



Middle Marches Community Land Trust

Safeguarding Policy

1. Purpose of the policy

Middle Marches Community Land Trust (MMCLT) is committed to safeguarding practices that help ensure the safety of children and people at risk whilst taking part in our group activities and in the wider community. This policy helps everyone involved in our group:

- be aware of our legal responsibilities
- understand the safeguarding risks in MMCLT
- know what to do if they have a concern about the well-being or welfare of anyone at risk that comes into contact with our group.

This safeguarding policy and associated procedures apply to all individuals involved in MMCLT, including board members and volunteers. The policy applies to all concerns about the safety of people at risk while taking part in our group and the activities we run, or while in the wider community.

2. Code of conduct

When working with vulnerable people, we are acting in a position of trust. We recognise that keeping our group safe is everyone's responsibility, and we expect our members and volunteers to behave according to the following values:

- All people at risk have an equal right to protection from abuse and to be kept safe from harm regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation
- We recognise some people are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues
- We listen to and respect everyone in the group
- We use language that is appropriate for age and ability, and not offensive or discriminatory
- We encourage a culture of honesty, where everyone feels comfortable pointing out attitudes or behaviours they do not like
- We know it isn't always easy to be vocal about concerns – for ourselves or for other people
- All allegations and suspicions of neglect and abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

This means when working with people at risk, we will never:

- Promise to keep secrets – safeguarding relies on sharing concerns appropriately with other agencies
- Allow suspicions or allegations of abuse or neglect to go unreported
- Act in a way that is threatening, abusive or bullying
- Jump to conclusions about others without checking facts
- Enter into a sexual or intimate relationship with an adult at risk.

3. Online and Digital Safeguarding

MMCLT recognises that safeguarding includes online and digital environments. We will:

- Use official communication channels for organisational business
- Avoid private one-to-one digital communication with children
- Obtain written consent before taking and using photographs
- Store images securely
- Challenge and report online harassment or inappropriate behaviour
- Ensure digital records are stored securely and password-protected

4. Legislation

MMCLT recognises that the local authority has the main legal duty to safeguard people at risk, and we are committed to working with them and our local Safeguarding People Board.

This policy, and the practices within it, are based on the relevant legislation and government guidance, including:

- The Children Act 2004
- The Mental Capacity Act 2005 (which protects people’s right to make their own decisions in any situation where they are able to do so).
- The Care Act 2014
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Prevent Duty)
- The Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)

We base our practices on the principles laid out in the Care Act 2014:

- Empowerment – People being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and give informed consent
- Prevention – It is better to take action before harm occurs
- Proportionality – The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented
- Protection – Support and representation for those in greatest need

- Partnership – Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse
- Accountability – Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

5. Definitions

According to the Care Act 2014 (applicable in England):

An **adult at risk** is an individual aged 18 years and over who:

- has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs), AND
- is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect, AND
- as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of, abuse or neglect.

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons. It can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it. Any or all of the following types of abuse may be perpetrated as the result of deliberate intent, negligence, omission or ignorance. Often, the perpetrator of abuse is known to the adult and may be in a position of trust and power.

The types of abuse we need to be aware of are:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional/Psychological/Mental
- Neglect and acts of omission
- Financial or material abuse
- Discriminatory
- Organisational/institutional
- Self-neglect
- Domestic abuse (including coercive control)
- Modern slavery

The Children Act 1989 defines a child as: anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday, even if they are living independently, are a member of the armed forces or are in hospital.

Child abuse happens when a person harms a child. Children may be abused by: family members; friends; people working or volunteering in organisational or community settings; people they know; or strangers.

The types of child abuse we need to be aware of are:

- Physical abuse
- Neglect
- Emotional abuse

- Bullying and cyberbullying
- Child sexual exploitation
- Child criminal exploitation
- Child trafficking
- Domestic abuse
- Female genital mutilation
- Grooming
- Historical abuse.
- Online abuse
- Radicalisation.

6. Recognising safeguarding concerns

Many signs and indicators may suggest someone is experiencing abuse or neglect. There may be other explanations too, but MMCLT will not ignore any of these signs if they are apparent.

