

MSCI SAFEGUARDING POLICY



Mustard Seed
Communities Ireland

CARING FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE



Introduction

Purpose:

The purpose of this safeguarding policy is to ensure that EVERYONE connected to Mustard Seed Communities Ireland, whether trustees, employees, volunteers, programme participants and partners who are involved in the projects and activities run by Mustard Seed Communities Ireland, (MSCI) are protected from harm, exploitation, and abuse.

Central to our mission is MSCI's belief in the intrinsic dignity of every person. Inspired by the healing Ministry of Jesus Christ, its aim is to create relationship of mutual respect where the rights and dignity of every person are respected.

Mustard Seed considers safeguarding as a critical aspect of its mission, and therefore has Zero tolerance to exploitative, discriminatory or abusive behaviour by anyone associated with the implementation of MSC's work.

Who Should Read This Policy:

This policy applies to EVERYONE connected with MSCI; to include all board members and trustees, employees, volunteers, programme participants, consultants and partners. MSCI recognises that safeguarding is not the responsibility of any one person or even a group of people; it is a shared responsibility. MSCI is committed to keeping safeguarding as a key focus throughout our organisation thus encouraging EVERYONE to recognise this shared responsibility.

Mustard Seed Communities Ireland Policy Statement:

At Mustard Seed Ireland, Everyone Matters. Keeping people safe is a vital part of our mission. This includes the prevention of exploitation and abuse as well as any harm caused by our failure to take reasonable care when designing and carrying out our programmes and activities.

Mustard Seed is aware that power imbalances can lead to many forms of exploitation and abuse. The nature of our work can sometimes create a power differential between those employed by or representing Mustard Seed, and our programme partners and recipients, hence the potential for the abuse of power. Mustard Seed also recognises that there are specific needs, vulnerabilities and risks that exist for children and is committed to make every effort to ensure children are safe and protected both in its international programmes and outreach programmes in Ireland.

MSCI employees and volunteers undertake to do all in their power to create a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults and to ensure their protection from neglect, discrimination, exploitation, and physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.

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Declaration Form

I have read and fully understand Mustard Seed Ireland's Safeguarding Commitment and agree to adhere to the behaviour requirements with the policy.

I understand that as a Representative of Mustard Seed Communities Ireland, I agree to conduct all activities in line with the following principles and standards:

- **Zero Tolerance for Exploitation and Abuse:** I understand that Mustard Seed Communities Ireland has zero tolerance for exploitation, abuse, and harassment.
- **Best Interests of Vulnerable Individuals:** I will promote and protect the best interests of all children and adults who may be vulnerable or at risk.
- **Prohibition of Harm:** I will not engage in behaviour that causes harm, including physical, sexual, emotional abuse, neglect, and exploitation, and will report any such incidents.
- **Encouraging Reporting:** I will support an environment where safeguarding concerns and complaints can be freely reported.
- **Reporting Safeguarding Concerns:** I will report any safeguarding concerns immediately and understand my mandatory duty to report.
- **Prohibition of Sexual Interactions:** I will not engage in sexual interactions with anyone under 18 years of age or enter into sexual relationships with any representatives or engage in commercial sexual transactions.

(Please return the signed Declaration Form to info@mustardseed.ie.)

Name/Signature:

Date:

Scope

This policy applies to 'EVERYONE' representing Mustard Seed Ireland. For the purposes of this document, all parties will be referred to as Mustard Seed Ireland Representatives. Mustard Seed's expectation is that all Representatives uphold our safeguarding commitments in both their professional and personal lives.

Legal Framework/Guiding Principles

This policy adheres to the safeguarding laws of Ireland, and the respective laws and regulations of the countries in which Mustard Seed Ireland operates.

Our approach to safeguarding is also guided by key international principles and standards as set out in the IASC;- Interagency Standing Committee. We aim to uphold our commitment to protect all those in contact with Mustard Seed from harm, and our policy defines the type of harm, behaviours and abusive activities and practices that are not tolerated.

Key Principles

- **Integrity:** We act honestly, transparently, and in the best interests of all individuals in our care.
- **Confidentiality:** Personal information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.
- **Accountability:** We are answerable for our actions and decisions, particularly when they affect vulnerable individuals.

Safeguarding Principles

MSCI is dedicated to safeguarding all individuals associated with our organisation. It is our priority to ensure that every person including those we serve, are safe and valued in the workplace and across our programmes.

MSCI does not discriminate against, nor tolerate harassment or bullying of any of its Representatives based on race, colour, creed, religion, sex, age, disability, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, sexual orientation, gender orientation, political opinions, or any other impermissible factor. MSCI will not tolerate sexual misconduct or stand for any harassment of any kind. MSCI recognises that harassment can unreasonably interfere with an individual's work performance and create an intimidating or offensive work environment.

