

OUR POLICY ON SAFEGUARDING

What's this policy about?

Village Water prioritises safeguarding and will not tolerate any form of bullying, harassment or abuse (emotional, physical or sexual). We are proud to offer a safe and trusted environment for everyone we come into contact with. This includes staff, Trustees, volunteers, supporters and beneficiaries. We and our local partner organisations in Africa have appropriate policies in place to ensure staff, Trustees and volunteers are aware of safeguarding issues and procedures to enable them to identify and appropriately report any incidents according to a clear escalation ladder, without fear of repercussion. Policies are reviewed regularly, and staff in all countries are offered appropriate training and refresher course to uphold best practice.

This safeguarding policy is guided by the following principles:

- Partnership: Village Water works through local partners. Their safeguarding policies are robust, and they are required to inform us of any incidents arising and actions taken.
- Proportionality: Village Water does not work directly with beneficiaries in sub-Saharan Africa. We do not recruit staff or office volunteers under the age of 18. However, in specific cases where volunteers under the age of 18 wish to contribute, we allow their participation only under the direct supervision of a responsible adult who is accountable for the child's safety and welfare.
- Village Water respects the wishes and beliefs of everyone it comes into contact with and strives to achieve a culture whereby individuals feel able to report incidents and concerns.
- Accountability: Village Water has clear reporting procedures which are regularly reviewed and updated.

Is this policy part of my contract of employment?

No, and we can change this policy at any time, but if any changes are made, we'll always make you aware of them. We may also vary things like time limits, if we feel we need to.

Who's covered by this policy?

This policy applies to all employees, trustees, partners or anyone that we work with.

Who's responsible for this policy?

Everyone is responsible for the effective management of our safeguarding responsibilities.

Key safeguarding areas include:

- Bullying and harassment. See Appendix for link
- Whistleblowing. See Appendix for link
- Health & safety.
- Lone working.
- Code of Conduct.
- Data protection & cybersecurity.
- Fundraising events & risk assessment.
- Fundraising materials.
- Working from Home
- Radicalisation

Duty of care:

Village Water acknowledges that safeguarding goes beyond preventing bullying, harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse, and includes ensuring all people who come into contact with the organisation are safe, including healthy work practices & environment, adequate training & tools with which to perform their role, & protection from the misuse of personal data.

Village Water sets and promotes a safe organisational culture from recruitment through to reporting incidents.

- a) Recruitment: Village Water takes up references, checks any gaps in work history & check social media profiles of prospective employees.
- b) Policies and Procedures: staff, Trustees, and where appropriate, volunteers, are made aware, at their induction, of the Organisational Handbook, incorporating the Safeguarding Policy. These give guidance on grievance procedures and how to report any concerns. These documents are available at all times to staff and Trustees through the organisation's Sharepoint system. Volunteers are shown how to access them after induction.
- c) Office environment: Village Water operates an open plan office environment and encourages communication. Regular 1-1s give staff and volunteers the opportunity to raise any concerns. Staff also have the contact details for the Chair of Trustees in case they have concerns they cannot raise with the CEO.
- d) Lone working: Village Water is committed to ensuring the safety of its staff, Trustees and office volunteers when undertaking Village Water activities alone outside the office and there is a tracing system in operation. During the previous Government directive to work from home, new systems have been put in place to ensure adequate support for UK staff working in unfamiliar territory, including regular teams meetings which can be set up by any and all staff. New hybrid working practices are now available for all staff and these structures will be constantly reviewed with national guidelines for any future pandemic recurrence. Whenever staff members conduct meetings with donors, it is essential for them to inform their line managers about the schedule and location of the meeting, and to ensure they remain reachable during that time.
- e) Supporters: Village Water has a robust data protection policy in-line with the General Data Protection Regulation, overseen by our Privacy Officer.

Information on how we collect and store supporter data, how supporters can opt out or amend their details and our privacy policy are all publicly available on our website. In the event of a data breach, we have a process in place to rectify this & report to the relevant authorities in line with ICO requirements.

