

# Safeguarding

## PIRC Policy

### Criteria

*Every PIRC policy should try to keep the following in mind:*

1. **Our approach, culture and values:** Reflecting our culture; striving to be anti-oppressive, equitable, & sustainable.
2. **Healthy working:** Prioritising what is best for good team working, power dynamics, wellbeing and cohesion.
3. **Legality & affordability:** Checked by PIRC Resources Group within these parameters.
4. **Framing:** People may use our policies to gauge what kind of organisation we are. If they did, we'd like them to get a sense of our approach and values in the way that the policy has been written: with accessibility, our values, the trust we place in our staff, and approachability in mind (rather than being legalistic and punitive).

### Background

*Public Interest Research Centre (PIRC) is committed to creating a caring and supportive workplace and we want our policies to reflect that. We'd like the way we work to actively challenge the power structures that reproduce inequality and injustice, and consciously choose to work in ways that are liberatory, or anti-oppressive, and with awareness of our own privileges.*

*Our policies have been written with these principles in mind, aiming to reflect our anti-oppressive, equitable, & sustainable culture. PIRC formally moved to working non-hierarchically in late 2015. This means that every team member has equal input and decision-making power in the direction and running of the organisation, and we share the tasks related to general organisational management as well as project or delivery work. The following policy has therefore been drafted with equal input, and is open to being adapted according to staff and trustee requests, or to reflect changes to our workplace.*

### Policy

**Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.** The safeguarding team (see below) is responsible for addressing any safeguarding concerns, but **looking after the safety of the team and those we interact with is up to all of us.** This policy applies to all staff and Trustees, as well as freelancers, volunteers, sessional workers and visitors working with PIRC. PIRC regularly undertakes community work, and this policy should be kept in mind with all interactions. This policy applies in all circumstances, including digitally.

### Purpose & Scope

PIRC aims to work in community and therefore we should be prepared for supporting people at risk

of being in, or currently in, vulnerable or dangerous situations. We must also be prepared for responding to safeguarding issues within our own team. This policy does not exist in isolation, and sits alongside our Anti-oppression, Bullying & Harassment and Grievance policies. Even where this policy is most applicable, there might still be crossover with other policies. This policy is not intended to replace anyone's right to raise a formal complaint or grievance.

The wording of this document may not cover every eventuality or set of circumstances, and as such PIRC will take care to consider on a case-by-case basis when a safeguarding case arises - prioritising the wants and needs of the person being harmed, or at risk of being harmed. This policy will be particularly flexible when staff are working abroad/away at residential trainings, and are considering how to support participants, in which those involved in preparation should make safeguarding plans for the event, that can be guided by this policy, and supported by the safeguarding team.

PIRC works almost exclusively with adults over the age of 18, and therefore this policy refers to adult safeguarding, unless stated otherwise. If you are made aware that a child or teenager (18 or under) is at risk, you should take additional action, outlined below under the heading *Safeguarding children and young people*.

## **What is the purpose of safeguarding?**

PIRC defines safeguarding as support and care to protect people from abuse, neglect and harm. We encourage a proactive approach, so that where possible we can prevent harm before it takes place.

Safeguarding is generally associated with punishment and the involvement of police and social services. This policy aims to challenge that, centering individuals and considering the multitude of ways that people might feel safer.

## **What is considered a safeguarding concern?**

A safeguarding concern is when someone is currently in, [or is at risk of being in](#), a vulnerable or dangerous situation. Vulnerable or dangerous situations are situations where abuse, harm or neglect might take place, or are currently taking place.

## **Self-determination**

One important difference between safeguarding adults (over 18) and safeguarding children and teenagers (18 and under) is an adult's right to self-determination. Adults may choose not to have any safeguarding intervention, and it is only in extreme circumstances that the law intervenes. This will often only happen when an adult is assessed to lack capacity to make decisions around safeguarding (see *Capacity*, below), or where the concerns may extend to children, such as when they are living in the same household (see *Safeguarding children and young people*, below).

Our safeguarding culture should celebrate and respect self-determination—taking lead from the person experiencing harm and prioritising their wants, needs and confidentiality. We should inform and consult people on all decisions affecting them before we take any actions regarding those decisions.

In line with this, all PIRC staff and Trustees will be required to fill out their own safeguarding plan (see below), about how others can support them if they are in immediate danger. Delivery team staff might also consider safeguarding plans for participants when running workshops and residentials.

## Capacity

All adults should be assumed to have capacity to make safeguarding decisions for themselves. If you are concerned someone does not have capacity to make safeguarding decisions for themselves, you should encourage them to take a capacity test, which can be performed by a medical professional. Consider offering to attend doctor's appointments and tests with that person (even just to sit in the waiting room for support).

