

# Humanists UK Safeguarding Policy

*If you are a member of staff, volunteer, consultant, celebrant, school speaker, pastoral carer, or acting in any other role for or on behalf of Humanists UK and wish to report a safeguarding concern or incident, please see your Staff / Volunteer Handbook or the People Site for full guidance.*

## **Safeguarding commitment at Humanists UK**

Safeguarding is the action of protecting children and adults from harm. Creating a safe and welcoming environment, where everyone is respected and valued, is at the heart of safeguarding. It's about making sure our organisation is run in a way that actively prevents harm, harassment, bullying, abuse, and neglect. It's also about being ready to respond safely if there is a concern. We have a duty to safeguard volunteers, staff members, service beneficiaries, participants, and donors. Everyone in Humanists UK has a role to play in safeguarding. It is part of our day to day activities.

This Humanists UK's Safeguarding Policy applies to everyone working or volunteering on behalf of Humanists UK. This policy is detailed in Humanists UK's staff, trustee, consultant, and volunteer handbooks and is replicated in the Celebrant code of conduct.

Humanists UK is committed to the protection from harm of *all* people who come into contact with the organisation, though particular consideration is given to children and adults at risk. Safeguarding applies to all people coming into contact with Humanists UK through its work.

Below are the key principles underpinning safeguarding at Humanists UK:

- The welfare of the individual is paramount.
- All people, without exception, have the right to protection from abuse<sup>1</sup>.
- The policy applies to all personnel including staff, trustees, contractors, volunteers and celebrants.
- All concerns and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously. This may require a referral to Children's Services or Adult Social Services and, in emergencies, the Police.
- Humanists UK is committed to safe recruitment, selection, and vetting of personnel.
- This policy should be read alongside our policies and procedures that can be found in the staff, trustee, volunteer, and consultant handbooks and Celebrant code of conduct. These are reviewed annually.

All personnel (including trustees, staff, consultants, celebrants and volunteers) must report any concerns or allegations of abuse to either the Lead Safeguarding Officer, Chief Executive, children's services, adult social services, or the police. Failures to report will be taken up using Humanist UK's disciplinary procedures. Personnel are encouraged

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<sup>1</sup> This includes, but is not limited to, those people who have protected characteristics under the Equality Act: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity.

to flag concerns about the policy or procedures relating to Safeguarding to the Lead Safeguarding Officer.

## **Purpose of Safeguarding**

The purpose of safeguarding is to protect people's health, wellbeing, and human rights, and to enable them to live free from harm, abuse, and neglect. Below are some types of abuse:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation
- Psychological or emotional abuse
- Domestic violence or abuse
- Financial or material abuse
- Modern slavery, or commercial exploitation
- Discriminatory abuse
- Organisational or institutional abuse
- Neglect
- Self-neglect
- Cyber abuse
- Religious or spiritual abuse

This list is not exhaustive, and people may experience more than one type of abuse at the same time. Exploitation is a theme throughout.

## **Safeguarding Children**

Safeguarding children duties apply to any charity working with, or coming into contact with, anyone under the age of 18. In the course of our work we may also become aware of safeguarding risks to a child/children and be required to act. Safeguarding children means:

- Protecting children from maltreatment;
- Preventing harm to children's health or development;
- Ensuring that children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- Taking action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcomes.

Child protection is part of the safeguarding process. It focuses on protecting individual children identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. This includes child protection procedures which detail how to respond to concerns about a child.

## **Safeguarding Adults at Risk**

Safeguarding duties for adults at risk (often referred to as vulnerable adults) apply to any organisation working with anyone aged 18 or over who:

- Has, or may have, needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) AND
- is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect

- 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<sup>2</sup>

An adult at risk of abuse may:

- have an illness affecting their mental or physical health
- have a learning disability, medical condition
- suffer from drug or alcohol problems
- be elderly and frail
- Be a family carer
- May have protected characteristics as a result of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation

(A more precise definition of Vulnerable Adults can be found in Section 59 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 but this broader 'Adults at Risk' definition from the Charity Commission is helpful in understanding the broad scope of safeguarding. **Any adult could be 'at risk'**, whether they are in a care setting or not.)

