

PERSONAL SAFETY GUIDELINES

for mentoring and befriending programmes working with children and young people



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Foundation





# Introduction

Volunteer mentors and befrienders work with a range of people from different backgrounds with different needs and circumstances. Sometimes, they will meet a mentee / befriender in their home, in a public place or at a venue chosen by the project. Whatever the arrangements, managing the personal safety of volunteers and the people they work with is a key issue for the organisations that provide these services.

“Personal Safety” refers to behaviour that produces damaging or hurtful effects, physically or emotionally, on people.

Employers do have a responsibility for assessing the risks involved in volunteering activities and for avoiding or controlling those risks. However, the volunteers themselves also have a responsibility to take reasonable care of themselves and any other people affected by their work e.g., mentees / befrienders.

This guide, produced specifically for providers of mentoring and befriending services working with children and young people, aims to address the (sometimes conflicting) personal safety issues of the volunteers and the mentees / befrienders they work with. It offers practical guidance and examples of good practice based around 10 Key Personal Safety Guidelines. Each guideline includes a number of risk assessment questions to enable practitioners to consider the personal safety issues in relation to their own programme and mentee / befriender group. Legal considerations are also highlighted, where relevant, and signposting to further information and guidance.

Specifically, Guideline 1 addresses the potential conflict between different legal requirements designed to protect children and young people and the personal safety needs of volunteers.

We hope the guide will help all mentoring and befriending programmes consider the personal safety issues that are pertinent to the running of their own programme and where necessary to review and develop new procedures to ensure their volunteers and mentees / befrienders are safeguarded. A card detailing the 10 Key Personal Safety Guidelines is available for distribution to your volunteers and is available from the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation.



# Acknowledgements


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This guide has been compiled in association with the Suzy Lamplugh Trust and with a range of mentoring and befriending service providers who attended a consultation workshop. Our thanks go to all those who gave their time and shared experiences, ideas and whose views and good practice have helped to produce this guidance.

Written by Pierre Lombaard, Consultant, Suzy Lamplugh Trust

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## Focus group representatives from:

- > 121 Youth Befriending
  - > Adolescent Resource Team Mentoring Project (Richmond)
  - > Bolton Lads and Girls Club
  - > Bromley EBP Mentoring Initiative Vulnerable Pupils
  - > Chance UK
  - > Friends United Network
  - > One-to-One Mentoring Project, Depaul Trust
  - > Time Together, London
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# 10 Key Personal Safety Guidelines

The following “10 Key Personal Safety Guidelines” were devised by the group:

- 1 Make sure your project knows your whereabouts
- 2 “PLAN” for your own safety
- 3 Familiarise yourself with the area in which you will be working
- 4 Present yourself appropriately in various contexts (e.g., dress)
- 5 Communicate any concerns to your co-ordinator
- 6 Make sure your mobile phone is fully charged and easily accessible
- 7 Carry your ID badge with you at all times
- 8 Follow the guidelines laid down by the programme
- 9 Trust (and listen) to your instincts
- 10 Record and report any incidents that cause you concern

Each Personal Safety Guideline is explored fully with a typical scenario outlined to illustrate; a question to aid discussion; examples of the different ways in which programmes have tackled this particular area of personal safety; risk assessment questions for you to consider; any relevant legal information and signposting to further information.



## Guideline 1: Make sure your project knows your whereabouts

### scenario

*After meeting a mentee/befriendee late on Thursday afternoon, Mark failed to return home. By 20:00 his partner was extremely worried, but had no-one from the organisation to call for information. She also realised that no-one had her contact details, even if they were aware of a problem. She was told earlier that she cannot have his mentee's/befriendee's contact details due to legal constraints.*

**How would a buddy/tracing system have helped resolve this situation? Would someone know if you didn't return from a meeting? Would the contact system you use comply with the confidentiality requirements of the Children Act 2004 and Data Protection Act 1997?**



