

Merry Bells Village Hall

Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Policy

Policy owner: Merry Bells Village Hall Trustees

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Judy Barrett

Email: safeguarding@merrybells.org.uk

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1. Purpose

The Trustees of Merry Bells Village Hall are committed to safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk who visit, work in, hire or use the premises.

Merry Bells is a multi-room community facility. Different rooms, offices and shared areas may be used by different people and organisations at the same time. This policy therefore sets out the safeguarding responsibilities of the Trustees, Hall Personnel, Private Hirers and Organised Hirers/Service Providers.

Everyone using the premises has a responsibility to behave appropriately, maintain suitable boundaries and report safeguarding concerns.

2. Definitions

Child or young person: Anyone under 18.

Adult at risk: An adult aged 18 or over who has care and support needs, is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect, and is unable to protect themselves because of those needs.

Hall Personnel: Trustees, committee members, employees, contractors, volunteers and authorised representatives acting on behalf of Merry Bells Village Hall.

Private Hirer: An individual hiring a room or facility for a private social or family event, such as a child's birthday party.

Organised Hirer/Service Provider: An individual, organisation, club, charity, business, tutor, instructor, practitioner or other provider using the premises to deliver an organised activity, service, instruction or care.

3. Responsibilities

Merry Bells Village Hall provides premises for use by individuals and organisations. Unless expressly agreed otherwise, the Hall does not provide supervision, childcare, teaching, care or activity leadership for participants attending any hirer's booking. The Hall's safeguarding responsibilities do not replace the legal or safeguarding responsibilities of hirers, organisations or individuals conducting activities on the premises.

The Trustees will:

- maintain safe premises and appropriate safeguarding arrangements;
- appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL);
- ensure safeguarding expectations are communicated to users;
- include appropriate safeguarding requirements in hire agreements;
- respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns; and
- co-operate with safeguarding agencies and the police where necessary.

Hall Personnel must follow this policy, maintain appropriate professional boundaries and report concerns promptly.

Private Hirers

Private Hirers are responsible for the safety, supervision and behaviour of their guests, including children and adults at risk, during their booking. They are expected to read through this policy and follow its safeguarding principles.

For example, a parent hiring a room for a child's birthday party is responsible for the wellbeing, safety, supervision and behaviour of the children attending the party.

Private Hirers are not normally required to have a safeguarding policy, DBS checks or formal first aid qualification simply because they have hired a room. They are expected to follow the Hall's safeguarding principles and to use reasonable and proportionate safeguarding arrangements appropriate to the nature of their event and the people attending.

They must comply with the Hall's terms and conditions and report any safeguarding concern arising during their booking.

Organised Hirers/Service Providers

Organised Hirers/Service Providers are responsible for safeguarding people participating in their activities and for ensuring that their activities are conducted safely and appropriately.

They must confirm at the time of booking (via the online booking form) that they have appropriate arrangements for their activities, where applicable, including:

- appropriate safeguarding procedures;
- suitable risk assessments;
- appropriate insurance for their activity;
- appropriate safeguarding training for staff and volunteers; and
- appropriate DBS checks or other safer-recruitment measures where required for the roles undertaken.

The requirements will depend on the nature of the activity, the people involved and the roles being undertaken. Organised Hirers/Service Providers are responsible for determining and meeting the safeguarding, insurance, safer-recruitment and DBS requirements applicable to their own activities and personnel.

Merry Bells Village Hall may request evidence of appropriate safeguarding arrangements where this is reasonably necessary for the safe use of the premises.

4. Rooms, Offices and Shared Areas

This policy applies to **all areas of the Merry Bells premises**, including rooms, offices, kitchens, toilets, corridors, entrances, storage areas, outdoor areas and other shared facilities.

Some facilities, **including the toilets**, are shared by users of different rooms and activities. Hirers must ensure that children and adults at risk are appropriately supervised when using shared facilities, according to their age, individual needs and the circumstances.

Hirers should make appropriate arrangements for participants who may require assistance to use shared facilities, taking account of dignity, privacy, consent and any relevant individual needs.

Users must:

- remain within areas they are authorised to use;

- respect the privacy and dignity of other users;
- not enter offices, storage or restricted areas without permission;
- ensure children and adults at risk do not enter unsafe or unauthorised areas;
- respect the privacy of people using the shared toilets and never enter a toilet cubicle occupied by another person unless there is an immediate emergency;
- not photograph, film or record anyone in toilets or other areas where privacy is expected;
- keep emergency exits and access routes clear; and
- follow any room-specific safety arrangements.

Organised Hirers/Service Providers are responsible for making appropriate first-aid arrangements for their activities, taking account of the nature of the activity and the needs of participants. Private Hirers should make reasonable and proportionate arrangements for the first-aid needs of their group.

