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PAGANAID SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Introduction

PaganAid is committed to supporting and empowering young people and adults on the Pagan pathway. The charity has a commitment to ensuring that all children, young adults, and vulnerable adults under their care are in a safe and supportive environment whether that is online, over the phone or face to face.

The following Safeguarding Policy has been created to ensure that all trustees, members and volunteers have a strict code of conduct and protocols set in place to protect and support vulnerable members and child members.

Any member of the PaganAid trustees, volunteers and membership group can raise a concern about potential abuse. It is important that everyone is alert to concerns and questions behaviour. The following information helps to highlight the different areas where abuse may be occurring.

External stakeholders will also be expected to follow this policy even if we do not have direct jurisdiction over them, and if they do not we will take appropriate steps and cease to work with them as far as is possible.

As a registered charity (1158075) it is a requirement to have a safeguarding policy and clear reporting procedure in place.

PaganAid is committed to safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk.

This document is publicly available on our website www.paganaid.org

This policy only covers specific requirements for Safeguarding.

Harassment, discrimination, bullying and similar behaviour within PaganAid are covered by our codes of conduct but can be reported in the same way as a safeguarding disclosure.

PaganAid fully endorses the principle that all people have the right to protection from abuse and harm, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, disabilities, sexual orientation or religion.

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Forms of abuse:

- Religious discrimination and or abuse

  It is discrimination to be treated unfairly compared to someone else, because of your religion or belief. This is called direct discrimination and is illegal. Examples include: refusing you a bank loan because you're Jewish, refusing to allow you into a restaurant because you're Muslim, dismissing you from work because you're Rastafarian. You may be able to make a complaint if you have suffered direct discrimination because of your religion or belief. It is also illegal for someone to have a rule, policy or practice which someone of a particular religion or belief is less likely to be able to meet than other people and this places them at a disadvantage. This is called **indirect discrimination**. Examples of indirect discrimination might include: requiring all your employees to dress in a particular way if this means they can't wear an item of clothing they regard as part of their faith such as a pagan veil.

- Bullying and Cyber Bullying (Online Abuse)

  Online abuse is any kind of abuse that can occur on the internet. This may come in the form of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, sexting, grooming and cyber bullying. Online abuse may come from other children, young people or adults. There are many forums where children, young people and vulnerable adults may experience online abuse including social media, email, live streaming, texting messaging and gaming sites.

- Sexual Abuse (exploitation)

  Sexual exploitation involves forcing or enticing a child or young person (or vulnerable adult) to take part in sexual activities, whether the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. This may also include involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or talking about sexually inappropriate topics. This would include 'abuse of position of trust', 'Child0onchild abuse' (Sexual Offences Act 2003).

- Trafficking

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Trafficking in persons refers the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons—by force, coercion, fraud or some other form of deception—for the purpose of exploitation. Many of the practices associated with trafficking are prohibited under international human rights law.

- Domestic abuse

  Domestic abuse as an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, in the majority of cases by a partner or ex-partner, but also by a family member or carer.

- Emotional abuse

  Emotional abuse is persistent or emotional ill treatment of a child or young person, vulnerable adult or adult that adversely affects their development. May involve conveying to a child that they are worthless, unloved, and inadequate, there only to meet the needs of another; or where inappropriate expectations are imposed upon them. In addition, it includes children who are regularly frightened, exploited or corrupted or witness domestic violence.

- Grooming

  Grooming is when a person builds a relationship with a child, young person or an adult who's at risk so they can abuse them and manipulate them into doing things. The abuse is usually sexual or financial, but it can also include other illegal acts.

- Physical abuse

  Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child or young person (or vulnerable adult) including fabricating the symptoms of, or deliberately causing, ill health to a child, smacking or causing mental harm. (Children's Act 2004)

- Modern slavery

  Modern slavery is the recruitment, movement, harbouring or receiving of children, women or men through the use of force, coercion, abuse of vulnerability, deception or other means for the purpose of exploitation.