[See here](#) for situations in which an adult might be assumed not to have capacity. PIRC recognises that capacity is not linear. PIRC also recognises that while capacity can be a useful measure, historically marginalised people, particularly Black, Brown, disabled and LGBTQ+ folk, sex workers and survivors of domestic and sexual abuse, have had arguments of incapacity used to harm, abuse and oppress them. Therefore, all assumptions of incapacity should be carefully considered. Ask yourself: *"What are my preconceptions about what it means to 'have capacity'? Is this person truly unable to think/act for themselves, or do I simply disagree with their decision/actions?"* PIRC will cover this in safeguarding training (see *Relevant support/training*, below).

Only if someone has a doctor's certificate stating they do not have capacity to act for themselves can action be taken without their consent. The DSP and SSL are responsible for considering the most caring approach, and for integrating any safeguarding plan that a person might have filled out when they did have capacity.

## PIRC safeguarding team

### Designated Safeguarding Person

Safeguarding trustee, currently: ADD NAME.

The Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) should be your first point of contact for any safeguarding concerns. They are responsible for:

- Discussing safeguarding concerns;
- Preventing situations where an individual may experience abuse, neglect and/or harm;
- Managing any immediate actions to ensure the person at risk is safe from harm, abuse or neglect.

### Staff Safeguarding Lead

The People Team coordinator, currently: ADD NAME

The Staff Safeguarding Lead (SSL) will work closely with the DSP to carry out any actions that need to be taken. As the person responsible for staff wellbeing, they should check in with any affected staff members about any support they might need.

## What to do if you would like safeguarding support

If you are worried about your own safety, you can approach the safeguarding team for support. If you are feeling unsafe at any point during your working hours at PIRC, you are welcome, and have the right to, leave any situation in which you feel you are being harmed, and can follow this up with the safeguarding team at a time that feels best for you after.

Consider what you need before, during and after the conversation. You will be asked if you need any reasonable adjustments for any conversations had. PIRC should welcome a staff member, trustee or external person supporting you as you liaise with the safeguarding team.

## **What to do if you have a safeguarding concern about someone else**

If you are worried about someone's safety, or if you receive a disclosure of harm, PIRC recommends taking a person-centred approach; considering firstly what you and the person being harmed want and need. We recommend some steps below, while acknowledging that each situation is different and therefore we should all be flexible to act in an emergent way.

1. Assess your own capacity and safeguard yourself;
2. Ask the person being harmed/at risk of harm what they want;
3. With the person's consent, document and get support.

### **1. Assess your own capacity and safeguard yourself**

Check in with yourself: Do you have space/capacity to approach the person being harmed, have a conversation about your/their concerns, and ask them what they want to happen next?

If you have capacity: Consider what might be helpful before, during and after the conversation, both for yourself and the person at risk of harm. For example, is there somewhere quiet you can sit, is there a time of day that works best for them to talk, how can you decompress after talking? How can you prioritise this conversation, and have it in a way that is gentle, supportive and centres the person being harmed?

If you don't have capacity: Who can you ask to approach the person instead?

### **2. Ask the person being harmed/at risk of harm what they want**

Make time and space to listen to the experiences of the person being harmed. Form a plan with them about what to do next, asking these questions:

- What would help you to be safe? What next steps can we take?
- What practical support would you like?
- What emotional support would you like?
- Can I pass some details of this conversation onto the PIRC safeguarding team? What are you happy for me to share? Is there anything you'd like me to keep confidential between us?

**A person's confidentiality should always be respected**, unless there is a serious risk of harm to another adult, or a risk of harm to a child (see breaking confidentiality, below), in which case you are

legally required to break confidentiality. If you are going to break confidentiality, inform the person first, explain why you will break confidentiality, and only share relevant information with the safeguarding team.

### **3. With the person's consent, document and get support**

Once you have consent, you should **document all the details**. The person at risk of harm can do this themselves, or ask for the person they have confided in to write a document. **If the document is digital, make sure the document's share settings are private**, so that information remains confidential. If the document is physical, **store securely in a locked drawer/area** that only you and the person affected have access to.

**The person at risk of harm should always see the document in full before it is shared further.**

**Contact the DSP as soon as possible.** Send an email outlining your concerns, and call the DSP to make them aware of your email. You should receive a response within 24 hours. If you haven't, you should contact the SSL. If the safeguarding concern involves either the DSP or SSL, defer to the other person. If the concern involves the DSP and SSL, then contact your Trustee buddy or an alternative Trustee of your choice.

## **What happens next**

All safeguarding concerns should be responded to within 24 hours, or immediately if a person is at risk of immediate harm.

