

SAFEGUARDING POLICY



Voices of Colour is committed to ensuring the health, safety, welfare and development of all participants and personnel regardless of age, gender, stage of development, disability, sexual orientation, religion, culture or ethnicity. We expect participants and personnel to show respect for, and understanding of, all people's rights and to conduct themselves in a way that reflects these principles.

INTRODUCTION

The procedures outlined in this policy are to assist Voices of Colour participants and personnel to protect all persons by identifying clear instructions. They include:

- Abuse – what it is and how to recognise the signs.
- Procedure for preventing abuse.
- Procedure for responding to the discovery and disclosure of abuse and how to respond sensitively to persons who have been abused.

A "Participant" is defined as: Any person who is participating in Voices of Colour activities in a volunteer capacity who is either employed by a partner company or is a registered alumni ambassador. "Personnel" are defined as: "Any person who is recruited into a paid position in Voices of Colour. For the purposes of this policy this includes Trustees." This policy applies to all Voices of Colour participants and personnel. It is essential that everyone who volunteers or works for Voices of Colour is aware of their responsibilities under this policy and abides by it. It is not within the scope of this policy to cover any person who is not participant or personnel in the Voices of Colour Community Programme. In the instance that a safeguarding concern is raised regarding someone who is outside the scope of this policy, concerns should be raised locally with the appropriate authorities.

THE ROLE OF THE LEAD OF SAFEGUARDING:

The Lead for Safeguarding (Voices of Colour Programme Manager) is responsible for:

- Monitoring and recording concerns.
- Making referrals to social care services without delay.
- Liaison with other agencies.
- Arranging training for all staff.
- Ensuring this policy is reviewed annually.
- Ensuring it is implemented throughout the organisation and safeguarding training given.
- Ensuring it is annually reviewed.
- Ensuring monitoring and recording procedures are implemented.

PREVENTION OF ABUSE:

Protecting people is not just about policing or investigating the possibility of abuse, it is also about preventing it. Voices of Colour has put in place procedures to ensure that:

- Any personnel applying for jobs with Voices of Colour are checked for their suitability.
- All Voices of Colour personnel are trained in safeguarding.
- Personnel follow the information within the Staff Handbook, and participants adhere to the Staff Code of Conduct with regard to their dealings with all people.
- Participants who are volunteering in the role as a mentor must be registered with the Voices of Colour Programme Manager and deemed appropriate before being allocated to a team.
- Both the policy and practice are reviewed regularly.

RECOGNISING THE SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF ABUSE

The Care and Support Statutory Guidance Issued under the Care Act 2014 provides guidance on recognising and responding to abuse. It highlights that abuse may be the result of a deliberate or accidental act, may occur through ignorance, can be carried out by someone with any relation to the victim, may occur once, or multiple times, may affect more than one person and can occur anywhere. It provides a list of possible forms of abuse:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Psychological
- Exploitation
- Financial or material abuse
- Neglect and acts of omission
- Discriminatory
- Institutional

TREATING ALL PEOPLE WITH RESPECT

All personnel of Voices of Colour and participants within its programmes must endeavour to treat all people with respect, regardless of ability or culture. We ensure that all personnel read and acknowledge the Staff Handbook, and every participant reads and acknowledges Voices of Colour Code of Conduct on commencement of their working or volunteering with the organisation.

SAFER RECRUITMENT

Voices of Colour recruits' personnel and ensures that all recruitment is carried out in a fair and transparent manner, and the required background checks are undertaken

INDUCTION & TRAINING

All successful applicants undertake an induction process on commencement of their role with Voices of Colour.

“Personnel”:

- The staff member will undertake an online training course or attend face-to-face safeguarding training, with Voices of Colour
- Training for Programme Managers and the Voices of Colour Director includes: How to recognise behavioural/physical indicators of abuse, how to respond to a disclosure of abuse and manage (not investigate) the disclosure and how to escalate concerns outside the organisation.
- Discussion with the Lead for Safeguarding to ensure clear understanding of all aspects of the Safeguarding Policy and actions to follow a reported disclosure or suspicion of abuse.
- The remaining Voices of Colour personnel will have minimal face-to-face contact with participants; however, it is possible that a safeguarding disclosure may be made to them. Training includes: How to respond to a disclosure of abuse and escalate concerns within the organisation.

“Participants” in Voices of Colour:

- Safeguarding is covered in the Voices of Colour Training materials for mentors and ambassadors

BEHAVIOUR GUIDELINES FOR MENTORS & AMBASSADORS

Mentors perform an advisory role in support of students organised with Voices of Colour. Mentors would not interact with the beneficiaries of the Voices of Colour team project.

All mentors and ambassadors should:

- Set examples of appropriate behaviour and should avoid using sarcasm, discrimination negative criticism, labelling and so on.
- Positively encourage good behaviour and discourage inappropriate behaviour.
- Show respect for people at all times and be sensitive to the feelings of individuals.

