

Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants

Safeguarding Policy

Islington Centre is a charity that works to improve the lives of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. We believe that every individual who accesses our services should be treated with dignity and respect, have their choice respected and not be forced to do anything against their will. Islington Centre is committed to safeguarding [1 – see definitions below] all asylum seekers, refugees and migrants and their children coming into contact with the charity, regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs.

Islington Centre personnel come into direct and indirect contact with clients through delivery of a range of services. Some of these clients may be vulnerable [2] adults. While the majority of Islington Centre services are delivered to adults, from time to time staff delivering training, activities and support services may come into contact with children accompanied by their parent or guardian who is a client of the Centre. This policy defines a child as anyone under the age of 18.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and all personnel who, during the course of their employment, volunteering or other agreed service delivery have direct or indirect contact with vulnerable adults or children, or who have access to information about them, have a responsibility to safeguard and promote their welfare.

This policy applies to anyone employed or engaged directly or indirectly by Islington Centre and includes trustees, staff, volunteers, internships, trainers, consultants and freelancers (including session leaders) (known collectively as "Islington Centre Personnel"). While this policy focuses on the workplace responsibilities of staff, responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults extend to an individual's personal and domestic life.

The Charity Trustees are responsible [3] for ensuring that those benefiting from or working with their charity are not harmed in any way through contact with it. This policy has been approved and endorsed by the Board of Trustees.

The child protection and vulnerable adult safeguarding policy statement which is a high level summary of this document will be available on the Islington Centre website.

A review of safeguarding concerns, action taken and staff training and support will be conducted annually and safeguarding policy and procedures will be reviewed every three years or in the light of significant changes to best practice or legislation.

Policy approval: This safeguarding policy adopted: **January 2025**

Date of next review: **January 2026**

For Islington Centre this means...

1. ensuring that Islington Centre practices **safe recruitment** in checking the suitability of Islington Centre Personnel to work with vulnerable adults and have contact with children.
2. ensuring **safe environments**, checking the suitability of premises where work of the charity is undertaken ensuring services are provided in safe environments and that sufficient safeguards are in place.
3. raising awareness of how and when to **signpost vulnerable adults** to appropriate services.
4. raising awareness of **child and adult protection** situations, and our procedures for identifying and reporting concerns or suspected cases.
5. building a **culture** that values and respects all children and adults and modelling appropriate conduct in line with our values
6. setting out clear **roles and responsibilities** for safeguarding

We set out below the steps Islington Centre is taking and requires all Islington personnel to take in order to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.

1. Safe recruitment

a. Islington Centre Personnel

Islington Centre has put in place procedures to ensure that thorough checks are made prior to appointment of Islington Centre Personnel, in order to prevent a person using their position to harm a child or vulnerable adult.

For all employment posts at Islington Centre the following vetting checks and safeguards are implemented prior to confirming the appointment:

- agreement to disclose previous spent/unspent convictions and disciplinary or capability procedures
- Identity documents including photographic identity
- Proof of right to work in the UK
- References including a written professional reference using Islington Centre's pro-forma template

- Qualification certificates if required for the role
- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check. All appointments to posts involving direct work with children and/or vulnerable adults will be subject to an Enhanced Disclosure from the DBS.

Trustees, volunteers, internships, trainers, consultants and freelancers (including session leads) pose the same level of risk to clients as paid staff. The following vetting checks and safeguards are implemented prior to commencement of such services by any individuals including:

- Agreement to disclose previous spent/unspent convictions
- References including a written reference using Islington Centre's pro-forma template.
- DBS check if eligible (Note: all session leads to be subject to DBS checks). All Trustees, volunteers, internships, trainers, consultants and freelancers working **directly** with children and/or vulnerable adults **without supervision** by a member of Islington Centre Personnel with a DBS check will be subject to an Enhanced Disclosure from the DBS.

