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Prepared by	Amelia Crowther and Kristine Stave
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SAFEGUARDING POLICY & PROCEDURE

This policy also applies to WFSA (UK), Charity Number 1166545

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### 1. Introduction

Safeguarding means taking all reasonable steps to prevent harm, particularly sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment from occurring, protecting people, especially adults at risk of harm and children, from that harm, and responding appropriately when harm does occur. Safeguarding anyone at risk of harm will be our first priority. Further definitions relating to safeguarding are provided in the glossary of terms below. This definition draws from World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists' (WFSA) 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.

We believe that everyone we come into contact with, regardless of age, gender, disability or ethnic origin etc. has an equal right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation. We do not tolerate harm, abuse, and exploitation by volunteers or staff.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are at the heart of our values. This policy will not discriminate, either directly or indirectly, on the grounds of the 9 protected characteristics (as cited in the UK Equality Act 2010): age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation.

We commit to addressing safeguarding consistently and without exception across our programmes and activities, partners, associated personnel and staff. This requires proactively identifying, preventing and guarding against all risks of harm, exploitation and abuse and having mature, accountable and transparent systems for response, reporting and learning when risks materialize. Those systems are survivor-centred and also protect those accused until proven guilty.

Safeguarding puts beneficiaries and affected persons at the centre of all we do.

We are aware that those in positions of trust and responsibility may abuse their power and exploit or harm others. We seek to take action to deal with any abuse and to challenge any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of trust.

WFSA volunteers, staff and associated personnel must not:

- Engage or attempt to engage in any form of sexual activity with anyone under 18 years of age, regardless of the age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence.
- Engage or attempt to engage in any form of sexual activity with other representatives, partner/supplier representative where there is a power imbalance.
- Engage or attempt to engage in any form of sexual activity with a beneficiary of assistance.
- Suggest or imply that the payment, assistance in any form, employment or any opportunity is received because of participation in any form of exploitative or harmful behaviour, including sexual activity.
- Engage in any form of transactional sexual activity of any kind, regardless of local or national law.
- Support, participate in or condone any form of sexual exploitation or abuse, including the trafficking of human beings and child marriage.
- Engage in any form of sexual harassment.
- Subject a child to physical or emotional abuse, or neglect.
- Subject a vulnerable adult to physical, emotional or psychological abuse, or neglect.
- Agree, assist, or negotiate any form of settlement between a victim/survivor of abuse (or their family/community) and an alleged perpetrator. Suspected or actual incidents must be reported in accordance with this policy.
- Fail, delay, or obstruct the reporting of any safeguarding concerns in accordance with this policy; the absence of evidence or inability to identify a named victim or alleged perpetrator is not reasonable grounds to delay or fail to report any concerns about exploitation or abuse.

## **2. Purpose and Aims**

The purpose of this policy is to protect people from harm, in particular that caused due to their coming into contact with the WFSA. This includes staff, volunteers, associated personnel and particularly children, at risk adults and beneficiaries of assistance. This includes harm arising from:

- The conduct of staff, volunteers or personnel associated with the WFSA;
- The design and implementation of the WFSA's programmes and activities.

The policy lays out the commitments made by the WFSA, and informs volunteers, staff and associated personnel<sup>1</sup> of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. It also provides

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<sup>1</sup> The definition of associated personnel can be found in section 1 of the Code of Conduct and section 3 below.

procedures for dealing with reports of breach of Safeguarding Policy, where the safeguarding violation is:

- Against volunteers, staff, associated personnel or members of the public;
- Perpetrated by volunteers, staff, partners or associated personnel.

### **3. Scope**

This policy applies to:

- All staff contracted by the WFSA;
- Our volunteers including Board, Council and Committee members along with others who give their time freely to advance the mission and vision of the WFSA;
- Other associated personnel, including interns, scholars and fellows, agency staff, and anyone from a Member Society, partner organisation or institution that is involved in the WFSA' work or working on behalf of the WFSA.

