

Mindfulness Network Safeguarding Policy



Date Drafted: Feb 2023

Date for Review: Feb 2025

Date Approved by Board of Trustees: Feb 2023

Section 1: Mission Statement

By developing mindfulness and compassion both internally and through our services, the Mindfulness Network (MN) has the intention to:

- reduce/alleviate human suffering.
- promote well-being.
- create the conditions in which people, communities, and the planet, can flourish.

The MN acknowledges that some of the people we work with – and those associated with them – may be at risk from harm, abuse and neglect. The MN is fully committed to safeguarding children, young people and adults who come in to contact with the organisation. Although the MN does not provide services directly to children, the organisation has a very wide reach and those accessing its services will have children e.g. children of retreatants, children of mindfulness teachers who are being supervised by supervisors who are associates, as well as the children of participants who are taking part in mindfulness courses that teachers in supervision are delivering (this is not an exhaustive list).

The MN will work in partnership with other local and national agencies to ensure robust safeguarding practice and to demonstrate the organisation's commitment to safeguarding those at risk.

We will continually monitor and review our Safeguarding Policy and procedures for reporting concerns and making referrals and always where there has been a disclosure. New policy and procedures will be developed in the light of this ongoing process.

The MN trustees, staff team, associates and volunteers are all required to keep their safeguarding practice up to date and are expected to access specialist support as and when required. Safeguarding practice relates to the way in which everyone connected with the organisation integrates safeguarding into the activity they undertake on behalf of the organisation. This includes taking part in training to increase knowledge, develop skills and raise awareness, engaging in discussion and reflection about how this policy is implemented in practice, as well as processes for

reviewing the policy and procedures in the light of changes to legislation and developments in good practice.

Associates of the MN are defined as people with whom the organisation has an agreement to deliver a service, including trainers, retreat leaders, compassion teachers, assessors and supervisors.

The MN recognises that safeguarding responsibilities and protecting those at risk is a governance priority for all charities and is fundamental to operating as a charity for the public benefit.

The MN recognises its internal duty of care to staff, trustees, associates and volunteers and this policy covers situations where there is/may be a risk of harm, abuse or neglect to a person within the organisation. Distance learners, training participants, retreatants and supervisees - and anyone else who comes in to contact with the organisation - are the people external to the organisation to whom the MN has a duty of care under the terms of this policy.

The MN board of trustees has ultimate responsibility for safeguarding and the organisation understands that The Charity Commission will hold trustees to account if things go wrong and will check that trustees followed their guidance and the law. The MN also understands that trustees are also expected to take responsibility for putting things right.

The MN and its staff and associates who teach mindfulness on behalf of the MN all agree to comply fully with the BAMBA Good Practice Guidelines for Mindfulness-Based Teachers and Trainers, including the requirement for full adherence to the ethical framework appropriate to each teacher or trainer's professional background and working context.

Section 2: Legislative Background

Safeguarding is about protecting children and adults from abuse or neglect and educating those around them to recognise the signs and dangers. The MN is committed to sharing responsibility for wellbeing with those individuals who have needs for care and support and their carers.

The legislation that underpins this policy includes:

- 1989 The Children's Act
- 2004 The Children's Act
- 2014 The Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act
- 2014 The Care Act (England)

- 2014 Adult Support & Protection (Scotland) Act
- 2014 Children & Young People (Scotland) Act
- 2007 Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order
- 1998 Human Rights Act

Definition of “At Risk”

An “adult at risk” is an adult over the age of 18 who:

- Is experiencing or is at risk of experiencing abuse or neglect.
- Has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs); and
- As a result of those needs is unable to protect themselves against the abuse or neglect or risk of it

A “child at risk” is a child under the age of 18 who:

- Is experiencing or is at risk of experiencing abuse, neglect or other kinds of harm; and
- Has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs)

The MN will operate its Safeguarding Policy and procedures in accordance with the relevant regional legislative framework, with awareness of possible cross-boundary issues, e.g. where a person may live in one region but attend a course, retreat, training course or be in supervision in another.

Section 3: Safer Recruitment

The MN will seek to recruit all paid staff using appropriate procedures, safeguards and checks. A range of measures will be used to screen out people who are unsuitable for working with children, young people and adults at risk.