### Organisations can help their volunteers by:

- Providing a named person to contact in emergency after hours
- Providing emergency contact details (usually including the mentee's/befriendee's contact details) in a sealed envelope to a volunteer's next of kin. This can be accessed in a personal safety emergency. If this is opened, an incident report has to be completed.
- Providing a buddy system to help identify a person's possible whereabouts in case of an emergency. This can include:
  - Having a central diary system that designated persons can access in order to identify a person's whereabouts, or
  - Providing an electronic tracing system that will raise the alarm in case a person does not return at a predetermined time, or
  - Joining volunteers in pairs or triplets to act as each others' "buddies". This is often simpler and more effective than a centralised system, or
  - Allocating one individual (usually a line manager or administrator) to act as a buddy for a larger group of people. This person will have a set process to follow in case someone goes missing.
- Have a set procedure in an easy-to-use diagram that outlines steps to be taken should someone go missing.





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## Risk Assessment questions each organisation should ask themselves:

- Is there a reasonably foreseeable risk that your workers or volunteers could go missing whilst performing their duties? What are you doing to reduce the risk?
- If you cannot provide a safe place of work (for example if your volunteers operate in public or on other people's premises) you need to have safe systems of work. Do you ever test these systems to ensure they operate adequately?

## Legal info

In order to comply with the *Data Protection Act* and the *Children Act*, organisations need to ensure that the information about vulnerable persons is held in accordance with legal requirements. This means that contact details of mentees/befriendees should not be made available to "buddies" (including family or friends) unless they

are specifically authorised to do so. This authorisation may involve checks made by the Criminal Records Bureau.

Under the *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999* employers are obliged to carry out "suitable and sufficient" assessment of risks to which their workers are exposed. This includes their personal safety. Your risk assessment will aid in deciding what type of buddy system you need to have in place.

In April 2008 the *Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007* took effect. An organisation to which this section applies is guilty of an offence if the way in which its activities are managed or organised (a) causes a person's death, and (b) amounts to a gross breach of a relevant duty of care owed by the organisation to the deceased. How the activities were managed or organised by senior management must be a substantial element of the gross breach.

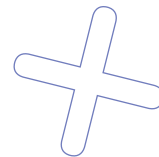
## Signposting

Book: "Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations", HSE (1999), London, HMSO (1999), SI 1999 No 3242

[www.opsi.gov.uk](http://www.opsi.gov.uk) –  
Office of Public Sector Information

[www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk) -  
The Information Commissioner's Office

Data Protection Act 1998, London, HMSO (1998), ISBN 010 542998 8



## Guideline 2: "PLAN" for your own safety

### scenario

On her way to meeting a young person at a local community event someone bumped into Francine on the train platform. A few minutes later she realised she had been pickpocketed – both her purse and mobile telephone were taken. She was now stranded at the station and didn't know any telephone numbers to inform her co-ordinator, the young person or her own family – even if she could ask someone to assist her.

She could possibly walk to the library, but she feels it will be safer to go back home first. That will, however, leave the young person stranded at the event, which will end quite soon anyway.

**How would PLANning have reduced the impact of Francine being pickpocketed? Do you think she should have walked to the event to meet the young person first? Why / Why not?**



#### Organisations can help their volunteers by:

- Providing a "safety checklist bookmark" to all volunteers
- Obtaining local risk information from their local police station's Crime Prevention Officer
- Providing an all-hours emergency number that all volunteers should memorise

#### Risk Assessment questions each organisation should ask themselves:

- What equipment can you provide to your volunteers beforehand in order to help them manage their risk (e.g., a personal alarm or a mobile telephone)
- How clear are your volunteers on the threshold of risk that may require them to withdraw from an incident?

To "PLAN" means to:

- Prepare
- Look and listen
- Act to avoid risk
- Never assume it won't happen to you

#### Legal info

*Health and Safety at Work Act of 1974:*  
Employers have a legal duty under this Act to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees. However everybody owes everyone else a duty of care under common law (with the exception of under 18's and those with mental health issues).

#### Signposting

[www.crimereduction.gov.uk](http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk)

[www.hse.gov.uk/legislation/hswa.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/legislation/hswa.htm) - The Health and Safety Executive

[www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)  
The Business Link website has a tool to help small businesses get a summary of the legislation that is relevant to them (not just on health and safety).

