हिंदू स्वयंसेवक संघ युके
Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (UK)
110 High Street, Edgware, HA8 7HF • info@hssuk.org
Registered Charity: 1202635

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy ("Safe to Trust Policy")

1. Policy Statement

Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (UK) ("HSS (UK)") is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and adults at risk who take part in our activities. We believe that:

The welfare of the child/adult at risk is paramount.

All children/adults at risk have an equal right to protection, regardless of age, ability, gender, race, religion, culture, sexuality, or background.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility — trustees, volunteers (Karyakartas), parents, visitors and activity leaders (shikshaks).

Children/adults at risk must **never experience abuse** of any kind: physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, bullying, harmful cultural practices, online abuse or exploitation.

HSS (UK) operates a **zero-tolerance approach** to abuse, misconduct, discrimination, bullying or any behaviour that places a child at risk.

Transparency, accountability and respectful conduct are fundamental to our work with children.

We are committed to creating environments where children feel safe, valued, empowered and able to speak out about concerns.

2. Purpose of This Policy

This policy sets out:

- How HSS (UK) prevents harm and keeps children/adults at risk safe.
- How we respond to concerns, disclosures and allegations.
- Roles and responsibilities for safeguarding across the organisation.
- Safer recruitment standards for all volunteers.
- Reporting and recording expectations.
- Codes of conduct and behaviour requirements.
- Procedures for online safety and digital communication.

3. Scope

This policy applies to **all children under 18** and **adults at risk** participating in or affected by any HSS (UK) activity, including:

- Weekly shakhas
- Camps, day events, national gatherings and competitions
- Online sessions, communication platforms, social media and digital interactions
- Transport arranged by HSS (UK)
- All venues and environments used by HSS (UK)

This document is a **mandatory policy** for all:

- Karyakartas
- Trustees
- Visitors, external facilitators and contractors involved in activities or attending HSS (UK) programmes

4. Definitions

Safeguarding: Protecting people's health, wellbeing, and human rights, enabling them to live free from harm, abuse, and neglect, particularly vulnerable individuals like children and adults at risk. It involves preventing harm to their development, ensuring they can make their own choices, and taking action when problems arise, focusing on creating a safe environment where they are supported.

Child: Anyone under the age of 18.

Adult at Risk: An adult who, due to disability, illness, mental health or other circumstances, may be unable to protect themselves.

Karyakarta: Anyone actively engaged in HSS (UK) work, whether paid or voluntary; a local leader. This term encompasses all formal roles e.g. adhikari, sanghchalak, karyawaha, pramukh and shikshak (see HSS (UK) Glossary).

Safeguarding Officer / Deputy Safeguarding Officer: Trained, designated individuals responsible for overseeing concerns and safeguarding responses at a regional level (North (3 vibhags), Central (4 vibhags) and South (4 vibhags)).

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Trained, designated individuals responsible for receiving concerns and coordinating safeguarding responses at a Vibhag level.

5. Safeguarding Principles

HSS (UK) follows these core principles:

- Safeguarding is **proactive and preventative**, not just responsive.
- Children/adults at risk have the right to **be heard, believed and taken seriously**.
- We work in partnership with parents, carers and communities when safe to do so.
- Concerns are shared **promptly** with statutory agencies when required.
- No concern is ever too minor — **always report it**.
- Karyakartas must **not investigate** concerns themselves.
- Information is shared **on a need-to-know basis only**.

6. Codes of Conduct

The following behaviour is required from all adults:

Positive Behaviours

- Treat all children/adults at risk with dignity, respect and kindness.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries at all times.
- Work in an open environment — avoid being alone with a child.
- Use appropriate, non-aggressive, non-discriminatory language and behaviour.
- Report any concerns immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- Behave in accordance with the HSS (UK) Code of Conduct.

Prohibited Behaviours

Adults must **never**:

- Hit, shout aggressively at, humiliate or ridicule a child/adult at risk.
- Have unnecessary physical contact.
- Give gifts or special treatment to individual children.
- Use personal phones to message or call children/adults at risk without parental and karyakarta supervision.
- Take or share photographs without consent and organisational approval.
- Transport children/adults at risk alone unless authorised or in an emergency.
- Use substances or be under the influence while responsible for children/adults at risk.
- Keep secrets about a safeguarding concern.

7. Adult Supervision

The following minimum number of Enhanced DBS checked adults must be present at shakha:

- Swayamsevak-only shakha/milan: Two male adults
- Sevika-only shakha/milan: Two female adults
- Parivaar shakha/milan or Balagokulam: Two male and two female adults
- Events/shakhas with larger numbers of children may require greater numbers of Enhanced DBS checked adults, utilising the above as guidance.

Where a child is under 5 years of age (below primary school year 1), at least one parent/guardian **must** be present.