## Confidentiality

It is important that members of the public who contact Humanists UK feel able to share information with us. Humanists UK personnel should keep this information confidential as far as possible. However, this confidentiality cannot be absolute, and we have a responsibility to share personal information if we believe that doing so could prevent a serious crime or prevent serious injury to, or abuse of, themselves or another person.

Our Privacy Policy can be found on our website: <https://humanists.uk/privacy-policy/>

## Managing risks when planning activities

When planning or reviewing services or activities, risk assessments should be conducted to ensure that the safety of children and adults at risk is paramount. A *proportional response* to risks should be taken, with high-risk activities not engaged in without appropriate mitigation measures in place.

Humanists UK personnel typically do not engage in any unsupervised activities involving children under the age of 18. Teachers, parents, carers or an otherwise responsible party should always be in attendance. Should Humanists UK personnel find themselves alone with a child, they should seek help as quickly as possible.

Humanists UK personnel should endeavour not to work alone with adults at risk, for example by staying in a group setting or with a DBS-checked member of staff from the organisation with whom they are working. Supervision of activities with known adults at risk should be provided by a DBS-checked individual.

Activity planning meetings may, by their very nature, involve two people working alone, whether online or in a private space. A proportional response to risk should always be

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<sup>2</sup> Care Act 2014

taken. If there is any reason to have concern about such a situation, the Lead Safeguarding Officer should be consulted immediately.

This mitigates the risk of harm both to service users and to Humanists UK personnel.

Unsupervised one-to-one contact with adults at risk occurs only in helpline or other specific caring activities such as Celebrant family visits, Faith to Faithless or Pastoral Care, all of which should be conducted by trained, DBS-checked personnel.

## Training

Humanists UK will provide training to any employee, trustee, volunteer<sup>3</sup>, consultant or celebrant who it feels should complete child and/or adults at risk safeguarding training, especially if their work may require them to provide support to adults at risk and children. This includes volunteers whose role requires them to respond to queries from members of the public, Coordinate a Group or Section or to run events. It is the responsibility of the Humanists UK Lead Safeguarding Officer (LSO) in conjunction with the Head of People (HoP) to determine who requires training.

## Safeguarding roles

Humanists UK has appointed an individual who is responsible for dealing with Safeguarding concerns. In their absence, a deputy will be available for anyone to consult with. The LSO within Humanists UK is:

Lead Safeguarding Officer (LSO): Clare Elcombe Webber  
Telephone Number (Work): 020 7324 3069

Deputy Safeguarding Officer: Catriona McLellan  
Telephone Number (Work): 020 7324 3068

Deputy Safeguarding Officer: Ann-Michelle Burton  
Telephone Number (Work): 020 7324 3006

Should none of these named people be available then please refer directly to the relevant local safeguarding board ([which you can find here](#)). **Should the concern be about an immediate risk to an individual, call 999.**

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<sup>3</sup> This policy applies to those people working and volunteering directly for Humanists UK, not people trained by Humanists UK but working or volunteering for other organisations. These organisations will have their own safeguarding policy and training. For example, if you are a pastoral carer practising in an institution you must primarily abide by their safeguarding policies, and the institution will ensure you are trained and meet their safeguarding requirements. Individuals working or volunteering in schools or other educational institution settings will again need to abide by the safeguarding rules of those organisation.

## **Safeguarding training**

Everyone has a part to play in safeguarding but all staff and volunteers in roles where they may come into contact with children or adults at risk will undergo safeguarding training as standard. This information is documented and reviewed annually by the LSO and HOP.

The requirement for a specific role to be safeguarding trained will be determined at the creation of the new role by the hiring manager and the LSO and, for existing roles, will be reviewed on an annual basis as part of the People Team workplan.

Additional training will be provided as needs are identified (e.g. for a volunteer managing events, section secretaries, Public Affairs staff working with asylum seekers).

Safeguarding training is conducted via: <https://www.safecic.co.uk/>

## **Disclosure and Barring Service checks**

DBS Checks are arranged by the People team in accordance with this policy, and in line with government guidelines regarding whether one is required. The DBS must be conducted by an umbrella body from the GOV.UK list (found [here](#)). Humanists UK currently uses Checks Direct to carry out DBS checks. The requirement for a specific role to be DBS checked will be determined at the creation of the new role by the hiring manager and the LSO and, for existing roles, will be reviewed on an annual basis as part of the People Team workplan. Where checks are required, they will be paid for by Humanists UK. Some individuals will hold multiple roles for Humanists UK, and will require the level of check required by the most stringent role.

