





BLESMA SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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Approval			
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BLESMA - SAFEGUARDING POLICY
(September 2024)

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References:

- A. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 updated 2023.
- B. The Care Act 2014.
- C. Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.
- D. Sexual Offences Act 2003.
- E. Equality Act 2010.
- F. Mental Health Act 2005.
- G. The Children’s Act 1989 and 2004. (Children and Social Work Act 2017)
- H. Gov.UK – Charities: how to protect vulnerable groups including children, 23 May 2013.
- I. Office of the Public Guardian Safeguarding Policy, May 2013.
- J. Gov.uk - Disclosure and Barring Service Eligibility Guide.
- K. Blesma Staff Handbook.
- L. Blesma Complaints Policy 2020.
- M. Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- N. Blesma whistleblowing Policy 2020.
- O. Human Rights Act 1998
- P. Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999
- Q. Domestic Violence, Crimes and Victims Act 2004 (amended 2012)
- R. Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards 2009
- S. Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- T. Care and Support Guidance issues under the Care Act 2014

1. Safeguarding and Blesma

Blesma maintains an unwavering commitment to excellence in safeguarding practices, prioritising the protection of individuals within its community. This dedication reflects broader obligations upheld by charities, as emphasized by the Charity Commission. Under the guidance of Blesma's board of trustees, a culture of fairness, openness, and positivity prevails, fostering an environment where all members feel empowered to identify and report concerns confidently, thus facilitating continuous improvement.

The board of trustees assumes overall responsibility for safeguarding individuals who interact with the charity, including beneficiaries, staff, volunteers, and other stakeholders. To fulfil this responsibility, Blesma adheres to several key practices:

1. Establishment of comprehensive policies and procedures, ensuring adherence by all stakeholders.

2. Integration of safeguarding principles into the organisation's culture, clarifying roles and responsibilities.
3. Implementation of rigorous checks and induction processes to verify suitability for roles.
4. Provision of guidance, training, and support to enable effective identification and handling of concerns.
5. Establishment of clear referral and reporting mechanisms, involving external agencies when necessary.
6. Regular review and updating of policies, guidance, and training materials.
7. Definition of clear lines of accountability and governance for safeguarding.
8. Implementation of systematic processes for investigating and reviewing major incidents or failures.
9. Commitment to staying informed about relevant statutory guidance, good practice, and legislation.

This includes:

- Members of the Armed Forces Community (AFC) and their families.
- Staff
- Volunteers, both fundraisers and skills based.
- People who come into contact with the charity through its work.
- Stakeholders and Partner agencies.

Blesma ensures it is meeting its safeguarding responsibilities by:

- Having appropriate policies and procedures in place, which are followed by all trustees, staff, volunteers, AFC and families, and other identified stakeholders.
- Making sure safeguarding is central to the charity's culture and that everyone knows their role and responsibility regarding safeguarding.
- Ensuring all staff are DBS checked to the appropriate level to evidence staff and volunteers are suitable to act in their roles.
- Ensuring quality staff induction.
- Providing guidance, training, and support so everyone knows how to identify and handle concerns in a full and open manner.
- Defining clear systems of referring or reporting as appropriate, including involving external agencies, if and when necessary.
- Identifying a systematic process for reviewing policies / guidance and a schedule for updating training.
- Setting out the lines of accountability and governance for safeguarding.
- Providing a clear process of investigation and review for major incidents or when things go wrong.

- Keeping up to date with statutory guidance, good practice guidance and legislation relevant to the charity's safeguarding function.

2. Policy statement

Blesma is deeply committed to fostering a safe and nurturing environment that prioritises the welfare and well-being of all individuals associated with the Charity. This encompasses beneficiaries, staff (including partner organizations), and volunteers. Safeguarding, to us, transcends mere policy; it embodies a mindset and ethos guiding our actions and interactions. Our safeguarding principles are guided by the following key considerations:

- Empowerment
- Prevention
- Proportionality
- Protection
- Partnership
- Accountability

The Trustees recognise their ultimate responsibility in ensuring that individuals engaging with the Charity are shielded from harm and treated with dignity, respect, and appropriateness. This responsibility is especially pertinent concerning individuals who may be temporarily or permanently vulnerable, such as the elderly, adults requiring support or care, or those susceptible to harassment or intimidation. Additionally, it extends to young people, who are under 18 years of age.