Someone may confide (disclose) to a volunteer, committee member or other member of MMCLT that they are experiencing abuse, inside or outside the activities of the group. Or someone else may notice signs in a particular individual. The signs we will look out for include:

- Unexplained bruises or injuries
- Belongings or money going missing from the person
- The person no longer attending or enjoying MMCLT's activities, or responding to contact from other members of the group
- A change in confidence or behaviour of a person, for example, if they are withdrawn and quiet around a particular person or people, when usually they are outgoing and confident
- A change in the appearance of the person, for example, losing or gaining weight, deterioration in personal hygiene or way of dressing
- Someone else (for example, a parent, carer or family member) is always speaking for the person and not allowing them to make their own choices
- The person showing fear of, or not wanting to be around, a particular individual or group of people.

7. Responding to concerns

MMCLT has a designated safeguarding lead whose contact details are in section 11. MMCLT recognises that it can be difficult for many reasons to speak up if you think someone is being abused or neglected. However, we expect our volunteers and committee members to take action in response to any concerns. Our safeguarding lead will support the person raising the concerns, as well as the person being abused.

If anyone in the group notices any signs of abuse or neglect in another person, they should bring these concerns to the safeguarding lead.

If an adult discloses to anyone else in the group that they are being abused, the response should be as follows:

- Always make sure the person speaking up feels they are being listened to and supported
- Don't promise to keep information confidential between you and them
- Tell the designated safeguarding lead about the concerns (unless the safeguarding lead is implicated in causing the harm or perpetrating the abuse. In this situation, information should be shared with a trusted committee member/trustee, and they will be responsible for taking further action instead of the safeguarding lead)
- Ask for the person's consent to share the information. If they refuse and you are still worried that they or someone else is at immediate risk of harm, you cannot wait for this consent. You must share this information with the safeguarding lead
- Write a clear statement of what you have been told, seen, or heard.

If anyone in the group notices any signs of abuse or neglect in a child, they should bring these concerns to the safeguarding lead.

If a child discloses to any adult in the group that they are being abused, the response should be as follows:

- Always make sure the child speaking up feels they are being listened to and supported
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing by telling you
- Emphasise that abuse is never their fault
- Take time, be patient, and let the child go at their own pace
- Don't promise to keep information confidential between you and them. Explain that you need to share the information with someone who will be able to help
- Tell the designated safeguarding lead about the concerns (unless the safeguarding lead is implicated in causing the harm or perpetrating the abuse. In this situation, information should be shared with a trusted committee member, and they will be responsible for taking further action instead of the safeguarding lead)
- Write a clear statement of what you have been told, seen, or heard
- Do not talk to the alleged perpetrator about the child's disclosure, this could make it a lot worse for the child.

The **designated safeguarding lead (DSL)** is responsible for taking further action once concerns have been raised with them. Throughout the process, the safeguarding lead will record all the information they are given, the actions they take, and why.

The procedures they will follow are:

7.1 Initial assessment

As soon as information is shared with the safeguarding lead, they will make an initial assessment of the concern. They will, if possible, talk to the person reporting the concern and gather as much information as possible from them.

Key questions to ask:

- What type of concern has been reported? Different actions are required depending on what type of concern it is (see below)
- What action has already been taken?
- Is anyone else in the organisation affected by this situation (eg other volunteers or those you work with)? Are there any attitudes or emotions that you may have to be aware of?
- How might this concern affect what the organisation delivers in the short term?
- Who else might need to be informed?
- What other actions now need to be taken?

7.2 Immediate actions depending on the type of concern raised

- a) **Emergency incidents:** this is when there's a life-threatening situation where there's imminent danger and harm to an adult or child.
 - Immediately contact the emergency services if they haven't been called already
 - Make sure the current situation is safe.
 - Establish how others are coping – do they need any immediate support?
 - Inform the senior people in the group.

- b) **Protection concerns:** This is when an adult or child who you believe is unable to protect themselves is at current risk of, or has experienced, abuse or harm.
 - If the person is in immediate danger, call the police
 - If they're not in immediate danger, you must contact the local authority safeguarding team within 24 hours and make a referral (contact details are in section 10)
 - Be guided by the safeguarding team or police on any further actions required of you.

