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The World Community for Christian Meditation in the UK
Registered as Christian Meditation Trust (UK), Charity no 1101900 and
WCCM in the UK, Charity No 1189977

Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility:

The protection of vulnerable adults is a key aspect of safeguarding. It holds equal importance as the safeguarding of children and young people. We do not have a separate policy for children and young people simply because those associated with WCCM in the UK do not work with children directly in their own right or on their own, but come under the safeguarding of children procedures of the school or church they are working in. It is essential that all are acquainted with such procedures if they are working with children and young people. Both aspects of safeguarding are essential.

What does the term vulnerable adult mean?

"Aged 18 years or over; who 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". ***Safeguarding Adults NHS England 2017***

Good safeguarding provision looks beyond official definitions of what might be a vulnerable adult. A vulnerable adult is any person aged 18 years or over and at risk of abuse or neglect because of needs for care and or support. This also applies to moments in the life of any adult when he or she might feel particularly vulnerable. Such moments might be brief, longer term or recurring. They would include admission to hospital, periods of ill health, bereavement and other losses, life adjustments, transitions and other times of personal stress and distress.

A list of what is meant by abuse is included at the end of this document, entitled ***Definitions of abuse and neglect***.

Responsibility

The responsibility to care for and protect vulnerable adults is a shared one. Whilst as a registered charity, WCCM in the UK has a responsibility to safeguard vulnerable adults who attend meditation groups and events, both in person and online, it is also important to remember that there will be times when volunteers, officers and administrators (hereinafter called community members) might also find themselves vulnerable.

In exercising this important duty of care the World Community for Christian Meditation in the UK (hereinafter WCCM in the UK) will be required to comply with the recording and reporting procedures which are in line with current practice in the UK. This will include reporting as required to

the statutory services, health, social care and the police.

We believe that it is important for all community members of WCCM in the UK to:

- Be alert to potential indicators of abuse or neglect.
- Be alert to the risks which individual perpetrators, or potential perpetrators, might pose to vulnerable adults.
- Understand their personal responsibility to report all vulnerable adult concerns in accordance with these procedures.
- Share information where requested by agencies who need to know so that an assessment can be made of the vulnerable adult's needs and circumstances.
- Contribute to whatever actions are needed to safeguard and promote the welfare of any vulnerable adult.

Community awareness

All community members will be made aware of the importance of safeguarding vulnerable adults and this policy, when they take on a community role and there will be briefings and updates for leaders of the community (Group Leaders, Coordinators, Trustees, Action Group members and Administrators). They will be encouraged to attend online or other training courses and to be aware of any updates provided by the community.

We will seek to safeguard vulnerable adults by:

a. Valuing them, listening to and respecting them;
b. Adopting protection guidelines through procedures for all community members;
c. Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and vulnerable adults appropriately;
d. Providing effective assistance for community leaders through encouraging training and providing support.
e. In that small number of roles that involve contact with known vulnerable adults we will require a DBS check to be carried out.

Allegations Involving a Member of the Community

WCCM in the UK is committed to ensuring that all community members are suitable for the roles. However, there may still be occasions when there is an allegation against a community member. Allegations against those who work with vulnerable adults, whether in a paid or unpaid capacity, cover a wide range of circumstances.

All allegations of abuse of vulnerable adults by those who work with them, or care for them, even in a voluntary capacity, will be taken seriously. All reports of allegations must be submitted in writing, preferably within one working day, to one of the two Safeguarding Officers. These are:

- The Safeguarding Trustee
- The Special Interest Coordinator for Safeguarding.

The names and contact details of these officers are recorded on the last page of the community newsletter – Meditation News – which is available on the website. The report should use the format outlined in the **Procedures to Follow When an Allegation of Abuse is Made** set out later in this document. The procedure should be applied in all situations where it is alleged that a person who works with vulnerable adults has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a vulnerable adult or may have harmed a vulnerable adult.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a vulnerable adult.
- Behaved towards a vulnerable adult in a way that indicates that he/she is unsuitable to work with vulnerable adults.