### **4. Roles and Responsibilities**

#### WFSA responsibilities

The CEO is responsible for ensuring that:

- All volunteers, staff and associated personnel have access to, are familiar with, and know their responsibilities within this policy;
- There is a clear Code of Conduct communicated to all volunteers, staff and associated personnel which details unacceptable conduct;
- There are designated, named Safeguarding Officers with the relevant knowledge and skills and that they have time and resources necessary for them to fulfil these responsibilities to the best of their abilities;
- HR procedures include safeguarding requirements when recruiting, managing and deploying staff and associated personnel;
- All volunteers, staff and associated personnel receive appropriate training on safeguarding at a level commensurate with their role in the organization. This will ensure all staff and associated personnel have a basic awareness of safeguarding issues including:
  - Being alert to the possibility of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation;
  - Sufficient understanding to recognize safeguarding concerns;
  - Knowing who in the organization to raise concerns with;
  - Being competent to take the appropriate immediate or emergency action.
- All volunteers, staff, associated personnel and the communities we work with have access to safe, appropriate, accessible means of reporting safeguarding concerns;
- Complaints from external sources such as members of the public, partners and official bodies are accepted;
- Reports of safeguarding concerns are followed up promptly and according to due process outlined in the procedure below;
- All volunteers, staff and associated personnel reporting concerns or complaints are protected by WFSA's Whistleblowing Policy;
- There is appropriate support to those who raise safeguarding concerns and 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 in consultation with the survivor

- The policy and procedures are published and available publicly

### WFSA Board

The Board is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the Safeguarding Policy is reviewed on an at least annual basis;
- Seeking and receiving appropriate reporting of safeguarding matters affecting the organisation as part of its wider risk assurance functions;
- Ensuring there is appropriate support and resources available to staff to implement this policy.

### Volunteers, staff and associated personnel responsibilities

We recognise that protecting people from harm is both a corporate and an individual responsibility. All volunteers and members of staff and associated personnel should be proactive in taking appropriate, proportionate, preventative steps to reduce the risk of, or perception of, harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

All volunteers, staff and associated personal will:

- Contribute to creating and maintaining an environment that prevents safeguarding violations and promotes the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy;
- Design and undertake all their activities in a way that protects people from any risk of harm that may arise from their coming into contact with WFSA. This includes the way in which information about individuals in our programmes is gathered and communicated;
- Report any concerns or suspicions regarding safeguarding violations by a WFSA volunteers, staff member or associated personnel to appropriate person (see procedure below). In doing so the primary consideration should always be the best interests of those at risk of or experiencing harm;
- Maintain confidentiality at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns. Ensuring information relating to the concern and subsequent case management is kept secure and shared on a need-to-know basis only.

### Responsibilities when working in partnership

Our partners enable us to achieve our goals. They often have the stronger direct relationship with those at higher risk of harm and have better understanding of the law and practice in their country. Therefore, we respect that in most circumstances our partner should have the primary duty of care to beneficiaries of assistance and are best placed to lead investigation of any safeguarding concern. We will always reserve the right to take independent action if we consider that the safeguarding lead organisation is not responding adequately.

The CEO is responsible for ensuring that in a joint initiative:

- A written agreement has been made which clarifies who is the safeguarding lead organisation and which procedures will be followed. Where possible this must be included in the relevant Memorandum of Understanding/Project Framework Agreement or similar document.

The partner confirms that they feel confident that they have adequate safeguarding arrangements compliant with national laws, their context and risks they manage. Any partner whose representatives encounter adults at risk or children in the course of a partnership must have safeguarding arrangements at least equivalent to WFSA. Partners who cannot meet this standard must agree to implement WFSA safeguarding standards.

All staff, volunteers and associated personnel should abide by the law of the country they are volunteering in. The partner(s) is required to inform WFSA of any safeguarding incident in any WFSA supported project or initiative. On the occasions where WFSA is the safeguarding lead, seek to accept challenge and concern from partners in a positive spirit and prioritise actions in the best interests of those who have experienced or are at risk of harm.