1. The welfare and safety of the person at risk is Vital. All vulnerable people, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
2. The Charity is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity. Blesma's Equal Opportunities Policy aims to eliminate all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination, both direct and indirect, from its employment practices.
3. The Charity takes all reasonable measures to protect its beneficiaries and supporters and complies with the Institute of Fundraising guidance on treating donors fairly. The Charity will never exploit vulnerability and will do everything it can to ensure that potential donors are able to make an informed decision about the support they choose to give.

[Blesma Vulnerable Supporter Policy - reviewed August 2024.pdf](#)

4. Blesma is routinely engaged in face-to-face activities with its Members and works through third parties. The Charity ensures that appropriate due diligence is carried out on these third-party organisations, ensuring that they have appropriate systems in place, including adequate safeguarding policies and procedures.
5. Safeguarding is at the centre of all we do in order to promote a fair, open and positive culture where all who are involved feel able to report concerns, confident they will be heard and responded to without avoidance. All staff, the Board of Trustees, volunteers, Members

or those working on behalf of Blesma are required to demonstrate full commitment to safeguarding “Making safeguarding everyone’s Business”.

6. This safeguarding policy is reinforced by a third line assurance from an external safeguarding advisor, guaranteeing that the information remains current and accurate at the time of review. any recommendation is brought to the board ahead of their approval

7. This policy should be read alongside Blesma’s Employee Handbook (Ref K).

3. Safeguarding and you

Safeguarding is a collective duty, with each individual playing a pivotal role. It encompasses the promotion of general safety and wellbeing, alongside taking extra measures to shield those who are less capable of defending themselves against harm or mistreatment. **Every member of staff, volunteer, and other stakeholders** within the charity bears the responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of everyone they interact with through the charity's activities.

Safeguarding means protecting a person’s right to live in safety and free from abuse or neglect.

Given the integral nature of safeguarding within the charity's operations, it is crucial that you possess the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfil our safeguarding obligations, in adherence to legal and regulatory requirements. This policy, along with its accompanying guidance on various safeguarding facets, mandates that you keep your knowledge current. Additionally, it is your duty to ensure compliance with all the training and ongoing refresher courses pertinent to your role, as outlined in the Safeguarding Training Schedule.

[Safeguarding Guidance Manual V2 09012024.pdf](#)

4. Safeguarding adults

The Care Act of 2014 delineates the criteria for identifying an 'adult at risk.' This term refers to individuals who are considered to need extra protective measures as they may not be capable of securing such protection on their own. According to safeguarding legislation, an adult at risk is characterised as anyone aged 18 or above who:

- Has needs for care and support (whether the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and;
- Is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
- As a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.

It is important to note that being an “adult at risk” can be temporary or changeable and there are other risk factors to consider –

- Mental health and psychological factors (capacity)
- Alcohol or substance misuse
- Domestic abuse

- Physical dependency, for example during a period of rehabilitation
- Low self esteem
- Previous abuse as an adult or child

While it is not possible to solely classify Blesma's beneficiaries as "at risk," according to the stipulations of the Care Act 2014, some individuals utilising our services are consistently categorised as such. This group encompasses Armed Forces Community members grappling with severe mental health conditions, intricate comorbid situations (simultaneous occurrence of multiple diseases or disorders), those suffering from acquired or traumatic brain injuries, and individuals who are physically reliant due to injuries sustained.

Numerous individuals may temporarily cross this threshold due to life's vicissitudes. It is imperative to acknowledge that upon such an occurrence, adherence to the established Safeguarding protocol. (as delineated in the Safeguarding Guidance Manual).

Some other categories that may put someone at risk are relationships, being socially isolated, a sense of duty or being lonely, being radicalised (this list is not exhaustive).

5. Safeguarding children [\(See guidance Manual for further information\)](#)

Blesma has a duty to comply with legislation and statutory guidance to keep children safe The Children's Act 1989 and 2004 Children Act (Children and Social Work Act 2017). Safeguarding Children means protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development, ensuring that children grow up with safe and effective care, and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

[Children Act 1989: care planning, placement and case review - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The Department for Education (DfE) published a new edition of its statutory guidance Working together to safeguard children in December 2023.

This 2023 edition replaces Working together to safeguard children 2018, which underwent a limited factual update in 2020.

The guidance outlines what organisations and agencies must and should do to help, protect and promote the welfare of all children and young people under the age of 18 in England.

This briefing outlines the main changes in the 2023 edition, including updates around:

- multi-agency expectations for all practitioners
- working with parents and families
- clarifying the roles and responsibilities of safeguarding partners
- the role of education and childcare providers
- multi-agency practice standards
- support for disabled children
- tackling harm that occurs outside the home.

