



Debate Mate Schools Ltd and Debate Mate Ltd (DMLTD) Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures

POLICY

1 POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 All children without exception have the right to protection from abuse regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs. As an organisation working with children and young people, Debate Mate Schools Ltd. and Debate Mate Ltd. and its Debate Mate programmes (“DMLTD”), has a clear part to play in ensuring children’s welfare and safeguarding them from harm.
- 1.2 The welfare of the child is paramount in any of DMLTD’s activities. DMLTD believes that a child or a young person should never experience abuse of any kind. DMLTD has a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe. DMLTD is committed to operate in a way that protects them.
- 1.3 The policy is approved and endorsed by the Board of Trustees (November 2022).
- 1.4 The policy sets out what is understood by the term ‘child protection’, as well as what to do when in contact with a young person who discloses abuse.
- 1.5 Any child or young person who signs up with DMLTD will be able to view this policy and procedures on our website (www.debatemate.org/policies).

2 SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy applies to all trustees, employees, mentors, independent contractors, agency staff and volunteers of DMLTD who come into contact with young people, including those who mentor on any programmes (“Staff”).
- 2.1 This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children, including:
 - Children Act 1989
 - United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991
 - Data Protection Act 1998
 - Human Rights Act 1998
 - Sexual Offences Act 2003
 - Children Act 2004
 - Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
 - Protection Of Freedoms Act 2012
 - Children and Families Act 2014
 - Special educational needs and disability (SEND) code of practice: 0 to 25 years – Statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities; HM Government 2014
 - Information Sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers; HM Government 2015



- Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children; HM Government 2018
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022, statutory guidance for schools and colleges; HM Government 2022

2.3 This policy should be read alongside DMLTD's policies and procedures on:

- Employee Expectations
- Mentor Memorandum of Understanding
- Photography and Sharing Images Policy
- Anti-Harassment and Bullying
- Grievance and Disciplinary
- Whistleblowing
- Health and Safety
- Online Safeguarding Protocol
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

2.4 The policy and framework applies to all young people under 18, including those who are classified as children under The Children Act 1989.

3 PRINCIPLES

3.1 Child protection consists of two key areas:

3.1.1 The safety of the environment both online and off-line, including the suitability of volunteers, trustees, employees and independent contractors to work with children and young people.

3.1.2 Responding to concerns about children and young people who come into contact with DMLTD.

3.2 Protecting young people from harm is everyone's business; it is not a responsibility that can be passed on to someone else, be they a mentor, affiliate teacher, Programme Director, or collaborating agency.

3.3 All operational and managerial decisions and administrative practice will be compliant with this policy.

3.4 The Executive Director and a DMLTD Advisory group consisting of the Chief Executive Officer, a trustee and nominated mentors of the programme team, will review the policy every two years or sooner if needed.

3.5 The Designated Safeguarding Lead is: **Enayah Byramjee ("DSL")**. In her absence, Jessica Dix, Kim Rennie, Seun Iyaniwura or Abby McGovern will deputise.

3.5.1 The DSL and Deputies will be provided with adequate child protection training at least every 3 years. It is their responsibility to periodically review DMLTD activity



and feedback from young people where a child protection issue is disclosed to ensure that an adequate response was given.

- 3.5.2 The DSL will ensure that all Staff are made aware of the procedures and what they should do if they have concerns about a service user.
- 3.5.3 The DSL will offer Staff support when dealing with any child protection concerns from service users.
- 3.6 The Chief Executive Officer will be responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented.
- 3.7 The Chief Executive Officer will be responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented alongside the policy requirements stipulated by third party agencies, such as schools, youth centres, etc, wherever DMLTD activity or collaboration takes place.

