

Safeguarding Policy

Introduction

MAITS is an international disability charity whose mission is to improve the lives of some of the world's poorest people with developmental disabilities and the lives of their families, through better access to and quality of health and education services and support.

The beneficiaries of MAITS' programmes are infants and children. We do not implement projects on our own but work with a range of partners including government, civil society actors and the private sector. It is our partners who work directly with infants and children. It is the responsibility of all MAITS staff to promote good safeguarding practice in our work and to share the policy, as appropriate, with external stakeholders. We have a zero-tolerance approach to harm, exploitation and abuse. This Safeguarding Policy provides clear definitions, sets standards across the organisation, and gives guidance on how to apply and implement the policy throughout the organisation and across our programmes. All MAITS representatives must abide by this policy and the Code of Conduct both within and outside working hours.

Risk background

MAITS works in a range of development and humanitarian contexts in which children and adults with disabilities can be at higher risk than the general population. MAITS notes with concern that children with disabilities are more than three times more likely to be abused than children without disabilities.¹ Adults with disabilities – especially women – are also highly vulnerable to experiencing abuse if safeguards are not in place. MAITS believes that every child and adult have the right to protection and to live in 'safe environments', regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, political association, religion, marital status, sexual orientation and whether or not they have a disability. It is our responsibility to make sure that all children and adults who come into contact with MAITS' programmes are safeguarded to the greatest extent possible.

¹ Hughes et al. 'Prevalence and Risk of Violence against Adults with Disabilities: A systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies', *Lancet*, 28 April 2012, doi:10.1016/S0410-6736(11)61851-5.

Who this policy applies to

This safeguarding policy is a mandatory policy that applies to all MAITS staff and others like consultants, contractors, board members, project visitors, interns and volunteers (hereafter referred to as MAITS Representatives). MAITS works very closely with and via partners and expects partners to uphold high standards of safeguarding based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child² and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities³.

What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding is the action that is taken to promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and to protect them from harm.

Safeguarding means:

- protecting children and vulnerable adults from abuse and maltreatment
- preventing harm to the health and development of children and vulnerable adults
- taking action to enable all children and vulnerable adults to have the best outcomes.⁴

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that MAITS' activities are implemented in a safe and protective environment where harm, exploitation and abuse are effectively prevented, as far as reasonably possible and responded to effectively.

The policy has three specific objectives:

1. Keeping children and adults safe.
2. Ensuring the highest standards of behaviour from representatives and minimising the risk of abusers entering the organisation.
3. Safeguarding the reputation of MAITS, including guarding MAITS' representatives from false allegations or from operating within an unclear framework.

MAITS is committed to keep everyone connected to our work safe, with a specific focus on children and people with a disability. MAITS' work is guided by:

- the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), with specific reference to article 19 on protection from all forms of violence, injury, exploitation, abuse, neglect, mistreatment and sexual abuse; and

² [Convention on the Rights of the Child | OHCHR](#)

³ [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities | OHCHR](#)

⁴ Adapted from NSPCC, [Safeguarding children and child protection | NSPCC Learning](#)

- the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) including its special provisions for the protection of children with disabilities from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (article 15) and exploitation and abuse, including gender-based violence (article 16).
- the recognition of the rights of children and adults with disabilities to access services, justice, and full participation in their communities, in line with the CRPD. This means that effective safeguarding from the additional risks faced by those with disabilities must not include preventing them from accessing these rights.
- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child which commits to protect the child from all forms of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment and especially physical or mental injury or abuse, neglect or maltreatment including sexual abuse (article 16) In all activities involving children, including fundraising, communications and programme activities, primary consideration should be given to children’s rights, following the four key principles of the CRC, namely, the “best interest” of the child, the child’s right to life and development, the child’s right to be heard/participate, and the child’s right to nondiscrimination.

Principles of Safeguarding

MAITS is committed to the six key principles that should underpin all safeguarding functions, actions and decisions, as set out by the UK Care Act 2014. These principles are relevant for both child and adult safeguarding.

1. **Empowerment.** People being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and provide informed consent.
2. **Prevention.** It is better to take action before harm occurs.
3. **Proportionality.** The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.
4. **Protection.** Support and representation for those in greatest need.
5. **Partnership.** Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.
6. **Accountability.** Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

Online Safeguarding

Online safeguarding is the protection we put in place as an organisation to ensure our representatives or online activities do not harm, exploit or abuse any individual connected to the work of MAITS.

