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Ownership / Responsible for monitoring:	Ownership – Executive Director Monitoring – Head of People
Responsible body:	Mary's Meals UK Board

Purpose and context

It is the responsibility of the organisation to make sure our employees and volunteers pose no harm to children, vulnerable adults, and the general public when on charitable duties and that any concerns we have about the safety of anyone are reported to the appropriate authorities.

This policy exists to protect children, vulnerable adults and the public from harm and abuse, to affirm Mary's Meals UK's (MMUK) commitment to the safety and protection of those we encounter and to ensure that, in our work, we do not perpetuate or reinforce systematic or structural abuse. The policy provides definitions and outlines our guiding principles, roles, responsibilities, and approach towards implementation which will ensure that this commitment is integrated into all areas of our work.

Policy statement

MMUK raises awareness and funds across the UK to support the Mary's Meals vision that every child receives one daily meal in their place of education and that all those who have more than they need, share with those who lack even the most basic things.

We are not responsible for the safety of children at the schools MMUK attends for creating awareness and fundraising purposes. However, we have a duty to ensure we minimise any risk to children who encounter our people, directly or indirectly, and that we will always take account of child safety.

Volunteering with Mary's Meals offers opportunities to a diverse workforce, which may, on occasion, be attractive to vulnerable adults and the general public. We have a duty to ensure our people are well trained to ensure anyone that we come into contact with or enter into a volunteer agreement with is supported and aware of their safeguarding responsibilities.

This policy is intended as a guide for MMUK employees, volunteers, and other stakeholders. Its fundamental purpose is to provide protection from harm, primarily to children and vulnerable adults, but also to Mary's Meals UK staff, volunteers, the general public and to the organisation itself.

Principles

- All children and protected adults have an equal right to development and their welfare should always be promoted.
- Anyone we come into contact with, particularly children and vulnerable adults should always be protected from any form of sexual, physical, verbal, or emotional abuse or exploitation, both from adults and other children.
- The data and information held on children and vulnerable adults should be managed confidentially and sensitively.
- The health and safety of everyone, particularly children and vulnerable adults should always be paramount.
- All children have the right to participate freely in decisions which affect their lives and should be empowered to act upon this, recognising the importance of parents, families, and other carers in children's lives.

- Children and vulnerable adults should always be treated with respect and valued as individuals and equals with respect to the context of their own culture, religion, and ethnicity.
- Children and vulnerable adults should always feel empowered to raise and discuss any issues or concerns and should always be listened to.
- Any allegations of any form of abuse towards anyone should always be treated seriously and appropriately and promptly dealt with. Victims and other involved parties should always be supported, and perpetrators must always be held to account.
- Investigation of any concerns regarding the allegations of harm or abuse of a child or vulnerable adult should always be conducted with reference to national laws and employment rights and immediately referred to any relevant statutory authorities where appropriate.
- Our people should always be recruited, supported, and trained with respect to safeguarding everyone both within the organisation and the general public.

Any staff or volunteers are asked that if they are undergoing any safeguarding investigations or if any previous allegations have been substantiated that these are disclosed immediately to the Head of People. In addition, we ask staff and volunteers to be transparent and honest about any possibility of risk to placement on any nation's barring list or children's register. Should this be the case then please again report this to the Head of People. MMUK is highly committed to protecting children from exploitation and abuse. MMUK takes its duty of care seriously, particularly in protecting children and vulnerable adults.

The policy is intended as clear guidance on our belief that all children (as defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as anyone under the age of 18, even where defined otherwise in national contexts) must be protected from abuse or exploitation. It is accompanied by relevant procedures which are guided by the principles. Vulnerable adults are adults at risk of abuse due to having an illness affecting their mental or physical health, a learning disability, suffering from drug or alcohol problems or be frail.

For regulated work, MMUK will only employ people who are members of the Protected Vulnerable Group (PVG)/ Vetting and Barring (VBS) Schemes for UK nationals, as it is against UK law for an organisation to employ someone who will undertake regulated work with children or vulnerable adults if they are barred from doing so.

All our people doing regulated work who are UK nationals, outside Scotland, will have a DBS check (or national equivalent) every three years.

The Children Act 2004 states that every organisation should have a named person for safeguarding children and young people. The Head of People will have responsibility for safeguarding issues as part of their responsibilities. The role will be the Designated Safeguarding Person and has a responsibility at both a strategic level within the organisation and on a day-to-day basis. This will include monitoring the charity's work on protecting children and vulnerable adults, providing guidance to the organisation where necessary.

Although we have safeguarding roles, safeguarding is the responsibility of every individual who represents this organization. This includes all staff and volunteers who, on commencement of volunteering or employment agree to abide by our code of conduct. In addition, all staff are required to complete our in-house safeguarding training and all volunteers attend an online safeguarding training session run by the People team.

Anyone connected with MMUK and travelling overseas to visit our programmes is obliged to sign and abide by the policy, code of conduct and procedures in place. Enforcement of this policy will be monitored through an annual Safeguarding Audit; risk assessments and a policy review every two years.

In addition to the Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct, our HR policies for recruitment, induction, staff development and training, performance management, disciplinary procedures whistleblowing, complaints, investigation mechanisms, safeguarding procedures and HR policies and procedures are designed to support the protection of children and vulnerable adults.

Adults in vulnerable circumstances

Whilst the primary safeguarding principles of this policy are with regards to children and vulnerable adults, there may be instances of working with or alongside, or encountering, adults in vulnerable circumstances.

Our People in Vulnerable Circumstances and Fundraising policy exists to identify and protect people in vulnerable circumstances from harm and abuse, to affirm our commitment to the safety and protection of those people and to ensure that, in our work, we do not perpetuate or reinforce systematic or structural abuse and discrimination.

The policy is intended as a guide for our employees to ensure we take reasonable care to identify supporters who may be in vulnerable circumstances, and what actions we will take if we suspect a person is vulnerable.

Reporting and accountability

MMUK has a legal duty to report any concerns about actual or suspected abuse to the relevant nation's disclosure service.

Any allegations and concerns relating to our staff and partners in this crucial area are reported centrally to the Executive Director and any allegations will be fully investigated. In the first instance of a safeguarding investigation occurring, the Director of Communications must be notified to manage our crisis communications plan effectively. The Director of Communications, MMUK will notify the Director of Communications in Mary's Meals International about any potential reputational risk.

The Head of People will notify the Director of People in Mary's Meals International of any risks and investigations. Names of individuals involved will not be shared with Mary's Meals International employees.

The safeguarding committee will meet quarterly to share good practice, advise on changes and actions required, and conduct a review of policy and procedures.

Mary's Meals UK will seek support and advice where needed from [Safeguarding | NCVO](#) and [Safeguarding | Bond](#).

The policy will be reviewed every two years, and the procedures, and their implementation will be regularly monitored. A report on any incidents relating to child protection will also be made to the Board of Directors on an annual basis.

The policy has been approved and endorsed by MMUK's Board of Directors and is a key element of our organisational policy. Compliance with the policy is mandatory for all our employees, volunteers, and other stakeholders.

For all concerns, please follow the reporting process below:

Contact emergency services immediately and explain that your concern is of a safeguarding nature.

Any concerns should be reported to the Chair of the Safeguarding Committee Jim McGowan jim.mcgowan@marysmeals.org immediately where concerns are potentially serious, and within 24 hours otherwise.

In Jim's absence please contact Annette Reid, Head of People annette.reid@marysmeals.org.

Reporting framework

Our Safeguarding Policy Statement will be reviewed by the Head of People every two years.