

Women Together Safeguarding Policy



1. Introduction

Women Together is a voluntary, community-led group supporting vulnerable and isolated women, including those affected by domestic violence, mental health challenges, anxiety, self-confidence issues, and health inequalities. Many of our members are from BAME communities and may have specific health needs, such as low vitamin D and lowered immunity.

This safeguarding policy outlines our commitment to ensuring the safety, wellbeing, and dignity of all women attending our activities, particularly exercise sessions such as swimming and cycling.

2. Purpose of the Policy

- To protect all participants from harm, neglect, abuse, and exploitation.
 - To create a safe, supportive, and respectful environment.
 - To provide clear guidance for volunteers and facilitators on safeguarding responsibilities.
 - To set out procedures for raising and responding to safeguarding concerns.
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3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All members of Women Together.
 - All volunteers, facilitators, and activity leaders.
 - All activities organised by Women Together, including swimming sessions, group exercise classes, and community events.
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4. Our Safeguarding Principles

- **Zero Tolerance:** Abuse, neglect, or discrimination will not be tolerated.
 - **Respect & Dignity:** Every woman has the right to be treated with respect and feel safe.
 - **Empowerment:** We encourage participants to make informed choices and have control over their involvement.
 - **Inclusivity:** We are sensitive to cultural, religious, and health needs of women, especially those from BAME backgrounds.
 - **Confidentiality:** Information will only be shared when necessary to protect someone from harm.
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5. Safeguarding Responsibilities

- **Volunteers & Facilitators** must:
 - Prioritise the safety of participants at all times.
 - Be aware of health conditions, allergies, or additional support needs (confidentially shared).
 - Ensure exercise activities (including swimming) are risk-assessed and safe.
 - Never engage in inappropriate behaviour, favouritism, or discrimination.
 - Report safeguarding concerns immediately.
 - **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):**
 - **Name:** Sidra Naeem
 - **Email:** sidra_n@yahoo.com
 - **Phone:** 07795 216270
 - Responsible for receiving safeguarding concerns, deciding on next steps (including referrals to external agencies if required), and keeping safeguarding records securely.
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6. Types of Harm (Adults)

Women Together recognises the following types of harm adults may face, in line with the Care Act 2014:

- **Physical abuse** – hitting, slapping, misuse of medication, restraint.
- **Domestic violence** – coercive control, threats, intimidation, isolation.
- **Sexual abuse** – harassment, inappropriate touching, assault.
- **Emotional/psychological abuse** – threats, humiliation, controlling behaviour.
- **Neglect/self-neglect** – ignoring medical or care needs, poor nutrition, unsafe living conditions.
- **Financial abuse** – theft, fraud, exploitation, misuse of property.
- **Discriminatory abuse** – harassment, slurs, unequal treatment based on race, gender, religion, disability, or culture.
- **Organisational abuse** – neglect or poor practice within group settings.

Indicators of harm may include unexplained injuries, changes in behaviour, withdrawal, fearfulness, lack of basic needs being met, or disclosure of abuse.

7. Relevant Legislation

This policy is guided by the following legislation and statutory frameworks:

- **Care Act 2014** – sets out local authorities' responsibilities for protecting adults at risk.

- **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023** – only relevant if children are present (not applicable to Women Together sessions currently).
 - **Equality Act 2010** – protects individuals from discrimination.
 - **Human Rights Act 1998** – ensures the right to life, freedom from degrading treatment, and respect for private/family life.
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8. Swimming & Exercise Safety Guidelines

- A risk assessment will be carried out before each activity.
 - Participants will be encouraged to disclose health conditions relevant to exercise.
 - Qualified instructors/lifeguards will be present for swimming activities.
 - Appropriate supervision will be provided, respecting privacy and dignity (e.g., women-only sessions where possible).
 - Emergency procedures will be explained before each session.
 - First aid support will be available at all sessions.
 - Cultural and religious sensitivities (e.g., modesty swimwear) will be respected.
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9. Recognising Signs of Abuse or Harm

Volunteers should be alert to:

- Physical signs (injuries, poor health, unexplained marks).
 - Emotional signs (withdrawal, anxiety, fearfulness).
 - Signs of domestic violence or coercive control.
 - Neglect or lack of self-care.
 - Sudden changes in financial circumstances.
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10. Responding to Safeguarding Concerns

If a safeguarding concern arises:

1. **Listen** calmly and respectfully if a participant discloses a concern.
2. **Do not promise confidentiality** – explain concerns may need to be shared to keep them safe.
3. **Record** the concern factually (time, date, what was said/observed).
4. **Report** immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
5. If someone is at **immediate risk of harm, call 999**.

Reporting Flow:

Concern identified → Report to DSL → DSL assesses risk and decides action → DSL contacts Essex Social Care (Adult Safeguarding) or Essex Police if required → Record kept securely.

11. Key Contacts

- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Sidra Naeem – sidra_n@yahoo.com – 07795 216270
 - **Essex County Council Adult Social Care Safeguarding:** [working hours **0345 603 7630**, out-of-hours / emergency duty number is **0345 606 1212**
 - **Essex Police (non-emergency):** 101
 - **Emergency services:** 999
 - **NSPCC Helpline (for advice if required):** 0808 800 5000
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12. Training & Awareness

- All volunteers will receive safeguarding awareness training.
 - Regular refreshers and updates will be provided.
 - Volunteers leading exercise activities will also have relevant health & safety training
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13. Confidentiality & Record-Keeping

- Safeguarding records will be kept securely and confidentially.
 - Information will only be shared with relevant agencies if necessary to protect someone from harm.
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14. Review of Policy

This safeguarding policy will be reviewed **annually**, and sooner if required by changes in legislation, guidance, or group activities.

Adopted by Women Together on: 23.9.25

Signed by Chair/Coordinator: *S. Naeem*