PROCEDURE

4 WHAT IS A CHILD PROTECTION ISSUE?

- 4.1 A child protection issue includes any disclosure or allegation of the abuse of a young person (under 18). Abuse includes:
 - 4.1.1 Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or children to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact or non-contact activities or on-line activity, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males, women can also commit acts of sexual abuse as can other children (child on child abuse).
 - 4.1.2 Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates symptoms or deliberately induces illness in a child.
 - 4.1.3 Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional mistreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless and unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, "making fun" of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or

corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of mistreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

- 4.1.4 Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and / or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may involve failing to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter including exclusion from home or abandonment; failure to protect a child from physical harm or anger; failure to ensure adequate supervision, including the use of adequate care takers; or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.
- 4.1.5 Sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation (FGM), trafficking of children in order to exploit them, abuse linked to beliefs such as spirit possession or witchcraft, radicalisation, online abuse, bullying and domestic violence are also forms of child abuse.
- 4.2 A child protection issue also includes situations in which a young person is suffering or could suffer significant harm, which includes self-harm, rape, attempting suicide or runaways.
- 4.3 Abuse is not always obvious, and there are many reasons why children may not tell anyone that they are being abused. They may not even realise that what is happening to them is abusive. Children and young people can also experience different types of abuse at the same time. For example, all abuse involves an element of emotional abuse and neglect often occurs in contexts where children are also being subjected to physical sexual abuse.
- 4.4 In terms of specific signs and indicators, sometimes there are physical signs, such as: unexplained bruises or other injuries or health problems; unexplained gifts or additional mobile devices; poor appearance or hygiene; recurring health problems that are not treated; pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections; any signs that a child/young person is at risk of being subjected to forced marriage or FGM.
- 4.5 A child's behaviour can also indicate whether they are being abused. Look out for signs that a child is unsettled or unhappy; withdrawn; suddenly behaves differently; anxiety; clingy; depressed; aggressive; problems sleeping; eating disorders / changes in eating habits; takes risks; misses school; obsessive behaviour; nightmares; drugs; alcohol; self-harm; thoughts about suicide.

5 APPROPRIATE RESPONSES TO CHILD PROTECTION ISSUES RAISED BY A YOUNG PERSON

- 5.1 Any disclosure of a child protection issue by a young person to a member of Staff must be taken seriously and any suspected abuse must be reported immediately to the DSL at DMLTD. If the member of Staff feels the child is at immediate risk and should not leave the school premises, they will find they will find the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead or a member of Senior Leadership and ensure they are informed of the concern. If the session is virtual and the member of Staff feels the child is in immediate danger, they need to contact one of Debate Mate's Designated Safeguarding Leads immediately.



5.2 During their Induction and / or training, Staff will be trained on how to respond to a disclosure and how to follow up and inform the DSL at DMLTD in a confidential way using an online form (Appendix I: Guidance on Reporting a Disclosure). The DSL will inform the Designated Safeguarding Officer at the school the child attends, and if necessary, Social Services and the Local Authority where the school is situated.

5.3 There may be time when the young person does not want us to tell anyone about the abuse or dangerous situation they are in. The mentor's response should be:

"Because of what you have told me it sounds like you need protection and because of this, the law says I have to advise the school's child protection officer (teacher) who will treat it seriously and with respect. Nobody other than those who will help you will know about this."

6 APPROPRIATE REFERRALS:

6.1 It is not within DMLTD's remit to work with the young person or persuade them to give permission to disclose confidential information to a third party. There are agencies (such as ChildLine & NSPCC) that are better placed to provide counselling to help a young person decide whether they want to disclose abuse to a statutory agency.

7 APPROPRIATE RESPONSES TO CHILD PROTECTION ISSUES REGARDING A YOUNG PERSON WHO IS NOT ON OUR PROGRAMMES

7.1 Should we have any concerns that a young person (who is not on one of our programmes but is, for example, attending a youth participation event) is being abused, the school or organisation that co-ordinated the child's visit to DMLTD should be informed.

7.2 If no school or organisation was involved and the parent / carer arranged the child's attendance, the Social Services department local to where the child lives should be informed.

7.3 Full registration forms, including the child's address, for young people participating in such activity should be retained so that information can be forwarded to Social Services should this be necessary.

