

# RAMSEY MERESIDE VILLAGE HALL

Registered Charity Number 1202644

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## Ramsey Mereside Village Hall CIO Safeguarding Policy

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Updated February 2026

### 1. Introduction

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults at risk from abuse or neglect.

This policy defines how Ramsey Mereside Village Hall CIO (RMVH) operates to safeguard children, young people, and adults at risk of abuse or neglect.

The RMVH trustees acknowledge and accept a duty of care and are committed to the protection and safety of everyone who enters our premises (the building, decking and the grounds) including children, young people and adults at risk involved as visitors and/or as participants in all activities and events. We also have a duty to safeguard and support our trustees, volunteers, and staff.

### 2. Scope

This policy is for use by the trustees, staff, volunteers and those associated with Ramsey Mereside Village Hall.

### 3. Purpose of the policy

To provide protection for the vulnerable people who use the Village Hall's facilities and services.

To provide trustees, staff and volunteers with guidance on procedures they should adopt in the event that they suspect a vulnerable person may be experiencing, or be at risk of, harm.

To provide guidance and procedures they should adopt regarding possible allegations against trustees, staff or volunteers.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other related RMVH policies and procedures including the RMVH Trustee Code of Conduct.

### 4. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

**Children and young people** are defined as those persons aged under 18 years old.

**Safeguarding** and promoting the welfare of children is defined in working together to safeguard children as:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's health and development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

**Child protection** is part of the safeguarding process. It focuses on protecting individual children identified as suffering or likely to suffer 'significant harm'.

**Significant harm** is defined in The Children Act 1989 as 'the ill treatment or impairment of health and development'. This definition was clarified in section 120 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (implemented on 31 January 2005) so that it may include, "for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another". Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Emotional Abuse and Neglect are all categories of Significant Harm (see appendix 1)

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) states that any professionals with concerns about a child's welfare should make a referral to local authority children's social care.

### **Adult at risk of abuse or neglect**

For the purposes of this policy, adult at risk refers to someone over 18 years old who, according to Section 42 of the: Care Act 2014:

- has care and support needs
- is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect
- as a result of their care and support needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

If someone has care and support needs but is not currently receiving care or support from a health or care service, they may still be an adult at risk.

**Safeguarding vulnerable adults** means protecting them from maltreatment and preventing injury or significant harm. Abuse violates an adult's human and civil rights. It can vary from treating someone with disrespect in a way which significantly affects the person's quality of life, to causing actual physical suffering.

A safeguarding concern arises if abuse is suspected or disclosed. Abuse can happen anywhere at home, in a residential or nursing home, a hospital, in the workplace, at a day centre or educational establishment or in the street.

**Vulnerable People** are defined as children, young adults or vulnerable adults.

## **5. Ramsey Mereside Village Hall CIO facilities**

Any possible safeguarding concerns regarding vulnerable people that occur at the Village Hall and grounds must be reported as a matter of urgency to the RMVH appointed Safeguarding person, Social Services or the Police when appropriate.

All children and young people under the age of 18 visiting the Recreation Ground and using the play equipment remain the responsibility of their parents or guardians whilst using these facilities.

## **6. Contact Vulnerable People**

The trustees, staff and volunteers are not required to undertake activities that involve them being on their own with vulnerable people and are asked not to put themselves in possible vulnerable situations.

We ask that trustees, staff and volunteers recognise their position of trust in the local community and behave appropriately at all times.

All trustees, staff and volunteers must adhere to these safeguarding procedures and report any issues or concerns accordingly.

Any concerns about a trustee, member of staff or volunteer and their conduct or contact with vulnerable people must be raised immediately with the RMVH appointed Safeguarding person and the appropriate authorities.

### **Persons affected**

- All trustees, volunteers, and staff.
- All those attending any activity or service that is being delivered from the village hall charity property.

- All visitors and contractors.

## **7. Policy principles**

There can be no excuses for not taking all reasonable action to protect children and adults at risk from abuse or neglect. All citizens of the United Kingdom have their rights enshrined within the Human Rights Act 1998. People who are eligible to receive health and community care services may be additionally vulnerable to the violation of these rights by reason of disability, impairment, age, or illness.