For salaried staff and trustees:

- The recruitment process for the MN is based on a CV and letter of application.
- Gaps in work/life/career history are checked out at interview.
- Interview panels use a consistent list of questions which ask about values as well as skills and which are asked to each applicant.
- References, right to work and qualification evidence are always requested and these are checked for genuineness.

We will identify whether any roles are eligible for enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. A role can meet the eligibility criteria for an enhanced DBS check by the contact required in the role with children and adults at risk and the opportunities to develop a relationship of trust within the role. There are no roles

within the organisation that are deemed to be Regulated Activity, though if this changes, we will ensure that Barring List checks are undertaken.

We will ensure that everyone within the organisation has access to Safeguarding Policy and training as required. We will review our recruitment procedures in response both to changes in legislation and changes in systems external to our organisation e.g. the Disclosure and Barring Service. All salaried roles within the organisation will include a probationary period, mentoring as required, ongoing personal development and annual Performance Development Review (PDR) with their line manager.

Section 4: Volunteers

The MN will treat volunteers fairly and on an equal footing with paid staff. Volunteers will be provided with a clear role description and will be offered support in order to enable them to fulfil their role within the organisation. Volunteers are required to abide by the MN volunteering contract and to work within defined role boundaries.

Requirements for DBS checks apply to volunteers in the same way that they do to paid workers. There are currently no roles within the organisation that would require a volunteer to work with children. There are no roles within the organisation that are deemed to be Regulated Activity, though if this changes, we will ensure that Barring List checks are undertaken.

Section 5: Safeguarding Officer & Other Contacts

Sarah Millband is the Safeguarding Officer for the Mindfulness Network.
(07563 753824) - sarahmillband@live.co.uk

Alison Evans will deputise for supervision related reports.
(07703 156021) - alison@mindfulness-network.org

Bridgette O'Neill will deputise for retreat related reports.
(07762 220258) - b.oneill@bangor.ac.uk

Sophie Sansom will deputise for training related reports.
(07792 669343) - sophie@mindfulness-network.org

In addition, the Executive Director and the Business Director have responsibility for overseeing safeguarding practice within the MN.

Executive Director: Ken Lunn
(07725 362825) - ken@mindfulness-network.org

Business Director: Ruth McDonald
(07432 140102) - ruth@mindfulness-network.org

The MN has trustees with dedicated responsibility for safeguarding:

Paula Watson (07812 166292) paula@yardo.co.uk

The Safeguarding Officer and deputies will have access to appropriate training to support them in these roles. They will also:

- liaise with appropriate local and national agencies and ensure a formal safeguarding report is submitted to the relevant authority when appropriate.
- receive feedback from the relevant department within 7 working days from submitting a safeguarding report, or seek same, and action as appropriate.
- contribute to the development of appropriate policy and procedures.
- maintain records and keep confidentiality.
- adhere to and promote this Safeguarding Policy within the organisation.
- support or provide access to support for any individual suffering harm, abuse or neglect.

The Safeguarding Officer and deputies will be available to staff, associates, volunteers and any individual in contact with the organisation who has a concern about any aspect of safeguarding. Processes for submitting Safeguarding Incident reports and recording Safeguarding Concerns have been developed – see flow chart in appendix 1.

The Safeguarding Officer will attend relevant training provided by national umbrella organisations (e.g. WCVA) and access support from specialist staff within these organisations. The MN will continually review Safeguarding Policy and Practice and peer support will be promoted.

Section 6: Awareness of harm, abuse and neglect

The MN recognises that harm, abuse and neglect can be experienced by trustees, staff, associates, volunteers and individuals in contact with the organisation.

