



# The ME Association – Safeguarding Policy

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## 1. Purpose and Scope

The ME Association (MEA) is committed to protecting the rights, safety and wellbeing of everyone who comes into contact with the charity — including people with ME/CFS and those close to them, volunteers, staff, trustees, donors, and the public.

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, trustees, and contractors engaged in MEA activities, whether working face-to-face, online, or remotely.

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## 2. Definition of Safeguarding

Safeguarding means protecting people's right to live safely, free from abuse, harm, neglect or exploitation.

For the MEA this includes promoting welfare, dignity and choice for everyone we support, and ensuring all interactions, both externally and internally, are safe and respectful.

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## 3. Who Requires Safeguarding

Safeguarding responsibilities extend to:

- Children
- Adults at risk (this group includes those living with disability/chronic illness)
- Staff
- Public
- Volunteers
- Trustees
- Donors
- Partners

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## 4. Legal and Regulatory Framework

MEA follows the Charity Commission (England & Wales) guidance on safeguarding, which requires all charities to:

- Prioritise safeguarding internally and externally.
- Have clear policies and procedures in place.
- Carry out due diligence on trustees, staff and volunteers.
- Provide regular training and supervision.
- Respond promptly to concerns and report serious incidents.
- Appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy Safeguarding Lead
- Embed a culture where safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

## 5. Responsibilities

- **Trustees** – Ensure safeguarding policy and culture are in place and reviewed annually.
  - **DSL** – Lead on safeguarding, advise colleagues, make external referrals, liaise with agencies, report serious incidents to the Charity Commission.
  - **Deputy DSL** – Provide cover and support for the DSL.
  - **Managers / Team Leads** – Ensure volunteers and staff understand and follow procedures.
  - **All Staff and Volunteers** – Remain vigilant, report and record all concerns promptly.
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## 6. Creating a Safeguarding Culture

MEA strives to embed safeguarding into all aspects of its work by:

- Promoting openness, respect and dignity.
  - Encouraging service users to speak up about concerns.
  - Modelling professional boundaries and appropriate communication.
  - Regularly reviewing incidents and learning from them.
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## 7. Types of Harm and Abuse

The MEA recognises the following categories of harm:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Neglect
- Self-neglect
- Financial or material harm
- Domestic abuse / intimate partner violence
- Discriminatory abuse
- Organisational / institutional abuse
- Modern slavery
- Extremism and radicalisation
- Spiritual abuse

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## 8. Recognising Concerns – Remote and Digital Settings

Given MEA’s remote services (phone, email, social media, Discord), staff and volunteers should remain alert to:

- Verbal indicators – tone, distress, inconsistencies, background noises.
- Written indicators – language choice, hidden signals, urgency, repeat requests for help.
- Contextual patterns – sudden change in tone, frequency, or content of contact; mentions of neglect, control by others, or inability to access money/medical care.

If something feels “off,” trust your instincts and act. It is better to raise a concern that proves unfounded than risk harm through inaction.

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## 9. Barriers to Action

Common reasons people fail to act include fear of being wrong, uncertainty about process, or disbelief.

MEA’s expectation is clear: all safeguarding concerns, whether internal or external, must be shared. Staff and volunteers are supported — not blamed — for raising concerns in good faith.

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## 10. The 7 R’s – MEA’s Safeguarding Framework

**Recognise:** Identify possible signs of harm.

**Respond:** Listen, acknowledge, do not promise confidentiality.

**Report:** Share concerns immediately with the DSL or Deputy.

**Record:** Complete accurate written notes or Charitylog entry.

**Respect:** Treat the individual and the information with care and dignity.

**Refer:** DSL/ Deputy DSL decides if referral to external agency is required.

**Review:** DSL / Leadership monitors and learns from cases.

## 11. How to Report a Safeguarding Concern

### **Immediate Danger:**

Call 999 if someone is at immediate risk of harm.

### **Non-Immediate Risk:**

1. Contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Katharine Leat – via Teams or email (marked Important (!)).
2. If DSL unavailable, contact Deputy DSL: Dr Charles Shepherd – via email (marked Important (!)).
3. Record the concern:
  - If using Charitylog, enter the details and click Alert, then message the DSL on Teams.
  - If not using Charitylog, complete the MEA Safeguarding Concern Form (available in the All-Staff Teams Channel and OneDrive) and email it to the DSL.

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## 12. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Information will be shared only with those who need to know in order to protect a person from harm.

All records will be kept securely and in accordance with data protection legislation (GDPR 2018).

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## 13. Training and Support

All staff, volunteers and trustees will:

- Receive safeguarding induction and refresher training.
- Be familiar with MEA's safeguarding process and reporting routes.
- Have access to supervision and support following any difficult contact.

## 14. Related Policies and Guidance

- MEA Safeguarding Concern Referral Form
- Process quick reference guide and Confidentiality, Consent and Data Protection guidance
- Counselling Skills Guidance (available from Katharine Leat)

[Ann Craft Trust: Safeguarding Adults](#)

[Getting started with Safeguarding NCVO](#)

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## 15. Review and Approval

This policy will be reviewed annually by the MEA Board of Trustees, or sooner if there are changes to legislation, guidance, or operational practice.

Approved by: David Allen . Chair MEA Board of Trustees

Policy Owner: Katharine Leat, Designated Safeguarding Lead

Last Reviewed: 13th November 2025