## Guideline 3: Familiarise yourself with the area in which you will be working

### scenario

*On Tricia's map it seems rather easy to walk across a playing field from her mentee's / befriender's house to the local high street (where they will attend a music event). When they arrive at the fields, it is very muddy and already quite dark. They hear a group of people not far off shouting and laughing loudly. However, they decide to continue, but halfway through the field three people approach them, who then tell her to leave as they have an issue to sort out with the young person. She fears that leaving the young person will put him at serious risk, but at the same time fears for her own safety.*

### What could Tricia have done differently in order to prevent this situation?

#### Organisations can help their volunteers by:

- Requesting local crime prevention information from their nearest police station, and disseminating it to their volunteers
- Requiring their volunteers to agree a "code word" with their mentees/befriendees if they need to leave a particular area immediately without argument
- Paying for licensed minicabs or other reputable forms of transport if volunteers need to operate in unfamiliar areas

#### Risk Assessment questions each organisation should ask themselves:

- Are there certain modes of transport in your area that should best be avoided by your volunteers? What are you doing to enable them to use other forms of transport?
- Are there specific "safe havens" you would like your volunteers and clients to be aware of in the local area? These can be places that can provide immediate support and assistance in case of an emergency.

- Even if no personal safety crisis has ever occurred in your organisation, but it has occurred in organisations similar to yours, it is likely that there is a reasonably foreseeable risk that the crisis may occur again. Have you considered such events in other organisations?

#### Legal info

Describing certain people (or their properties) as "potentially violent" may be in breach of the Data Protection Act of 1997.

You can contact the Data Protection Commissioner for further information.

#### Signposting

[www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk) -  
The Information  
Commissioner's Office

Data Protection Act 1998,  
London, HMSO (1998),  
ISBN 010 542998 8



## Guideline 4: Present yourself appropriately in various contexts

### scenario

While working on a hot summer's day Clara wore a shirt that exposed part of her shoulders. Upon entering her mentee's / befriender's block of flats, she was confronted by two people who challenged her by saying "we don't want your kind of people here..." She was unsure what their problem was, and when she stood her ground the two people became extremely abusive and threatening. They then tell her they will "sort out" her mentee's / befriender's family for mixing with people like herself.

**Was Clara correct in standing her ground? In what other ways can your appearance jeopardise your personal safety?**

#### Organisations can help their volunteers by:

- Providing guidance on culturally acceptable behaviour in their area
- Providing guidance on certain items that are not allowed to be worn or carried whilst performing duties

#### Risk Assessment questions each organisation should ask themselves:

- Does our organisation work in areas that may be sensitive to specific appearance? How do we communicate this to our volunteers?
- Is there likely to be significant cultural differences between our volunteers and the people they are supporting? How can this be interpreted as triggers to aggression?