- c) **Allegations concerning committee members or volunteers:** this is when someone has alleged that someone from your organisation has harmed or abused an adult or child at risk.
 - Contact the local authority safeguarding team as soon as possible, within 24 hours
 - Be guided by them on any further actions required of you
 - Consider whether a referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is required (for allegations involving harm to a child by someone in a position of trust)

- Consider temporary suspension as a neutral act pending investigation
 - Do not conduct internal investigations prior to statutory guidance.
- d) **Welfare concerns:** This is when no one has been harmed in any way, but a person shows signs of being in need. It's when you have concerns for their health, well-being or safety if they don't get help.
- Within 7 days you, or someone in your organisation, should speak with the person. When it is appropriate you should also speak with their family or carer. You must explain your concerns and make sure they have the support they need
 - Depending on the conversation, the safeguarding lead may then also:
 - Help the person or their family access services or give them the information they need to do this themselves
 - Speak to another professional who is already working with the person or family, such as a social worker, about their needs
- e) **Concerns about other organisations:** This is a situation where the safeguarding concern is about another organisation, their staff, volunteers or the people they work with.
- As soon as possible, within 24 hours, contact the designated safeguarding lead of the organisation in question and pass on your concerns, if this has not already happened
 - In some circumstances you may decide to follow up with the organisation to confirm they have acted on the issue
 - If at any point you think the organisation has not acted and someone is at risk, you should contact the local safeguarding team yourself.
- f) **Responding to historic or non-recent concerns:** You may become aware or be told about a concern relating to an incident which took place in the past, including when they were a child. Historical allegations of abuse should be taken as seriously as contemporary allegations.
- Remember that it's never too late to report abuse. An individual can make a formal complaint to the police about non-recent abuse, ideally in the geographic area in which the abuse is reported to have taken place
 - Establish if the person alleged to have caused the harm works with children or people at risk. Try to find out their recent or current whereabouts and any contact they have with children or people at risk. A referral should be made to social services, with the consent of the person who experienced the abuse, if possible
 - Consider what consent the person has given for information to be shared. How, when and to whom they share this information should usually be with their consent
 - Signpost the person who experienced the abuse to relevant support groups that can help them.
- g) **Supporting those who share a concern with you:** Your primary concern should be the best interests of the person who is at risk of harm. However, the person

sharing this concern with you may also be distressed by the situation, even if they are reporting on behalf of someone else. Everyone can respond to worries about another differently. If someone has previously experienced trauma, they can find it especially upsetting.

- Thank them for bringing this concern to your attention, and that they have fulfilled their key responsibility
- Explain that you will now take responsibility in leading the management of this concern and any contact with statutory agencies
- Highlight that there may be limited updates that you have or can give them on the situation; that does not mean that it was not important for them to share their concern
- Remind them of the importance of confidentiality and not sharing this information further
- Ensure they have your contact details in case they think of anything else they have not yet shared that they think may be relevant
- Discuss with them what additional support they may require. Consider contacting them later to check in on how they are doing.

8. Whistleblowing

MMCLT promotes a culture of openness and accountability. Any volunteer or member who has concerns about unsafe practice, leadership behaviour, or systemic safeguarding failures may raise concerns without fear of reprisal.

Concerns may be raised:

- With the Designated Safeguarding Lead
- With the Chair of the Board
- Directly with Shropshire Council Safeguarding Team
- With the Police (if a crime may have been committed)

Whistleblowers will not suffer detrimental treatment for raising genuine concerns.

9. Keeping records

MMCLT recognises that it is vital to record and store details about any safeguarding concerns that arise. We will record information, even if the concerns have not been shared with the police or the local authority safeguarding team. These records are extremely sensitive and will be kept in a locked cabinet or drawer (if hard copy) and/or password-protected and stored electronically with protection against hackers and viruses.

It is the responsibility of the designated safeguarding lead to ensure that the following information is recorded about every safeguarding concern:

- The date and time of the incident/disclosure/concern
- The date and time of the report

- The name and role of the person to whom the concern was originally reported and their contact details
- The name and role of the person making the report (if this is different to the above) and their contact details
- The names of all parties who were involved in the incident, including any witnesses
- The name and any other relevant information about the adult who is the subject of the concern (including information about their care and support needs)
- What was said or done and by whom
- Any action taken to look into the matter
- Any further action taken (such as a referral being made)
- The reasons why the organisation decided not to refer those concerns to a statutory agency (if relevant).

