

**\*This policy is currently under review & update period, updated version will be published before the end of May 2024.**



# The Vavengers Safeguarding Policy

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to protect people, particularly children, at-risk adults and beneficiaries of assistance, from any harm that may be caused due to their coming into contact with The Vavengers. This includes harm arising from:

- The conduct of staff or personnel associated with The Vavengers
- The design and implementation of The Vavengers programmes and activities

The policy lays out the commitments made by The Vavengers and informs staff and associated personnel<sup>1</sup> of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding.

This policy does not cover:

- Safeguarding concerns in the wider community not perpetrated by The Vavengers or associated personnel.

## **What is safeguarding?**

In the UK, safeguarding means protecting people's health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.

In our sector, we understand it to mean protecting people, including children and at-risk adults, from harm that arises from coming into contact with our staff or programmes. Further definitions relating to safeguarding are provided in the glossary below.

## **Scope**

- All staff contracted by The Vavengers
- Associated personnel whilst engaged with work or visits related to The Vavengers, including but not limited to the following: consultants; volunteers; contractors; programme visitors including journalists, celebrities and politicians.

<sup>1</sup> See 'Scope' for definition of associated personnel:

<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-law-enforcement-processing/scope-and-key-definitions/>



## Policy Statement

The Vavengers believes that everyone we come into contact with, regardless of age, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation or ethnic origin has the right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect<sup>2</sup> and exploitation.

The Vavengers will not tolerate abuse and exploitation by staff or associated personnel. This policy addresses the following areas of safeguarding in particular: child safeguarding, adult safeguarding, and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.

The Vavengers commits to addressing safeguarding throughout its work, through the three pillars of prevention, reporting and response.

## Prevention

### *The Vavengers responsibilities*

The Vavengers will:

- Ensure all staff have access to, are familiar with, and know their responsibilities within this policy
- Design and undertake all its programmes and activities in a way that protects people from any risk of harm that may arise from their coming into contact with The Vavengers. This includes the way in which information about individuals in our programmes is gathered and communicated
- Implement stringent safeguarding procedures when recruiting, managing and deploying staff and associated personnel
- Ensure staff receive training on safeguarding at a level commensurate with their role in the organisation
- Follow up on reports of safeguarding concerns promptly and according to due process
- Require DBS checks for staff, trustees and associated personnel and volunteers who work with children or vulnerable adults and ensure that these are carried out at least every five years
- If requested, provide safety door cameras for board members, staff and volunteers who are facing risk by doing anti-violence work
- Keep a record of DBS checks, the certificate and the date it was issued and checked. [All data will be kept and recorded in line with the Vavenger's data protection policy]
- Consult with the Safeguarding Focal Officer if any DBS certificate flags any concerns

<sup>2</sup> NHS 'What is Safeguarding? Easy Read' – <https://www.england.nhs.uk/safeguarding/about/>



### *Staff responsibilities*

The Vavengers staff, volunteers and associated personnel should:

- treat all persons that they come into contact with in the course of their work with respect and dignity;
- be aware of any personal information and sensitive data that they come into contact with and understand their responsibility to deal with this data in accordance with the Vavenger's privacy policy;
- be alert to risks such as abuse, exploitation and trafficking and look out for signs of these risks;
- respect everyone's right to personal privacy;
- understand that in their role they may come into contact with adults or children in a position of vulnerability and that this needs to be met with respect, caution and an appropriate level of patience;
- be conscious of language and behaviour that could be triggering for others, particularly at-risk adults and children, and adapt such behavior accordingly;
- try to ensure that one's actions cannot be misunderstood or cause offence, and are acceptance within the relationship of trust;
- always consider the appropriateness of the situation if there is potential to be alone with a child or at-risk adult;
- if it is necessary to supervise a child in private then try to ensure another member of staff or associated personnel who is close by is aware that this is happening; and
- try to ensure that if any physical or medical needs are attended to that this is done in the presence of another adult.

The Vavengers staff, volunteers and associated personnel should not:

- be intimidating to any person through tone of voice, language or body language;
- touch any adult or child physically unless it is necessary from the needs of the adult or child and, in any case, without following proper precautions and safeguarding guidance in doing so;
- make or allow jokes about any sensitive subject matters or engage in behavior that could be interpreted as not taking matters seriously;
- engage in any sexual relationships with beneficiaries of assistance, since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics; and
- invade the privacy of any adult or child attending workshops or clinics.

Additionally, The Vavengers staff, volunteers and associated personnel are obliged to:

- Contribute to creating and maintaining an environment that prevents safeguarding violations and promotes the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy
- Be vigilant about safeguarding and report any concerns or suspicions regarding safeguarding violations by a Vavengers staff member or associated personnel to the Safeguarding Focal point or their line manager



## **Enabling reports**

The Vavengers will ensure that safe, appropriate, accessible means of reporting safeguarding concerns are made available to staff and the communities we work with. The Vavengers will also accept complaints from external sources such as members of the public, partners and official bodies. Upon receiving reports of safeguarding concerns the Vavengers will consult with at least two trustees to determine the appropriate response.

