

Heartfulness UK or Shri Ram Chandra Mission (SRCM) UK (the “Charity”)

Policy on Safeguarding Children

Statement of Intent

The Charity offers meditation with transmission and relaxation sessions to adults over the age of 18. Although the Charity provides written and online relaxation materials for teachers to use in their classrooms, the Charity does not work with children and does not allow children to take part in their meditation sessions because some of the meditation techniques used by the Charity are not suitable for a child.

The Charity wishes to ensure that:

- in accordance with the requirements in Scotland of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 as amended (the “2007 Act”), that their activities will not fall within the category of “Regulated Work” as defined under this Act. This means that all those connected with the Charity, including the charity trustees, volunteers, trainers who carry out the meditation sessions and the zonal and Heartspot coordinators do not require to be a member of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme, or to have completed disclosure checks under the 2007 Act. A child is defined in the 2007 Act as being an individual who is under the age of 18.
- in accordance with the requirements in England and Wales of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 as amended (the “2006 Act”), that their activities do not fall within the category of “Regulated activity” as defined in the 2006 Act. As a result, all those connected with the Charity including the charity trustees, volunteers, trainers who carry out the meditation sessions and the zonal and Heartspot coordinators do not require to have completed Disclosure and Barring Service checks. A child is defined in the 2006 Act as a person who has not attained the age of 18.

The Charity is satisfied that in accordance with the “normal duties” test under the 2007 Act in Scotland, and the “Regulated activity” test under the 2006 Act in England and Wales, they are not carrying out any activities which are aimed at children. In addition, the Charity seeks to ensure that their charity trustees, volunteers, trainers, zonal and Heartspot coordinators should not have any opportunity to have “incidental” contact with children during the course of carrying out the activities of the Charity. The Charity has specific guidance in place to deal with the situation of adults attending the activities of the Charity accompanied by children, as discussed below.

The Charity recognises that everyone has a role to play in relation to safeguarding in order to promote and prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children. This policy therefore provides our charity trustees, volunteers, zonal and Heartspot coordinators, beneficiaries, parents and guardians with the procedures setting out our approach to child protection. This is to ensure that appropriate action is taken in the event of any allegations or suspicions regarding harm to a child that comes to the attention of our charity trustees, volunteers, trainers, zonal and Heartspot coordinators or which arises from any form of contact with the Charity is dealt with appropriately.

Related Policies & Procedures

This policy forms part of our other policies and procedures, which should all be read together. These policies include the following:-

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- Managing complaints / grievance procedure;
- Our safeguarding policy for vulnerable adults;
- Anti-bullying;
- Code of conduct for charity trustees, volunteers, trainers; and advice for meditators
- Conflicts of interest;
- Data protection and recording information;
- Whistleblowing; and
- Disciplinary procedures.

Our Safeguarding Officer

The charity has its own Safeguarding Officer and an Asst Secretary for Legal Affairs who also deals with safeguarding issues. Their details are shown below. They can be contacted at any time to report any concerns or issues, or to pass on a report or allegation.

In the event that the Safeguarding Officer is unavailable for any reason, please contact the Asst Secretary for Legal Affairs instead.

Safeguarding Officer:- Dr. Venkat Shenoy who can be contacted on safeguarding.equality@heartfulness.uk

Asst Secretary for Legal Affairs:- Simon Maharaj who can be contacted on asst-secretary.legal@heartfulness.uk.

Guidance for all Charity Trustees, Meditators/ Volunteers/ Zonal and Heartspot Coordinators regarding Children in Heartfulness Centres or at other Organised Events

As stated above, the Charity does not work with children and does not allow children to take part in any meditation and relaxation sessions. The Charity recognises however that some parents/guardians may attend one of our centres or events with their child/children.

In this event only, the following procedures will apply:-

- Most of our centres and some of our events will have a specific designated space where children can stay safely during the session. The following procedures must however apply at all times:-
- The child/children must be accompanied by a parent/guardian who is not taking part in the session at ALL times. At no point whatsoever should a child/children be left unsupervised in the designated space, even for a very short space of time. This will mean that any child/children will also have to be accompanied to use the bathroom facilities. There should be no opportunity for any of our charity trustees/ meditators/ trainers/volunteers/ zonal or Heartspot coordinators to have the opportunity of unsupervised contact with any child/children.
- Parents/ guardians should be made aware that our charity trustees/ meditators/ trainers/volunteers/ zonal or Heartspot coordinators are not required to be disclosure checked

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under the 2007 Act in Scotland or under the 2006 Act in England and Wales and should not therefore have any contact with the child/ children that is unsupervised by the parent/ guardian.