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PaganAid policy on events bearing our name

Any event under our name including commercial activity or the occupation of premises, or the organisation or direction of the public, will be properly managed, insured and staffed to ensure the safety of all volunteers, attendees and members of the public.

This includes organising conferences, attending events with a PaganAid stall and digital events. Any event in these categories is required to have a named PaganAid trustee or volunteer taking responsibility for safeguarding.

That person will be either the named safeguarding lead, or a specific authorised and suitably trained delegate of an officer in one of those categories (responsible officer in the context of the reporting procedures below).

Circumstances where we may come into contact with people

- PaganAid events
- Pagan events not under the control of the PaganAid
- Online forums and Facebook groups

As a general principle, we will design and plan our activities and any associated data collection to minimise the risk of harm to everyone and specifically children, young people and adults at risk.

Specifically, any events bearing our name shall not involve any belief practices which contain nudity.

Events, both PaganAid led and those not under the control of PaganAid

PaganAid trustees and volunteers are expected to use their awareness at all events and raise any reasonable concerns they have in line with the reporting procedures below.

Online forums and Facebook groups

Details of this can be found in our Social Media Policy and Code of Conduct.

Responsibilities

All PaganAid trustees and volunteers

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All Pagan Federation trustees and volunteers are expected to be familiar with this policy, the basic training material referred to below and to follow reasonable guidance issued in specific contexts with committee approval.

Trustees and volunteers at events are expected to make sure they understand and follow any briefing material given in this context. For PaganAid members, not doing so may lead to an investigation under the complaints process which may lead to membership being terminated. For those non-members it may lead to not being allowed to volunteer at any future event.

Reporting procedures

Any PaganAid trustee, volunteer or member with concerns regarding any person falling within the remit of this policy should raise them initially with the following person and in every case, they should complete a Safeguarding Incident Report Form to log with the Safeguarding Lead:

- At an official PaganAid event: the Responsible Officer;
- Event not under the control of the PaganAid: Alexia-Costadina the Safeguarding lead.
- Online concerns: the Communications: Alexia-Costadina the Safeguarding lead.
- In the event of the safeguarding lead being an inappropriate choice, PaganAid has linked with the Pagan Federation and named Sarah Kerr their President as an external safeguarding deputy.

If concerns falling within the remit of this policy are expressed to another PaganAid Trustee, Volunteer or member by a member of the public or an external body, they should pass them on as above.

If anyone has concerns outside the remit of this policy please report to the safeguarding lead **Alexia-Costadina**.

All concerns will be taken seriously.

Reporting Process

1. The officer first expressing or receiving concerns shall inform the relevant designated safeguarding lead or designated safeguarding officer at an event.

2. The designated safeguarding lead or office will log the Safeguarding Incident Report Form (and liaise with the safeguarding lead if officer is informed) and they will jointly decide who is then responsible for any further actions and inform the general secretary who will keep a formal record of the concern or complaint.
3. This should include any details provided, the contact details of a person raising the issue and the decisions and actions taken including any response made to the person making the concern or complaint.
4. The general secretary is also responsible for coordinating our internal complaints process or disciplinary procedure if required.
5. At least two officers should be involved in the initial decision, even if one only has a reviewing role. This particularly applies if a decision is made either that a complaint has no substance or to take no action.
6. If for any reason an officer does not feel able to come to a view on the concern or to raise the matter with the officers suggested above, or if one of the officers suggested above is the subject of the complaint, it should be raised with the president, one of the vice-presidents, the general secretary or another member of the committee.

The overriding consideration in all decisions and actions will always be the welfare of any children and young people involved. Depending on the nature, seriousness, and circumstances of the concern or complaint, the following actions are possible:

- An investigation under the PaganAid Disciplinary Procedure (applies to PaganAid trustees, volunteers and members);
- Banning someone who is not a member from either helping at or attending future PaganAid events;
- Raising the issue with the organisers of an event not under the control of the PaganAid, or with other Pagan organisations;
- Referral to the Police;
- Referral to Local Authority Social Services;
- Raising the issue with any official body responsible for supervising prisoners released on licence.