The opportunity of this policy and accompanying guidance ensures that Blesma staff, parents/carers, trustees, volunteers, and the wider community understand their responsibilities, can recognise, and prevent risks, and know what action to take to protect children should the need arise

6. Safeguarding Principles

All safeguarding within Blesma is based on working within the following principles:

- a. **Empowerment.** Blesma supports, empowers and encourages that decisions will be led by the individual where possible, without influence or coercion. No matter how complex the person's needs, Blesma will work to empower all individuals where safeguarding may be a concern and put them at the centre of their safety and wellbeing (noting Reference B)
- b. **Protection.** Blesma where appropriate, will provide support and representation for those in need so they can take action.
- c. **Prevention.** Blesma will be proactive in preventing harm, neglect or abuse to its' Members, their families, children, staff, volunteers, and all who come in contact in support of our charitable activities and support. Blesma will work on the premise it is better to act than allow harm to occur to report than under report to protect those with concerns.
- d. **Proportionality.** Blesma will adopt a least invasive and therapeutic approach appropriate and proportional to the risk that is presented.
- e. **Partnerships.** Where appropriate, we will seek to engage and collaborate using safe sharing using the 7 golden rules of information sharing with the member with concern where they consent to the appropriate authorities, agencies and other charities to provide appropriate and timely solutions for our members.
- f. **Accountability.** Blesma will advocate an open and transparent approach to safeguarding recognising its' responsibilities to its Members and staff to work within all appropriate legal frameworks in discharging its responsibilities. Good safeguarding practices requires openness, transparency, and trust. Blesma's "duty of candour" to our beneficiaries will involve us being open where mistakes have been where a desired support outcome has not been achieved, apologise where appropriate, and advise on any action taken as a result.
- g. **Safeguarding Adults.** The Care Act (2014) sets out what constitutes an 'adult at risk'. Adult at risk is the term used to describe those deemed to require additional protection measures because they may be unable to ensure this for themselves. Under safeguarding law, an adult at risk is defined as a person 18 and over who:

- (1) Has needs for care and support (whether the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and:
 - (a) Is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect.

- (b) As a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.
- (c) It is important to note that being an “adult at risk” can be temporary or changeable and there are other risk factors to consider:
 - i. Mental health and psychological factors (capacity).
 - ii. Alcohol or substance misuse.
 - iii. Physical dependency.
 - iv. Low self-esteem.
 - v. Previous abuse as an adult or child.

18. Although beneficiaries of Blesma cannot exclusively be categorised “at risk”, under the provisions of the Care Act (2014), there are those whom we support, who are permanently within this category and many others who will variously cross this threshold on a temporary basis. These include Members with serious mental illness, complex comorbid (presence of one or more diseases or disorders co-occurring concurrently) presentations, individuals with acquired brain injury and those physically dependent due to injury. Likewise, it is important to recognise that others also may be more at risk because of their relationships, being socially isolated, a sense of duty or being lonely (this list is not exhaustive).

19. **Operating Procedures.** To ensure we respond to a safeguarding incident effectively and in a consistent way, the following will be adopted:

a. **Recognise.** Blesma staff and volunteers should be alert to the early signs of abuse and utilise their training to identify the difference between “banter” and offensive behaviour, understanding that perception and the thresholds of individuals are a significant factor in determining the signs of abuse and neglect. Blesma adopts a zero-tolerance approach to abuse.

b. **Respond.** Gather information about the specific concern / allegation and the current circumstances of the individual(s) who are felt to be vulnerable and present a safeguarding risk. If in doubt, take action to ensure the safety and welfare of the individual(s). If medical attention or Police attention is required, call the emergency services on 999.

c. **Report.** At the earliest opportunity, the incident should be reported, if appropriate, to the relevant statutory authority and then to a Blesma member of management. The DSL or a member of the Safeguarding Team will then if appropriate inform DIW and CE without delay once the incident has been reported appropriately.

d. **Children.** Safeguarding Children means protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of children’s mental and physical health or development, ensuring that children grow up with safe and effective care, and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes. The scope of this policy and accompanying Safeguarding guidance manual ensures that Blesma staff, parents/carers, trustees, volunteers, and the wider community understand their responsibilities and know what action to take to protect children should the need arise.