Preventing Sexual Exploitation & Abuse

Interagency Standing Committee:

IASC 6 Core Principles:

In line with IASC - Interagency Standing Committee; MSC in its commitment to protect all those in contact with MSC from harm, defines the types of harm, behaviours and abusive activities and practices that are not tolerated:-

<https://psea.interagencystandingcommittee.org/update/iasc-six-core-principles>

1. “Sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment.
2. Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defence.
3. Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour is prohibited. This includes exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries.
4. Any sexual relationship between those providing humanitarian assistance and protection and a person benefitting from such humanitarian assistance and protection that involves improper use of rank or position is prohibited. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of humanitarian aid work.
5. Where a humanitarian worker develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, he or she must report such concerns via established agency reporting mechanisms.
6. Humanitarian workers are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of their code of conduct. Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this environment.”

| Safeguarding in Action

MSCI has operating procedures and systems in place to improve safeguarding reporting across its programmes.

Recruitment and Selection of Staff, Volunteers and Programme Participants:

Background Checks:-

- Safeguarding is considered across all functions of the organization commencing with Human Resources for recruitment, training and onboarding.
- In relation to the selection and recruitment of staff, volunteers and programme participants, and their suitability to work with children, MSC adheres to the statutory vetting requirements of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016 and to the wider duty of care guidance set out in relation to Garda Vetting.
- As one of its safeguarding strategies, MSCI requires everyone involved with the organization over the age of 18 years, to be Garda Vetted or to provide a Police Certificate, where appropriate.

Interviews:-

The recruitment process includes a standardized set of questions designed to assess Representative's understanding of and commitment to safeguarding.

Training and Awareness:

Initial Training:-

- Training in Safeguarding is a mandatory part of the induction and onboarding process for all Representative's to address what is expected in terms of behaviour, culture and safeguarding in the organization.
- Everyone involved with the organisation must sign a contract in agreement with MSCI's Code of Conduct and safeguarding policies and procedures.
- In relation to the provision of information, and where necessary instruction and training in respect to the identification of the occurrence of harm, MSCI will provide all Representatives with:
 - Copy of MSCI's Child Safeguarding Statement
 - Relevant training in Child Safeguarding

Refresher Courses:-

MSCI will require all Representatives to complete refresher training courses annually to keep their safeguarding knowledge up to date.

Duty to Report

Reporting Concerns:-

All Representatives have a duty to comply with the principle of: “If you see something say something.” MSCI wants and needs to know when it is not meeting its own standards. MSCI expects its Representatives to notify it of violations of its Code of Conduct, ethical concerns or other concerns related to misconduct or questionable activities. If in doubt, report.

Designated Safeguarding Officer

- MSCI has a designated Safeguarding Officer who is trained to handle any concerns or allegations.
- MSCI Safeguarding Officer:
 - Contact: Conal O'Donnell
 - Email: safeguarding@mustardseedireland.ie

Concerns are most quickly resolved if reported in person at the time of the event to the leaders of the relevant programme; however, for those unable to or uncomfortable reporting the concern at the time it occurs, reports can be submitted by email to MSCI's Safeguarding Officer:- safeguarding@mustardseedireland.ie

Reports may be submitted anonymously, and all reports are treated as confidential. Those who submit reports in good faith shall be protected against any form of harassment, intimidation, discrimination or retaliation.

Those who engage in any retaliatory conduct against a good faith reporter will be subject to disciplinary action. Information regarding reporting is included on MSCI's website, by visiting www.mustardseedireland.ie and included as part of onboarding materials for all representatives.

Investigation Procedure

Allegations will be taken seriously and investigated promptly by MSCI. A committee consisting of senior management, and if needed, external experts will oversee the investigation.

Actions and Consequences

If an investigation confirms a breach of this policy, appropriate actions, up to and including legal proceedings and dismissal, will be taken.

Record-keeping and Confidentiality

All records of safeguarding concerns, actions, and investigations will be securely stored. Access will be limited to authorized personnel only.

Monitoring and Review

- MSCI is committed to making Mustard Seed Ireland a safe place to work and volunteer and will continue working to develop even more robust policies that prevent abuse and protect, value, and empower people.
- This safeguarding policy will be reviewed annually by the board of directors of MSCI. It may also be updated in response to new legislation or following the outcome of any investigations.

Contact Information

- **Designated Safeguarding Officer:** Conal O'Donnell, Mustard Seed Ireland
- Email: safeguarding@mustardseedireland.ie

Dervilla Gannon
General Manager



Signature:

01 July 2024

Billy Glennon
Chairman



Signature:

01 July 2024



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