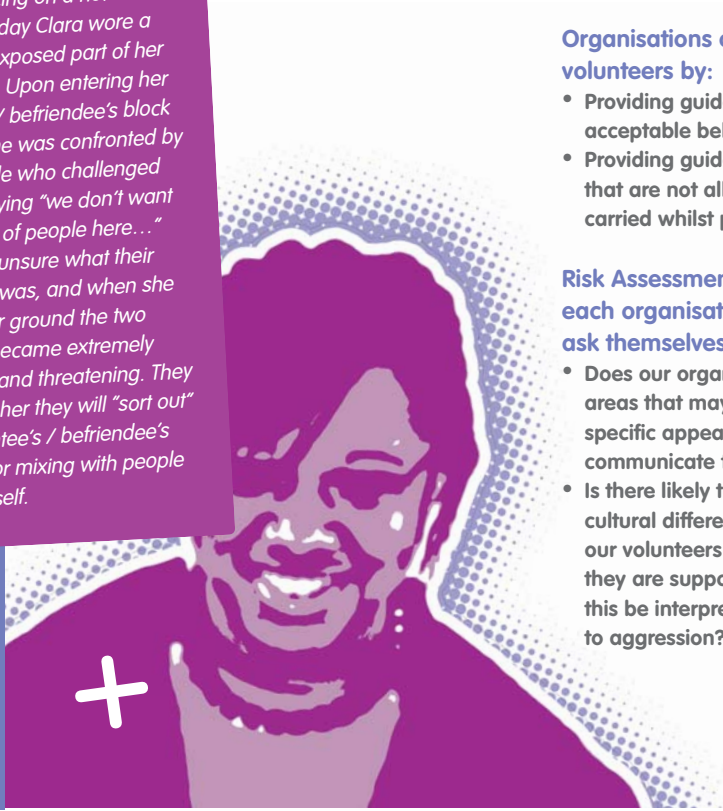
#### Legal info

*Criminal Justice and Public Disorder Act 1994* makes intentional harassment a criminal offence. Harassment is defined as "any physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct that is unwanted".

#### Signposting

*Criminal Justice and Public Disorder Act 1994* London, HMSO (1994), ISBN 010 543394 2

[www.opsi.gov.uk/](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/) - Office of Public Sector Information



## Guideline 5: Communicate any concerns to your co-ordinator

### scenario

For a number of weeks Jon's mentee / befriender arrived at their meetings with different minor injuries. Every time he enquired, the mentee / befriender gave a reasonable explanation. Eventually Jon decided to talk to the mentee's / befriender's dad about it, but the response he got was very surprising. He was told that he could never see the mentee / befriender again, and that if Jon tried to involve other people in the issue, it "would be his last day as a volunteer".

### How could things have worked out differently if Jon had kept his supervisor informed from the beginning?

#### Organisations can help their volunteers by:

- Providing regular feedback or supervision sessions to all volunteers
- Providing anonymous helplines for volunteers
- Having clear complaints and reporting procedures

#### Risk Assessment questions each organisation should ask themselves:

- Do you need to have an employee assistance programme? Can this be outsourced? An employee assistance programme is a set of support measures available to employees and/or volunteers, and may include counselling services, advice and information. This is often provided by specialist external organisations.
- Do clear internal guidelines exist in case a worker is accused of misconduct?

#### Legal info

*Health and Safety at Work Act 1974:*

Part of a worker's duty of care to themselves will include keeping their employer informed of any incidents related to their safety that may have happened. However the employer needs to provide adequate systems of reporting.

#### Signposting

[www.hse.gov.uk/legislation/hswa.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/legislation/hswa.htm) -  
The Health and Safety Executive

The Health and Safety Executive Infoline  
0845 345 0055





## Guideline 6: Make sure your mobile phone is fully charged and easily accessible

### scenario

Whilst waiting for her mentee / befriendee, Mandy made a few phone calls. She soon realised that her phone would soon be running out of battery power so she stopped using the phone. On their way back to the mentee's / befriendee's home, the mentee / befriendee fell and injured her arm rather badly. Mandy tried to call her supervisor, but struggled to find his number while assisting her mentee / befriendee. By this time Mandy's phone had no power left, and she couldn't access the telephone's Contact List. A passer-by eventually called an ambulance, but Mandy now had no means of contacting her supervisor, the mentee's / befriendee's family or even her own friends.

What actions could Mandy have taken prior to the event that would have enabled her to obtain support?

#### Organisations can help their volunteers by:

- Providing free emergency mobile telephone chargers (available from high street stores)
- Encouraging their volunteers to memorise all important phone numbers related to their work
- Providing an all-hours emergency telephone number to support their volunteers.

#### Risk Assessment questions each organisation should ask themselves:

- What equipment would our volunteers need in order to reduce the risk to their safety?
- Do all our volunteers have a simple, easy to understand emergency procedure in case of a serious problem?

#### Legal info

*Health and Safety at Work Act of 1974:*

Part of an employer's duty of care to their workers includes providing the required tools and systems to operate safe systems of work. In terms of personal safety this may include communication devices like mobile telephones (depending on the findings of your risk assessment).