- e. **Care Homes.** Blesma conducts annual and ad hoc reviews of members that reside in care homes that we fund. In doing so, the due diligence procedure requires having sight of the care homes latest CQC inspection and a detailed form that requires information regarding safeguarding incidents in the past year. The DSL and the DIW ensure that there is an annual review to ensure oversight of each care home.
- f. Where it is felt concerns within a care home are not being heard, concerns can be raised to the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on 03000 616161.
- g. **Whistleblowing.** Whistleblowing is “making a disclosure in the public interest” and occurs when an employee raises a concern about a dangerous or illegal action by employees or volunteers that affects staff, Blesma’s Members or the general public. Blesma encourages “whistleblowing” so staff feel confident they can report a wrongdoing or suspected wrongdoing knowing they are protected. Details are contained in the Blesma staff handbook at Reference 1. Page 9 1.5.
[Blesma new handbook FINAL 01_05_2024 - FINAL v3.pdf](#)
- h. All staff need to be aware of their duty to raise concerns, where they exist, relating to safeguarding. These may include the attitude or actions / inactions of colleagues, poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the charity’s safeguarding arrangements.
- i. **Refer.** Where appropriate, the incident will be referred externally, without delay, to the appropriate safeguarding local authority using Blesma’s incident reporting form (Annex B). The issue with all relevant correspondence may be referred for independent legal advice and potentially reported to the Charity Commission.
- j. **Record.** Details pertaining to the incident should be captured and a report, produced (using the form at Annex B) and forwarded to the DSL and DIW for initial action and potential external referral.

7. What is Abuse? [\(See guidance manual for further information\)](#)

Care and support statutory guidance identify 10 categories of abuse. Additionally, Blesma includes cyber abuse.

Abuse is a violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by another person or persons. Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, mental, illegal personal gain at the expense of a beneficiary, as the result of an action, or inaction. Abuse is about the misuse of power and control that one person has over another. Where there is dependency, there is a possibility of abuse or neglect unless adequate safeguards are put in place. It is important to acknowledge that abuse may be carried out deliberately or unknowingly. Abuse may be a single act, or a series continued over a protracted period and come from people from all walks of life.

- **Physical abuse:** including assault, hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, pulling hair, biting, pushing, scalding and burning, physical punishments, inappropriate or unlawful use of restraint, making someone purposefully uncomfortable (e.g. opening a window and removing blankets) misuse of medication, involuntary isolation or

confinement, forcible feeding or withholding food, unauthorised restraint, restricting movement.

- **Sexual abuse:** including rape, attempted rape or sexual assault, Inappropriate touch anywhere, non-consensual masturbation of either or both persons, non-consensual sexual penetration of the vagina, anus or mouth, any sexual activity that the person lacks the capacity to consent to, inappropriate looking, sexual teasing or innuendo or sexual harassment, sexual photography or forced of photography or witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure
- **Psychological or Emotional abuse:** including Enforced social isolation – preventing someone accessing services, educational and social opportunities and seeing friends, Removing mobility or communication aids or intentionally leaving someone unattended when they need assistance, Preventing someone from meeting their religious and cultural needs, Preventing the expression of choice and opinion, Failure to respect privacy, Preventing stimulation, meaningful occupation or activities, Intimidation, coercion, harassment, use of threats, humiliation, bullying, swearing or verbal abuse, Addressing a person in a patronising or infantilising way, Threats of harm or abandonment, Cyber bullying.
- **Financial or Material abuse:** including Theft of money or possessions, Fraud, scamming, Preventing a person from accessing their own money, benefits or assets, Employees taking a loan from a person using the service, Undue pressure, duress, threat or undue influence put on the person in connection with loans, wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, Arranging less care than is needed to save money to maximise inheritance, Denying assistance to manage/monitor financial affairs, Denying assistance to access benefits, Misuse of personal allowance in a care home, Misuse of benefits or direct payments in a family home, Someone moving into a person's home and living rent free without agreement or under duress, False representation, using another person's bank account, cards or documents, Exploitation of a person's money or assets, e.g. unauthorised use of a car, Misuse of a power of attorney, deputy, appointee ship or other legal authority, Rogue trading – e.g. unnecessary or overpriced property repairs and failure to carry out agreed repairs or poor workmanship
- **Domestic:** including physical / psychological violence, financial abuse, emotional, coercive control, harassment, stalking, on-line / digital abuse, Gas lighting, Honour based abuse, Female genital mutilation (FGM) forced marriage.
- **Neglect and Acts of Omission:** including Failure to provide or allow access to food, shelter, clothing, heating, stimulation and activity, personal or medical care, providing care in a way that the person dislikes. Failure to administer medication as prescribed, Refusal of access to visitors, Not taking account of individuals' cultural, religious or ethnic needs, Not taking account of educational, social and recreational needs, Ignoring or isolating the person, Preventing the person from making their own decisions, preventing access to glasses, hearing aids, dentures, etc., Failure to ensure privacy and dignity.
- **Discriminatory abuse:** including Unequal treatment based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex or sexual orientation (known as ['protected characteristics'](#))

[under the Equality Act 2010](#)), Verbal abuse, derogatory remarks or inappropriate use of language related to a protected characteristic, Denying access to communication aids, not allowing access to an interpreter, signer or lip-reader, Harassment or deliberate exclusion on the grounds of a protected characteristic, Denying basic rights to healthcare, education, employment and criminal justice relating to a protected characteristic, Substandard service provision relating to a protected characteristic.