## **How to report a safeguarding concern**

Staff members who have a complaint or concern relating to safeguarding should report it immediately to their Safeguarding Focal Point or line manager. If the staff member does not feel comfortable reporting to their Safeguarding Focal Point or line manager (for example if they feel that the report will not be taken seriously, or if that person is implicated in the concern) they may report to any other appropriate staff member. For example, this could be a senior manager or a member of the HR Team.

## **Breach of the safeguarding policy**

Any breach of this policy will be taken seriously and may result in disciplinary action being taken. Any conduct in breach of this policy:

- For Vavengers staff: may be gross misconduct, will be addressed in accordance with the Vavengers' disciplinary procedures and may result in summary dismissal; and
- For associated personnel: may result in the termination of their relationship with the Vavengers.

## **Please get in touch with our Safeguarding Leads if you would like to report a safeguarding concern:**

Hoda Ali: Co-founder & Trustee, Safeguarding Lead

[hoda@thevavengers.co.uk](mailto:hoda@thevavengers.co.uk)

or

Dominica Debczak-Debski: Head of Development & Community

[dominica@thevavengers.co.uk](mailto:dominica@thevavengers.co.uk)

## **Response**

The Vavengers will follow up safeguarding reports and concerns according to policy and procedure, and legal and statutory obligations. The Vavengers will apply appropriate disciplinary measures to staff found in breach of policy. The Vavengers will offer support to survivors of harm caused by staff or associated personnel, regardless of whether a formal internal response is carried out (such as an internal investigation. Decisions regarding support will be led by the survivor.

## **Confidentiality**

It is essential that confidentiality is maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns. Information relating to the concern and subsequent case management should be shared on a need to know basis only and should be kept secure at all times.



## Glossary of Terms

*Beneficiary of Assistance:* Someone who directly receives goods or services from [NGO]'s programme. Note that misuse of power can also apply to the wider community that the NGO serves, and also can include exploitation by giving the perception of being in a position of power.

*Child:* A person below the age of 18

*Harm:* Psychological, physical and any other infringement of an individual's rights

*Psychological harm:* Emotional or psychological abuse, including (but not limited to) humiliating and degrading treatment such as bad name-calling, constant criticism, belittling, persistent shaming, solitary confinement and isolation

*Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA):* The term is used by the humanitarian and development community to refer to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse of affected populations by staff or associated personnel. The term derives from the United Nations Secretary General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13)

*Safeguarding:* In the UK, safeguarding means protecting people's health, wellbeing, and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect. In our sector, we understand it to mean protecting people, including children and at-risk adults, from harm that arises from coming into contact with our staff or programmes.

One donor definition is as follows:

*NHS 'What is Safeguarding? Easy Read' 2011*

Safeguarding means taking all reasonable steps to prevent harm, particularly sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment from occurring; to protect people, especially vulnerable adults and children, from that harm; and to respond appropriately when harm does occur.

This definition draws from our values and principles and shapes our culture. It pays specific attention to preventing and responding to harm from any potential, actual or attempted abuse of power, trust, or vulnerability, especially for sexual purposes. Safeguarding applies consistently and without exception across our programmes, partners and staff.

It requires proactively identifying, preventing and guarding against all risks of harm, exploitation and abuse and having mature, accountable and transparent systems for a response, reporting and learning when risks materialise. Those systems must be survivor-centred and also protect those accused until proven guilty. Safeguarding puts beneficiaries and affected persons at the centre of all we do.

*Sexual abuse:* The term 'sexual abuse' means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.



*Sexual exploitation:* The term 'sexual exploitation' means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. This definition includes human trafficking and modern slavery.

*Survivor:* The person who has been abused or exploited. The term 'survivor' is often used in preference to 'victim' as it implies strength, resilience and the capacity to survive, however, it is the individual's choice how they wish to identify themselves.

*At-risk adult:* Sometimes also referred to as 'vulnerable adults'. A person who is or may be in need of care 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.

#### **Further reading for The Vavengers staff & associated personnel:**

- The Mental Capacity Act 2005: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/9/contents>
- The Care Act 2014: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents/enacted>

#### **Governance, Diversity & Inclusion Committee**

A committee was set up by The Vavengers in November 2021 to enable a space where all safeguarding concerns, related policies as well as other relevant topics of the committee can be discussed and reported to the board. The committee's aim is to meet three times a year one week before each board meeting and create relevant paperwork. The Vavengers welcomes anyone associated with the organisation to apply to be at this committee to promote an open conversation regarding safeguarding & equality. If you would like to apply to join this committee, please email [info@thevavengers.co.uk](mailto:info@thevavengers.co.uk) with your up to date CV and a cover letter.

#### **Supporting Documents:**

- Associated policies
- Code of Conduct

Policy created: July 2019

Policy reviewed: May 2023

Policy review date: May 2024