The safeguarding team should prioritise discussing the solutions and wants of the person being harmed. The safeguarding team should also work with the person at risk of harm to make/adjust their safeguarding plan (see below) about what feels best for them. This plan should also consider what action the person wants to be taken by others if they are at immediate risk of harm.

## **Caring for those who are experiencing harm**

As well as the practical safeguarding steps, the mental health and wellbeing of the person being harmed should be prioritised. If a staff member is being harmed, the SSL should ask the following questions:

- Do you need time off work?
- What can be put in place at work to support your wellbeing?
- If you are taking time off, how can PIRC support your return to work?

PIRC will facilitate time off work for staff and supporting staff e.g. for wellbeing, rest and to attend any relevant appointments

If a participant is being harmed, the relevant supporting person should ask the following questions:

- Do you need time away from your involvement with PIRC?
- Is there anything PIRC can do to support your wellbeing?

# Supporting those causing harm

PIRC is committed to the values of transformative justice, and so should approach people causing harm with encouragement that they can change their behaviour. PIRC recommends taking a person-centred approach; recognising that we all have capacity to harm. We recommend some steps below, while acknowledging that each situation is different and therefore we should all be flexible to act in an emergent way.

1. Assess your own capacity and safeguard yourself;
2. Ask the person if they recognise they are causing harm, and if they are prepared to be accountable;
3. With the person's consent, document and get support.

## 1. Assess your own capacity and safeguard yourself

Check in with yourself: Do you have space/capacity to approach the person causing harm, have a conversation about your/their concerns, and hold them accountable? Are you the best person to do this - or is there someone better suited? Will it feel safe for you to have this conversation?

If you have capacity: Consider what might be helpful before, during and after the conversation, both for yourself and the person causing harm. For example, is there somewhere quiet you can sit, is there a time of day that works best for you to talk, how can you decompress after talking? How can you prioritise this conversation, and have it in a way that is transformative?

If you don't have capacity: Who can you ask to approach the person instead?

## 2. Ask the person if they recognise they are causing harm, and if they are prepared to be accountable

It is important that those causing harm are accountable for the harm they are causing. PIRC will endeavour to support people towards accountability if they are prepared to admit the harm they have caused, and are committed to ending that harm. Transformative justice practices will look different depending on the extent of harm caused, and crucially, considering what the person who has been harmed/is being harmed wants and needs. The person who has been harmed should always be prioritised.

Form a plan with the person causing harm about what to do next, asking these questions:

- The person who has been harmed has stated they need "[FILL IN]". Are you prepared to respect their wants, needs and boundaries?
- What next steps can we take to ensure future harm stops and past harm is addressed?
- What practical support would you like to move towards accountability?
- Can I pass some details of this conversation onto our safeguarding team? Is there anything you'd like me to keep confidential between us?

If the person causing harm is not prepared to admit harm and begin an accountability process, the safeguarding team will consider what action to take. PIRC will not tolerate harm continuing

unaddressed in any of its spaces.

Whether the person is happy to admit accountability or not, PIRC should always act in the best interest of the person being harmed. This includes setting boundaries where necessary, for example if the person causing harm is a participant on a course, they could be ejected immediately. This also applies to staff members, who could be subject to disciplinary action.

### **3. With the person's consent, document and get support**

Once you have consent, you should **document all the details**. The person causing harm can do this themselves, or ask for the person they have confided in to write a document. **If the document is digital, make sure the document's share settings are private**, so that information remains confidential. If the document is physical, **store securely in a locked drawer/area** that only you and the person affected have access to.

**The person causing harm should always see the document in full before it is shared further.**

**Contact the DSP as soon as possible.** Send an email outlining your concerns, and call the DSP to make them aware of your email. You should receive a response within 24 hours. If you haven't, you should contact the SSL. If the safeguarding concern involves either the DSP or SSL, defer to the other person. If the concern involves the DSP and SSL, then contact your Trustee buddy.

## **What to do if you would like support with harm you have caused/are causing**

If you are worried about your own behaviours, you can approach the safeguarding team for support.

Consider what you need before, during and after the conversation. You will be asked if you need any reasonable adjustments for any conversations had. PIRC should welcome another staff member, trustee or external person supporting you as you liaise with the safeguarding team.

## **If someone is at risk of immediate harm**

**If someone is experiencing, or at risk of, immediate harm, refer first to their safeguarding plan, and follow what it says.**

**Unless otherwise stated in somebody's plan, the default procedure should be to call the DSP immediately.** If they do not respond, call the SSL immediately. You may consider stepping in to deescalate the situation - PIRC does not expect or require this of anyone, but we will provide relevant training to equip staff to feel more able to do this (See *Relevant support/training*). If somebody does not have a safeguarding plan for whatever reason, default to following this course of action.