## **5. Related Documents**

**The Safeguarding Policy must be read in conjunction with:**

- WFSA's Code of Conduct
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy
- Whistle-blower Policy
- Policies and procedures related to disciplinary matters (see Staff Handbook)
- WFSA Volunteer Agreement
- WFSA Partner Agreement
- WFSA Contract of Employment
- Any other policy documents, role or job descriptions, grant agreements and contracts specific to certain positions or partnerships.

Where there is any conflict between this policy and its associated procedures and other policies, procures or established ways of working, the priority is always to safeguard people at risk of harm.

## **6. Appendices**

### **Appendix 1 Glossary of Terms**

#### **Beneficiary of Assistance**

Someone who directly receives goods or services from our programme. Note that misuse of power can also apply to the wider community that we serve, and also can include exploitation by giving the perception of being in a position of power.

#### **Child**

For the purposes of the present policy, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years, regardless of local legislation.

#### **Domestic Abuse**

Being subject to abuse perpetrated by carers, family and intimate partners.

#### **Harm**

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

#### **(Imbalance of) Power**

An imbalance of Power is having influence, authority, or control over people and/or resources.

### **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 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 peoples' health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.

In the health 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.

### **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.

### **Sexual harassment**

Any form of unwanted conduct of a sexual nature towards an adult, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. This includes all forms of direct or indirect contact.

### **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.

### **Vulnerable Adult**

Anyone over the age of 18 who, may be or is unable to protect or care for themselves by reason of a disability (of any kind), illness or age, those suffering from domestic abuse, trauma, addiction, or their immigration status. Vulnerability may be temporary. In the UK the term Adult at Risk is often used to describe a vulnerable person with a narrower definition than adopted by WFSA

## Appendix 2: Safeguarding Reporting and Response Procedure

### Stage 1 - Report is received

1.1 Reports can reach WFSA through various routes. This may be in a structured format such as a letter, email, text or a message on social media. It may also be in the form of informal discussion or rumour if staff member or associated personnel hears something in an informal discussion or chat that they think is a safeguarding concern.

1.2 If a safeguarding concern is disclosed directly to a member of staff, the person receiving the report should bear the following in mind:

- Listen;
- Empathize with the person;
- Ask who, when, where, what but not why;
- Repeat/ check your understanding of the situation;
- Report to the Safeguarding Officer.

If at any point, there is a concern that an individual is at immediate significant risk of harm, and it is not possible or appropriate to seek support from the WFSA Safeguarding Officer (Amelia Crowther) or the Senior Safeguarding Officer (Dr Balavenkatasubramanian Jagannathan), the person should take reasonable steps to seek assistance from statutory protection services, including for example local authorities, social services and/or the police.

1.3 The person receiving the report should then document the following information using an Incident Report Form:

- Name of person making report;
- Name(s) of alleged survivor(s) of safeguarding incident(s) if different from above;
- Name(s) of alleged perpetrator(s);
- Description of incident(s);
- Dates(s), times(s) and location(s) of incident,

The absence of information must never prevent the sharing of any concern with the Safeguarding Officer. A failure to report concerns or otherwise delay or obstruct a report will be considered a disciplinary matter. Nothing in this policy or other guidance should be construed as mandating a survivor to report their own abuse.

The person with the concern should then share this information with WFSA's Safeguarding Officer (Amelia Crowther) based at the WFSA Secretariat in London.

If the allegation is against the Safeguarding Officer or if the person reporting prefers to speak to someone outside of the Secretariat, he or she may contact the Senior Safeguarding Officer who is a Member of the WFSA Board.

If the person reporting feels that the report will not be taken seriously, or if that person is implicated in the concern, he or she may report to any other appropriate Board Member or follow the Whistleblowing Policy.

If you are reporting an incident or behaviour during an overseas project or placement (i.e., outside the United Kingdom), please include (if possible) the name and details of the project lead or co-ordinator and the name and details of the WFSA's local partner for the project.

|                                                             |                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Safeguarding Officer</b><br>(Member of WFSA Secretariat) | <b>Senior Safeguarding Officer</b> (Member<br>of WFSA Board) |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                        |                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Amelia Crowther                                                        | Dr Balavenkatasubramanian Jagannathan                                  |
| Programmes Officer                                                     | Board Member                                                           |
| <a href="mailto:safeguarding1@wfsahq.org">safeguarding1@wfsahq.org</a> | <a href="mailto:safeguarding2@wfsahq.org">safeguarding2@wfsahq.org</a> |
| Telephone: +44 20 3290 8613                                            |                                                                        |

1.4 Due to the sensitive nature of safeguarding concerns, confidentiality must be maintained during all stages of the reporting process, and information shared on a limited 'need to know' basis only. This includes senior management who might otherwise be appraised of a serious incident.