Harm is caused by accidents, deliberate abuse (physical, sexual, emotional/psychological and financial) neglect (deliberate or not) or factors such as bullying, prejudicial attitudes or a failure to enable an individual to participate in activities that are open to most of their peers. All incidents of harm to any individual in contact with the organisation will require an appropriate response to safeguard the individual and to reduce risks. Deliberate acts of harm (physical, sexual, emotional/psychological and financial), exploitation and neglect are abuses against the person and the MN is committed to fully undertaking the responsibility to act on any information that relates to harm, abuse and neglect to any individual. This responsibility includes passing information on to the following relevant organisations:

- social services
- the police
- other professional bodies e.g. NSPCC
- the DBS (where appropriate)

Section 7: Suspected Incidents of Abuse, Harm and Neglect

The MN recognises that although it does not have a duty to investigate, it has a responsibility to inform external agencies in cases of suspected abuse, harm and neglect. Where suspected incidents of abuse, harm and neglect occur, MN trustees, staff, associates and volunteers are expected to:

- act in a timely manner.
- take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of those affected, ensuring that these steps do not compromise their own safety or jeopardise any future investigation by statutory agencies.
- maintain confidentiality and exercise caution to ensure that they do not endanger any individual further (e.g. by alerting the alleged perpetrator)
- report the facts to the Safeguarding Officer or deputies.

MN trustees, staff, associates and volunteers are responsible for submitting Safeguarding Incident reports or recording Safeguarding Concerns using the on-line process on the MN electronic system NED (Network Exchange Database) as soon as possible. Processes for submitting Safeguarding Incident reports and recording Safeguarding Concerns have been developed – see flow chart in Appendix 1. If internet access is not available the Safeguarding Officer and relevant lead will need to be contacted directly. The form in Appendix 2 can be used as a guide to recording any safeguarding concerns prior to transfer to the NED system.

The MN acknowledges its legal duty to take action where a Safeguarding Incident has occurred. A **Safeguarding Incident Report** will be submitted where a Safeguarding Incident has occurred and where there is:

- a need for immediate action because an individual at risk of or suffering from harm, abuse or neglect.
- a need to inform external agencies about abuse, harm and neglect.

The MN recognises the importance of prevention in safeguarding. **Safeguarding Concerns** will be recorded where there is a cause for concern and where there is:

- a need for action because an individual is vulnerable.
- a need to prevent a situation from escalating.
- a need to inform someone within the organisation about the potential for abuse, harm and neglect to occur.
- a need to address poor or inappropriate practice which could result in harm to others.

The MN will monitor and review Safeguarding Concerns raised within the organisation to continually develop and disseminate good practice and will adapt its policy and procedures where necessary.

The Safeguarding Officer/Deputy is responsible for responding within 24 hours of a Safeguarding Incident Report being submitted through the NED system and within 48 hours of a Safeguarding Concern being submitted. Formal safeguarding reports to local authorities are made within 24 hours of this step becoming apparent.

The Safeguarding Officer/Deputy, along with trustees, staff, associates and volunteers, must be prepared to seek guidance and support from appropriate individuals and agencies – both internal and external to the organisation e.g. NSPCC practitioners helpline: 0808 800 5000

Section 8: The Role of the Board of Trustees

The MN recognises that the board of trustees are ultimately responsible for safeguarding and that this is a key part of their governance role.

Board member Paula Watson has been delegated specific responsibility for safeguarding. In addition, the Board has tasked safeguarding responsibilities to a designated Safeguarding Officer and to deputies who hold the roles of Supervision, Training and Retreat Leads within the organisation. Paula Watson will meet with the Safeguarding Officer, deputies and the Executive Director and Business Director regularly to review policy and procedures and to reflect and share learning that arises from safeguarding practice within the MN.

Safeguarding is a standing item on the agenda for MN trustee board meetings. The Board will be alerted if there is a Safeguarding Incident and are responsible for making a Serious Incident report to the Charity Commission, as required by charity registration.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-report-a-serious-incident-in-your-charity>

The MN recognises that trustees must be subject to recruitment and communication process that ensure the board of trustees is made up of people who are appropriate to make welfare decisions about children and/or adults at risk.

Section 9: Confidentiality & Consent

All reports are kept confidential and held securely according to the MNs Data Protection Policy and Privacy Policy until or unless it is necessary to share this material with the agencies named above. The MN recognises that it has a responsibility to share relevant information to prevent harm to an individual or to assist in the prevention or detection of a crime. Information is shared within the organisation on a need to know basis only. Those reporting Safeguarding Incidents or recording Safeguarding Concerns are required to maintain confidentiality whilst the Safeguarding Officer is responding to the issues raised.