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Wherever possible the person who is the subject of the referral will be advised and their consent sought, unless doing so would increase the risk of harm to the person concerned.

Anyone who has raised concerns and feels they have not been addressed should contact the relevant designated officer/lead, and if they still have concerns after that, the Chair of the PaganAid (chair@paganaid.org).

The Safeguard Lead will seek independent consideration of safeguarding complaints to assess our actions and ensure that our processes are robust and handled within the boundaries of our set procedures correctly.

Failure to report reasonable concerns or to follow the above reporting procedure will be a disciplinary matter for PaganAid trustees and volunteers.

Levels of training

Basic – *for all PaganAid trustees and volunteers*

All PaganAid trustees and volunteers are required to receive basic awareness training in safeguarding and protection. This may take the form of either attending a training session at a quarterly trustee meeting or elsewhere or of confirming that they have read and understood this policy and brief written training material.

All those receiving the training will be expected to understand that abuse can take many forms as set out earlier in this document. The training will also, as a minimum, cover how those forms of abuse could present in a Pagan context and also faith-based abuse, forced marriage, racism, slavery and violent extremism.

Enhanced – *for all trustees and volunteers with direct responsibility for vulnerable adults*

The enhanced training will ensure that trustees and volunteers recognise and accept their responsibilities in identifying behaviours that cause harm. Effective and appropriate continuous supervision, support and training will be provided. This will also cover physical contact, developing relationships and safe practice.

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Recruitment

PaganAid is committed to safe recruitment, selection and vetting for those who work with vulnerable people. The Board of Trustees of PaganAid accept their responsibility to be aware of the law in this area and the legislation and regulations that disqualify certain people from working with vulnerable adults.

Our selection process for those who work with vulnerable people will be designed to ensure those appointed have the necessary experience, skills and qualities and exclude those who are not suitable.

Unsuitable candidates are:

- Anyone convicted of a sexual offense against minors and
- Anyone convicted of any violent offense.

Wherever possible references will be sought either formally or informally, including, again where possible, specific questions about concerns regarding the conduct or practice of the applicant and whether these have read the formal disciplinary action or concerns.

Where a trustee or volunteer is convicted of a criminal offence a risk assessment should be carried out before any continuing involvement with any vulnerable persons.

Wherever there is a legal entitlement to do so a DBS check will be obtained for:

- Any PaganAid trustee or volunteer actively working with vulnerable people;
- Any person who is a designated lead within this policy;
- Designated responsible officers for PaganAid events.

Data protection

PaganAid trustees are reminded that concerns or complaints involving children, young people or vulnerable adults will contain sensitive personal data to which data protection legislation applies, and they are required to adhere to the requirements of the law and maintain appropriate confidentiality following our Data Protection Policy.

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All PaganAid trustees are required to sign a volunteer agreement before they are appointed, which includes requirements to comply with all PaganAid policies, data protection law, and to maintain confidentiality.

Review and updating of this policy

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and the next target date is Sept 2025.

In addition any change to our activities working with people should trigger a review.

Designated officers of the Pagan Federation and their deputies

External and overall safeguarding lead
Alexia-Costadina – email; webmaster@paganaid.org.uk

Secondary (external) safeguarding lead
Sarah Kerr, email: president@paganfederation.co.uk

Other PaganAid policies and documents applying to this policy:
Codes of conduct including online behaviour
Complaints policy and disciplinary procedure
Social Media Policy
Information Governance Policy
Contact details for reporting concerns
Safeguarding Incident Report Form
Safeguarding Reporting Procedure

Alexia-Costadina
PaganAid Webmaster
PaganAid External and Overall Safeguarding Lead
October 2024

PaganAid is registered as charity number 1158075 by the Charity Commission of England & Wales.

Registered office only: Apex House, Thomas Street, Trethomas, Caerphilly, CF83 8DP, UK.