- **Institutional or Organisational:** including Discouraging visits or the involvement of relatives or friends, Run-down or overcrowded establishment, Authoritarian management or rigid regimes, Lack of leadership and supervision, Insufficient staff or high turnover resulting in poor quality care, Abusive and disrespectful attitudes towards people using the service, Inappropriate use of restraints, Lack of respect for dignity and privacy, Failure to manage residents with abusive behaviour, Not providing adequate food and drink, or assistance with eating, Not offering choice or promoting independence, Misuse of medication, Failure to provide care with dentures, spectacles or hearing aids, Not taking account of individuals' cultural, religious or ethnic needs, Failure to respond to abuse appropriately, Interference with personal correspondence or communication, Failure to respond to complaints.
- **Modern Slavery:** Human trafficking, Forced labour, Domestic servitude, Sexual exploitation, such as escort work, prostitution and pornography, Debt bondage – being forced to work to pay off debts that realistically they never will be able to.
- **Self-neglect:** including Lack of self-care to an extent that it threatens personal health and safety, Neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings, Inability to avoid self-harm, Failure to seek help or access services to meet health and social care needs, Inability or unwillingness to manage one's personal affairs, diet, hoarding, insanitary or squalid living conditions, neglecting household maintenance.
- **Cyber abuse:** including grooming, incitement, bullying, fraud, Artificial Intelligence AI), radicalisation.

Knowing what to look out for is vital to the identification of risk factors or abuse. The schedule of training and safeguarding guidance manual which compliment this policy are essential in supporting with this. If someone is unsure, advice is available through the designated safeguarding lead.

8. AI (Artificial Intelligence) and Safeguarding.

While we acknowledge the potential benefits of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in supporting our safeguarding efforts, it's important to recognise and address potential risks. AI systems, while capable of processing large amounts of data, may introduce biases or errors that could lead to incorrect assessments or unintended consequences. Additionally, relying solely on AI may overlook important contextual factors crucial in safeguarding interventions.

Therefore, we are committed to carefully evaluating the ethical implications and potential risks associated with AI implementation in our safeguarding practices. We will implement robust safeguards, including regular checks, transparent decision-making processes, and ongoing training for our staff and stakeholders involved in using AI. Moreover, we emphasise the importance of maintaining human oversight to ensure accountability, fairness, and ethical conduct in all AI-assisted safeguarding activities.

By proactively addressing the potential dangers associated with AI, we aim to utilise its benefits responsibly while prioritising the safety and well-being of all individuals within our Blesma community." If someone is unsure, advice is available through the designated safeguarding lead.

9. Taking action [\(See guidance Manual for further information\)](#)

Safeguarding is primarily about **preventing** the risk of harm, abuse, or exploitation. Therefore, in addition to this policy, this principle is a central consideration across all Blesma policies and standard practices. This list includes, but is not exhaustive, safer recruitment, risk assessment, recovery services assessment and action planning, data and digital management, professional standards and boundaries, complaints, and whistle-blowing policies.

'Safeguarding means protecting a person's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, while at the same time making sure that the person's wellbeing is promoted including, where appropriate, having regard to their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs in deciding on any action.'

Care and Support Statutory Guidance, Department of Health, updated February 2017.

Where risk or abuse is identified Blesma staff, contractors and volunteers will ensure that their work reflects the principles, outlined in section 2, and ensure the person is involved in their decisions and informed consent is obtained. It is essential to ensure that the safeguarding action agreed is the least intrusive response to the risk. Relevant partners from the community should be involved in any safeguarding work to prevent, detect, or report neglect and abuse. Any decisions or action taken by Blesma in relation to safeguarding will be transparent and accountable in delivering safeguarding actions.

Staff, contractors, and volunteers who have any safeguarding concerns should:

1. Respond

- Take emergency action if someone is at immediate risk of harm/in need of urgent medical attention. Dial 999 for emergency services.
- If a crime has been committed contact the police and preserve any forensic evidence
- Get details and be curious about what has happened and what the person's wishes are, but do not probe or conduct a mini-investigation.