Where several groups are using the premises simultaneously, each hirer remains responsible for the people participating in its own activity, including when participants use shared facilities.

The presence of other adults elsewhere in the building does not constitute supervision. Hirers must not assume that another group, Hall Personnel or another adult using the premises is responsible for supervising their participants.

5. Safe Practices

Anyone involved in activities with children or adults at risk must:

- maintain appropriate boundaries;
- avoid unnecessary one-to-one situations where practicable;
- use transparent working practices;
- avoid inappropriate physical contact or private communications;
- use appropriate organisational communication channels rather than personal accounts or private messaging wherever practicable;
- ensure activities are appropriately supervised;
- ensure children or adults at risk do not use hazardous equipment or areas without appropriate supervision; and
- know how to summon first aid and emergency assistance.

Where lone working is unavoidable, appropriate safeguards must be used, including keeping others informed of whereabouts and maintaining appropriate visibility where practicable.

6. Photography and Online Communication

Hall Personnel must not photograph or film children, young people or adults at risk without appropriate consent. CCTV may operate in designated areas in accordance with the Hall's CCTV, privacy and data protection arrangements.

Organised Hirers/Service Providers are responsible for obtaining and managing appropriate consent for photography or filming connected with their own activities, and for ensuring that photographs or recordings are used and stored appropriately.

Hirers and Hall Personnel must respect requests relating to privacy and must not photograph or record people in toilets or other areas where privacy is expected.

Hall Personnel must not use personal social media accounts or private messaging to establish inappropriate communications with children.

7. Recognising and Reporting Concerns

A safeguarding concern may arise from something seen, heard, disclosed or reported. It does not need to be proven before it is reported.

Safeguarding concerns may include physical, sexual, emotional or psychological abuse, neglect, financial abuse, domestic abuse, discriminatory abuse, exploitation, self-neglect, or abuse occurring online.

If someone discloses a safeguarding concern:

- **Listen and accept:** Give your full attention, stay calm, and take what the person says seriously, treating them with respect and dignity.
- **Do not promise secrecy:** Never promise to keep the information a secret; gently explain that you may need to share it to keep them safe. Reassure them that you will do everything you can to keep them safe.
- **Avoid leading questions:** Do not probe for extra details, finish their sentences, or ask questions that suggest specific answers. (remember TED prompts: Tell me, Explain to me, Describe to me)
- **Consider immediate safety:** If there is an immediate risk of harm, take appropriate action to obtain emergency help. Do not investigate the circumstances yourself. If someone is in immediate danger, or a serious crime is taking place or has just taken place, call 999.

What to Do After a Disclosure or When You Have a Safeguarding Concern

- **Record the facts promptly:** Make a factual written record as soon as possible. Include the date, time and location, what was seen, heard or disclosed, the names of those involved where known, and the actions taken. Where possible, record the person's own words rather than interpreting or summarising what they said.
- **Report promptly:** Concerns should normally be reported to the DSL. Where the concern involves the DSL, it should be reported to the Chair of Trustees or another Trustee who is not involved in the concern. Where the concern involves the Chair, it should be reported to the DSL or another Trustee who is not involved in the concern.
- **Do not investigate:** Do not attempt to investigate the allegation yourself or confront the person alleged to have caused harm.

Seek appropriate advice: The DSL will consider the information, seek appropriate advice and, where necessary, make or support a referral to the relevant safeguarding agency or police.

The Hall will not conduct its own investigation into allegations that should properly be dealt with by the police or statutory safeguarding agencies.

Merry Bells Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Judy Barrett

Tel: 07427 343080 (ask for the Designated Safeguarding Lead)

Email: safeguarding@merrybells.org.uk

Safeguarding concerns should normally be reported to the DSL as soon as possible.

If the concern involves the DSL: If a safeguarding concern or allegation involves the DSL, it must **not** be reported to the DSL. It should instead be reported to the Chair of Trustees or another Trustee.

If the concern involves the Chair of Trustees: If the concern involves the Chair of Trustees, it should be reported to the DSL or another Trustee who is not involved in the concern.

If the concern involves both the DSL and Chair of Trustees: The concern should be reported to another Trustee and, where appropriate, directly to the relevant safeguarding authority or police.

No person should be involved in handling a safeguarding concern where they are the subject of the concern.

If there is any immediate risk of harm, call 999.

8. Children and Young People

Safeguarding concerns about a child must be reported promptly to the DSL or, where appropriate, directly to Oxfordshire Children's Services/MASH

Oxfordshire Children's Services/MASH: 01865 519800 (*Out of hours: 0800 833 408*).

Where there is immediate risk of harm, call **999**.

9. Adults at Risk

Safeguarding concerns about an adult at risk must be reported promptly to the DSL or, where appropriate, directly to Oxfordshire's adult safeguarding service.