If an individual subscribes to the DBS Update Service and their record can be verified as current, this will replace the need for a specific new DBS check.

Everyone has a part to play in safeguarding but the roles listed below will undergo DBS-checks as standard.

### **Humanists UK Trustees**

All trustees are required to undertake an enhanced DBS check, updated every five years.

### **Humanists UK Staff**

Employees whose role includes direct contact with children or adults at risk, or the management or supervision of other staff/volunteers who in turn have a level of safeguarding responsibility shall undertake a DBS check. The roles currently required are set out below, and all checks are renewed every five years.

### **Enhanced check plus barred list check**

- Director of Understanding Humanism
- Director of Humanist Care
- Apostate Services Manager
- Apostate Support Development Officer
- Faith to Faithless Policy Officer
- NRPSN Manager
- Any Deputy Safeguarding Officers

### **Enhanced check**

- Chief Executive

### **Basic check**

- Director of Ceremonies
- Ceremonies Network Manager
- Director of Operations
- Head of People

### **Celebrant Network**

The Humanist Ceremonies Network is a network of celebrants trained and accredited by Humanists UK. They are based (and work) across England, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and abroad. To enhance the reputation of Humanists UK and to provide reassurance to celebrants' clients, Humanists UK policy is that all celebrants undertake a basic DBS check every five years.

### **Faith to Faithless**

Faith to Faithless provides support for apostates who leave high-control or coercive religious groups or cults. Many apostates can be considered 'at risk' adults, as they may be in danger as a result of their circumstances, and unable to protect themselves as a result of being isolated from wider society. Some might already have been disowned by their family and religious group and left homeless and vulnerable. Others may be at risk of violence: in some religious groups, apostasy is regarded as punishable by death. Some apostates are entirely reliant on their parents or families for their care. They may fear the repercussions of 'coming out' as an apostate. Others may have already told their families, and been harmed as a result.

All Faith to Faithless volunteers, staff and consultants require an enhanced & barred list DBS check, renewed every five years, including the Advisory Board.

## **Non-Religious Pastoral Support Network**

The Non-Religious Pastoral Support Network trains and accredits non-religious people to provide pastoral care in institutions across the country, including prisons, hospitals, hospices, and universities. In general, pastoral carers are managed by the institution in which they work, and follow the institution's DBS-checking and safeguarding procedures. As endorsement by the NRPSN is a statement from our organisation that an individual is suitable for practice, from January 2024 all prospective NRPSN members will have an enhanced & barred list DBS check as a requirement before accreditation, which will be repeated every five years. Additionally, all consultants and NRPSN staff will also be required to undergo an enhanced & barred list DBS check.

## **School Speakers Programme**

The School Speakers Programme trains and facilitates visits by non-religious people to educational institutions across the country, including schools and universities. School speakers follow the DBS-checking and safeguarding procedures of the institution at which they have been invited to speak. However, as there is a high possibility that some schools will leave these volunteers unattended in classrooms, school speakers all require an enhanced & barred list DBS check, repeated every five years. School Speaker trainers also require this check.

## **LGBT Humanists**

The LGBT Humanists section provides community activities and activism opportunities for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender humanists, as well as promoting LGBT rights and understanding of humanism as part of Humanists UK.

All LGBT Humanist volunteers are required to undertake a basic DBS check, repeated every five years.

## **Humanists UK Local Sections**

Sections are the local community humanist groups of Humanists UK. They are part of Humanists UK, covering a specific geographical area. Sections actively promote humanism, Humanists UK campaigns, and Humanists UK community services in that area, and provide community and fellowship for humanists in the area through a range of activities.

All Humanists UK Section Coordinators are required to undertake a basic DBS check, repeated every five years.

Other local humanist groups run in the UK, some in partnership with Humanists UK and others entirely independently. Humanists UK do not set or enforce safeguarding policies and processes for these groups.

## **Other volunteers, sections, and networks**

Humanists UK has numerous other volunteer roles, and supports other sections and networks which do not require any form of DBS check as their work does not routinely bring them into contact with children or adults at risk. Whenever a new role is created, or an activity changes within a section or network, the LSO and Head of People will consider whether DBS checks are required,

**Clare Elcombe Webber**  
**Lead Safeguarding Officer**  
**February 2024**