- Where possible seek consent from the person to act and to report the concern. Consider whether the person may lack capacity to make decisions about their own and other people's safety and wellbeing. If a decision is made to act against their wishes or without their consent, a record of this, and the reasons, must be kept.

2. Record

- As far as possible, records should be written contemporaneously, dated, and signed.
- All safeguarding recording is held in the safeguarding area of the Blesma' client management system, *Icaris*.
- Until such time that records can be uploaded to Icaris, records about safeguarding concerns should be held confidentially and in a location where unauthorised persons will not have access to the record. Access to such confidential information should not be given to any unauthorised person, including the sharing of passwords.

3. Report

- Reports of safeguarding concerns or incidents must be reported to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead** as soon as possible and within 24 hours.
- Reports are made following Icaris user & non-Icaris user process for reporting. All reports should be written on the safeguarding concern proforma and sent to dsl@blesma.org.

Link to guides and concern forms

4. Refer

Where possible this will be done in consultation with, or by, the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

In deciding whether to refer or not, the following is to be considered:

- (1) The person's wishes and preferred outcome
- (2) Whether the person has mental capacity to make an informed decision about their own and others' safety
- (3) The safety or wellbeing of children or other adults with care and support needs
- (4) Whether there is a person in a position of trust involved
- (5) Whether a crime has been committed

This will inform the decision whether to notify the concern to the following people:

- the police if a crime has been committed and/or
- Local Authority Adult or Children's Services

- relevant regulatory bodies such as Care Quality Commission, Ofsted, Charities commission
- service commissioning teams
- family/relatives as appropriate

A record should be included on Icaris of the reasons for referring the concern or reasons for not referring.

Who to go to with a concern? (See safeguarding team contact list at end of document).

Blesma's **Designated Safeguarding Lead** is Colin Branch, Head of Welfare Support.

All staff, contractors and volunteers are responsible for following the additional guidance on responding to and recording safeguarding concerns.

All staff, contractors, and volunteers should contact The Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Safeguarding Lead for any concerns/queries they have in regard to safeguarding.

Working with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, the safeguarding team will also ensure that the safeguarding policies and procedures are in operation and up to date across the various regions / departments of the charity. They will promote a safe environment for all and ensure compliance with the training and refresher schedule.

Raising Prevent concerns. Where radicalisation of an individual is suspected, the concern should be raised with the DSL and completed safeguarding pro-forma submitted. The report form will form the basis of a referral to the local Authority or prompt a call to the police who will then follow this up by taking the information to the Channel Panel for consideration. The Channel Panel addresses all types of extremism including the extreme-right and religious fundamentalism. If left unsupported, could lead adults and children to being radicalised and ultimately involved in terrorist-related activity. Free online Prevent training can be found by following the link below:

<https://www.elearning.prevent.homeoffice.gov.uk/edu/screen1.html>

Safeguarding in the Devolved Nations & Overseas – Although the principles and approach to safeguarding are generally universal across the UK (United Kingdom) there are some notable differences in statutory frameworks, definitions and the bodies which deal with safeguarding referrals. As Blesma operates across all UK nations and overseas there is additional information for colleagues in the Safeguarding Guidance Manual.

Members who reside outside of the United Kingdom will not have access/immediate access to services in the UK. There may be difficulties with language barriers and identifying services in their chosen location. Where Safeguarding is a concern for Members, Children and Carers Overseas, staff are directed to engage directly with the relevant British Embassy or FCO via <https://www.gov.uk/world/embassies> where support and advice can be provided about access to local services.

10. Zero Tolerance, Exclusions, Restricted Access.

At times, some of our service users will occasionally present with high-risk complex issues, which could include criminal convictions, aggressive presentation, and complex mental health issues.

Blesma is committed to providing excellent service and support to our veteran community where everyone is entitled to be treated respectfully and courteously in a polite manner and we respond professionally and sympathetically to those seeking support. However, aggressive behaviour, be it violent or abusive, will not be tolerated and may result in membership being removed from or restricted to different levels of support and, in extreme cases, the Police being contacted.

As an employer, Blesma has a duty of care for the health and wellbeing of its staff. Colleagues have a right to care for others without fear of being attacked or abused. To successfully provide these services a mutual respect between all the staff and service users must be in place.

Within this policy is a strategy to support staff and volunteers proactively and manage behaviour that is illegal inappropriate or against our code of conduct. It is designed to ensure staff can work without fear of abuse, violence, threats, or harassment.