Where a child is between 5-11 years old (baal/baalika age range or primary school), it is highly recommended that at least one parent/guardian is present.

8. Online Safety & Digital Communication

To protect children online:

- Karyakartas must use **official HSS (UK) communication channels only**.
- Social media accounts must be managed professionally.
- Photography and/or videography to be undertaken by designated karyakarta only and managed in accordance with membership permissions, safeguarding principles and the HSS (UK) data protection/privacy policies. Regular checks with members during sessions to confirm consent.
- No direct private messaging with children/adults at risk.
- Cyberbullying must be treated as a safeguarding concern.

Online sessions must:

- have at least **two adults** logged in.
- have cameras on for all.
- record attendance.
- not be recorded unless authorised.

9. Training Requirements

All karyakartas must complete initial safeguarding training and annual refresher training.

Role-specific training must be completed for Designated Safeguarding Leads and Safeguarding Officers/Deputy Safeguarding Officers.

Non-compliance will result in karyakartas being **removed from their role** until training is completed.

10. Responding to Concerns or Disclosures

If a child/adult at risk discloses abuse, or you suspect a child/adult at risk is at risk:

Do

- Stay calm and listen.
- Reassure the child/adult at risk: “You’ve done the right thing telling me.”
- Report the concern **immediately** to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Record facts only — no opinions.
- Act on the same day.
- Call **999** if a child/adult at risk is in **immediate danger.**

Do Not

- Promise confidentiality.
- Ask leading questions or investigate.
- Express shock or disbelief.
- Discuss the concern with anyone except the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

11. Escalation to Authorities

The Safeguarding Officer will:

- Contact **Children’s Social Care**
- Contact the **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)** for allegations involving karyakartas
- Contact **Police** where criminal activity is suspected
- Inform Trustees

- No internal fact-finding will begin until statutory agencies give permission.

12. Managing Allegations Against Karyakartas

An allegation may involve actual harm, potential harm, or inappropriate conduct.

HSS (UK) will:

- Immediately inform the LADO within **24 hours.**
- Take protective measures (e.g., temporary "stay away from role").
- Keep the accused informed and supported.
- Continue to cooperate fully with statutory agencies.
- Record all decisions and outcomes.

13. Supporting Children/Adults at risk & Families

HSS (UK) will:

- Provide reassurance and safe space for children/adults at risk raising concerns.
- Work with parents where safe to do so.
- Provide information on support services.
- Make reasonable adjustments for children/adults at risk with additional needs.

14. Recording, Storing & Information Sharing

All safeguarding records must be:

- Written within **24 hours.**
- Accurate, factual and signed.
- Stored securely with restricted access.
- Kept in line with data protection requirements.
- Retained for **a minimum of 7 years**, or longer if required.

Information is shared:

- Only on a **need-to-know basis.**
- For safeguarding purposes and legal obligations.
- With statutory agencies when required.

15. Roles & Responsibilities

Trustees

- Ensure organisational compliance.
- Appoint and support the Safeguarding Officer/Deputy Safeguarding Officer.
- Ensure resources for training and Enhanced DBS checks.
- Review annual safeguarding reports.

Safeguarding Officer/Deputy Safeguarding Officer

- Lead safeguarding practice.
- Supervise and oversee the DSLs.
- Liaise with authorities.
- Maintain records.
- Deliver training.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSLs)

- Receive and act on concerns.
- Maintain records.
- Escalate as appropriate.
- Liaise with the Safeguarding Officer/Deputy Safeguarding Officer.

Karyakartas

- Follow all policy requirements.
- Uphold safe practice.
- Attend training.
- Report concerns without delay.

16. Risk Assessment & Safety Planning

See HSS (UK) Health & Safety Policy and associated procedures/policies for further information.

17. Complaints & Whistleblowing

See HSS (UK) Complaints Policy or HSS (UK) Whistleblowing Policy for further information.

18. Organisations

The Police: Call 112 or 999 in an emergency or 101 for non-urgent concerns.

NSPCC: Call 0808 800 5000 or email help@NSPCC.org.uk.

ChildLine: Call 0800 1111.

The Survivors Trust: Call 08088 010818 or email helpline@thesurvivorstrust.org.

Survivors UK: Call 02035983898 or email help@survivorsuk.org.

National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC): Call 0808 801 0331 or email support@napac.org.uk.

Rape Crisis: Call 08085002222 (24/7) or visit the Rape Crisis website to start a free online chat.

Samaritans: Call free 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org.

19. Contacts

HSS (UK) Safeguarding Officer

Nikesh Patel 07967 102953

HSS (UK) Deputy Safeguarding Officers

North: Pravin Patel 07779 132042

Central: Dipvandana Mehta 07916 335693

South: Parin Shah 07977 234733

Email: safeguarding@hssuk.org

20. Policy Review

In accordance with all HSS (UK) policies, this policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if legislation changes.