## **Breaking confidentiality**

**A person's confidentiality should always be respected**, unless there is a **serious risk of harm** to themselves, another adult, or a risk of harm to a child.

PIRC defines 'serious risk of harm' as anything that could permanently damage a person's physical, emotional, spiritual or mental health. Some examples include if someone is at risk of ending their own life, ending someone else's life or if serious sexual violence or stalking is taking place.

If you are going to break confidentiality, inform the person first, explain why you will break confidentiality. **Only relevant information should be shared if you are breaking confidentiality** - be particularly mindful not to share information about someone's protected characteristics unless it is relevant to the safeguarding concern.

Even if you consider there to be a serious risk of harm, your first point of contact should always be the DSP. It will then be up to the safeguarding team whether the risk of harm is serious enough to break confidentiality to social services.

When a safeguarding professional believes there is a serious risk of harm to an adult or child, they are required by law to fill out an adult or child safeguarding form, one for each individual who is at risk/experiencing harm. It is worth considering that these services could involve police, and for PIRC to consider staff wellbeing.

PIRC recognises the historic and current harm and danger of these institutions, particularly towards Black people, Muslim people, migrants, disabled people, people with mental ill health and other marginalised groups. Therefore, **the safeguarding team should always consider whether there are steps that can be taken to reduce risk before contacting these institutions.**

If a safeguarding form is filled out, the person experiencing harm should be given options about how they can be supported and cared for by PIRC. This care should be focused on what the individual wants/needs, and will therefore vary for each person. Some questions include:

- Would you like to complete your own safeguarding form, or would you like someone else to complete one with/for you?
- Would you like someone to be with you during your contact with police/social services?
- Would you like someone to be your designated point of contact for police/social services?
- Do you need time off work for rest?
- Do you need time off work to attend appointments?

## **Safeguarding children and young people**

For the sake of this document "children and young people" refers to those aged 18 and under.

PIRC rarely works directly with children and young people, but might be made aware of at risk children and young people through adults.

If a child or young person is at risk of harm, PIRC is legally required to inform social services via a safeguarding form. Unless it isn't possible, children and relevant adults should be involved in this process. A person can fill out a safeguarding form on their own/their child's behalf, and can be supported to do this.



In recognition of the harm and damage that institutions continue to cause to marginalised folk, PIRC should consider this step as a legal formality, and ask what else can be done. This includes offering care to any adults involved, as outlined in the rest of this policy. PIRC recognises that we do not have a specialism in supporting children and young people, and therefore we should endeavour to provide support services to children and young people at risk - these might include youth workers, domestic/sexual abuse support workers, supportive teachers etc. The safeguarding team can also make a safety plan with the child and relevant adults about their continued care.

## **Safeguarding safety plans**

All staff and Trustees will be required to fill out a safeguarding plan about how they would like to be cared for and supported if they are at risk and not available/not able to communicate. This will also be a requirement or option for freelancers, volunteers, sessional workers and visitors working with PIRC, case dependent.

Safeguarding plans can and should also be offered to others coming into contact with PIRC, where relevant. Anyone filling out a safeguarding plan will be given options about confidentiality, including what they would like to share with anyone relevant, what they would like to share with a smaller group (eg. a particular member of staff or a particular board member, and what they would like to be shared only with the safeguarding team).

## **Practice**

### **Contractors & Freelance Employees:**

We aim to undertake joint safeguarding training with contractors and freelance employees. In addition, we include a Safeguarding section in all our freelance contracts that highlights PIRC's Safeguarding Policy and makes clear that it applies to the contractor while they're undertaking work for PIRC.

### **Partners:**

Similarly to contractors, we include a new section in our partnership agreements / MoUs outlining our policy, ensuring we each share policies and that our collaborative work is, at minimum, working at the level of PIRC's Safeguarding Policy.

## **Review period**

This policy will be reviewed every two years as standard. Next review by DATE.

Safeguarding plan reviews will be offered to staff, Trustees and relevant partners once a year, with the option always available for edits to be made ad hoc.

## **Relevant support/training**

Each staff member and Trustee should have their own personal safeguarding plan. New staff/trustees will be required to create one as part of onboarding. They will receive support from the safeguarding team to do this. Safeguarding plans should be reviewed once a year, or when someone wishes to make

updates.

The DSP will receive Level 3 safeguarding qualification by DATE.

PIRC will provide active bystander training and conflict de-escalation training to the DSP and SSL by DATE and all staff by DATE.

In addition, by 31/04/23, all staff and the DSP will work through [Maslaha's Radical Safeguarding Workbook](#), applying their questions and activities to contexts they might encounter. They will also participate in a radical safeguarding session, held by SSL ADD NAME. All board members, Associates ADD OTHER GROUPS will also be invited to participate.