

Safeguarding, Welfare, & Incident Management Policy

Control The Meerkat Ltd

1. Purpose of This Policy

This policy serves as the foundational document detailing the approach of Control The Meerkat Ltd (CTM) to the critical areas of safeguarding, participant welfare, and the structured management of incidents. This framework is applied consistently across the full spectrum of our professional services, which encompasses intensive one-on-one professional behaviour consultations, dedicated long-term mentoring programmes, and structured group learning environments, most notably the Assistance Dog Club.

Aims and Objectives of the Policy:

The core purpose of this policy is multifaceted and critical to maintaining a safe, ethical, and professional service environment. Specifically, it is designed to:

1. **Protect Physical and Emotional Safety:** Establish clear, proactive measures to safeguard the physical and emotional well-being of all individuals participating in CTM services, including clients, mentees, and staff. This includes the prevention of harm, neglect, abuse, and exploitation.
2. **Ensure Proportionate and Ethical Responses:** Guarantee that any concerns or disclosures related to welfare or safeguarding are met with an immediate, sensitive, ethical, and legally compliant response that is proportionate to the severity and nature of the concern.
3. **Provide Clear Incident and Conflict Management Structure:** Outline a robust, step-by-step process for the transparent and effective management of all types of incidents, conflicts, and breaches of conduct, ensuring consistency and fairness in resolution.
4. **Maintain Professional Boundaries and Role Clarity:** Define explicit professional boundaries for all CTM personnel and clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of staff and participants within the various service contexts to prevent ambiguity and ensure accountability.

By strictly adhering to the principles and procedures detailed within this document, Control The Meerkat Ltd commits to fostering a trusting, supportive, and legally compliant environment for all individuals engaging with our specialist behaviour and training services. This commitment to safeguarding and welfare underpins our entire



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operational ethos.

2. Safeguarding Principles

Control The Meerkat Ltd is fundamentally committed to operating within a framework that is both trauma-informed and welfare-led. This philosophy dictates how we approach every interaction and concern:

- **Professional and Compassionate Inquiry:** Concerns are not treated as immediate conclusions. Instead, they are approached with a posture of professionalism and compassion, ensuring a thorough, non-judgemental inquiry process before any final determination is made.
- **Dignity and Respect:** Every individual—client, team member, or animal—is treated with inherent dignity and respect throughout any process or investigation.
- **Proportionality:** All responses, actions, and interventions are strictly proportionate to the factual information available at the time, avoiding overreaction or undue intervention.

This principled approach to welfare does not, however, preclude necessary action. The CTM framework explicitly allows for and supports:

- **Setting Clear Boundaries:** Establishing and enforcing necessary behavioural and environmental standards.
- **Proactive Risk Management:** Identifying and actively mitigating potential risks to safety or welfare.
- **Decisive Action:** Taking firm and immediate action where required to ensure safety.

The paramount priority of Control The Meerkat Ltd is the welfare of all clients and their dogs. Any confirmed or substantiated concern raised regarding behaviour that results in poor welfare—whether directed towards clients, CTM team members, or their animals—will result in the immediate and permanent removal of the offending party from the relevant space and all associated CTM services.

3. Scope of Responsibility

Control The Meerkat Ltd is committed to upholding the highest standards of safeguarding and participant welfare, particularly within the formal and structured environments it facilitates. Our responsibilities are clearly defined and primarily focus on the activities where our professional supervision and direct organisation are central.



Direct Responsibility and Accountability:

- **Formally Organised Sessions:** This includes all classes, workshops, courses, and structured training sessions that are planned, managed, and delivered directly by Control The Meerkat Ltd staff or authorised representatives. Our responsibility encompasses the physical and emotional safety of human and canine participants during the official duration and within the designated boundaries of these sessions.
- **Professional Consultations:** During one-on-one or group consultation sessions where a professional service is being rendered, Control The Meerkat Ltd is responsible for maintaining a safe, ethical, and supportive environment for all involved, adhering to professional conduct and safeguarding protocols.
- **Structured Group Environments Under Direct Facilitation:** Any organised group activity, such as supervised practice groups, seminars, or events where a Control The Meerkat Ltd facilitator is actively leading and managing the proceedings, falls under our safeguarding remit. This includes the management of group dynamics and adherence to health, safety, and welfare guidelines.