Once an allegation is received, the Safeguarding Officers will discuss the allegation to determine what steps should be taken and where necessary obtain further details of the allegation and the circumstances in which it was made. The discussion should also consider whether there is evidence/information that establishes that the allegation is false or unfounded, whether a referral to the local authority safeguarding team is required and/or whether action pending a disciplinary investigation is appropriate. At this point, the Safeguarding Officer should avoid taking on an investigatory role to determine whether an allegation is true or false. This is a task for the statutory services. It is advisable that this is considered by the Safeguarding Officers as soon as possible, seeking specialist advice if deemed appropriate.

Some allegations will be so serious as to require immediate referral to the local authority safeguarding team and the Police; but common sense and judgement must be applied in reaching a decision about what action to take. At all times, the Safeguarding Officers should not act alone and should make good use of the professionalism and expertise available to them.

Some allegations may be less serious and at first sight might not seem to warrant consideration of a police investigation or enquiries by the local social services department. However, it is important to ensure that even apparently less serious allegations are followed up and examined objectively by someone independent of the organisation. Consequently, the Safeguarding Officer should be informed of all allegations that come to the community member's attention and appear to come within the scope of this procedure so that he or she can consult Police and Social Care as appropriate. Ensuring a professional audit trail of such situations is important.

Where such allegations are made, consideration must be given to the following four strands:

1) The police investigation of a possible criminal offence.
2) Enquiries and assessment by Adult Social Care Services as to whether the vulnerable adult is need of protection or in need of services.
3) Consideration by an employer of disciplinary action in respect of the individual.
4) Evidence that the Safeguarding Officer, the Safeguarding Trustee and the Safeguarding Consultation Team have responded with full compliance to this policy and respective local policies and civil laws.

Allegations made against someone outside WCCM in the UK

In addition, within the context of meditation, spiritual listening, events and retreats, it is possible that someone might disclose historical abuse against a family member or other person or persons alive or deceased. This should be referred to one of the Safeguarding Officers using the following Allegation Reporting structure set out on the following page.

Procedures To Follow When an Allegation of Abuse is made.

When an allegation is made

If someone discloses that they are being abused, in all situations, the care and support of the victim is a priority. Upon receiving the information, you should:

- React calmly.
- Reassure the vulnerable adult that they were right to inform us and that they are not to blame and take what they say seriously.
- Be careful not to be deemed as putting words into the mouth. The easiest way of doing this is by seeking to clarify what you have heard.
- Be honest; never make promises to keep what you are being told confidential. If abuse is involved, you will need to tell someone.
- Tell them what you will do with the information they have shared, and that they will be kept informed. Do not introduce personal information from either your own experience or that of others.
- Do not investigate the matter any further for yourself or approach the person about whom allegations may have been made.
- Make a full and written record (see below for format) of what has been said as soon as possible. Only pass the information on verbally if it is an emergency situation. Even so, you must also find time as soon as possible to write it down and send it on to the relevant person.
- It may be helpful to contact one of the Safeguarding Officers at this stage.
- Send your report to one of the Safeguarding Officers, preferably by email, as soon as possible. Ideally, this should happen of the day of the disclosure.

Listed below is the information that needs to be recorded on your report to the Safeguarding Officer.

The Format of an Allegation Report

a. The vulnerable adult's known details including name, date of birth, address and contact numbers.
b. Whether or not the person making the report is expressing his or her own concerns or those someone else.
c. The nature of the allegation, including dates, times, specific factors and any other relevant information
d. Make a clear distinction between what is fact, what is opinion, or what is hearsay.
e. A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also, any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
f. Details of any witnesses to the incident(s).
g. The vulnerable adults account if it can be given, of what has happened and how are any bruising or other injuries occurred.
h. Accounts from others, including colleagues and parents.

As a summary, the following might be helpful as you review the facts you record
WHO was involved? Name the key people.
WHAT happened? Facts not opinions.
WHEN did it happen? Date and time.
WHO have you referred the issue on to?

In the event that your allegation needs to be referred to the statutory authorities (The Local Authority and/or the Police), you will have identified this with the Safeguarding Officer. Once referral has been agreed to, you will be the one making the contact with the statutory services in your area. The Safeguarding Officer will help you to identify who this is. It is important that you are the contact person in case any further enquiries are made.