No person should be harmed through the online activities of our representatives or organisation. This includes the use of all forms of social media. All MAITS’ staff and

consultants must abide by the Data Protection Policy, where more information on safe online conduct is outlined.

Ethical content collection

MAITS is committed to adhering to ethical guiding principles on communications to minimise the risks of people misusing photographs and related information beyond the agreed purpose and consent. The best interests of the featured adult or child are to be safeguarded as a primary consideration. To this effect, MAITS' representatives and partners will abide by the following guidelines:

- All programme participants must fully understand how, where and why we will use their content and understand any potential consequences of the content being made public or used online. Images, stories and messages about beneficiaries will present them in a dignified, respectful manner, portraying them as equal partners in the development process.
- Ensure all interviews and images of adults and children are undertaken with sensitivity to safeguard the individual's rights to dignity, identity, confidentiality, and privacy. Where possible individuals should be prepared for interviews prior to being interviewed. In the case of children, a parent or guardian should be present during interviews, where appropriate, or their permission sought beforehand for a professional adult with agreed responsibility (such as medical or educational professionals) to be present on their behalf.
- Pictures of adults and children should be decent and respectful and should not stigmatize community, family, or the individual. All children should wear decent clothing appropriate to the local custom.
- Prior consent to use information collected in interviews and/or images of adults and children should be obtained from the individual themselves (if they possess the maturity to do so), and in the case of children, consent must also be obtained from their parents and/or guardians. To help keep adults and children safe, consideration should be given to how much information is published. See the triangle of risk principle below.
- Pictures, materials and personal information regarding individuals will be held in a secure database and according to the appropriate MAITS' data security protocols. Access to these materials will be carefully controlled and shared by MAITS. The misuse of images accessed will be treated in the same way as other breaches of this policy. Applicable data protection laws for all stored images will be followed.
- MAITS and its partners are committed to guard carefully any information about adults and children who feature in their publications, ensuring that their personal data are used appropriately. This also applies when material is made available to third parties.

- Safeguarding is our priority when gathering stories, and we undertake rigorous procedures to remove or minimise any risk to the people we portray. We would not have the impact that we need if we never showed a persons' face, but that inevitably carries a degree of risk since a persons' face is traceable, particularly in an online world with ubiquitous access to information.

How do we minimise the risks?

- The triangle of risk principle is used, and we will never give any more than two of these pieces of information together: a persons' full name, image and location (exact location like school or village cannot be used - district can be used without counting as location information).
- In certain circumstances, and in consultation with the contributor and/or their family, we will also change a persons' name or use unidentifiable/partial imagery to further protect them.
- MAITS will review the appropriate use of images on a case-by-case basis, with the safety and wellbeing of the person being portrayed at the forefront.

Measures to implement this policy

The safeguarding policy requires the following steps for its implementation:

Clear Roles and Responsibilities for staff including the designation of a Safeguarding Lead.

Prevention measures including awareness raising, training of relevant staff, risk analysis, recruitment procedures, induction of staff in the policy and codes of conduct for MAITS' representatives.

Reporting and responding measures including steps for alerting and reporting safeguarding concerns, investigation and incident management, duties and responsibilities of assigned managers and the Safeguarding Lead.

Implementing and maintaining the policy, including training and capacity building of staff and partners, monitoring, reporting and review of the policy.

Roles and responsibilities

At the beginning of a potential partnership, **Project coordinators** collect due diligence documents from individual trainers and organisations. The **Director of Operations** then reviews the documents and confirms the eligibility of the trainer/organisation to partner with MAITS. For trainers, we collect two references or a referral from their most recent employer. (It is the responsibility of the organisation to have done due diligence on the individuals they are asking us to train).

Prevention

Staff recruitment

All recruitment of staff will include a full online induction to the safeguarding policy and code of conduct, including procedures to follow should any safeguarding concern arise. When recruiting staff, MAITS will make sure that questions regarding safeguarding are included in any relevant job interviews, and that any roles with safeguarding responsibilities have those responsibilities explicitly outlined within the job description. Where possible, references should be sought from previous employers to get more information on the suitability of candidates.

According to UK government guidance on disclosure and barring service (DBS) checks, the vast majority of roles at MAITS are ineligible for criminal records checks. Access to children is incidental to the work we carry out and is not part of any staff members' direct responsibilities. Our programmes are developed and delivered with partner organisations, and it is our partners who provide services, and work directly with beneficiaries. On the rare occasion that a role at MAITS would qualify for a DBS or equivalent criminal record check, this will be undertaken as part of the recruitment process.