In line with Islington Centre's Policy on the Recruitment of Ex-Offenders, a criminal record does not prevent employment at or provision of services to Islington Centre. A thorough risk assessment is carried out by the Chief Executive and line manager if convictions are revealed on the declaration form or, where eligible, DBS check or it is not possible to obtain a DBS check from abroad if eligible, prior to confirming or withdrawing an appointment.

Induction for new personnel into the organisation ensures new personnel read and understand key corporate policies, including Safeguarding, Health and Safety and Equality and Diversity Policies, and understand their personal responsibilities within these, and that any training needs are identified and addressed.

2. Safe environments

a. Delivery of Activities

Activities take place both remotely online and on site at Islington Centre. Activities are supervised by a member of staff or with a member of staff or other appointed member of Islington Centre Personnel. The activities are delivered in line with Health and Safety requirements. When delivered off site, activities are supervised by a member of staff or with a member of staff or other appointed member of Islington Centre Personnel present.

b. Delivery of Support Services

Islington Centre will ensure that all environments where services activities are delivered will not cause harm to vulnerable adults or children. As well as ensuring that suitable members of Islington Centre Personnel

deliver activities, all service delivery environments will be assessed in line with Islington Centre's Health and Safety policy.

c. The Media

Asylum seeker, refugee and migrant case studies are frequently used to support and illustrate the issues faced by this client group. Clients involved in any media activity must give permission and can restrict the information that is shared or given and have the right to block any publication.

Islington Centre's Permission Form for use of photographs and art ensures informed consent is given before images can be used publicly.

d. Anti-Radicalisation

Islington Centre has zero tolerance of any action seeking to radicalise any clients with any extremist views during any Centre activity with permanent exclusion of anyone identified as radicalising clients.

e. Prevention of Sexual Harassment

Islington Centre will not tolerate sexual harassment. All grievances and complaints related to sexual harassment will be taken seriously and not be ignored. Islington Centre will respond in line with its Grievance Policy in the case of personnel or its Complaints Policy in the case of clients or any other person affected. The prevention of sexual harassment and types of sexual harassment in the work place can be found in Islington Centre's Whistle Blowing Policy. This applies to everyone in the organisation, regardless of role or status.

3. Signposting vulnerable adults to support

Islington Centre Personnel come into contact with asylum seekers, refugees and migrants while at the Centre and may interact with these clients via video conferencing software like Zoom or Google Hangouts, phone, email or social media.

Some of these clients may be particularly vulnerable, experiencing distress or have mental health issues. For the majority of these adults, their situation will not be of a nature that requires a member of Islington Centre Personnel to report a concern. However Islington Centre believes it is important to recognise the vulnerability of these adults. Islington Centre does not have appropriate expertise to deal directly with these issues although our intervention may be helpful, nor do we provide counselling support, so it is vital that Islington Centre Personnel understand how to identify signs and signpost effectively.

Islington Centre will support frontline staff and other members of Islington Centre Personnel to recognise the signs of distress, to handle this and their own reactions, and to signpost clients to the Islington Centre Support Service led by the Head of Support Service.

The Head of Support Service will provide or facilitate up to date signposting information for use by Islington Centre Personnel which details organisations that can be contacted to support clients in a range of situations ranging from homelessness, destitution, immigration to physical and mental health, domestic violence and family related issues.

The Head of Support Service and Designated Safeguarding Lead will ensure that these resources are updated regularly.

4. Child and adult protection

Contact with children

There are a number of situations where contact with children might occur including:

- Clients who are parents bringing their children with them to activities and services where attendance at Islington Centre has been approved.
- Clients who are parents bringing their children to events run by Islington Centre off site
- a child under 18 requesting to access a service. Although Islington Centre does not work directly with children under 18, it is possible that a child refugee may approach the Centre.

Islington Centre does not work directly with children so Islington Centre Personnel are not likely to be alone with a child face to face in any of the above situations but they may be providing services with the child's parent or guardian present. Islington Centre Personnel may also sometimes observe directly, infer from statements made or hear information that raises concerns about a child's welfare.