-----Exclusions from Responsibility

It is crucial for all participants to understand the limits of Control The Meerkat Ltd's safeguarding and welfare responsibilities. Our responsibility is explicitly **not** extended to environments or activities where we do not have direct control, organisation, or supervision.

- **Informal Meet-Ups and Social Gatherings:** We are not responsible for informal gatherings, social events, or activities that participants may organise amongst themselves outside of our formal schedule, even if these groups are composed of individuals who attend our sessions.
- **Peer-Led Activities:** Any training, practice, or social activity initiated and managed by participants without the direct and active supervision of Control The Meerkat Ltd is outside our scope of responsibility.
- **Unsupervised Environments:** We assume no responsibility for the safety or conduct of participants in any environment where direct facilitation or supervision by Control The Meerkat Ltd is not formally scheduled and present, including public spaces, private homes, or online forums not moderated by our staff.

-----Participant Responsibility

Regardless of the environment, a fundamental principle of our policy is that participants maintain ultimate responsibility for their own conduct and decisions. This responsibility is continuous and extends beyond the boundaries of our structured sessions.



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- **Individual Behaviour:** Each human participant remains solely responsible for their personal conduct, adherence to safety guidelines, and respect for others, both human and canine.
- **Dog's Behaviour:** Owners are wholly responsible for the management, control, and behaviour of their dog(s) at all times, including taking all reasonable steps to prevent injury, manage potential risks, and ensure their dog's welfare.
- **Decisions Made Outside Structured Sessions:** Control The Meerkat Ltd is not liable for outcomes resulting from decisions, actions, or training methodologies implemented by participants when they are not under the direct instruction and supervision of our professional staff.

4. Definition of a Safeguarding Concern

A Safeguarding Concern is defined as any event, observation, or report that suggests an immediate or potential compromise to the physical or emotional safety and welfare of a client, CTM team member, or their animal. These concerns are broad in scope and may include:

Specific concerns include:

- **Dog-to-dog incidents:** Aggression or serious altercations resulting in injury or risk to safety/socialisation.
- **Dog-to-human incidents:** Aggressive behaviour (e.g., biting, lunging) towards a human, causing injury or posing risk, or indicating a breakdown in trust.
- **Escalation of behavioural risk:** Sudden or gradual worsening of challenging behaviours (e.g., resource guarding) or emergence of new, high-risk behaviours requiring immediate intervention.
- **Emotional distress:** Signs of significant psychological suffering (e.g., chronic stress, severe phobias) that compromise quality of life and require welfare intervention.
- **Compromised safety:** Failure in environmental management, supervision, or protocol that places an animal or human in immediate physical danger (e.g., escape risks, exposure to toxins, inadequate housing).

Concerns may be identified through various channels: direct observation by CTM staff, formal reporting by a participant, or professional assessment indicating underlying risk. All identified concerns are subject to a formal review process as outlined in our incident management protocol.

5. Immediate Response to Incidents

In the event of an immediate incident, CTM team members will adhere to the following critical three-step protocol, focused purely on immediate safety and de-escalation:

1. **Immediate Safety and Risk Mitigation:** The first priority is to physically remove the dogs or individuals from the immediate source of risk, creating a safe distance and space between all parties involved.
2. **Stabilisation and De-escalation:** Avoid confrontation, blame, or immediate punitive action. The focus is exclusively on calming the environment and de-escalating the situation through non-aggressive, clear communication.
3. **Factual Information Gathering:** Once the scene is safe and stable, CTM staff will record factual observations, including the date, time, location, and the specific behaviours observed. This step must be performed without speculation, assumptions, or assignment of fault.

All immediate responses are based solely upon the information and resources available at the exact moment of the incident. Comprehensive follow-up actions and investigations will proceed after the immediate risk has been neutralised and the scene is stabilised.

6. Reporting a Concern

Participants who become aware of a safeguarding concern must report it as soon as is reasonably possible after the event. All formal reports must be submitted in writing to the designated email address: hello@controlthameerkat.com. The report must contain factual information and avoid speculation.

- **Confidentiality:** All reports are treated with the utmost discretion and managed strictly in accordance with CTM's data protection policy and relevant legislation.
- **Internal Resolution Preference:** Where it is deemed safe and appropriate, internal resolution processes, such as compassionate or mediated resolution, should be actively considered and attempted before escalating the matter to external authorities.