Each record will be signed and dated by the person making the report. Safeguarding records will be retained in accordance with data protection legislation and organisational retention schedules. Access will be strictly limited to authorised safeguarding personnel.

10. Confidentiality, consent and information sharing

10.1 Adults

Timely information sharing is key to keeping people safe and responding appropriately to concerns about their welfare. In general, MMCLT expects all committee members, volunteers and staff to maintain confidentiality and act in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

We will share information within the group (eg with other volunteers) in situations where this is necessary in order to deal effectively with safeguarding concerns or to provide continuity of support. We will share information with other organisations in order to keep a person safe.

Whenever confidential information is shared, we will follow the principles below. We will:

- Have a clear and legitimate purpose
- Keep clear records of why we chose to share the information
- Ensure we are not putting the person at risk by sharing information
- Be as factual as possible
- Seek consent. If the adult refuses consent, we may share information **only** if:
 - We think they are at serious risk of harm or abuse, including harming themselves
 - Information indicates that a serious crime has been or is going to be committed

- We think the person lacks the mental capacity to decide for themselves, and we believe it would be in the individual's best interests
- We are required by law, for example, if we suspect FGM, forced marriage, or a possible terrorist threat.

10.2 Children

Timely information sharing is key to keeping children safe and responding appropriately to concerns about their welfare. In general, MMCLT expects all committee members and volunteers to maintain confidentiality and act in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Parents/carers are normally the first point of contact for any concerns about a child. If there is a disclosure or suspicion of abuse, however, we will take guidance from the NSPCC Helpline and/or local authority safeguarding team as to whether we should make parents/carers aware of it or whether it should be left to other authorities to speak with the parents/carers.

Whenever MMCLT shares information about a child with any other organisation, we will follow the principles below. We will:

- Have a clear and legitimate purpose
- Keep clear records of why we chose to share the information
- Ensure we are not putting the child at risk by sharing information
- Be as factual as possible
- Seek consent. If the child is deemed old and capable enough, consent should come from them. If not, we will ask their parent/carer, unless doing so would put the child at risk of harm. In any situation where consent is refused, but we believe the information needs to be shared in order to protect the child from significant harm or to promote their welfare, we will seek advice from the NSPCC Helpline. If advised, we will share information with the police and/or local authority safeguarding team without consent.

11. Recruiting and training volunteers

MMCLT volunteers who work with people at risk will be given an induction that covers the safeguarding policy and procedures of the group. They will be trained in: our code of conduct; definitions of abuse and harm; recognising signs of abuse; and how to respond to concerns and disclosures. All volunteers will know who the designated safeguarding lead is, and that they should go to them with any concerns.

The designated safeguarding lead will be offered further training to ensure they are clear about their role and what action to take in response to different concerns.

We will apply for Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for all volunteers for whom we are legally required to do so.

MMCLT is committed to safer recruitment practices. We will:

- Clearly define safeguarding responsibilities in role descriptions
- Assess whether roles are eligible for DBS checks in line with current legislation
- Carry out risk assessments where DBS checks are not required
- Ensure at least one trustee understands safer recruitment principles
- Provide safeguarding induction to all new volunteers
- Provide periodic safeguarding refresher awareness
- Ensure the Designated Safeguarding Lead undertakes enhanced safeguarding training every 2–3 years.

12. Key contacts

MMCLT's Designated Safeguarding Lead

Name: Dr Richard Keymer

Contact details:

email: richard.keymer@yahoo.co.uk

Tel: 07970 838417

Shropshire Council Safeguarding Hub

This is the safeguarding team to contact to make a referral about an adult at risk.

First Point of Contact team on **0345 678 9044** Monday to Thursday, 9am to 5pm, and Friday 9am to 4pm.

If you have urgent adult safeguarding concerns outside of these hours, please phone the **Emergency Social Work Duty Team** on 0345 678 9040.

This policy and its procedures will be reviewed annually, or sooner if:

- Legislation or statutory guidance changes
- A serious safeguarding incident occurs
- Organisational activities significantly change