



Love Bengo Community Group Safeguarding Policy

1. Introduction

- **Purpose:** Ensure the safety of children and adults-at-risk during any work associated with Love Bengo.
- **Key belief:** Every individual, regardless of age, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnic origin, has the right to protection from harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
- **Policy foundation:** Built on the Children's Act 2004 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which defines children's civil, political, economic, social, health, and cultural rights.

2. Scope

- **Applies to:** All Love Bengo members, third-party contractors, volunteers, and associated personnel.
- **Covers:** Both direct and indirect contact with children and adults-at-risk.

3. Definitions

- **Child:** Anyone under 18 years of age.
- **Adult-at-risk:** Anyone 18 or older who requires community care due to mental/physical disability, age, or illness, and who may be unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation.
- **Child abuse categories:**
 - **Physical abuse:** Hitting, shaking, burning, mutilation, torture, etc.
 - **Emotional abuse:** Humiliation, bullying, persistent criticism, solitary confinement, etc.
 - **Neglect:** Failing to provide food, shelter, education, supervision, or medical care.
 - **Sexual abuse/exploitation:** Includes incest, forced marriage, rape, pornography, inappropriate touching, and profiting from sexual exploitation.
- **Safeguarding:** Protecting individuals' rights to live free from harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

4. Objectives

- Promote a safe, supportive, and protective environment.
- Ensure safeguarding practices are embedded in all projects and partnerships.
- Establish a culture of accountability and transparency in safeguarding matters.
- Uphold equal access to services for all.

5. Guiding Principles

- Everyone has a right to basic human rights and dignity.
- Love Bengo refuses to collaborate with organisations that endanger children or adults-at-risk.
- Safeguarding responsibilities apply to all members, regardless of role.

6. Golden Rules

- **Consent:** Always obtain informed consent from children and adults-at-risk before involving them in projects or activities.
- **Cultural sensitivity:** Ensure approaches align with local customs and contexts.
- **Prohibition of harm:** Never harm, abuse, neglect, or exploit anyone or create opportunities that could lead to such outcomes.
- **Mandatory reporting:** Report any safeguarding concerns or incidents to the relevant authorities immediately.
- **Confidential cooperation:** Support investigations while respecting confidentiality.

7. Ethical Principles

- **Respect individuals:** Value children and adults-at-risk as individuals with their own rights and roles within families and communities.
- **Protect relationships:** Recognise and respect family relationships and other significant connections.
- **Confidentiality:** Safeguard personal data, ensuring it's used appropriately and stored securely.
- **Reject discrimination:** Oppose any form of oppression, exploitation, or mistreatment.
- **Maintain integrity:** Uphold the highest personal and professional ethical standards.

8. Projects Involving Children and Adults-at-Risk

- **Sensitive interactions:** Ensure communication is clear, respectful, and compassionate.
- **Consent protocols:** Secure informed consent from guardians and individuals separately — avoid group consent to prevent peer pressure.
- **Confidentiality:** Handle data securely, and allow individuals to refuse participation or withdraw at any time.
- **Safety measures:** Projects must occur in safe environments, free from coercion or bias.
- **Exit options:** Ensure participants have a clear, accessible way to stop participation if they feel uncomfortable.

9. Violations of Privacy and Confidentiality

- **Exceptions to confidentiality:** If a child or adult-at-risk is in danger, their right to protection overrides their right to privacy.
- **Mandatory reporting:** Members must report harm, abuse, neglect, or exploitation even if the individual doesn't want to pursue the matter.
- **Transparency:** Keep the individual informed throughout the process, explaining why confidentiality is overridden.

10. Consequences for Policy Breaches

- **For members:**
 - Possible suspension during investigation.
 - Disciplinary action, up to removal from the group.
 - Notification to law enforcement and authorities.
- **For partner organisations:**
 - Immediate termination of partnerships or contracts.
 - Consideration of impact on beneficiaries before ending agreements.

11. Monitoring and Prevention

- **Regular reviews:** Policy reviewed every 2-3 years or when laws change.
- **Training:** Inductions include safeguarding policies.

- **Ethical communication:** Minimise risks of misused photos or information. Ensure interviews and images respect dignity, privacy, and identity.
- **Awareness campaigns:** Ensure all members and partners stay informed on best safeguarding practices.

12. Reporting Incidents

- **How to report:** Members must report safeguarding concerns immediately to the Love Bengo Chair or Love Bengo Project Lead.
- **Response protocol:** Bengo Chair ensures reports are followed up according to policy, legal requirements, and organisational procedures.
- **Support for victims:** Love Bengo supports children and adults-at-risk affected by harm - whether or not an internal investigation takes place.
- **Strict confidentiality:** All reports and investigations must remain confidential and shared only on a need-to-know basis.

13. Additional Legal Responsibilities

- **Follow international law:** Guided by the Children's Act and Sexual Offences Act.
- **Preventative and protective measures:** Includes identifying, reporting, investigating, and treating child abuse.
- **Good-faith protection:** Individuals reporting abuse are legally protected from liability, even if no abuse is ultimately found — provided the report was made without malicious intent.
- **Failure to report:** Members may face legal consequences if they knowingly fail to report suspected abuse.