Limitations of CTM Responsibility:

Control The Meerkat Ltd is explicitly **not** responsible for the conduct, safety, or welfare in the following environments:

- Informal meet-ups or activities organised independently by participants.



- Peer-led activities that are not directly structured or facilitated by CTM staff.
- Any unsupervised environment or interaction outside the defined scope of CTM services.

Participants retain absolute and sole responsibility for their own behaviour, the conduct of their dog, and any decisions they make outside the scope of formally structured CTM sessions.

7. Professional Response Pathway

Following the immediate response, a professional pathway will be activated to address the concern comprehensively. All responses are:

- **Welfare-Led:** The animal and human welfare implications are the primary driver of the investigation and subsequent action.
- **Evidence-Informed:** Actions are based on recorded facts, professional assessments, and established best practice.
- **Proportionate:** The severity of the action taken will match the severity and substantiated nature of the concern.

Responses may include, but are not limited to:

- Formal welfare check-ins with the involved parties.
- Mandatory veterinary referral for physical injuries or suspected health issues.
- Mandatory behavioural assessment by a qualified professional to assess risk.
- Development of a formal risk management and safety planning strategy.

8. Restorative Resolution

Where the nature of the concern is deemed suitable, Control The Meerkat Ltd may initiate a Restorative Resolution process. This is a structured approach designed to facilitate mutual understanding and agreement on future conduct:

- **Process Components:** The process involves a structured discussion between the involved parties (with or without CTM facilitation), a thorough examination and review of the events leading to the concern, and the agreement upon a clear, written plan for future strategies and conduct to prevent recurrence.
- **Participation Requirements:** For this process to be effective, all involved parties are required to engage with professional, respectful communication and demonstrate a commitment to adhering strictly to the established boundaries and



the agreed-upon future plan.

9. Escalation to External Authorities

If the matter requires escalation beyond CTM's internal capability—such as serious criminality, child protection issues, or serious animal welfare offenses—the following protocols apply:

- **Internal Pause:** All internal investigation and resolution processes will typically be immediately paused.
- **Communication Limitation:** Communication regarding the specifics of the case will be limited to protect the integrity of the external investigation.
- **Formal Channels:** The matter will be handled exclusively through the formal channels of the relevant external authority (e.g., Police, Social Services, RSPCA/SSPCA, regulatory bodies).

10. Safeguarding Actions & Boundaries

Control The Meerkat Ltd reserves the right to implement various safeguarding actions to protect the immediate and long-term safety of all participants. These actions are protective, not punitive, and are determined based on the professional risk assessment:

- **Action Types:** Actions may include pausing a client's participation in a specific session, restricting access to certain group environments, or, in severe cases, permanently removing an individual from all CTM services.
- **Accountability:** All safeguarding actions are subject to an internal review process and require formal communication detailing the action taken and the rationale to the individuals involved. The actions must be clearly proportionate to the assessed risk.

11. Emotional Safety & Group Environment

Control The Meerkat (CTM) is profoundly dedicated to cultivating and maintaining a supportive, non-judgemental, and fundamentally safe environment for all participants. This commitment underpins every aspect of our community engagement. However, it is a crucial principle of this policy that the emotional safety and positive atmosphere of the community are a shared, collective responsibility. Every participant is not merely a recipient of a safe space but is also an active, essential contributor to its maintenance.



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Participants are therefore explicitly expected to actively and positively contribute to maintaining this supportive environment. This commitment manifests through several key behavioural expectations:

- **Adhering to the principles of respectful and considerate communication.** This encompasses listening actively, speaking with empathy, avoiding discriminatory or inflammatory language, and seeking clarity before jumping to conclusions. All communication, whether verbal, written, or non-verbal, must be guided by a spirit of mutual respect and kindness, fostering a welcoming atmosphere for diverse perspectives and experiences.
- **Actively respecting and upholding the boundaries set by CTM and fellow participants.** Boundaries are fundamental to emotional safety. This includes respecting personal space, time commitments, confidentiality requests, and stated topics of discomfort or sensitivity. Where an individual expresses a need for space or sets a clear boundary, it must be acknowledged and adhered to without argument or pressure. CTM will also set clear programmatic and community boundaries, which are non-negotiable and designed to protect the collective well-being.
- **Promoting Inclusivity and Challenging Exclusionary Behaviour.** Participants are expected to actively work against any form of marginalisation, prejudice, or exclusion within the group. If a participant witnesses behaviour that undermines the supportive environment, they are encouraged to safely and respectfully intervene or report the incident to CTM, following established reporting procedures.
- **Engaging in Constructive Conflict Resolution.** Disagreements are a natural part of human interaction, but the expectation is that they be approached constructively. Participants should aim to resolve conflicts with grace, focusing on the issue rather than personal attacks, and be willing to apologise, forgive, and move forward. Escalation to CTM should be a last resort, reserved for situations where self-resolution is impossible or safety is compromised.
- **Practicing Self-Awareness and Emotional Regulation.** Participants are encouraged to take responsibility for their own emotional state and its impact on others. While CTM provides support, it is important for individuals to manage their own reactions and, if necessary, take a break from group activities to regulate emotions, returning only when they can contribute positively to the shared environment.

12. Record Keeping

To ensure robust transparency, accountability, and professional governance, relevant information relating to any safeguarding concern or incident is formally recorded. This



information is considered strictly confidential and is securely stored in full compliance with all relevant data protection laws, including the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The required data points for every recorded incident include:

- Date and time of the incident or report.
- The precise nature and factual details of the concern.
- The individuals and animals involved.
- A clear, chronological record of all actions taken by CTM.
- The rationale and professional justification for all actions taken.

13. Limitations of Safeguarding

The scope of CTM's safeguarding responsibility is strictly limited to our professional context and the structured environments under our direct facilitation. This policy does not extend to:

- Independent, informal activities organised outside of CTM's services.
- Incidents that have not been formally reported to CTM management.

14. Relationship with Complaints Procedure

Any concerns or dissatisfaction regarding the way a safeguarding concern or incident has been handled by Control The Meerkat Ltd must be raised through the formal complaints procedure. All formal complaints should be submitted in writing via email to: hello@controlthemeerkat.com.-----

15. Client Responsibilities and Community Conduct Policy Acknowledgement of Responsibility

15. Agreement

By engaging with any of the services provided by Control The Meerkat Ltd (CTM), all clients formally acknowledge, understand, and accept full and complete responsibility for their own actions, conduct, and compliance with all the stipulations outlined within this comprehensive Safeguarding and Welfare Policy. This responsibility is non-negotiable and extends to all forms of interaction, whether they occur in a physical training setting,



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through digital communication platforms, or within any CTM-hosted community or online space. Expectations for Community Engagement

Acknowledgement of Responsibility:

By engaging with the services provided by Control The Meerkat (CTM), all clients formally agree to engage with all other members of the CTM community—including fellow clients, CTM team members, contractors, and external partners—with the highest standards of politeness, professional courtesy, and demonstrable respect. A supportive, positive, and constructive atmosphere is fundamental to the CTM environment, and all participants are expected to contribute actively and positively to this shared goal. This includes, but is not limited to, the mandatory use of professional, considerate, non-aggressive, and non-judgemental tones in all forms of communication, both written and verbal. Commitment to Inclusivity and Zero Tolerance

Expectations for Community Engagement:

Clients explicitly agree to engage with all other members of the CTM community, including fellow clients, CTM team members, contractors, and partners, with the highest standards of politeness, courtesy, and respect. A supportive and positive atmosphere is fundamental to the CTM environment, and all participants are expected to contribute positively to this goal. This includes using professional, considerate, and non-aggressive tones in all forms of communication.

Commitment to Inclusivity and Zero Tolerance:

Control The Meerkat Ltd is an inclusive organisation firmly and ethically committed to supporting all minority and protected groups. We maintain a strict **zero-tolerance policy** regarding any behaviour that constitutes:

- Bullying (including cyberbullying and systemic exclusion).
- Harassment (including unwanted or persistent communication).
- Discrimination.
- Hate speech.

This zero-tolerance policy applies to, but is not limited by, remarks or actions based on a person's race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, political affiliation, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability status (visible or non-visible), age, or any other characteristic protected by law or ethical conduct standards.

Any proven instance of such prohibited behaviour will result in immediate, comprehensive, and appropriate disciplinary action. This action may include, at the sole discretion of the CTM management team, temporary suspension or the permanent termination of access to all CTM services and community participation.



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