The MN recognises that it is best practice to gain consent from the parent/carer or child of sufficient understanding to report a Safeguarding Incident involving a child ONLY where this will NOT place the child at further risk of harm. In any situation where gaining consent about a child or from a child with sufficient understanding is not possible, the reasons for this must be fully documented.

For adult safeguarding, the MN will assume that the adult has the capacity to make decisions for themselves unless this has been assessed otherwise, and therefore has the right to be asked for, or to withhold, their consent.

Consent should therefore be obtained to report a Safeguarding Incident involving an adult unless:

- a crime has been committed.
- the situation, if not reported, would put other people at risk of similar abuse, e.g. if the suspected perpetrator is known to be working with other people who are at risk or vulnerable in similar circumstances.
- the individual is subject to undue influence (possibly from the perpetrator or a person with an interest in protecting the perpetrator) pressure or coercion with discharges them from giving consent.

In any situation where gaining consent about an adult is not possible, the reasons for this must be fully documented.

Section 10: Communication

The MN considers that safeguarding is everybody's business and will disseminate this policy and associated procedures to all trustees, staff, associates, volunteers and any individuals in contact with the organisation and their families and carers.

The policy will be included as part of induction for all trustees, staff, associates and volunteers. Beneficiaries of the organisation will be made aware of this policy and procedures in welcome letters and at the start of any MN course, retreat or training event. Beneficiaries will also be informed about what action will be taken by the organisation, including in a situation where a report needs to be made to another agency. The policy will be published on the MN website.

Alternative accessible formats will be made available where possible on request, so that the message about safeguarding is understood by all and to ensure that everyone knows that they have the right to speak up about poor practice, record Safeguarding Concerns or report Safeguarding Incidents.

The MN will encourage and support all trustees, staff, associates, volunteers and any individuals in contact with the organisation to speak up and to report Safeguarding Incidents and record Safeguarding Concerns using NED and to the named Safeguarding Officer/Deputy where they have:

- a concern, a worry, an issue or doubt about practice or treatment of an individual or colleague, or their circumstances
- information about a Safeguarding Incident that involves an individual at risk of or suffering from harm, abuse or neglect.

Safeguarding is a standing item on the agenda for the Trustee Board meetings, for supervision sessions and as part of retreat and training review and reflection process.

The Safeguarding Officer will always consult the deputies and trustees with responsibility for Safeguarding before a making decision to report a Safeguarding Incident to an external agency.

Section 11: Responding to Allegations against a Person within the Organisation

The MN recognises that there may be rare occasions when an individual in contact with the organisation may have concerns about inappropriate conduct by a member of the MN Trustee Board, the staff team, an associate or a volunteer. The person raising the concern must discuss their allegations with the Executive Director Ken

Lunn or the Safeguarding Officer (contact details in section 5) and not address the member of the MN trustee board, the staff member, the associate or volunteer directly.

In circumstances where an individual is concerned about the conduct of the Executive Director, the person raising the concern must discuss their allegations with the Safeguarding Officer.

Immediate steps must be taken to ensure the safety of the people affected – these steps must not compromise the safety of the person making the allegation or jeopardise any future investigation by statutory agencies.

Disciplinary procedures are in place to address the allegations made against a trustee, staff member, associate or volunteer with the MN, which can include immediate suspension without prejudice. These procedures have been developed to ensure fairness to the individual against whom the allegations have been made, whilst protecting those at risk and maintaining their safety.

The MN recognises that there may be some circumstances where a report to an external agency such as social services (where there has been a Safeguarding Incident) or the police (where a crime has been committed) is necessary. The MN will cooperate fully with any such investigations and will provide factual and relevant information as required.

Section 12: Whistleblowing (Disclosure in the Public Interest)

Whistleblowing is making a report in the public interest (Public Information Disclosure Act 1989) where there is wrongdoing, risk or malpractice.

The MN encourages trustees, staff, associates and volunteers to report any practice that:

- doesn't seem right.
- is illegal.
- represents negligence in undertaking their duties, leading to a risk of putting another individual's health and safety in danger.
- appears to be covering up wrongdoing in any way.

In the first instance, they should speak to the Safeguarding Officer or their deputies. Although the MN would prefer trustees, staff, associates and volunteers to use internal processes for making a report wherever possible, this does not prevent them from making a report or referral to social services, the police or the NSPCC (if appropriate) in their own right as a private individual.