Ramsey Mereside Village Hall has a zero-tolerance approach to abuse.

Ramsey Mereside Village Hall recognises that under the Care Act 2014, it has a duty for the care and protection of adults who are at risk of abuse. It also recognises its responsibilities for the safety and care of children under the Children Act 1989 and 2004.

Ramsey Mereside Village Hall is committed to promoting wellbeing, harm prevention and to responding effectively if concerns are raised.

Ramsey Mereside Village Hall is aware of the work of their local safeguarding Board/Partnership and other support organisations on the development and implementation of procedures for the protection of children and adults at risk. The policy is about stopping abuse where it is happening and preventing abuse where there is a risk that it may occur.

The Ramsey Mereside Village Hall Committee is committed to the following principles:

- The welfare of the child, young person or adult at risk is paramount.
- All children, young people and adults at risk have the right to protection from abuse.
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility: for services to be effective each professional and organisation should play their full part; and
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse must be properly reported to the relevant internal and external authorities and dealt with swiftly and appropriately.

## **8. Procedures**

- A. All members of the committee will sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office for trustees which includes a declaration that they have no convictions in relation to abuse.
- B. All members of the committee will familiarise themselves with safeguarding responsibilities, undertake training where appropriate on safeguarding issues including whistleblowing where it is available and offered by their local safeguarding board/partnership or other local support organisation and ensure that they understand the principles set out in this policy at 7 above.
- C. All members of the committee will work together to promote a culture that enables issues about safeguarding and promoting welfare to be addressed.
- D. All members of the committee, helpers or other volunteers will not have unsupervised access to children or adults at risk unless appropriately vetted.
- E. The Mereside Youth Club also fully subscribes to this policy.
- F. The hall committee will follow safe recruitment practices.
- G. A member of the committee will be appointed to be responsible for child and adult at risk safeguarding matters. This person will have responsibility for reporting concerns that arise, as a matter of urgency, to the relevant safeguarding authority. Their contact details will be made available to all hall users for the purpose of reporting safeguarding concerns.
- H. The person responsible for Safeguarding will be appointed by the committee each year at the first committee meeting following the AGM.
- I. All suspicions or allegations of abuse against a child or adult at risk will be taken seriously and dealt with speedily and appropriately. The appointed person will know who to contact and where to go for support and

advice in relation to an allegation, a concern about the quality of care or practice or a complaint. An allegation may relate to a person who works with children or adults at risk who has:

- a. Behaved in a way that has harmed a child or adult at risk or may have harmed a child or adult at risk.
  - b. Possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child or adult at risk; or
  - c. Behaved towards a child (or children) or adult at risk in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children or adults at risk.
- J. The Ramsey Mereside Village Hall Committee will ensure that all hirers of the hall have signed a hiring agreement. This will require all hirers who wish to use the hall for activities which include children and adults at risk, other than for hire for private parties arranged for invited friends and family, to either produce a copy of their Safeguarding Policy and evidence that they have carried out relevant checks through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) when requested to do so or, confirm that they have understood and will adhere to the hall's principles and procedures with regard to safeguarding.
- K. The Ramsey Mereside Village Hall Management Committee will carry out an annual review of this policy.

## **9. Reporting Safeguarding Concerns**

Any concerns regarding the welfare of vulnerable people should be reported as a matter of urgency to the RMVH appointed Safeguarding person. If there is an immediate risk then the incident should be reported to the Police as an emergency by calling 999. The appointed Safeguarding person will ensure relevant information is gathered to enable a report to be made to the Local Authority Social Services Safeguarding team.

The RMVH appointed Safeguarding person will ensure that they keep themselves informed and up to date with the appropriate methods of contacting the Local Authority Social Services Safeguarding team along with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) when dealing with incidents involving professionals.