All MAITS representatives will be required to acknowledge receipt of and compliance to the Safeguarding Policy and sign up to the Code of Conduct during their first week of employment.

Awareness

All MAITS representatives and partner organisations will be duly notified of the Safeguarding Policy and be made aware of how they will be expected to comply with it. The policy will be translated into the appropriate national languages where MAITS operate. It will be the responsibility of all MAITS staff to share the policy and approach as relevant to external stakeholders. MAITS will provide mandatory online training to all staff and trustees and will provide a recorded training to our partner organisations and trainers. MAITS will ensure all supporters, donors, sponsors and media representatives involved with MAITS' work have access to the Safeguarding Policy through its website and will take appropriate steps to communicate that availability.

Working with partners

When working with partners, MAITS will endeavour to ensure that the programmes it supports are safe for the infants and children they serve. To ensure that appropriate safeguarding measures have been put in place, MAITS will work with the partner to familiarise them with the safeguarding protocols, review their current safeguarding policies, and provide guidance on safeguarding matters.

Code of Conduct

The adherence to this code is mandatory for all MAITS representatives. Any violation of the Code of Conduct will result in disciplinary procedures in addition to any relevant legal action. To give maximum protection to beneficiaries, the organisation and staff, the Code of

Conduct is to be applied both within and outside of working hours. All partners and trainers in turn must sign a separate Code of Conduct at the stage when contracts are agreed and signed.

Reporting and responding to concerns

All Safeguarding concerns can be made to MAITS Safeguarding Lead, Sadia Mirza, in the following ways.

By email: sadia@maits.org.uk

- Mark the email as 'Urgent' and set it as 'High Importance'.
- The subject line should read: ATTENTION! Confidential.

By post: MAITS Director of Operations, 86/87 Wimpole Street, London, W1G 9RL

By telephone: +44 (0) 207 258 8443

MAITS will ensure that reporting and incident management procedures to handle safeguarding concerns are in place and effectively used to enable an appropriate and swift investigation of any given case. Any MAITS representative who has a concern or suspicion regarding harm, exploitation or abuse by someone representing MAITS or another agency must report such concerns to the Safeguarding Lead.

Confidentiality

All safeguarding notifications will be treated and managed with confidentiality to protect the identity of those concerned, in accordance with European Union data protection and national laws as applicable.

Procedures to be followed in the case of an incident

Agreed procedures to be followed are outlined in Appendix 1.

Consequences of harm, exploitation, or abuse

Any behaviour towards children which results in harm, exploitation or abuse, or the failure to follow the general requirements and specific code of conduct of this policy, is grounds for the following measures:

- **Representatives:** If an employee has been under investigation by MAITS or by official law enforcement authorities for any area of harm, exploitation or abuse as defined under this policy, they will be subject to employee disciplinary procedures. Under these procedures they may be temporarily suspended during the investigation. If an employee is dismissed for proven harm, exploitation, or abuse, MAITS will inform the relevant authorities, disclose this to prospective future employers and/or refuse a reference, depending on details.
- **Consultants:** If a concern is raised alleging that a consultant contracted by MAITS was found to be in breach of the Code of Conduct or Safeguarding Policy, this would be reviewed and investigated by MAITS' HR and Safeguarding leads, who would then

make recommendations on appropriate action, such as termination of contract and referral to appropriate 3rd parties.

- **Trustees:** If a concern is raised alleging that a MAITS' trustee was found to be in breach of the Code of Conduct or Safeguarding Policy, this would be raised with the Chairperson, to be reviewed and investigated. Once investigated, recommendations on appropriate action would be submitted to the Board for approval.
- **Partner organisations:** Appropriate action will be taken up to and including immediate termination of a partnership or service agreement. In this case, the short or long-term impact on beneficiaries of the termination of a partnership will be considered.

Implementation and Review

MAITS will integrate safeguarding measures into relevant core internal processes and tools such as programme technical guidelines, partner assessments and agreements, training modules, programme design, monitoring and accountability systems and recruitment procedures. MAITS will make sure that proper induction and training in safeguarding will be made available to all staff, permanent and temporary, consultants and volunteers. Where relevant, MAITS will support partner organisations by including relevant training and technical advice to build capacity in the field of safeguarding, with a particular focus on children with disabilities. The policy will be monitored on a regular basis by the Safeguarding Lead.

Review

A full policy review should take place every three years, instigated and led by the Safeguarding Lead, to include a review of external changes to safeguarding standards that apply nationally and internationally.