1.5 If the reporting staff member or associated personnel is not satisfied that the WFSA is appropriately addressing the report, they have a right to escalate the report, either up to the Board or to an external statutory body subject to the prevailing laws and guidance in the country where the concerns were raised.

## **Stage 2 - Assess how to proceed with the report**

These procedures describe our response to allegations of abuse and concerns for the welfare of anyone. Only staff designated by the CEO may respond to safeguarding reports such as the Safeguarding Officer. Deviation from these procedures requires the prior written authorisation from the CEO.

In accordance with the Safeguarding Policy, the overriding consideration in all circumstances will be the protection of anyone at risk of harm. All other considerations, no matter how important they might appear, are secondary.

Staff dealing with safeguarding concerns must demonstrate the highest standards of ethics and maintain the privacy of anyone affected. If a member of staff becomes aware of a conflict of interest or the potential for one, they must immediately notify the CEO

Where relevant these procedures differ for the UK and other jurisdictions, unless a procedure is marked as being for the UK or marked as potentially requiring deviation, procedures apply globally.

### **Receiving allegations of abuse against WFSA employees, contractors, volunteers, and trustees<sup>1</sup>**

On receipt of an allegation or concern, the Safeguarding Officer must immediately take the following steps:

1. Conduct an immediate risk assessment. If anyone is at an immediate risk of harm the police must be contacted via 999
2. If the subject of the allegation is present at a WFSA premises or WFSA activity their removal must be considered if it is required to safeguard anyone from a risk harm
3. Consideration must be given as to which statutory agency should receive a referral, a meaningful referral should be made within one working day, unless an exemption has been authorised by the Safeguarding Lead
4. The CEO must be immediately made aware of the allegation and discuss the response with the relevant director/executive, including whether a suspension is required. Advice should be sought from police or the Local Authority Designated Officer (or equivalent in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland) before a suspension is enacted. In the UK, a

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<sup>1</sup> For incidents outside of the UK see below for accepted deviation



referral to a statutory agency in circumstances where someone is believed to be at risk is mandatory

5. Within one working day case file should be opened and securely stored

### **Receiving allegations or concerns regarding beneficiaries, partners, supporters, and members of the public<sup>1</sup>**

On receipt of an allegation or concern, the Safeguarding Officer must immediately take the following steps:

1. Conduct an immediate risk assessment. If anyone is an immediate risk of harm the police must be contacted via 999
2. If the subject of the allegation is present at any WFSA premises or activity their removal must be considered if it is required to safeguard anyone from harm
3. If the subject of the concern relates to a WFSA partner, contact should be made with the relevant designated safeguarding lead. In many circumstances a school, which may have greater knowledge of those involved, are best placed to deal with a concern regarding an individual to whom they owe a duty. This does not mean that WFSA abdicates its role and written confirmation of discussions and decisions must be made (including who is making a referral to statutory agencies, if required)
4. If another party is not making a referral, consideration must be given to WFSA making a referral to the appropriate statutory agency, a meaningful referral should be made within one working day, unless an exemption has been authorised by the CEO
5. In the UK, a referral to a statutory agency in circumstances where someone is believed to be at risk is mandatory
6. Within one working day case file should be opened and securely stored

In all cases of doubt, a cautious approach must be taken and a referral to a statutory agency should be made. Other organisations, even those with statutory duties, must not prevent WFSA from making a referral where it is believed that it is in the best interest of a child or a vulnerable adult.

### **Allegations of Abuse Outside the UK**

Allegations that occur outside of the UK can appear complex and may require additional considerations. The above procedures for the UK should guide decision making for all allegations and the same or equivalent steps taken that is consistent with WFSA's duty to protect anyone at risk.