If you have concerns about a trustee, member of staff or volunteer contact the RMVH appointed Safeguarding person, who must contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

## **10. Procedures to be followed by a RMVH trustee in the event of a concern being reported to them.**

If you are approached by a vulnerable person, with a disclosure that they are being, or has been harmed or abused, or you are informed of such a disclosure by a colleague or member of the public,

Do:

- Stay calm.
- Provide a listening ear and an open mind.
- Be reassuring, particularly that the individual is doing the right thing by telling you.
- Record the information you are provided. This should be factual and not your personal opinion. Report as quickly as possible to the RMVH appointed Safeguarding person who will decide what further action will need to be taken.
- Make it clear that you have a duty to refer the matter on and that the information is likely to be shared with the relevant persons on a need-to-know basis.
- Make a record of the time, date and persons present.

Allegations against trustees, staff or volunteers:

Don't:

- Promise to keep the information secret.
- Stop the individual who is freely recalling significant events.
- Make the individual tell anyone else. They may have to be formally interviewed later and it is important to

minimise the number of times information is repeated.

- Make any suggestions to the individual about how the incident may have happened.
- Never ask a child why this happened or ask leading questions.
- Use your own words – note down the exact child's words
- Question the individual, except to clarify what they are saying.
- Discuss the information with anyone other than relevant safeguarding professionals involved.

All trustees, members of staff and volunteers should take care not to put themselves in potentially vulnerable situations. For example, inappropriate use of the internet or being alone with a vulnerable person.

The following outlines the steps you should take if you are concerned that the behaviour of a trustee, member of staff or volunteer is threatening, or potentially threatening, the well-being or welfare of a vulnerable person.

If you are concerned that a trustee, member of staff or volunteer is harming or abusing a vulnerable person, or acting inappropriately in their behaviour or conduct, you must immediately contact the RMVH appointed Safeguarding person who will report your concerns to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), Social Services department or Police.

If a person, such as a member of the public reports safeguarding concerns to you about a trustee, member of staff or volunteer then you must immediately inform the RMVH appointed Safeguarding person who will report your concerns to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), Social Services department or Police.

If the allegation is against the RMVH appointed Safeguarding person, then another suitably senior member of the Committee should be contacted immediately.

No attempt should be made to investigate the allegation before consultation has been made with the LADO.

RMVH trustees adhere to the Cambridgeshire Combined Authority [Managing Allegations or Serious Concerns in Respect of any Adult who Works or Volunteers with Children.](#)

## **11. Other national safeguarding priorities**

### **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

Female genital mutilation, also known as female circumcision or female genital cutting, is defined as the range of procedures which involve "the partial or complete removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs whether for cultural or any other non-therapeutic reason" Source: World Health Organisation.

The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as amended by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015) introduced a mandatory reporting duty for all regulated health and social care professionals and teachers in England and Wales. Professionals must make a report to the police, if, in the course of their duties they are informed by a girl under the age of 18 that she has undergone an act of FGM OR they observe physical signs that an act of FGM may have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18.

If trustees, staff or volunteers obtain any information that indicates that a child may have had FGM or may be at risk of having FGM, then they must contact the RMVH appointed Safeguarding person who will report to the Local Authority Social Services Safeguarding team immediately.

FGM procedures can be found on the Cambridge Safeguarding Children Board website. [Practice Guidance for practitioners on Female Genital Mutilation \(FGM\)](#)

### **Breast Ironing**

Breast Ironing also known as 'Breast Flattening' is the process whereby young pubescent girls breasts are ironed, massaged and/or pounded down through the use of hard or heated objects in order for the breasts to disappear or delay the development of the breasts entirely. It is believed that by carrying out this act, young girls will be protected from harassment, rape, abduction and early forced marriage and therefore be kept in education.

Much like Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Breast Ironing is a harmful cultural practice and is child abuse. Professionals working with children and young people must be able to identify the signs and symptoms of girls who are at risk of or have undergone breast ironing. Similarly to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), breast ironing is classified as physical abuse.

### **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**

A child is sexually abused when they are forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities. This doesn't have to be physical contact, and it can happen online. (NSPCC).

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse in which children are sexually exploited for money, power or status. Children or young people may be tricked into believing they're in a loving, consensual relationship. They might be invited to parties and given drugs and alcohol.

### **Forced Marriage**

A forced marriage is where one or both people do not or cannot consent to the marriage and pressure or abuse is used to force them into the marriage. It is also when anything is done to make someone marry before they turn 18, even if there is no pressure or abuse.