#### Signposting

The Health and Safety Executive Infoline can provide information to both employees and employers on safety related matters:  
[hse.infoline@natbrit.com](mailto:hse.infoline@natbrit.com),  
0845 345 0055





## Guideline 7: Carry your ID badge with you at all times

### scenario

Michael took his mentee / befriender (a young child) out during one of their mentoring sessions. Whilst walking they were suddenly confronted by an angry man shouting "what are you doing with my son?!!!" As he tried to explain the man became even more aggressive (with the child now crying), and the last thing he remembers is being pushed over by the man, and the mentee / befriender being grabbed.

### How could an ID badge have defused this situation?

#### Organisations can help their volunteers by:

- Providing quality photo ID badges with a clip to all volunteers in order to identify themselves to unknown persons
- Providing guidance to staff on the use of the badge, for example having it accessible but not visible at all times.

#### Risk Assessment questions each organisation should ask themselves:

- When may our volunteers need to identify themselves to unknown persons?  
How will they be able to do that?

#### Legal info

*Health and Safety at Work Act of 1974:*

Part of an employer's duty of care to their workers includes providing the required tools and systems to operate safe systems of work. In terms of personal safety this may include providing ID badges to all staff.

#### Signposting

[www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

[www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)



## Guideline 8: Follow the guidelines laid down by the programme

### scenario

Lucy's organisation provides emotional support and friendship to young people and their families. Due to previous incidents they are not allowed to help with household chores. Lucy ignored this guideline though when she helped her mentee's / befriender's mum cleaning her flat. However the following week the mum expected more help with the chores, and when Lucy politely refused, she became very abusive and threatening.

### How do you think guidelines such as these should be enforced in the first place?

#### Organisations can help their volunteers by:

- Providing bookmarks with key safety guidance to be available to volunteers at all times
- Arranging regular team meetings where staff can share experiences that relate to their personal safety, and ways to manage it.

#### Risk Assessment questions each organisation should ask themselves:

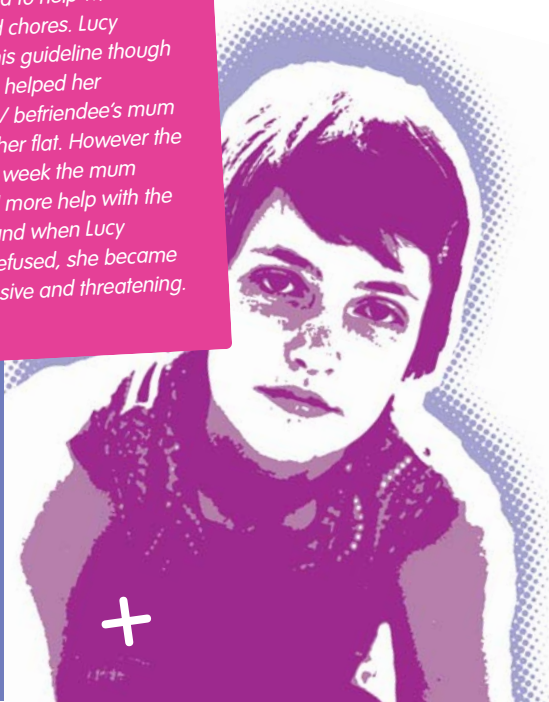
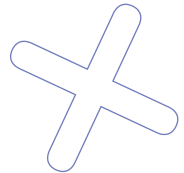
- Does our training programme clearly indicate the personal safety impact of not following some of our key guidance?
- What consequences will volunteers face should they ignore the guidelines?
- Have we included our volunteers in the process of designing the guidelines?

#### Legal info

*Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996* requires employers to inform and consult with their workers in good time on matters related to their health and safety.

#### Signposting

[www.opsi.gov.uk/](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/) -  
Office of Public Sector Information



## Guideline 9: Communicate any concerns to your co-ordinator

### scenario

Rose worked for an organisation that helped young people through outreach work and a local drop-in centre. A young person started to come along, and he focused much of his attention on Rose. Initially she was unconcerned; however, he soon became quite overbearing. Rose thought it must just have been her imagination, until one night when she got off the bus and realised he was following her home...