It is Islington Centre's policy not to undertake home visits for example to carry out interviews for research unless it has been pre-approved by the Chief Executive or the Designated Safeguarding Lead and appropriate checks are in place with the parties involved. This may arise for example in a hosting referral where Islington Centre is required to accompany a client to their new accommodation.

Contact with vulnerable adults

Islington Centre has contact with asylum seekers, refugees and migrants face to face, online, over the telephone and in writing. These situations include:

- Delivery of training
- Facilitating of activities
- Focus group or engagement session

- Research interviews
- Case study interviews
- Online Activities and Sessions
- Website enquiry form and other social media sites.

Some activities and services are more likely to uncover vulnerabilities and concerns. These include the Support Service activities where self expression is encouraged, sessions where personal information is shared.

At the end of each session, the Session Lead works with the Islington Centre Personnel present to identify any areas where the Centre is able to support a person or where an area of concern has arisen. This is then fed back to the Chief Executive and/or Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Awareness of Islington Centre's policies

All Islington Centre Personnel are required to read Islington Centre's *Safeguarding Policy* and the Safeguarding Policy Statement to understand their responsibilities in their role at Islington Centre.

Islington Centre Personnel working directly with asylum seekers, refugees and migrants will receive safeguarding training regularly to identify signs of abuse and know how to report concerns.

Training and Ongoing Compliance

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and the Operations Team will ensure that suitable training is provided to ensure that all staff and session leads are up to date in current policies and best practice and in order to feed back to update and enhance this policy.

Training will be provided annually to staff and volunteers by the DSL

The DSL will complete Designated Safeguarding Lead Training annually

Safeguarding Committee: DSL and Operations Team will be trained to Level 3 Safeguarding

Other Staff will be trained to a Level 2 Safeguarding

A Safeguarding Code of Conduct is read, signed and received for reference by all Islington Centre Personnel to ensure a safe and encouraging environment for all clients.

Alert to the signs of abuse

Our role in protecting children and vulnerable adults is to pick up cues that the child or adult may need protecting and pass this information to those who can assess the situation and act when required. Islington Centre Personnel are required to be aware of the different types and signs of abuse and the circumstances in which it can occur (see Guidance on recognising abuse, issues and concerns).

Aware of duty to report concerns.

All concerns and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to appropriately (this may require a referral to adult or children's services and/or emergencies, the Police). Islington Centre Personnel have a duty to report concerns in line with Islington Centre's procedures. Failure to comply with these responsibilities will be seen as a serious matter which may lead to disciplinary action.

Confidentiality.

Recognising that "the welfare of the child is paramount" Children's Act 1989, considerations of confidentiality which might apply to other situations should not be allowed to override the right of children or vulnerable adults to be protected from harm. Islington Centre therefore requires personnel to act in any situation in which a child or vulnerable adult is at risk and in particular situations when a vulnerable adult is at risk.

While all personnel should be open to the possible abuse of vulnerable adults in all situations, we envisage that there will be very few instances where personnel will need to report adult protection concerns. The situations where this is most likely to happen and where personnel will be expected to act are

- an adult has been assessed as being at high risk of suicide (see guidance on reporting concerns)
- There is a significant risk that the adult will be seriously physically harmed by another person.

In respect of vulnerable adults all action, including referrals to Social Services and the police, must be subject to the consent of the service user. In every situation it will be assumed that a person can make their own decisions and action will only be taken in the absence of consent from the service user where;

- they or others are in physical danger
- after seeking advice from an appropriate agency you have been advised to report the concern as it is believed that the vulnerable adult is unable/incapable of making an informed decision for himself or herself.

Personnel should never give absolute guarantees of confidentiality to anyone wishing to tell them about something serious.

Islington Centre's complaints procedure is an important way in which concerns can be surfaced and should be easily accessible to clients.