Associated policies

Code of Conduct

Data Protection Policy

Disclosure of Malpractice in the workplace – Whistleblowing Policy

Complaints Policy

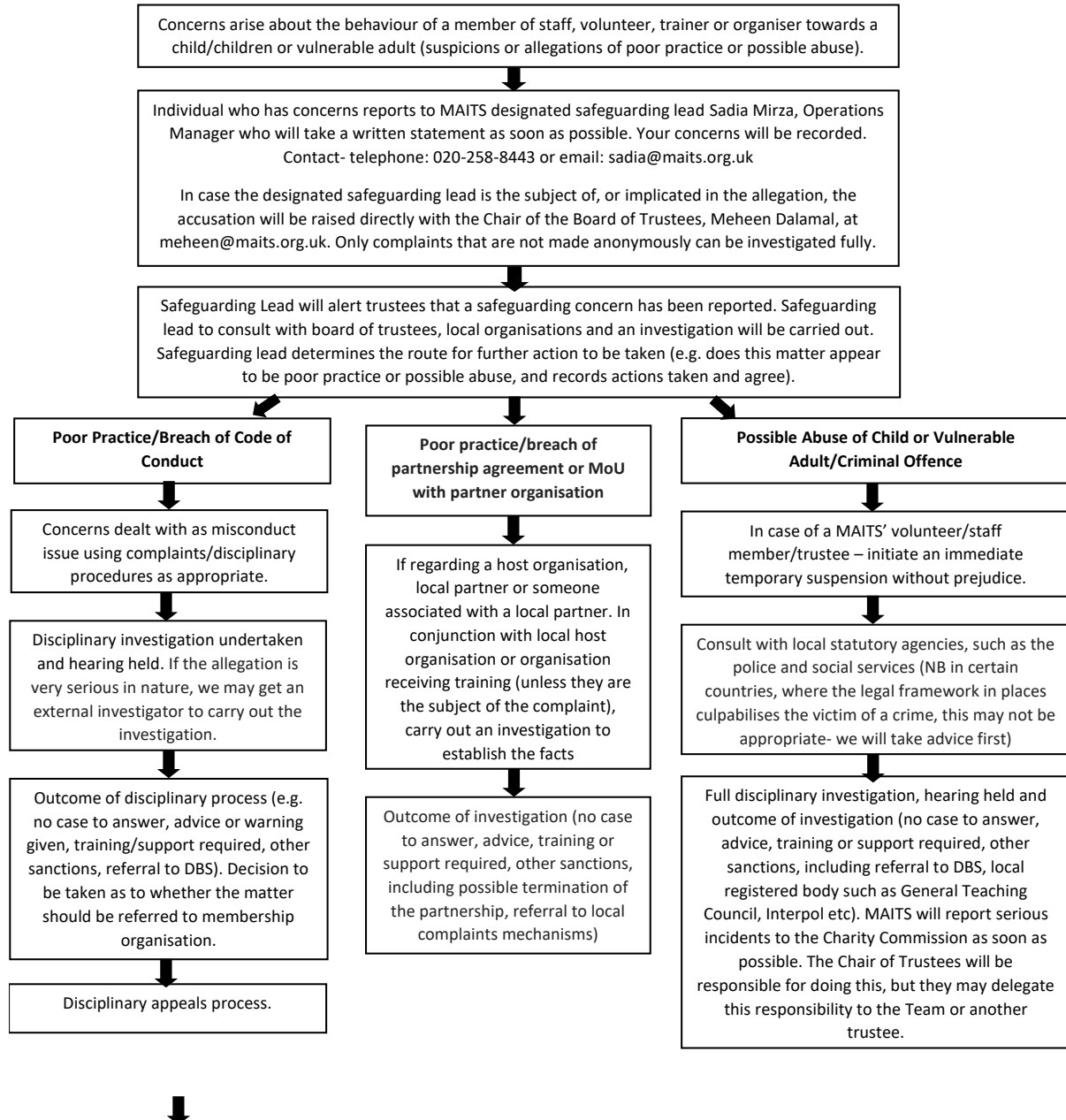
Disciplinary Policy

Grievance Policy

Appendix 1 – Safeguarding Procedure Flowchart

MAITS Outline safeguarding procedure concerns

This one-page document outlines what you should do if you have any safeguarding concerns about a child or vulnerable adult or exploitation or abuse.



**Concerns about children, young persons and vulnerable adults outside of training
(e.g. at home, school or in the community)**