8 ALLEGATIONS AGAINST A MENTOR OR EMPLOYEE

8.1 All Staff should be encouraged to raise any concerns they have about a colleague's behaviour regarding safeguarding and abuse, using the following procedure:

8.1.1 Any concerns that a mentor may have about another mentor or employee should be raised with the DSL, unless the concern is about the DSL, in which case it should be raised with the Executive Director.

8.1.2 Any concern that an employee has about a mentor should be raised with the DSL.

8.1.3 Any concern that an employee has about a fellow employee should be raised with the DSL. If the concern is regarding the DSL then it should be raised with the Executive



Director. If the concern is regarding the Executive Director or Chief Executive Officer then it should be raised with the Chair of Trustees and another DSL or Deputy.

- 8.2 A member of Staff who is the subject of an allegation will be suspended from working on the programme (and any other duties at DMLTD, if appropriate), while an investigation is conducted. Suspension does not assume guilt of the member of Staff but would be necessary to safeguard the welfare of the child.
- 8.3 Social Services and the independent Local Authority Designated Officer (“LADO”) will be informed prior to any investigation taking place.
- 8.4 DMLTD’s Disciplinary Policy contains the procedure for investigating any such allegations.
- 8.5 If, after investigation and disciplinary hearing, there is sufficient evidence that the member of Staff has abused someone, the outcome will be dismissal.
- 8.6 If, after investigation and disciplinary hearing, it is found that there is sufficient proof that the member of Staff is not guilty of abuse, they may return to their post.
- 8.7 Social Services and LADO will be informed of the outcome of the investigation. If the member of Staff is dismissed, the police will also be informed.
- 8.8 Questions about the suitability of Staff to work with children and young people are not limited to situations where there is positive evidence of abuse. This could also include the failure to respond appropriately to the needs of children and young people.
- 8.9 If DMLTD feels that a member of Staff is unsuitable to care for or work with children, the Chief Executive Officer may decide to discuss their concerns with Social Services.

9 RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF STAFF AND MENTORS

- 9.1 It is recognised that some applicants may seek to work with young people in order to abuse them and that some applicants may have already shown themselves to be unfit to work with children and young people.
- 9.2 In recruiting Staff, DMLTD will follow a systematic selection process, designed to assess the applicant’s suitability for the post and to work with children and vulnerable people. DMLTD’s Safer Recruitment Policy contains the procedures for this.
- 9.3 All Staff at DMLTD may come into contact with young people, either through the programme or any other DMLTD projects or work. Therefore, mentors will be subject to an Enhanced DBS Disclosure including checking the Children’s Barred list, at least every 2 years and employees will be subject to this every 3 years. Programme Directors will be given training on how to complete a DBS check during their Induction and Training.
- 9.4 Additional checks will be made to ensure that all the information provided by any potential employee or mentor is accurate. Specifically:
 - 9.4.1 Application packs and where possible, recruitment adverts should contain the following statement: ‘DMLTD has a responsibility to ensure that young people are



protected. The recruitment process will include specific checks relating to child protection issues, which will be implemented for all applicants.'

10 STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND BEHAVIOUR

- 10.1 The standards of behaviour expected of employees are outlined within the Employee Expectations document.
- 10.2 All employees will complete a probationary period, in which the employee's performance is closely monitored. Employees are only confirmed in post upon satisfactory completion of the probationary period of six months.
- 10.3 Training and support are provided for mentors before they begin working with children and throughout the academic year.

11 CONTACT DETAILS

Designated Safeguarding Lead:

Name: Enayah Byramjee

Email: enayah@debatebate.com

Phone: 07989 973 576

CEOP: Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre - www.ceop.police.uk

ChildLine: 0800 1111 or www.childline.org.uk

NSPCC Helpline: 0808 800 5000 or help@nspcc.org.uk

Review Date: This policy will be due for review in November 2024.