All mentors and ambassadors should NOT:

- Physically punish/abuse anyone they are working with.
- Humiliate or belittle anyone they are working with.
- Use inappropriate language and humour or act in any way that could be considered offensive or inappropriate.
- Put themselves or anyone else in a position of risk.
- Attempt to make any contact with anyone they are working with or assigned to
- Take photographs, inappropriate or otherwise, without the permission of anyone they are working with.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Voices of Colour has guidelines surrounding confidentiality for both personnel and participants which are covered during relevant inductions. As part of this, Voices of Colour recognises the principle that the welfare of any personnel and participants overrides any obligations of confidence that may be held to others. Individual cases will only be shared or discussed on a “need to know” basis. In cases of disclosure of abuse by any person, all Voices of Colour personnel and participants are obliged to share the information with the Lead, for Safeguarding who may have to refer any concerns to appropriate authorities, organisations, or the police in an emergency.

RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURES OR CONCERNS

Immediate Response to A Person Disclosing Abuse Personnel and participants to whom a disclosure is made should:

- Ensure the person is safe.
- Stay calm.
- Listen carefully to what is said without interrupting.
- Allow the person to continue at her/his own pace.
- Explain that it is likely that the information will need to be shared with others – do not promise to keep secrets.
- Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned when an allegation has been made and is being investigated.
- Ask questions for clarification only and at all times avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer.
- Tell them what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared. All information, however seemingly insignificant, about any situation that gives rise for concern that a person might be suffering harm must be passed on.
- It is important to record the details of an allegation or reported incident regardless of whether or not a referral is subsequently made to a statutory authority. The report should be clear and factual since any information you have may be valuable to professionals investigating the incident and may, at some time in the future, be used as evidence in court.
- It is not the responsibility of Voices of Colour personnel or participants to investigate or to decide whether a person is being abused – merely to report discovery or suspicion of abuse to the Lead for Safeguarding, following the guidelines given in this policy. It is important that everyone in the organisation is aware that the person who first encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred – this is a task for professional agencies on a referral to them of concern about the person by the Lead for Safeguarding.
- An Incident Report should be sent to the Lead for Safeguarding at Voices of Colour by the fastest possible method.
- If the Lead for Safeguarding is not available, contact must be made with the Voices of Colour Director. Prompt action is paramount. The Lead for Safeguarding will then initiate the procedure for dealing with allegations of abuse. Wherever practicable, it is up to the Lead for Safeguarding, and the Lead for Safeguarding alone, to make contact with the necessary professional services e.g. social services, police.
- In the instance where the concern is related to the Lead for Safeguarding, the concern will be managed by the Voices of Colour Director.

A concern regarding suspected or likely abuse may become apparent by:

- First hand observations and concerns.
- Being told by another person that they have concerns about a person.
- A person discloses they have been abused.
- An abuser discloses they have abused
- A concern may also arise because of difficulties experienced by other people, for example: Domestic Violence incidents. Mental Health issues. Substance and Alcohol Abuse Incidents

Remember:

- Do not delay.
- Do not investigate.
- Seek advice from the Lead for Safeguarding.
- Make careful recording of anything observed or told.

The role of the Lead for Safeguarding when alerted to cases of allegation or disclosure of abuse are as follows:

- Receive information, directly or indirectly, from any participants or personnel regarding safeguarding concerns, and maintain accurate records of them.
- Assess the information promptly and carefully, clarifying or obtaining more information about the matter as appropriate (although no direct investigation with the person should take place).
- Consult initially with a statutory safeguarding agency such as the local social services department or health board, to test out any doubts or uncertainty about the concerns as soon as possible. This can be done directly or by authorising proxy if concern is raised in country.
- Investigate breaches of the Code of Conduct and take appropriate action.
- Oversee any investigations.
- Act promptly to protect the reputation of Voices of Colour, in consultation with members of the Senior Management Team, invoking disciplinary action in accordance with the procedure.

It is the responsibility of the Lead for Safeguarding to ensure that these procedures are rigorously adhered to. In the case that the Lead is implicated, the matter should be reported to another member of the Senior Management Team and managed as appropriate. With regards to disciplinary and grievance procedures, no steps will be taken until the concern has been fully discussed and a strategy agreed with the Lead for Safeguarding.

RECORD KEEPING

All records will be securely kept in a locked cabinet/drawer in the Voices of Colour office. Only the Lead and/or Deputy for safeguarding will have access and records will only be kept as long as necessary. All records will be written by the person with the concern within 24 hours, on headed paper or incident sheets, and will be factual and non-judgmental. It is helpful to record any known details of the adult involved e.g. name, address, date of birth etc. It is equally important to record the reasons for making the decision not to refer to social care services, or relevant authorities. Always sign, date and time these records.