- Any parent/guardian who is unable to provide this form of continual supervision will unfortunately be unable to take part in the session. It is up to the parent/guardian to make the necessary arrangements to accompany their child/children for the entire length of their visit to the centre or event and they must take full responsibility for the child/children during their visit. The Charity can accept no responsibility for any loss, injury or damage caused to or by any child/children during their stay.
- In the event that any charity trustees/ meditators/ trainers/volunteers/ zonal or Heartspot coordinators of the Charity are informed by another parent or sees for themselves that a child/children have been left unsupervised, then this should be reported immediately to the Safeguarding Officer. The Safeguarding Officer or supervisory volunteer/trainer who is present at the session can ask the parent/guardian attending the session to leave, because immediate supervision of their child/children is required. The Charity recognises that this could be disruptive to those taking part in the session, so asks all parents/ guardians to respect the wishes of the Charity on this.
- It is important that any charity trustees/ meditators/ trainers/volunteers/ zonal or Heartspot coordinators who is made aware of a child/ children being left unsupervised, should not check out the situation on their own or have any form of contact with the unsupervised child/children. The charity trustees/ meditators/ trainers/volunteers/ zonal or Heartspot coordinators concerned should ensure that if any check is required, that they do so accompanied by the parent/ guardian.
- In the event that any adult is asked to leave the session because their child/children has been left unsupervised, then the Safeguarding Officer reserves the right to decide whether or not this adult should be allowed to return to the remainder of the session. If this appears to be a particular issue for any parent/guardian attending our sessions who have two or more reported incidents of their child/children being left unsupervised while at one of our centres or events, then the Safeguarding Officer /charity trustees can in their discretion decide to ask this parent/ guardian to stay away from our sessions until the issue has been resolved, owing to the disruption this causes to those enjoying the session and the risks it poses to the Charity itself.
- In the event that a session takes place in premises where there is no designated safe children's space available, then this will be advertised in advance of the session. If any parent/guardian should come to the session with a child/children, then it will not be possible for the child/ children to wait for the duration of the session. In this event only, the parent/guardian should not take offence when they are asked to leave the session by a charity trustee/ mediator/ trainer/volunteer/ zonal or Heartspot coordinator.

Guidance for Charity Trustees/ Meditators/ Trainers/Volunteers/ Zonal or Heartspot Coordinators in the Event of a Safeguarding Concern or Issue

Details of the different forms of child abuse and the indicators to be aware of are set out in Appendix 1.

In the event that either of the following situations should occur, then the applicable guidelines are set out below:-

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- If a charity trustee/ mediator/ trainer/volunteer/ zonal or Heartspot coordinator has any concerns about the possible safeguarding or welfare issues of a child/ children that they see come to a session with their parent/guardian, these concerns could relate to any form of physical, verbal, psychological, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect as detailed in Appendix 1. This could arise from something that they observe or overhear at the session, or that they are made aware of at the session from another parent/ guardian.
- If any child/ children at one of our centres or events discloses any concerns or incident of potential abuse directly to a charity trustee/ mediator/ trainer/volunteer/ zonal or Heartspot coordinators.

Procedure to follow in this event:-

- The charity trustee/ mediator/ trainer/volunteer/ zonal or Heartspot coordinator has a responsibility to report this concern in accordance with the procedures set out in this policy. Even if the concern seems minor, it should never be ignored.
- The charity trustee/ mediator/ trainer/volunteer/ zonal or Heartspot coordinator should make an immediate report to the Safeguarding Officer setting out the nature of the concern, how the matter came to their attention and their observations if any. If this report is made verbally, it should also be confirmed in writing to the Safeguarding Officer within 48 hours of the verbal report for the purpose of our records. The Safeguarding Officer will immediately on receipt of the initial report inform the police/NSPCC/Social Services as appropriate. A copy of the written report and any subsequent communication should also be passed by the Safeguarding Officer immediately to the Chairman of the Charity who will then inform the Charity trustees and keep them updated of progress.

Responsibilities of Charity Trustees/ Mediators/ Trainers/ Volunteers/ Zonal or Heartspot Coordinators

- All those involved with the Charity, particularly the charity trustees/ mediators/ trainers/volunteers/ zonal or Heartspot coordinators must ensure that they are familiar with this safeguarding policy and know how to follow and apply these procedures if required. This safeguarding policy should also be made available to any adult/parent/guardian attending the sessions that wishes to see it.
- The charity trustees/ mediators/ trainers/volunteers/ zonal or Heartspot coordinators should always take action in accordance with this policy if they have any safeguarding or welfare concerns regarding a child/children.
- The charity trustees/ mediators/ trainers/volunteers/ zonal or Heartspot coordinators are responsible for their own professional conduct on behalf of the Charity at all times and are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct.
- Anyone who reports a child/ children safeguarding/ welfare issue, whether they are a charity trustee/ mediator/ trainer/volunteer/ zonal or Heartspot coordinator or parent/guardian should be reassured that they will be listened to and their concern or allegations will be taken seriously and acted upon in accordance with this policy. Under no circumstances should the charity trustee/ mediator/ trainer/volunteer/ zonal or Heartspot coordinator promise to keep the matter confidential or secret.

Reporting Safeguarding Concerns about any of the Charity Trustees/ Meditators/ Trainers/Volunteers/ Zonal or Heartspot Coordinators

In the event that any parent/guardian/child/children has any concerns about a charity trustee/ mediator/ trainer/volunteer/ zonal or Heartspot coordinator of the Charity, regardless of whether it is something they have witnessed or heard directly or indirectly, they should immediately report their concerns to the Safeguarding Officer, unless this is one of the individuals concerned, in which case a report should be made to the Asst. Secretary for Legal Affairs. Contact details for these individuals have already been provided.