Appendix I: Guidance on Reporting a Disclosure Safeguarding Guidance for Employees and Mentors

Key Information

The Designated Deputy Safeguarding Lead at Debate Mate is:

Enayah Byramjee: 07989 973 576

If you cannot contact Enayah, please call one of the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead:

Jess Rolfe-Dix 07701 077 487

Kim Rennie: 07454 834 706

Abby Mc Govern: 07876 333 222

Seun Iyaniwura: 07401 241 462

DO NOT contact your Programme Director. You must **ONLY** contact one of the DSLs or Deputies named above to discuss safeguarding concerns.

If you believe that a child is in *immediate danger* in an in-person club:

Do not let them leave. Keep them with you, go to the school reception and ask to speak to the Safeguarding Lead in the school. This is unlikely to be the teacher supervising the club, and is more likely to be a member of the Senior Leadership Team, find out who they are and **only** disclose your concerns to them. If no Safeguarding Lead is available, make a member of Senior Leadership Team aware that you believe a child is in immediate danger. You should also contact the DSL at Debate Mate.

If you believe that a child is in *immediate danger* in a virtual club:

You must contact Debate Mate's Designated Safeguarding Lead or one of the Deputies (listed above), immediately.

Debate Mate Safeguarding Concern Reporting Procedure:

Step 1	As soon as you have an initial concern or a child has made a disclosure to you, you should write down what the child said, using their exact words where possible.
Step 2	Send a blank email, or an email which says, "I would like to make a report," to safeguarding@debatebate.com . Do not include any details in the email.
Step 3	You will receive an automatic response with a link to a report form. This must be completed within 24 hour of your initial concern.
Step 4	Complete the form to the best of your ability, using quotation marks to signal the child's exact words. Focus on facts and avoid including your personal opinions.
Step 5	Debate Mate's Designated Safeguarding Lead will take relevant action
Step 6	Debate Mate's Designated Safeguarding Lead will, where possible, update you on the action.

What is Safeguarding?

- Safeguarding is protecting children from harm, preventing damage to children's health or development, making sure that children grow up safely and taking action to make sure all children have the best start in life.
- Child Protection is the action taken to protect children who are being abused or who are at risk of abuse
- Child/ Young Person means anyone under the age of 18/ before their 18th birthday
- All people who work with or have regular contact with children have a **duty of care**. This means that everyone who comes into contact with children play a part in **identifying concerns, sharing information** and **taking prompt action**.

Your Role as a Mentor:

As a Mentor, you have a duty of care to the students you interact with. This involves the '4 Rs'.

R Recognise

- Recognise what abuse is, including definitions, signs, and indicators of abuse.

R Respond

- Respond appropriately to a child by actively listening, being aware of the barriers for the child. Reassure them they have done the right thing by telling you and make sure they know abuse is never their fault.

R Record

- Record all information as soon as possible and pass it on safely and securely to the person who needs to know. Keep the information secure.

R Report

- Report concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, using the appropriate mechanisms.

Recognise:

What is abuse?

Abuse and neglect are both forms of harm. They are either inflicting harm or failing to prevent it. Abuse happens both directly and indirectly, e.g. via the internet. These categories often overlap.

Physical Abuse - includes hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

Emotional Abuse - Persistent emotional harm to a child that causes a severe or long-lasting impact on their emotional development. It may involve saying to a child that they are worthless, unloved or inadequate. It may involve seeing or hearing abuse of another, including domestic violence, meaning the child is frequently frightened. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child but may also happen alone.

Sexual Abuse - involves forcing or persuading a young person to take part in sexual activities, forcing a child to see or be involved in sexual images or grooming of a child. It may not be violence and committed by both men and women as well as child on child abuse.

Neglect - involves the continual failure to meet a child’s basic physical and emotional needs, such as providing sufficient food, clothing and a safe home. This is likely to lead to serious harm in the physical or emotional development of a child.

What are the symptoms?