### What difference could it have made if Rose had listened to her concerns and reported it to a colleague?

#### Organisations can help their volunteers by:

- Providing clear guidance on bullying and stalking and how to respond to it
- Providing facilities to report low level incidents in order to have a record in case an incident escalates

#### Risk Assessment questions each organisation should ask themselves:

- To what extent may the nature of our work result in persons being harassed or bullied?
- How does our management training incorporate the need to support staff who are concerned about an incident even though it may not have resulted in any injury or threats?

#### Legal info

*The Protection from Harassment Act 1997* states (in Section 4) that it is an offence to put another person in fear of violence on at least two occasions.

#### Signposting

[www.cps.gov.uk/legal/section5/chapter\\_e.html](http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/section5/chapter_e.html) - The Crown Prosecution Service advice on the Act.



## Guideline 10: Record and report any incidents that cause you concern

### scenario

Blair regularly visited the flat of his mentee / befriender. One day he realised that two other people in the flat (whom he had seen a number of times previously) were selling drugs illegally from the premises. He was quite shocked, and didn't know what to do. His mentoring was at a critical stage of trust-building, and he feared that reporting this event to the police would render months of hard work useless (apart from the potential personal safety risk of reporting drug dealers to the police). However, he was also aware of the safety impact of this situation on his mentee / befriender.

How would Blair's situation have been different had he immediately reported the possible illegal activity to his supervisor?

### Organisations can help their volunteers by:

- Providing self-addressed prepaid postcards to report any incident to their health and safety team
- Including their duty to report incidents in a volunteer's standard induction programme

### Risk Assessment questions each organisation should ask themselves:

- Have we got sufficient levels of reporting, even of minor incidents?
- To what extent are our volunteers aware of our reporting procedures?
- Is there an opportunity for volunteers to make anonymous reports?

### Legal info

Under the *Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995* employers must notify their enforcing authority in the event at work that results in death, major injury or incapacity for normal work for more than three days. The *Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998* protects workers who 'blow the whistle' about wrongdoing (including a danger to the health and safety of any individual)

### Signposting

*Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995* (SI1995 No 3163) RIDDOR

[www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/](http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/) -  
The Health and Safety Executive

[www.opsi.gov.uk/](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/) -  
For more information on The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

# Further information

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## Mentoring and Befriending Foundation

The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF) provides guidance and support to organisations and practitioners involved in mentoring and befriending. As the national strategic body, MBF also works to influence policy and practice in the sector and across government. We reach over 3,000 projects in the Voluntary and Community Sector and have a team of regional co-ordinators throughout England.

### MBF resources

#### **Mentoring, befriending and drugs**

An introduction to the key issues for mentoring and befriending programme co-ordinators and volunteers produced in association with FRANK.

#### **A Guide to Effective Risk Management for Providers of Mentoring and Befriending Services**

Covers legal issues, volunteer status, insurance, implementing effective risk management plus good practice models, checklists and examples from a range of approaches.

Please see [www.mandbf.org.uk/resources](http://www.mandbf.org.uk/resources) for downloads

### **MBF training – One day interactive workshops available:**

#### **Personal safety for mentoring and befriending volunteers and clients**

Understand how to minimise risks for your volunteers and clients and gain practical guidance around personal safety issues. Consider issues in relation to your own programme and client group.

#### **Effective risk management for mentoring and befriending providers**

Provides an introductory overview of issues in relation to the management of risk, using models for effective evaluation. Reviews relevant legislation and strategies.

Please see [www.mandbf.org.uk/events](http://www.mandbf.org.uk/events) for location and dates

## **Suzy Lamplugh Trust**

Suzy Lamplugh Trust was the pioneer of personal safety as an important issue in society following the disappearance of Suzy. Since then, the Trust has been used by Government and Police as a key advisor on safety policy and is instrumental in developing policy and laws.

To access a broad range of services, resources and training visit [www.suzylamplugh.org](http://www.suzylamplugh.org)

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### **Mentoring and Befriending Foundation**

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