Social & Health Care Team (Adult Social Care): 0345 050 7666 (*Out of hours: 0800 833 408*).

Where there is immediate risk of harm, call **999**.

10. Allegations Against Hall Personnel

Any allegation or safeguarding concern involving a member of Hall Personnel must be reported promptly to the DSL.

Where the allegation or concern involves the DSL, it must instead be reported to the Chair of Trustees or another Trustee who is not involved in the concern.

Where the allegation or concern involves the Chair of Trustees, it must be reported to the DSL or another Trustee who is not involved in the concern.

Where an allegation involves a person who works or volunteers with children, the Oxfordshire Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) should be consulted in accordance with local safeguarding arrangements.

The Trustees will not conduct their own investigation into allegations that should properly be dealt with by the LADO, police or other statutory safeguarding agencies. The Trustees will cooperate with any safeguarding investigation or enquiry as required.

The police should be contacted where a criminal offence may have occurred or where there is an immediate risk of harm.

LADO: 01865 810603

Email: lado.safeguardingchildren@oxfordshire.gov.uk

11. Whistleblowing

Hall Personnel must raise concerns about unsafe practice, inappropriate behaviour, failure to act on safeguarding concerns or attempts to suppress a concern. Concerns about unsafe or inappropriate practice should be raised even where the behaviour does not appear to meet the threshold of abuse or neglect.

Concerns should normally be reported to the DSL. Where the concern involves the DSL, it should be reported to the Chair of Trustees or another Trustee who is not involved in the concern. Where the concern involves the Chair, it should be reported to the DSL or another Trustee who is not involved in the concern.

No person should be disadvantaged for raising a genuine safeguarding concern in good faith.

12. Confidentiality and Records

Safeguarding concerns will be handled sensitively and shared only on a need-to-know basis where this is appropriate to protect an individual or respond to the concern.

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where information needs to be shared to protect a child or adult at risk or where disclosure is otherwise required by law.

Safeguarding concerns will be recorded factually and stored securely, with access limited to those who need the information to safeguard an individual or manage the concern.

Safeguarding records will be retained securely for an appropriate period in accordance with applicable legal requirements, safeguarding guidance, data protection requirements and the Hall's records retention arrangements. Records will be securely destroyed when they are no longer required.

Data recorded may include:

- date, time and location;
 - a factual account of what was seen, heard or disclosed;
 - names and details of those involved, where known; and
 - actions taken and external bodies informed.
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13. Training

Hall Personnel whose roles involve contact with children or adults at risk must have appropriate safeguarding awareness.

Organised Hirers/Service Providers are responsible for ensuring that their own staff and volunteers have appropriate safeguarding training.

Private Hirers are not normally required to undertake safeguarding training for private family or social events, but they must be aware of the principles and processes in this policy.

14. Review

The Trustees will review this policy at least annually and sooner if legislation, safeguarding guidance, the use of the premises or the Hall's activities change.

Next review: 3/9/27

Approved by: Merry Bells Village Hall Trustees

Date: 3/9/26

Merry Bells Village Hall Safeguarding Quick Guide

If you are worried that a child, young person or adult at risk may be experiencing abuse, neglect or harm:

IMMEDIATE DANGER: CALL 999

If someone tells you they are being harmed

- *Stay calm and listen.*
- *Take what they say seriously, treating them with respect and dignity.*
- *Do not promise to keep it secret.*
- *Do not investigate or ask leading questions. If necessary, use open prompts such as: Tell me, Explain to me, Describe to me (TED).*
- *Record the facts and, where possible, the person's own words.*
- *Report the concern to the Merry Bells Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) as soon as possible*

The DSL will consider the information, seek appropriate advice and, where necessary, make or support a referral to the relevant safeguarding agency or police.

Contact Details:

- **Merry Bells DSL** (to be used unless the concern involves the DSL) *
Judy Barrett - 07427 343080 (ask for Judy, DSL)safeguarding@merrybells.org.uk
- **Children and Young People:** Oxfordshire Children's Services/MASH — **01865 519800** (office hours); **0800 833 408** out of hours.
- **Adults at risk:** Oxfordshire Adult Social Care — **0345 050 7666** (office hours); **0800 833 408** out of hours.
- **Police:** **999** in an emergency; **101** where there is no immediate danger.

* **If the concern involves the DSL:** Do **not** report it to the DSL. Report it to the Chair of Trustees or another Trustee who is not involved in the concern, using 07427 343080 or info@merrybells.org.uk

Remember

You do not need to prove that abuse or neglect has occurred before reporting a concern.

Do not confront the person alleged to have caused harm.

The Hall trustees will not investigate allegations that should properly be dealt with by the police or statutory safeguarding agencies.