

**Safeguarding Annual Report 2023/24**

**BUILDING  
A SAFER  
CULTURE**

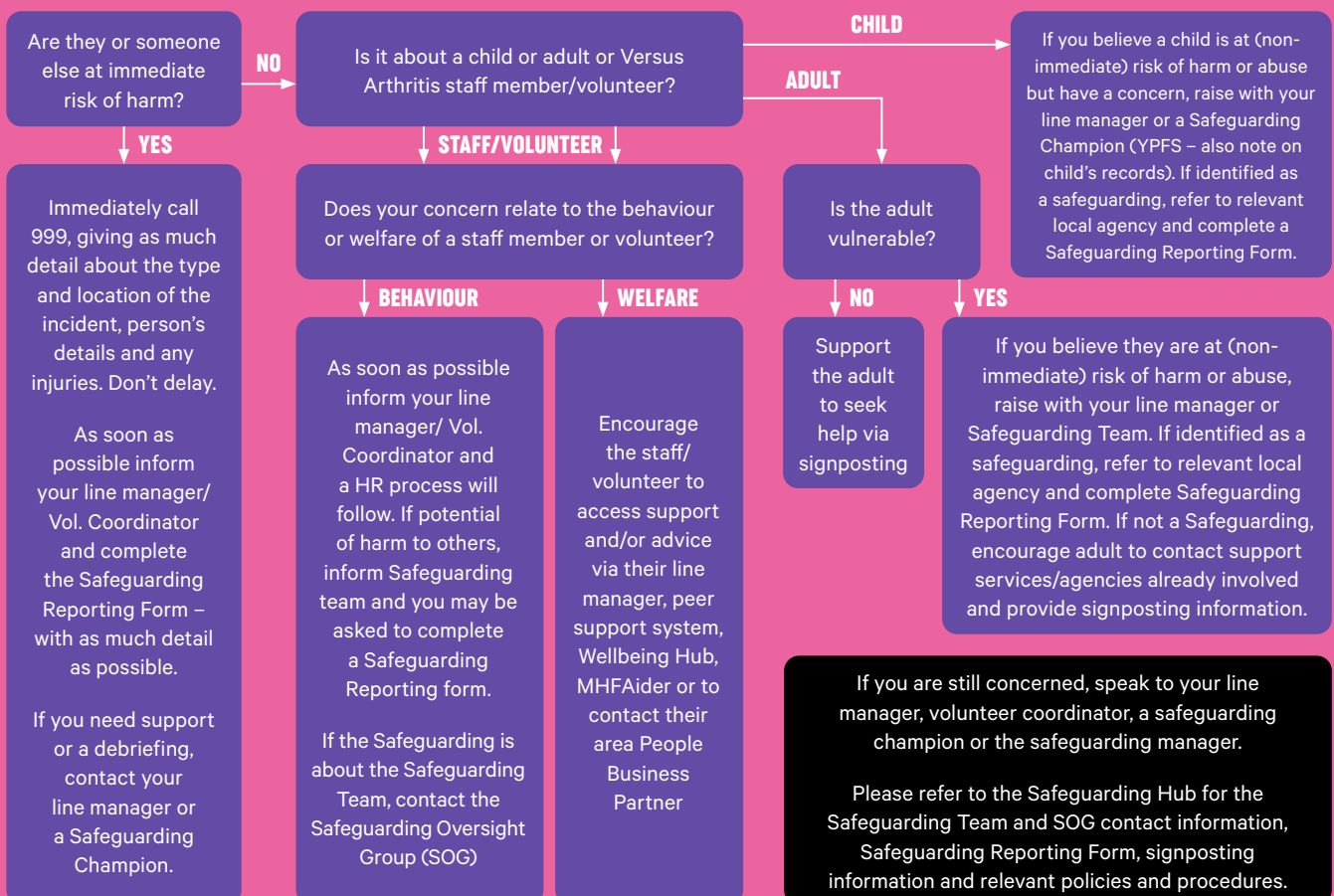
**VERSUS  
ARTHRITIS**

# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2023-2024

## ‘Building a Safer Culture’

- Staff and volunteers better understanding safeguarding their responsibilities.
- Clear processes for staff and volunteers to access safeguarding support and advice.
- Increased confidence in the revised safeguarding policy and procedure.
- Newly appointed Safeguarding Manager who has engaged across all directorates, teams and office in the four nations.
- Newly designed training that is fully relevant to our work at Versus Arthritis.
- Increase awareness of safeguarding concerns and wellbeing or welfare concerns and how to appropriately respond in either instance.

