 3 months befriending period, when HostNation stops monitoring the relationship but the befriender stays in touch with their refugee friend, the befriender must report any safeguarding incidents to the local authority safeguarding teams and other relevant organisations or in case of emergency to the emergency services
- Staff and Trustees should report all safeguarding concerns to the Safeguarding Lead or, in case of emergency, to emergency services and then Safeguarding Lead.
- If there are concerns regarding the Safeguarding Lead, they should be reported to the Trustee Safeguarding Lead.
- If the person reporting a safeguarding incident is the Safeguarding Lead, they should make sure that the Trustee Safeguarding Lead is aware and the incident is accurately logged.
- All safeguarding incidents will be logged and investigated by the Safeguarding Lead, who will assess the situation, support the individual who recorded the incident and make a decision about potential further referral to a local safeguarding team or other appropriate organisations. Any further action taken would be done so in discussion with the individual affected, ensuring where appropriate their consent has been given for information to be shared with any external organisations.
- All staff and Trustees will have a copy of the flowchart of the reporting process.
- The safeguarding policy will be reviewed annually, in line with statutory and professional guidance, and immediately following any serious incident.



Safeguarding Lead: Magda Wolfe [magda@hostnation.org.uk](mailto:magda@hostnation.org.uk)

Trustee Safeguarding Lead: Olivia Petie [livip@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:livip@hotmail.co.uk)

**Updated May 2023. Next update: May 2024**