Forced marriage is illegal in the UK. It is a form of domestic abuse and a serious abuse of human rights.

The pressure put on people to marry against their will may be:

- physical: for example, threats, physical violence or sexual violence
- emotional and psychological: for example, making someone feel like they are bringing 'shame' on their family

Financial abuse, for example taking someone's wages, may also be a factor.

### **Radicalisation**

A process by which an individual or group comes to adopt increasingly extreme political, social, or religious ideals and aspirations that reject or undermine the status quo or reject and/or undermine contemporary ideas and expressions of freedom of choice.

The Counter Terrorism Security Act 2015 Requires public bodies, including local authorities, health, schools and others such as childcare providers to act to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism, ensuring awareness of risks of terrorism.

If a trustee, staff member or volunteer is concerned that a vulnerable person is at risk of being radicalised then they must contact the RMVH appointed Safeguarding person who will report to the Local Authority Social Services Safeguarding team.

Date Adopted: July 2023, reviewed May 2024, updated April/May 2025, updated February 2026

Policy to be reviewed: February 2027

## Appendix 1 Definitions of abuse (NSPCC):

### Physical Abuse

In relation to children:

Physical Abuse is a form of **Significant Harm** which may involve including hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child

In relation to adults:

The non-accidental infliction of physical force that results in bodily injury, pain or impairment. Examples of such behaviour include: hitting, pushing, slapping, scalding, shaking, kicking, pinching, hair-pulling, the inappropriate application of techniques or treatments, involuntary isolation or confinement, misuse of medication. N.B. inadvertent physical abuse may also arise from poor practice, e.g. poor manual handling techniques.

### Sexual Abuse

The following definition is taken from Working Together to Safeguard Children.

In relation to children:

Sexual abuse is a form of Significant Harm which involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the Internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

In relation to adults:

Direct or indirect involvement in sexual activity without valid consent. Consent to a particular activity may not be given because:

- A person has **Capacity** and does not want to give it;

### SIGNIFICANT HARM

The Children Act 1989 introduced Significant Harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children.

Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Emotional Abuse and Neglect are all categories of Significant Harm. Harm is defined as the ill treatment or impairment of health and development. This definition was clarified in section 120 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (implemented on 31 January 2005) so that it may include, "for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another".

Suspicion or allegations that a child is suffering or likely to suffer Significant Harm should result in an Assessment incorporating a Section 47 Enquiry. There are no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm. Sometimes a single violent episode may constitute significant harm but more often it is an accumulation of significant events, both acute and longstanding, which interrupt, damage or change the child's development.

### CYBERBULLYING

Someone who has mental capacity means that they are able to make their own decision at the time when that decision needs to be made.

The Mental Capacity Act says that a person is able to make their own decision if they can do all of the following four things:

- Understand information given to them;
- Retain that information long enough to be able to make the decision;
- Weigh up the information available to make the decision; and
  - Communicate their decision.

Mental capacity must be presumed under law and decisions can only be made by someone else once the person has been assessed as lacking capacity through a Mental Capacity Assessment.

- A person lacks [Capacity](#) and is therefore unable to give it;
- A person feels coerced into activity because the other person is in a position of trust, power or authority.

### Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is a form of [Significant Harm](#) which involves the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or "making fun" of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children.

These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including [Cyberbullying](#)) causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

### Neglect

In relation to children:

Neglect is a form of [Significant Harm](#) which involves the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.

Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing, shelter including exclusion from home or abandonment, failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate care-takers, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

In relation to adults:

The repeated deprivation of assistance that the person needs for important activities of daily living, including a failure to intervene in behaviour which is dangerous to them or to others, or poor manual handling techniques.

Under the Mental Capacity Act 2005, wilful neglect and ill-treatment of a person lacking [Capacity](#) becomes a criminal offence.

Self-neglect on the part of an adult will not usually lead to the initiation of Adult Protection Procedures unless the situation involves a significant act of commission or omission by someone else with established responsibility for an adult's care. Other assessment and review procedures, including risk assessment procedures, may prove a more appropriate intervention in situations of self-neglect