## Safeguarding Flowchart



# SAFEGUARDING GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

In 2023 we established the Safeguarding Oversight Group which is chaired by our Safeguarding Trustee and membership includes our CEO, Director of People and Culture and Head of Legal and Governance. The group scrutinises progress of the safeguarding activity and provides a report to our Risk and Compliance Committee.

## Safeguarding Policy and Procedure

Our Safeguarding Manager spent time with colleagues in our services across the four nations to gather feedback on the efficacy of our safeguarding policy and procedure and as a result, both were revised to be more accessible and streamlined. The procedure now includes a flowchart for any initial concerns that may arise with a focus on 'Make It Happen' – ensuring that we are clear about our organisational role and responsibilities, inclusive of safer recruitment, staff and volunteer training and support.



## Effective Supervision

As part of the updating of the Safeguarding Policy and Procedure, a gap in staff peer supervision was identified and therefore Effective Supervision Guidance was created to support conversations and opportunities for any potential concerns and training needs.

## Safeguarding Champions

In August 2023, we created a network of Safeguarding Champions to promote positive safeguarding practice across the charity. This approach has encouraged more staff to want to be involved and support a safer culture and alongside the implementation of the new safeguarding training, we have increased the previous group of Designated Safeguarding Persons six to fourteen safeguarding champions. This is a significant number of Safeguarding Champions for the size and scale of the charity, covering the four Nations of adult services, young people and families, volunteering, People and Culture, Income and Engagement and Research and Health Intelligence.

## Safeguarding Peer Support Sessions

Peer support within safeguarding practice is essential for building a safer culture at Versus Arthritis and in 2023 we facilitated the following sessions, to encourage discussion and reflection:

- What is Safeguarding?
- Consent
- Effective Supervision

We are refocussing the sessions for 2024/25, to reflect the approach to a safer, positive culture connecting safeguarding and wellbeing. We will also align the sessions with our People Manager Peer Support Session continue reflection and learning.



## Trustee Safeguarding Information Sheet

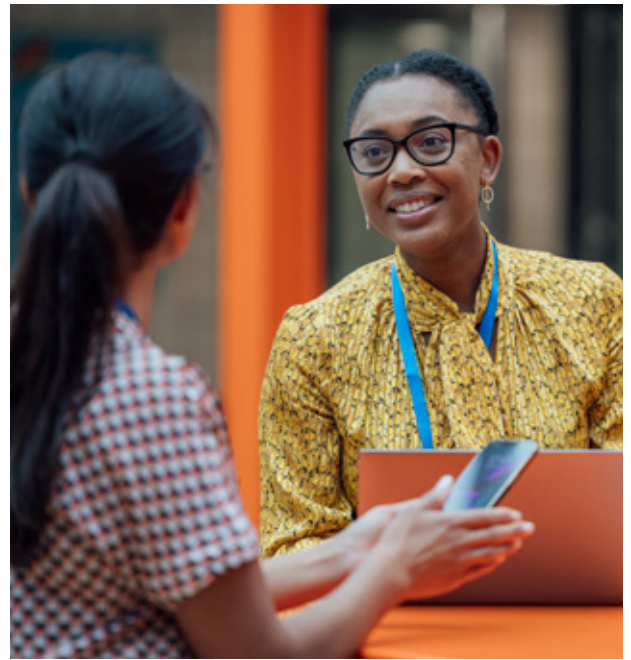
Our Board of Trustees have specific safeguarding responsibilities as per Charity Commission guidance. Trustees are required to attend our safeguarding training to ensure they know how to report safeguarding matters to the relevant agencies (such as the police, social services or Ofsted) and for putting matters right if things go wrong. We have created Safeguarding Information for Trustees Guidance so that trustees can promote an open and positive culture and ensure all involved feel able to report concerns, confident that they will be heard and responded to.