Guidance on protection and support for employees who blow the whistle appropriately within an organisation can be found via the charity Prevent: <https://protect-advice.org.uk/>

Section 13: Special Considerations

The MN conducts activities in a variety of different areas including mindfulness courses, retreats, training & supervision of mindfulness teachers as well as offering a programme of donation based events. The activities of the organisation include, but are not limited to, the following:

- distance learning mindfulness-based courses
- mindfulness retreats
- teacher training and continuous professional development training programme for mindfulness-based teachers
- compassion-based courses, trainings and retreats
- providing supervision and supra-vision of mindfulness-based teachers and supervisors
- providing mindfulness practice mentoring
- donation-based events

Mindfulness-Based Courses, Training Programmes and Retreats

- Aside from the shorter donation-based events, individuals accessing mindfulness-based courses and retreats through the MN will always complete a pre-course application, through which they will be given the opportunity to share with teachers, trainers and retreat leads any information about their mental and physical health needs, as well as any difficult life circumstances. The individual and the teacher, trainer or retreat lead will decide together whether the course or retreat is suitable.
- The importance and limitations of confidentiality will be openly discussed with all course and retreat participants, including ensuring understanding that teachers, trainers and retreat leads have a responsibility to act on their Safeguarding Concerns and to raise them with the Safeguarding Officer

Supervision of Mindfulness-Based Teachers

- Supervisees make an application for supervision through the MN, which provides supervisors with information about the background and training of the supervisees that they are working with.

- Supervisors have a supervision contract that is agreed with supervisors. This document sets out the importance and limitations of confidentiality. Issues of confidentiality will be openly discussed with supervisees, including ensuring understanding that supervisors have a responsibility to act on their Safeguarding Concerns and to raise them with the Safeguarding Officer.
- Supervisors have a responsibility to support supervisees with reporting Safeguarding Incidents or recording Safeguarding Concerns relating to any individual who is accessing a mindfulness-based course, and anyone associated with them.
- The processes listed above also apply to supra-vision (supervision of supervision) and mindfulness practice mentoring.