Allegations in the following jurisdictions will always be reported to the appropriate authorities: member countries the European Economic Area, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States.

In all other jurisdictions, a risk assessment must be undertaken and documented to ensure that a referral does not place anyone at risk of an unacceptable risk of serious harm. The implications for the victim/survivor and how they will receive the care and support they deserve is paramount.

Care must be taken in cases where an individual's gender (including identity/expression), sexual orientation, marital or immigration status or any other factor, whether perceived or otherwise, may place them at risk of harm.

Any legislation mandating the reporting of allegations must be considered and subject to a risk assessment if required and where it falls outside of the jurisdictions listed above.

Any decision not to make a referral must be authorised in writing by the Senior Safeguarding Officer and CEO and documented in the relevant file.

In cases where a referral is not made to a local statutory agency consideration must be given to.

- A referral to a non-statutory body, such as an NGO
- A referral to a specialist unit of a national law enforcement agency
- A referral to a law enforcement agency in another jurisdiction. For example, a dual national or resident of another state may be subject to extra-territorial legislation
- A referral for the purposes of disseminating criminal intelligence that may not identify witnesses or victims
- A referral to a regulatory body

Inaction is never an alternative to safeguarding measures, including in unfair legal systems which perpetuates harm to the most vulnerable or offers protection to those who exploit their inherent power imbalances to exploit others.

Where necessary safeguarding measures including suspension and a change in duties or deployment must be promptly implemented.

### **Individuals occupying a position of trust with children and/or vulnerable adults**

Any individual who undertakes work, paid or otherwise with children or vulnerable adults should be considered as occupying a position of trust, even if this work is outside of, and not connected to WFSA or not recognised in local legislation.

Given the international nature of WFSA operations, the criteria from the UK Government's Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018, will be helpful when considering if an allegation requires a referral to law enforcement or another statutory service services. Where the allegation suggests that someone occupying a position of trust with is alleged to have:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child or vulnerable adult, or may have harmed a child or a vulnerable adult, possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child or vulnerable adult
- behaved towards a child/vulnerable adult in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to them
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children or vulnerable adults

In all cases of doubt a cautious approach must be taken and a referral made. In jurisdictions with statutory guidance or legally mandated reporting these must be followed, unless to do so would place anyone at an unacceptable risk of harm (see above).

### **Identifying the Appropriate Referral Agency - UK**

In the UK, referrals should be made to a statutory agency or the NSPCC only, other bodies including the NHS do not have sufficient powers of protection for those at risk of harm. If a referral is required, it must be made to one of the following:

- Any UK law enforcement agency
- A local authority children's or adult service (In Northern Ireland social care is integrated in the Health Service)

- A local authority designated officer or equivalent for members of the children's workforce (see below)
- The NSPCC (children only)

If a subject of concern is unknown, the National Crime Agency should be the preferred agency.

Outside of usual working hours and in an emergency, the police are likely to be able to respond more promptly than social care.

Where a concern exists for the wellbeing of any person and there is no immediate risk of significant harm, the local police can be asked to conduct a welfare check. This is usually requested by contacting the police direct, via the 101 system. If a welfare check is accepted, a police officer/PCSO will visit the person of concern and must physically see them.

If another agency will not accept a referral in cases concerning the welfare and safety of children, the NSPCC may be contacted. In this respect, owing to the statutory power provided to the NSPCC, a referral carries the same weight as one to a statutory agency.

Both police and adult/children's services have a duty to notify their colleagues of concerns or suspected criminal offences and have mechanisms for doing so. For example: police responding to an incident of domestic violence, with children present should notify children's social care. WFSA staff must not assume that an agency has notified another. Where applicable WFSA staff should seek written confirmation that the appropriate referrals have been made. If assurance is not received, WFSA staff should make an additional referral.

### **Support from other organisations - UK**

If a referral to a statutory agency is not required (and there is no suggestion of alleged/suspected abuse, exploitation, or significant harm) other organisations may be able to assist. This includes places of education, care homes and the NHS.