## Safeguarding Resources

We have a broad range of safeguarding resources for our staff and volunteers available on our online, self service 'safeguarding hub'. It includes our safeguarding policy, procedure, organisational reports, signposting information and contact information. We have also updated the **Wellbeing Hub** for staff, to ensure they are aware of the support and resources available to support our people and to continue to promote wellbeing as an integral part of building a safer culture.

## Safer Recruitment

A Safer Recruitment Policy and Procedure has been developed for staff and volunteers, formalising and establishing clear processes for recruiting, pre-boarding and on-boarding staff and volunteers. The policy also includes the agreed appropriate level of criminal record check identified for each role and all current staff checks have been completed. A full-scale data cleanse has been undertaken for our volunteers to identify who is an active volunteer, as well as identifying which roles require a criminal record check, this work is still ongoing with the Volunteering Team.



## Safeguarding Training

The refreshed safeguarding training was delivered between January and April 2024 with a focus on ensuring all staff and relevant volunteers understand key definitions of safeguarding, can recognise signs of abuse and know how to respond, have an awareness of the safeguarding support available within Versus Arthritis and how to access it. A hybrid approach to the session delivery was adopted, with the Safeguarding Manager facilitating 41 sessions across the daytime, the evenings and on weekends, both in person across the four nations and via face-to-face online delivery. We believe this flexibility has been instrumental to the success of the training roll out. We kept the number of attendees limited in each session to ensure we could monitor engagement in the session and understanding of its content and received both helpful constructive feedback regarding the session delivery, as well as positive feedback to support the desired outcome to improve and overall safer culture within Versus Arthritis. Below is a snapshot of the training roll out for Q4 2023/2024.



41

sessions facilitated



288

staff completed the training



80

volunteers completed training



131

people completed feedback survey

### Survey Feedback:

100%

reported understanding key definitions

100%

reported understanding how to access support for any concerns within Versus Arthritis

100%

reported knowing how to report a safeguarding within Versus Arthritis

### Feedback included:

“This was a much better and clearer session than the previous safeguarding training. I particularly liked how scenarios and examples were used.”

“I think the revised view of safeguarding is more straightforward than before. I enjoyed the session, it was relaxed but informative.”

“I thought it was delivered very well, and it was accessible for all levels of prior knowledge/ experience. It was delivered in a warm and welcoming fashion, relaxed but still ample information provided.”

“This one was very easy to understand and very helpful in my line of work. It was also right amount of info therefore I will be able to retain the information better. Previous one is too long and impersonal. Thank you.”

“This is far better than the previous training. I particularly like the flowchart, which I think should be made into a poster and placed in all our offices.”

# PLANS FOR 2024/25

Our principal activity for 2024/25 will include continuous improvement through reviewing, planning, delivering and evaluating safeguarding training and delivering our safeguarding learning and development programme.


- Mandatory safeguarding training for new staff and a train the trainer plan in place to enable Safeguarding Champions to deliver the training in their directorates to support with induction and future refresher training.
- Mental Health First Aid Training for Helpline staff, to ensure the psychological safety of the service team.
- Safeguarding Champions to complete Safeguarding levels 1-3.
- County Lines Training
- Demetia Training
- Grief Training.
- Substance Misuse training – including overuse of painkillers.
- We will review our safeguarding policy and procedure in partnership with the Safeguarding Oversight Group and plan and deliver activity that ensures the profile of safeguarding is high across Versus Arthritis.
- Regularly review Versus Arthritis' Safeguarding Risk Register, identifying new risks and mitigations.
- Plan and deliver a 'safeguarding glossary'.
- Prepare and present reports to Safeguarding Oversight Group and Risk and Audit Committee, ensuring accurate and proportionate information is included.
- Manage a network of safeguarding champions.
- Manage day to day operations of Safeguarding; supporting individuals with concerns and responding to any safeguarding concerns raised.




For further information about this report, please  
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