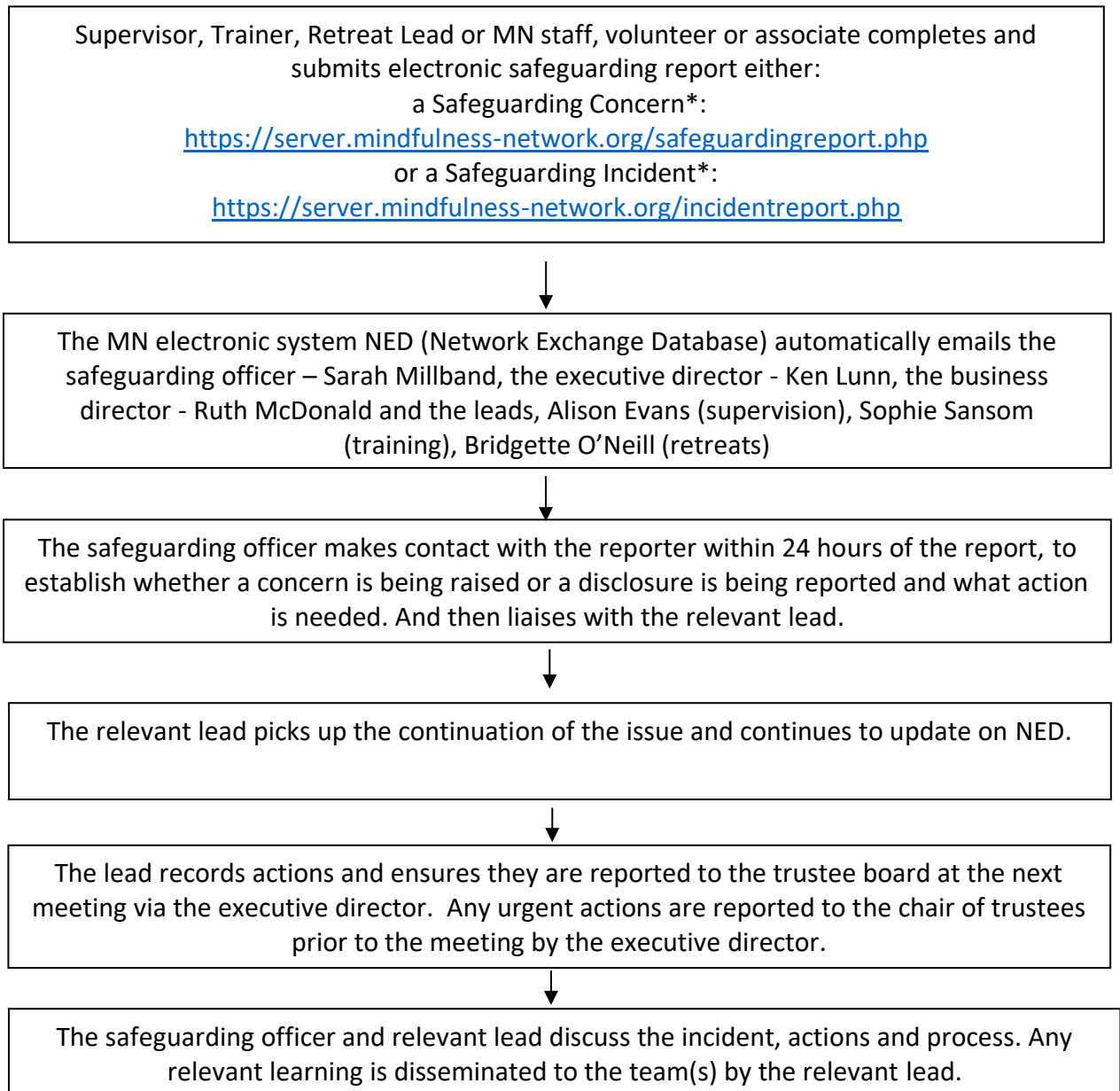
Section 14: Other Related Policies

The following MN policies and procedures link to this Safeguarding Policy:

- Discipline and Grievance Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Complaints Procedure

APPENDIX 1: Safeguarding Process

The flow chart below outlines the process for initial recording, reporting and actions following a safeguarding incident.



* Please note the difference between a Safeguarding Incident & a Safeguarding Concern as detailed in section 7 of this Safeguarding Policy

A **Safeguarding Incident** has occurred and where there is:

- a need for immediate action because an individual at risk of or suffering from harm, abuse or neglect
- a need to inform external agencies about abuse, harm and neglect.

A **Safeguarding Concern** will be recorded where there is a cause for concern and where there is:

- a need for action because an individual is vulnerable.
- a need to prevent a situation from escalating.
- a need to inform someone within the organisation about the potential for abuse, harm and neglect to occur.
- a need to address poor or inappropriate practice which could result in harm to others.

Additional Guidance for Residential Events

When providing details of your safeguarding concern, include whether this is arising from direct observation or whether you have received information from a third party.

If the participant is unwell and not engaging in the event, please agree and record a series of times in the day when you will check in with the retreatant, including checking whether they will be taking meals. Please also note whether the person has any medication with them or needs medical attention.

If the participant decides not to remain at the event, please provide details here of your early departure interview with them, including your assessment of whether the participant is safe to travel. Please agree a time by which the participant will contact you to let you know that they have arrived home safely.

In all situations where a participant leaves the residential training without an early departure interview, please contact the participant by phone and if there is no reply, leave a message asking them to return your call within an hour and letting them know that if they don't reply, you are required to contact their next of kin. Please note here the time that phone calls took place and record what was said.

Appendix 2: A paper-based form.

Raising and Reporting Concerns Form

(Only to be completed manually in the absence of internet access, and then shredded once submitted online at the links listed in Appendix 1)

Guidance for Raising and Reporting Concerns

- Use this document to raise and report any concerns you have which are related to an individual who is in contact with the MN (including staff), or anyone associated with this individual.
- You may also use this document to raise a concern about the conduct of a member of MN Staff or a Volunteer.
- Please complete as soon as possible after the event making sure you strike through any blank spaces on this form.

Date

Time

Location

Please provide details of your concern, including whether this is arising from direct observation or whether you have received information from a third party.

Please provide details of any actions you have taken, including the date when you contacted the Safeguarding Officer