The Charity understands that this may be a difficult and sensitive concern to report, but the Charity has a duty to safeguard children and to prevent the reputation of the Charity being brought into disrepute. The safeguarding procedures set out in this policy will be followed immediately.

In the event the concern is being raised by another charity trustee/ mediator/ trainer/volunteer/ zonal or Heartspot coordinator, then the individual concerned should remember that their first duty is to safeguard the child/children concerned by following the procedures set out in this safeguarding policy. Their concerns should be reported to the Safeguarding Officer unless this is one of the individuals concerned, in which case a report should be made to the Asst. Secretary for Legal Affairs. They should be reassured that their report will be taken seriously and investigated fully. The individual concerned should not talk about the disclosure to any other colleagues within the Charity.

Procedure to follow in this event:

- Any verbal report should also be confirmed in writing to the Safeguarding Officer within 48 hours of the verbal report for the purpose of our records. The Safeguarding Officer will immediately on receipt of the initial report inform the police/NSPCC/Social Services as appropriate. A copy of the written report and any subsequent communication should also be passed by the Safeguarding Officer immediately to the Chairman of the Charity who will then inform the Charity trustees and keep them updated of progress.
- The Charity may also wish to conduct its own internal investigation into the matter, with the charity trustees being kept fully informed throughout.

Record Keeping

- Any such written report will be kept in accordance with the Charity's Data Protection Policies and Procedures.
- The information in the report should be recorded as factually as possible. Any records kept by charity trustees/ meditators/ trainers/volunteers/ zonal or Heartspot coordinators about a child/children should include what was said or observed, all the persons involved, the date and time of what occurred, date of any disclosure and if there were any observable injuries.
- A record should also be kept of any action agreed or to be taken.
- All reports should be completed ideally within 48 hours of the incident or disclosure occurring, as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Professional Code of Conduct

- All charity trustees/ meditators/ trainers/volunteers/ zonal or Heartspot coordinators and zonal coordinators should adhere by the Charity's Code of Conduct in relation to dealing with members of the public. This will include maintaining a professional boundary at all times.
- Any charity trustee/ mediator/ trainer/volunteer/ zonal or Heartspot coordinator who breaches the Code of Conduct in relation to a safeguarding issue will immediately be reported to the Safeguarding Officer and further action will be taken in accordance with the Charity's disciplinary procedures.

Appendix 1

The following guidance is taken from the updated NSPCC Guidance on the definitions and signs of abuse in children. Full details can be found on www.nspcc.org.uk. The following examples are not conclusive and are for illustrative purposes only.

Physical Abuse

This can occur where deliberate harm or injury is caused to a child/children by hitting, shaking, squeezing, burning, scalding, cutting, suffocation and biting or by giving children alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison. This category will also include attempted suffocation or drowning. Physical harm can also be caused where the parent or carer deliberately tries to induce illness in a child or makes up symptoms of illness, known as Fictitious Illness by Proxy or Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse of a child/ children will include either forcing or enticing a child/ children to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution to meet the sexual needs or practices of an adult/carer/guardian. This can include physical contact and will include penetrative or non-penetrative acts. Sexual abuse shall also include showing children or involving children in the production of pornographic material, watching sexual activities or encouraging children to behave in a way that is sexually inappropriate. Other areas to look out for include use of the internet for online sexual abuse such as grooming, or exploiting a child/ children for sexual activities by giving them gifts or affection.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the regular emotional mistreatment of a child/children such as a persistent lack of love or affection, by constantly shouting at the child or children, threatening them or taunting them, making them feel worthless and unloved or inadequate and nervous or withdrawn.

Emotional abuse can also occur where there is continual overprotection which either holds back or prevents the child from socialising with other children of their own age.

Emotional abuse can also include asserting control over a child by intimidation, threats of coercion, harassment or isolating a child/ children from services or supportive networks. It can involve being drawn in to radicalisation of any kind. It can also involve bullying in any form, such as bullying by parents/ coach or a teacher. It can also include witnessing the ill treatment of another child/children.

As the above demonstrates, emotional abuse can occur in many different ways.

Neglect

Neglect is the repeated and regular failure by an adult to meet the basic needs of a child/children for essentials such as food, clothing, warm shelter and helping to meet the child's basic physical or psychological needs. This will include regularly leaving a child/children alone or unsupervised. It will include the failure of a parent/ carer to protect the child from physical or emotional harm that they are aware of and failing to provide the child's basic needs in terms of love and affection or even necessary medical care or supervision.

Bullying and Cyber-bullying

This has already been discussed above but can take the form of any of the other recognised forms of abuse.

Bullying can occur over things like social media, online, by texting or in person.

Financial Abuse

Financial abuse will involve the exploitation in some way or misuse of the property, possession or benefits which the child either receives or is entitled to receive. This will include stealing from the child/ children, fraud, putting on pressure or other forms of exploitation.