- f) Fundraising events: These are normally organised by supporters on behalf of Village Water. Where Village Water is responsible for organising an event, we ensure that the correct licenses and insurances are in place and a risk assessment carried out prior to the event to ensure staff, volunteer, and attendees' safety. For events that are not organized by Village Water but are held in support of our cause, it is imperative that they uphold our safeguarding principles and comply with all relevant local laws.
- g) Fundraising materials: Village Water uses staff, volunteer event attendee and beneficiary photos, names and case studies in its promotional materials including but not limited to, website, social media, annual review, proposals, and presentations. The following guidelines must be adhered to:
- h) Beneficiaries must be adequately dressed in photos. Any photos of inadequately dressed beneficiaries will be deleted from the Village Water photo database.
- i) Where person names are included in village reports to donors, Village Water asks donors to respect beneficiaries' privacy and not publish person and village names together, so that individual beneficiaries cannot be identified.
- j) Consent is sought from everyone, be they in the UK or in a village or school in Africa, for Village Water to use photos and case studies for reports and communications' materials.

Accountability

- a. This safeguarding policy is publicly available through our website.
- b. Village Water safeguarding and Trustee leads review the policy annually in line with changes in legislation or focus of activities. The Board discusses this prior to approval.
- c. Village Water recognises that Safeguarding is an organic and evolving practice and as such conducts annual training for staff and trustees.
- d. Staff, Trustees & volunteers (if appropriate) are required to sign that they have read the safeguarding policy and the linked policies as outlined in the 'Key safeguarding areas' above, contained within the Organisational and Trustee handbook to state that they understand their responsibilities. The lead Trustee and staff member for safeguarding attend regular training to ensure compliance and share this with the wider Board/team.
- e. It is the Board's responsibility to declare any safeguarding incidents which have occurred between board meetings.
- f. Local partners inform us of any safeguarding incidents at regular Safeguarding discussion/training meetings and submit an annual declaration as part of our Partnership Agreement with them. The reporting procedure for any incidents that could be considered a safeguarding issue is as follows:

Safeguarding Policy

1. Local partner staff to report any incident immediately internally according to your safeguarding reporting procedure
 2. Record in Logbook
 3. Within two weeks of incident email VW (CEO & Safeguarding lead) to let them know the details of the incident and the steps taken to resolve the issue or steps to be taken (Notify VW if they can assist with any specific incidents)
 4. If the incident was not dealt with on notice of incident, follow up with VW closing off the issue with the steps taken to resolve the incident.
 5. Review learnings and update policies where necessary on a 6 monthly schedule at safeguarding hub meetings or internally to learn from incidents and ensure future mitigation from past situations.
- g. Contact number for Louise Cook, lead Trustee on safeguarding for Village Water +44 7899 768 362

How to report a concern:

Staff and volunteers:

- In the first instance concerns relating to any safeguarding issues should be raised with the CEO. If this is not possible, either because the CEO is absent or is the subject of the concern, they should raise the concern with the lead Trustee on safeguarding whose contact details are above.
- The CEO will escalate concerns to the lead Trustee on safeguarding, who will review the incident form (see link below) discuss with the Chair of Trustees and, depending on the nature of the concern, notify the Charity Commission.
- An Incident form for any safeguarding &/or health & safety issues should be completed.

Trustees:

- Trustees should raise any concern with the lead Trustee on safeguarding in the first instance. If this is not possible because the lead Trustee on safeguarding is absent or is the subject of the concern, they should raise it with another member of the Trustee board with whom they feel comfortable.
- An incident form should be filled out and reviewed by the lead Trustee on safeguarding, who will in consultation with the Chair of Trustees depending on the nature of the concern, decide what action needs to be taken, including notifying the relevant authorities.

Immediate harm:

If a staff member, volunteer or Trustee witnesses a serious or immediate harm or threat of harm they should notify the relevant authorities (e.g. the police or social

service). Following this the CEO, the lead Trustee on safeguarding and Chair of Trustees should be notified, and an incident form filled out.

Learning outcomes:

A review of the safeguarding issue, using the incident form and staff/ trustee/ witnesses' reports should be completed within 4 weeks, learning outcomes noted and an action plan implemented to improve the service. This action plan would require yearly review until fully implemented.

Useful links

[Village Water safeguarding, complaint, grievance incident report form.docx](#)

[Village Water accident report form.docx](#)

[Whistle blowing policy.pdf](#)

[Anti-harassment, bullying and discrimination policy.pdf](#)

Reference:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-for-charities-and-trustees#have-suitable-policies-and-practices-in-place>

And that's it... for now

We understand that things change, so we'll continue to review the effectiveness of this policy and make sure it's achieving its objectives.

Next review: June 2025

Approved by Trustee board - 18 April 2024