While these may be signs of abuse, there may be innocent explanations. Some of the signs and indications listed may be because, for example, the child has experienced bereavement or it may be a temporary illness in the family. **It is not your job to diagnose if it is abuse - but it is your job to notice concerns and act on them.**

Physical Abuse	Emotional Abuse	Sexual Abuse	Neglect
Bruising	Aggressive behaviour	Nervous behaviour	Nervous behaviour
Nervous behaviour	Nervous behaviour	Lack of confidence	Lack of confidence
Bite or burn marks	Lack of confidence	Fear of making	Stealing food
Self-harm	Fear of making	mistakes	Sudden behaviour
Flinching	mistakes	Self-harm	changes
Sudden behaviour	Self-harm	Flinching	Frequent absences
changes	Flinching	Sudden behaviour	Lack of friends
Frequent absences	Sudden behaviour	changes	Fear of a specific
Hinting at secrets	changes	Lack of friends	individual
Fear of a specific	Lack of friends	Hinting at secrets	
individual	Fear of a specific	Fear of a specific	
	individual	individual	

Respond:

Recognising and Responding won’t always be a direct disclosure - someone may not come out and tell you that they are suffering from abuse. You may see or hear something, you may be concerned about another adult’s behaviour towards a child or someone may tell you about a concern for someone else. If a child tells you something directly, this is called a disclosure. It is often sudden, unexpected, simply blurted out and sometimes the young person changes their mind and stops telling you.

Key things you should remember to do:

- **Stay Calm** - Do not show shock or disgust or panic. This includes your own personal opinion. You should avoid making statements like “They seem like a really horrible person.” Saying things like “thank you for telling me that. That sounds like a worrying situation” would be more appropriate.
- **Listen Carefully** - Make sure you closely listen to exactly what they are telling you. You will need to write down what you hear later, as closely as possible to the child’s exact words. Avoid asking leading questions or specific questions. It is your job to listen not investigate – do not ask any questions.

Debate Mate

Learn today, lead tomorrow.



- **No Secrets** – Do not promise confidentiality or that you can keep secrets. You should tell the child that you may need to share this information with someone who can help. You can say something like “I will need to tell someone who can help you but I won’t tell anyone who doesn’t need to know” to reassure them.
- **Continue at the Child’s pace** - Do not probe or ask too many questions if they don’t want to. You can try to create a space for them to talk by saying things like “thank you for deciding to talk to me about this” and “it’s okay – take your time.” If a child starts telling you and then stops, you should still report it.
- **Reassure the Child** - Avoid making claims like “everything is going to be ok” but do say “Thank you for deciding to talk to me about this” or “I will do everything I can do to support you.”
- **Next Steps** - Make it clear to the child that you will act on this. This may be by saying “I need to talk to someone who can help sort this out.” If you think the child is in immediate danger, you need to keep the child with you and safeguarding lead at the school and/or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Record:

As soon as you hear anything you should make a record of it. This must be done **as soon as possible** to ensure you don’t forget any details. Preferably record what you heard on paper or if needs be it can be electronically (i.e. a ‘note’ on your phone). **Never email details of a concern to yourself or to anyone else.** Make sure you record any **exact words the child** uses using quotation marks. This record is to help you to complete the online form as accurately as possible - once you have reported the concern to Debate Mate, you should destroy / delete your notes.

Report:

You should report within 24 hours. If you are unsure if this is a genuine concern or not, we suggest you always report. This way you have done your bit to safeguard that child. You will never get in trouble for using the safeguarding reporting tool when you have a genuine concern.

Debate Mate’s reporting procedure:

Step 1	As soon as you have an initial concern or a child has made a disclosure to you, you should write down what the child said, using their exact words where possible.
Step 2	Send a blank email, or an email which says, “I would like to make a report,” to safeguarding@debatebate.com . Do not include any details in the email.
Step 3	You will receive an automatic response with a link to a report form. This must be completed within 24 hour of your initial concern.
Step 4	Complete the form to the best of your ability, using quotation marks to signal the child’s exact words. Focus on facts and avoid including your personal opinions.
Step 5	Debate Mate's Designated Safeguarding Lead will take relevant action
Step 6	Debate Mate's Designated Safeguarding Lead will, where possible, update you on the action.