If there is an identified risk towards colleagues and other service users a decision regarding restricting access to services will be made through the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Safeguarding MDT team. These decisions will not be made in isolation, but by 2 or more decision makers from the Safeguarding team. Should any decisions need to be made out of hours (non-urgent and would not meet the Critical Incident criteria) then the Designated Safeguarding Lead has the authority to make decisions that will remain until the next working day when a joint decision can be made.

Any membership removal is carried of by the governance subcommittee and then the Board of trustees.

Also see rules and articles of the association

removal of membership in accordance with Blesma's Articles of Association and Rules 2021 Rule 4.4 as follows:

- 4.4 Termination of Membership. Membership is terminated if: ... (d) the Member is removed from membership by a resolution of the Trustees that it is in the best interests of the Charity that his or her or its membership is terminated

11. Safeguarding concerns relating to staff & volunteers.

Blesma appoints colleagues in accordance with its Safer Recruitment Policy. Moreover, the charity is committed to ensuring that any allegations against staff are addressed promptly, thoroughly, and impartially.

In such circumstances, HR manager with pertinent managers to promptly conduct a risk assessment for all involved. This includes determining whether individuals can safely continue in their current or any other role within the service during an investigation. A member of the SMT supervises this investigation, which is conducted in partnership with the Head of Welfare, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy), and any other necessary staff, as part of the disciplinary proceedings.

Should there be suspicion of a staff member or volunteer committing a criminal act, or if a crime is observed, police involvement will ensue, along with any other relevant referrals such as LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) or DBS Service.

It's also vital to acknowledge that staff may sometimes be susceptible to harm or abuse. In these events, the HR Manager will support the affected staff member and liaise with line managers as needed.

12. Recording, information sharing and confidentiality.

All safeguarding details pertaining to recipients of charity services are securely stored within the safeguarding section of Icaris. The oversight and access to this function of Icaris are governed by the Designated Safeguarding Lead alongside the safeguarding MDT team.

The safeguarding data regarding staff members are maintained within the personnel record systems, under the supervision of the HR Manager.

Information on non-service users or third parties linked to safeguarding is handled separately from Icaris, in line with the data protection laws for sensitive or special category data, as directed by the Data Protection Officer (DPO).

When there are concerns regarding a person at risk, sharing information promptly and effectively among professionals and organisations can mitigate the risk of harm. Although the Data Protection Act 2018 imposes obligations on organisations and individuals to process personal data fairly and lawfully, it does not hinder the sharing of information when not doing so could place a child or an adult at risk of harm. Likewise, concerns over human rights, such as the right to privacy and family life, do not preclude sharing information when genuine safeguarding issues are present.

Hence, the proper handling of information is pivotal to effective safeguarding practices, and Blesma recognises the vital role of sharing information among professionals and local entities. The Charity operates in compliance with statutory frameworks and Caldicott principles. The secure exchange of safeguarding data is conducted in strict adherence to both the charity's and the government's data protection guidelines.

Discussions regarding the requirements for information sharing should initially take place with Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Staff members must not assure confidentiality to any individual regarding a safeguarding issue (this includes parents/carers or other external bodies) nor pledge to conceal information that could jeopardise safety or welfare.

13. Prevent Duty

The aim of Prevent is to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Prevent also extends to supporting the rehabilitation and disengagement of those already involved in terrorism.

The Prevent duty requires specified authorities such as education, health, local authorities, police, and criminal justice agencies (prisons and probation) to help prevent the risk of people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. It sits alongside long-established safeguarding duties on professionals to protect people from a range of other harms, such as substance abuse, involvement in gangs, and physical and sexual exploitation. The duty helps to ensure that people who are susceptible to radicalisation are supported as they would be under safeguarding processes.

Prevent's objectives are to:

- Tackle the ideological causes of terrorism.
- Intervene early to support people susceptible to radicalisation.
- Enable people who have already engaged in terrorism to disengage and rehabilitate.

This is statutory guidance for England and Wales, issued on 7 September 2023 under [Section 29 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015](#). It came into force on 31 December 2023, replacing the 2015 guidance which came into force in July 2015.

The new 'Prevent' statutory guidance, issued under s.29 of the Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015, is now in force. It applies to certain bodies including specified local authorities and those with safeguarding responsibilities.

Further detail can be found by following the link below:

More information can be found by following the below link:

*<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance/prevent-duty-guidance-for-england-and-wales-accessible>

Please note that this applies to England and Wales only.

Prevent duty, does not apply in Northern Ireland. However, this jurisdiction has legislation that makes it an offence to fail to provide information to the police in certain circumstances when a serious offence has occurred (regardless of whether it is terrorist related).