Aware of how and when to take action

- Personnel should read Guidance on Recognising Abuse, Issues and Concerns to help them decide if there is risk of harm and take action if required.
- In the first instance, all concerns should be reported to the Chief Executive or Designated Safeguarding Lead (who is also the Head of Support Service)
- All incidents should be recorded in writing and emailed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and copied to the Chief Executive. This email will be confidential.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead with the Chief Executive will make an assessment to bring the matter to the attention of relevant organisations if applicable. This may be support provided by Islington Centre or through a professional organisation working in the relevant area.
- All recorded incidents reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Chief Executive will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in confidence.
- Allegations of abuse or concerns raised against members of Islington Centre Personnel, will always be treated seriously. Where there is an allegation against a member of Islington Centre Personnel the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Chief Executive should be informed and a disciplinary investigation will be carried out. There may also be criminal (police) investigations. Where the allegation concerns any of the above personnel the concern should be reported to the Chair of the Board of Trustees. The Chair will agree the course of action with the Trustee in charge of Safeguarding who will lead the investigation in this instance.

5. Culture

a. Islington Centre Personnel

Islington Centre Personnel are required to work in line with the Equality and Diversity Policy to value diversity and respect the contribution of each individual.

Islington Centre Personnel are encouraged to raise concerns about employment practices and concerns will be taken seriously. Unlawful discrimination, bullying or harassment will not be tolerated. The Grievance Policy sets out how to raise concerns both informally and formally, how concerns will be investigated and support for individuals raising a concern as well as for Islington Centre Personnel who are the subject of a complaint. Islington Centre Personnel will not suffer any negative treatment for giving constructive criticism or raising a genuine grievance.

Islington Centre's Whistle Blowing Policy provides guidance for Islington Centre Personnel on confidential reporting of concerns about wrong doing in the workplace.

Islington Centre also has a clear policy forbidding inappropriate use of materials which includes sexually explicit material, obscene remarks and abusive or discriminatory messages.

b. Online Forums and Social Media

Islington Centre works to ensure that our social media pages are safe and are supportive places promoting the work of the Centre and encourage an inclusive and supportive environment where clients can feel comfortable to express themselves and share their experiences.

While we encourage lively debate, we do not tolerate behaviour which makes other users feel uneasy or unable to contribute to the page. As such, we reserve the right to remove posts which are aggressive in tone, abusive towards other users or disruptive to how the forum or page operates. Racist, sexist, homophobic or bullying posts will be removed without delay. This is common practice and corresponds with Facebook's terms and conditions. Anyone participating in online contact must also adhere to any relevant third party forum rules.

6. Roles and responsibilities

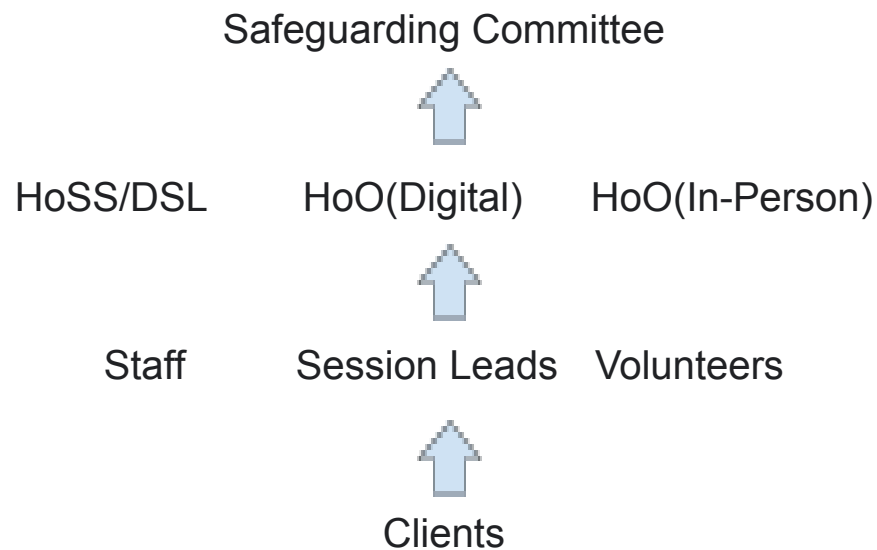
Safeguarding and Child Protection Responsibilities are set out as follows:

