PeerSphere

PeerSphere Safeguarding Policy

1. Purpose of Safeguarding

At PeerSphere we are committed to providing a secure and supportive virtual environment that protects all participants from harm. Our safeguarding policy ensures the safety and well-being of students while complementing the safeguarding measures already in place at participating schools.

2. Terminology and Definitions

To promote clarity, this policy includes key safeguarding definitions:

- **Safeguarding**: Actions taken to protect children from abuse or neglect and ensure their overall well-being.
- **Child Abuse**: Includes physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, neglect, and peer-on-peer abuse.
- **Confidentiality Limits**: Information may be shared with schools or authorities when necessary to protect a child's safety.

3. Designated Safeguarding Officer

PeerSphere has a designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) responsible for:

- Leading safeguarding efforts and being the point of contact for concerns.
- Collaborating with schools' safeguarding leads for escalation and resolution.

For concerns, contact: **ewen@peer-sphere.com**

4. Managing Disclosures

All PeerSphere staff with access to the students' community are trained to handle disclosures with professionalism:

- **Listen without judgment**: Allow students to share their concerns without interruption.
- **Avoid absolute confidentiality**: Explain that information may need to be shared for their safety.
- **Report appropriately**: Refer all concerns to the PeerSphere DSO and the student's school safeguarding lead.

5. Safer Recruitment

To ensure student safety, PeerSphere implements the following measures:

- Comprehensive background checks for community hosts.
- Training on safeguarding policies and procedures before assuming duties.

6. Virtual Environment Safeguarding

PeerSphere takes additional steps to ensure safety in online spaces:

- **Profile Pictures**: Students must use neutral avatars or images; personal photos are prohibited.
- **Usernames**: Students must avoid using their full names in usernames.
- **Disabled Private Messaging**: Peer-to-peer messaging is not allowed within the platform.

- **Supervised Sessions**: Adults are never left alone with groups of students, even in breakout rooms.
- **Secure Platform**: The students community hub is hosted on a closed platform separated from our other communities.

7. Collaboration with Schools

PeerSphere operates in partnership with schools, which have their own safeguarding policies. Schools are required to:

- Obtain parental consent for students' participation in PeerSphere activities.
- Ensure all students are aware of their rights and responsibilities within the community.

8. Code of Conduct

All participants are expected to adhere to the PeerSphere Code of Conduct, which promotes respect, inclusivity, and safe engagement. Violations are addressed in collaboration with the student's school.

9. Confidentiality

PeerSphere respects the confidentiality of all participants. However, confidentiality may be negated if:

- A student's safety is at risk.
- Disclosure is required by law or safeguarding protocols. In such cases, concerns will be escalated to the student's school account manager (SAM) and, if necessary, appropriate authorities.

10. Handling Allegations

If an allegation is made involving a PeerSphere staff member or participant:

- It will be immediately reported to the DSL and the student's school account manager (SAM).
- The individual involved may be suspended from activities while an investigation is conducted.
- PeerSphere will cooperate fully with the school's and authorities' investigations.

11. Risk Assessment

PeerSphere regularly reviews and updates its safeguarding practices to address emerging risks, particularly in the virtual environment. This includes periodic assessments of platform security and online behavior trends.

12. Training and Awareness

All PeerSphere staff directly involved in the student community receive annual safeguarding training, including:

- Recognizing signs of abuse.
- Handling disclosures appropriately.
- Reporting concerns in line with this policy.

13. Monitoring and Evaluation

This safeguarding policy is reviewed annually or after significant incidents to ensure relevance and effectiveness. Feedback from schools, parents, and participants informs updates.

By adhering to this safeguarding policy, PeerSphere ensures a safe and nurturing environment for all participants, fostering trust among schools, parents, and students. For more information or concerns, contact: ewen@peer-sphere.com