It may also be appropriate to refer an individual to sources of support such as other charities with expertise in a particular area.

### **Record Keeping**

Detailed records of concerns and allegations must be centrally maintained and securely stored, at a minimum record must include:

- The full names, dates of birth and any job titles of those involved
- If known, the location and time of any abuse/incidents
- The type or nature of the concern or allegation
- Details of to whom a referral was made, with a copy of the referral (when possible) or contemporaneous note and acknowledgement (where applicable)
- Details of why a referral was not made (if applicable)
- Decisions taken to safeguard anyone from a risk of harm and any risk assessments undertaken
- Detailed and dated notes of actions taken
- The outcome including whether, in relevant cases if any allegation was substantiated, unsubstantiated or deliberately false/malicious
- Any HR outcome or equivalent for volunteers, other departments records are not sufficient
- A copy of any referral made to any barring agency e.g. Disclosure Scotland or professional regulator

Records must be searchable by authorised staff and cross-referenced with related concerns or departmental records for example, if a volunteer is removed from a position following a safeguarding allegation, a record must be made with Human Resources to prevent the former volunteer being engaged as an employee without an appropriate assessment of risk.

Records must be kept separately from HR records to ensure that they are retained for the appropriate period and not subject to destruction or alteration for the purposes of keeping non-safeguarding records.

If documents, and files are password protected, these should be removed when the case is closed to ensure their future availability. When making and maintaining records consideration must be given to how clear and accessible these will be in the future.

### **Internal Investigations**

Where it is necessary to conduct a safeguarding investigation, or an investigation related to safeguarding, the Safeguarding Officer must work closely with the relevant director/executive to agree how an investigation will be conducted. Consideration must be given to the following:

- The production of clear terms of reference
- Any policy or procedural requirements
- The skills and experience required to conduct the investigation
- Any support required to those involved, including the supervision of investigators
- Who should receive the investigation report and act as a decision maker

The Safeguarding Officer must approve any terms of reference and the appointment of investigators, if the Safeguarding Officer is involved in an investigation as a subject, witness or complainant, a suitably qualified independent person for example the CEO must approve the terms of reference and the appointment of investigators.

When selecting investigators careful consideration must be given to skillset and experience. Safeguarding investigations will routinely require specialist knowledge. Investigatory experience in other fields, such as human resources, legal services or fraud, must not be assumed to provide competence in safeguarding matters without specialist training.

### **Victim/survivor care**

In all instances victim/survivor care must be carefully considered. In jurisdictions with state provided services it may be more appropriate for the state or another agency to provide some or all the care required, or for WFSA to provide support until care can be accessed.

Where an adult victim/survivor requests that an investigation or other form of action not take place, careful consideration will be given to the request. However, the overriding consideration will always be protecting those at risk of harm. In some circumstances action may need to be taken. Steps must be taken to assist the victim/survivor to understand WFSA's obligations and why decisions are being taken.

Participation in an investigation or any other process is entirely the choice of a victim/survivor throughout any process. Victims/survivors must never be pressured to support a course of action, survivor care must never be conditional on participation in an investigation.

Where a victim/survivor account needs to be recorded, it must be undertaken in a trauma informed manner by a qualified and supervised individual. Under no circumstances must children be interviewed by anyone who is not specially trained to interview child victims of abuse. If required, a presumption should be made that children have provided truthful information unless there are significant and exceptional reasons to suggest otherwise.

Adults and children may prefer to provide an account through an intermediary or in written form and should be supported to do so they would prefer this route.

**Anonymous, 'informal', brief, and non-recent allegations**

All allegations must receive a professionally curious response that is reflective of WFSA's obligations and potential or known risk.

The absence of formal complaints or allegations must not interfere with the implementation of these procedures. The mechanism by which an allegation is made must not in itself be used to dismiss the concerns or support inaction.

Allegations which contain limited information will be treated seriously and in accordance with these procedures.

There is no time limit on our accountability to those that have or may have been harmed. Non-recent allegations or incidents of abuse that may have taken place some time ago must be investigated in accordance with these procedures and judgements made in relation to any risk of harm that may be present.

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