- **Trustees** are accountable for Islington Centre and therefore all safeguarding within the organisation and will receive annual reports on safeguarding.
- The **Chief Executive [Andy Ruiz Palma]** is accountable to Trustees for safeguarding within the organisation and will ensure a clear framework for the management accountability for safeguarding is in operation.
- The **Designated Safeguarding Lead [Stephen Spencer], Staff** and other members of **Islington Centre Personnel** are accountable to the Chief Executive for safeguarding within their duties and responsibilities and ensuring it is integral to the delivery of their activities and services.
- The **Designated Safeguarding Lead [Stephen Spencer], Lead Safeguarding Trustee [Kathy Margerison]** will stay abreast of developments on safeguarding best practice, advise on changes to policy and practice and update the safeguarding policy.
- The **Safeguarding Committee** will meet weekly to review and discuss measures and actions to be undertaken as a result of any Safeguarding issue being raised. Follow up actions will be carried out in the first instance by the Designated Safeguarding Lead but may be delegated to a member of the committee. The measures and actions will be recorded and reviewed until that matter is resolved or passed over to an external Safeguarding body.

The Safeguarding Committee consists of the following staff members:

- Head of Support Service and Designated Safeguarding Lead (HoSS/DSL)
- Head of Operations (Digital)
- Head of Operations (In-Person)

Lines of Reporting:



A client reports an issue to a staff member, session lead or volunteer.

A staff member, session lead or volunteer reports it to their assigned Head of Department.

The Head of Department will contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead to respond to the issue and the issue will be shared with the Safeguarding Committee and actions or measures agreed.

Related policies and resources

This policy relates to measures in a range of other related Islington Centre policies that have been referred to throughout this policy where relevant.

Definitions

[1] Safeguarding

What is safeguarding? 4.1 Safeguarding is a term we use to describe how we protect adults and children from abuse or neglect. It is an important shared priority of many public services, and a key responsibility of local authorities. 4.2 Safeguarding is about protecting certain people who may be in vulnerable circumstances. These people may be at risk of abuse or neglect due to the actions (or lack of action) of another person. In these cases, it is vital that public services work together to identify people at risk, and put steps in place to help prevent abuse or neglect. *Source: Office of the Public Guardian, Safeguarding Policy (Updated 11 January 2023)*

[2] Vulnerable adult

Being an asylum seeker, refugee or migrant does not in itself make an adult vulnerable.

For the purpose of this policy a vulnerable adult is defined as

“anyone over the age of 18 who: is or may be in need of Community Care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and is or may be unable to take care of himself or herself or is unable to protect themselves against significant harm or serious exploitation” *No Secrets*, DOH (2000).

People who may be included in a definition of a Vulnerable Person:

- People with learning disability
- People with physical disabilities
- People with sensory impairment
- People with mental health needs including dementia
- People who misuse substances of alcohol
- People who are physically ill or mentally frail

Service users outside these definitions may also be vulnerable due to low self-esteem, social exclusion, offending history, homelessness, domestic abuse, ethnicity, immigration status etc.

[3] Trustee responsibilities

Protecting people and safeguarding responsibilities should be a governance priority for all charities. It is a fundamental part of operating as a charity for the public benefit. As part of fulfilling [your trustee duties, whether working online or in person, you must take reasonable steps to protect from harm people who come into contact with your charity.

[Charity Commission Guidance: Safeguarding and protecting people for charities and trustees, June 2022]