Definitions of Abuse and Neglect:

The abuse of vulnerable adults is a serious cause for concern within safeguarding. The serious nature and the inherent risks must be considered a priority so that staff and volunteers are vigilant. Adults and children who have any form of vulnerability or additional needs are at a higher risk of being abused. So often assumptions can be made that adults can take care of themselves or indeed that bullying is encouraged and enabled because it is part of the behavioural culture of the group. When abuse happens, it is rarely identified as one single form (or definition) of abuse.
Alongside sexual abuse there is often physical and emotional abuse. Within a faith context this is often further complicated by spiritual abuse.

Physical abuse

As with the definition of physical abuse of children, the same applies for vulnerable adults and can include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of or deliberately induces illness. Other types of physical abuse include unnecessary restraint; deliberately making a vulnerable adult feel physically uncomfortable; force feeding or withholding food and water; not responding to a call for assistance and physical punishments.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional or psychological abuse of vulnerable adults often happens under the generic term of bullying. It can also include name calling, failure to observe privacy, verbal abuse, intimidation, isolation, failure to attend to their needs, being manipulative, swearing and speaking to them in a patronising manner.

Sexual Abuse

As with the sexual abuse of children, the sexual abuse of adults includes grooming, forcing or bullying a vulnerable adult to participate in sexual contact or non-contact of a sexually abusive nature. It is important to remember that sexual abuse might not include direct physical contact and might include forcing a vulnerable adult to watch pornography, view pornographic images or to watch others engaged in sexual activity. Sexual abuse of vulnerable adults can include rape, prostitution, penetrative or non-penetrative activities, inappropriate touch and exposure.

Spiritual Abuse

Any abuse which takes place within a faith context can, by its very nature, include spiritual abuse. It is not unusual for the sexual and psychological abuse of vulnerable adults to be placed in a spiritual, context as if what is happening is the will of God or His divine (and often punitive) judgement. It is

very similar to emotional abuse in that it includes grooming behaviours but in a religious context. It can include coercive behaviours, the use of scripture or sacramental rituals, the teaching authority of the respective faith group, the power and position of authority held by those in leadership, the imposing of guilt and shame, encouraging emotional dependency and the misuse of power by those in leadership.

Neglect and Acts of Omission

Any failure to meet the needs of a vulnerable adult is a form of neglect. It can include failure to provide access to the basic requirements of food, shelter and clothing. It can also include: failure to provide medication as prescribed, isolation, not allowing the person to communicate his or her needs. It includes acts of omission such as failing to ensure the physical and emotional wellbeing of a vulnerable adult who might be displaying signs of self-neglect**.**

Other Forms of Abuse

The above list of types of abuse is not exhaustive. Other forms of abuse not included above include financial/material abuse, organisational abuse, self-neglect (by self), discriminatory abuse and modern slavery. For an explanation of these, please refer to online resources such as https://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/adults/introduction/types-and-indicators-of-abuse

Helpful Numbers

Out of hours emergency cover is provided by **Thirtyone:eight** from 5pm - midnight, 7am - 9am (Mon-Fri), 7am to midnight (Sat & Sun) and bank holidays. Call them on 0303 003 1111.
Local Authority Social Services **Stop It Now:** 0800 1000 900
Samaritans: 116 123
National Domestic Abuse Abuse Helpline:0800 2000 247
NAPAC: 0808 801 0331
Family Lives: 0808 800 2222
An immediate risk or danger? Contact the Police **on 999.**
National Care Line: 0800 0699 785

Reviewing the Policy and Procedure

This policy and procedure will be reviewed every two years; this will include checking telephone numbers, accuracy of personnel details, and any updates required by a change in local or national policy and or civil law.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 6th May 2026.
Next review date January 2028

Change Record

Revision No:	Date:	Comments:
Rev 1	Dec 2019	Minor typos and clarification re safeguarding officers and procedure.
Rev 2	Jan 2021	Addition of information at the start about work with children, and next review date and new charity details.
Rev 3	Feb 2024	Adding in person and online under responsibility.
Rev 4	May 2026	Minor clarification of responsibilities and actions. Inclusion of helpful third-party contact numbers.