There is separate [*guidance for Scotland](#).

[Prevent duty guidance for specified authorities in Scotland - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

14. Whistleblowing and raising concerns

It is imperative that all personnel recognise their obligation to voice concerns related to safeguarding when they arise. Such concerns may encompass the behaviour or deeds/omissions of colleagues, substandard or perilous practices, and possible shortcomings in the charity's safeguarding protocols. This enumeration is not comprehensive. For additional details and direction, please consult the Whistleblowing policy.

Blesma is dedicated to creating an environment where all individuals associated with the charity feel empowered to report any issues via established channels, which include the whistleblowing and grievances procedures. The Charity pledges to safeguard staff, contractors, and volunteers who, with integrity, raise concerns in the public interest from any form of retaliation or harassment.

If any member of the organisation is unhappy with Blesma' decision about the safeguarding concern, they are to refer to the complaints policy.

[Blesma new handbook FINAL 01 05 2024 - FINAL v3.pdf](#)

15. Link between safeguarding and incident review

Blesma is registered with the Charity Commission, obliging all staff, contractors, and volunteers to uphold a legal Duty of Candour by providing a thorough and truthful account when mishaps occur. The charity is committed to ongoing scrutiny and enhancement. Lessons from any grave incidents are examined and shared in accordance with the Serious Incident policy and procedure.

Furthermore, the Charity Commission ensures trustees are held accountable when errors are made, verifying adherence to guidance and legal requirements. In the event of a significant incident or failure, the board of trustees is tasked with conducting a thorough investigation and implementing necessary amendments as outlined in the Serious Incident Policy. This includes liaising with, and reporting to, the Charity Commission to ensure regulatory compliance. A structured process is in place to guarantee this is carried out methodically.

16. Safeguarding Team Contact List

Board of Trustees Safeguarding Lead

Ali Grant (Trustee)

Strategic Safeguarding Lead (SSL)

Ian Johnson (Director Independence and Wellbeing (DIW))

diw@blesma.org

07881 308 794

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Colin Branch (Head of welfare Support)

dsl@blesma.org

Mobile: 07423 533021

Landline number : 0208 548 7090

Extension number: 528

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)

Jess March (Head of Activities)

activities@blesma.org

020 8548 3519

07880 497781

MDT Safeguarding Committee member

Steve Burrell (BSO London & SE)

bsolse@blesma.org

07469 242277

MDT Safeguarding Committee member

Kevin Long (BSO EA)
bsoeastern@blesma.org
020395 43020
07852 536364

MDT Safeguarding Committee member

Francesca Anastasio
booeastern@blesma.org
07741 661159

[meet your SG TEAM.pdf](#)

17. Vetting and barring

Many of the staff, volunteers, and managers within Blesma have periodic contact with Members, some of whom due to their age, health and mental faculties may be deemed vulnerable. Likewise, there may be a requirement to assist a member to attend a future healthcare related appointment. In such cases, being regulated tasks, there is a statutory requirement for a DBS check to be conducted and certificate produced. Blesma will adhere to Statutory Guidance when requesting DBS checks for staff and volunteers in accordance with Reference K and be proportionate to the role of the individual. All Trustees will be DBS checked and the SMT and DSL are required to be enhanced DBS checked. Blesma's HR Manager will maintain a central DBS register and ensure designated members of Staff and volunteers have their certificates renewed every three years. The DBS register will be reviewed by the HWS with the HR Manager every six months.

18. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed by the strategic safeguarding committee and designated safeguarding leads (advised by the independent safeguarding advisor) on an annual basis and the updated version presented to the Board of Trustees for review.

To summarise, this policy delineates a strategic plan that guarantees Blesma maintains a unified and comprehensive methodology, alongside a constructive learning environment, to provide robust safeguarding for all personnel and members. We shall proactively seek avenues for enhancement and expeditiously implement requisite modifications to ensure this policy continues to be suitable and adheres to UK legislation and exemplary standards.

Next Review Date. September 2025 or following a serious safeguarding incident.



Viv Buck CBE

Chief Executive
Tel: 020 8548 3512
Mob: 07879 532714

20th September 2024

Annexures:

- A. Blesma Safeguarding Code of Safer Working Practice.
- B. Blesma responding and reporting process
- C. Blesma Incident Report Form.
- D. Management of members convicted with serious offences.

Appendices:

- A1. Code of Practice – All staff, Trustees, Volunteers and Activity Leads.
- A2. Safeguarding Training for staff and volunteers
- B1. Management of members convicted of serious offences