

SIDefxHUB Safeguarding Policy

Version 2 | 2nd September 2024

1. General

The purpose of this policy is to protect anyone involved with our charity from abuse, harassment, and bullying and to ensure that we respond promptly, proportionately, and sensitively to any concerns raised. Insofar as possible, these concerns will be treated confidentially.

This policy applies to anyone actively involved or participating in our organisation on our behalf, including our trustees, directors, and other volunteers. It also sets out what reasonable steps we will take to ensure that our organisation and communication platforms are not used to facilitate abuse, harassment, or bullying by members of the PFS or PSSD community or others outside our organisation.

This policy is kept under continuous review and formally revisited annually on or as near as possible to the anniversary of the date of this document.

2. Safeguarding Needs

Post-Finasteride Syndrome (PFS) is now a well-documented condition, which manifests itself in a myriad of ways and symptoms. At times, sufferers may experience impaired cognitive ability or may not be able to fully appreciate certain behaviour patterns they are exhibiting. Many members of the PFS community face isolation, have memory problems, or struggle to communicate, or do so inappropriately. These people are vulnerable adults and need special care, support, and protection.

A Vulnerable Adult may be defined as someone who is exposed to the possibility of being harmed, either physically or emotionally, due to a mental or bodily impairment or other circumstances that they find themselves in.

3. Reporting Abuse, Harassment, and Bullying

Abuse can be physical, financial, verbal, psychological, or emotional. It can result from an act or a failure to act. It is a misuse of power and the control that one person has over another or others and can happen in a variety of ways, including face-to-face, by letter, email, or phone.

Bullying and harassment are behaviours that make someone feel intimidated or offended. Harassment is unlawful in the UK under the Equality Act 2010.

Examples of abuse, bullying, or harassing behaviour include:

- Spreading malicious rumours
- Picking on someone or regularly undermining them

- The unjustifiable and unreasonable withdrawal of services or support networks

Abuse, bullying, or harassment within, towards, or by our charity will not be tolerated.

The Trustees and Directors of this charity are committed to:

- Creating a culture of openness and respect where individuals can feel confident in reporting any concerns.
- Ensuring that any allegations are handled promptly, sensitively, and appropriately in line with our core values and relevant law.
- Establishing appropriate processes to hear and address any concerns.

Anyone concerned about instances of abuse, bullying, or harassment should contact the charity immediately using concerns@sidefxhub.com. Complainants will be encouraged to provide contact details for the purposes of reporting back.

Anonymous concerns will be recorded, and any facts available will be examined. However, we will be mindful that anonymous complaints can sometimes be malicious. Everyone involved in our work, even incidentally, has the right to complain, and we will hold anyone accountable. However, individuals also have a right to be protected from unsubstantiated and potentially malicious allegations.

Serious, actual, or alleged incidents of abuse, bullying, and harassment will be reported to The Charity Commission using the serious incident reporting arrangements. Anyone inside or outside the charity can also make reports to the Commission.

4. SIDEfxHUB Support Groups

We recognise the importance of the various groups—WhatsApp, Reddit, etc. We know how reaching out to others in the community can be part of a coping strategy for difficult days. It can help keep people focused on recovery and maximise our fundraising ability. We want these groups to be a positive experience for all concerned, and our aim is to provide a safe framework to communicate with each other in a respectful and mutually supportive way.

In the past, discussions in the group have occasionally become tense and uncomfortably personal, especially in debates where differing opinions have prevailed. While we have no intention of censoring legitimate discussion, we are legally obligated to ensure that all participants are kept safe.

We cannot give a platform to offensive language or posts likely to cause harm, but we very much wish to engage the community in discussion and lively debate that could further our understanding of relevant events or developments around the world. We never want to be in a position where we miss something vital because someone, either within or outside our charity, disagrees in a self-defeating, rigid, or exclusionary manner.

As we grow, we will actively encourage participation by family and friends of PFS and PSSD sufferers. Therefore, it is essential that we keep this channel of communication civil and beyond reproach.

With this in mind, we adopt the following protocol:

(i) It is a condition of use that all participants agree to abide by our Social Media, Forum Rules, and Engagement Etiquette.

(ii) Where someone posts a comment that is improper or abusive or expressed with improper or abusive language, the comment will be immediately removed. The person responsible for the improper/abusive comment will be sent a message specifying the relevant breach of SIDEfxHUB Social Media, Forum Rules, and Engagement Etiquette. It may be appropriate to ask the person responsible to resubmit their comment without the abusive/improper content.

(iii) If the person responsible for the abusive or improper post/language continues to post comments of that nature, such posts will be immediately removed, and the person responsible will be blocked from posting for a 7-day inclusive "cooling-off" period. Throughout the suspension period, the person responsible for the posts will be offered support and the opportunity to present their side of the matter using a dedicated email: support@sidefxhub.com.

(iv) If the person responsible for abusive or inappropriate language continues to make similar posts, they will be immediately removed, and the person will be blocked from the group for a further interim 14-day inclusive period. The matter will then be referred to a member of the Board of Directors for an appropriate ruling. The person subject to exclusion will be contacted with a message informing them of the referral to the Board of Directors. The message will also make it clear that during the suspension period, the person will be offered support and the opportunity to present their case, using the dedicated email: support@sidefxhub.com.

The Board of Directors will invite the person subject to the suspension to present their case in writing and respond as soon as practicable. The ruling reached by the Board must conform to the principles of reasonableness and proportionality. In assessing whether the exclusion is reasonable, the Board will consider whether a reasonable person would conclude that the exclusion was warranted under the circumstances. To determine proportionality, the Board must assess whether the desired objective could be reached by alternative and less exclusionary means. The Board will communicate their ruling as soon as practicable, and a progress report will be provided within 3 weeks of the referral if a ruling has not yet been reached.

Any person subject to exclusion by a ruling from the Board of Directors may submit a written request for an appeal to the Board of Trustees within 3 months of the ruling. The Board of Trustees may be contacted using the dedicated email:

trustees@sidefxhub.com. In assessing whether to uphold or dismiss the ruling, the Board of Trustees must consider whether all relevant information was submitted to the Board of Directors and, if not, whether there was a valid reason for withholding the information. The Trustees will review the ruling in line with the principles of objective reasonableness and proportionality. A final decision confirming or dismissing the ruling will be communicated as soon as practicable, and a progress report will be provided within 3 weeks of the appeal request if the matter is still outstanding.

(v) All periods of exclusion or other rulings are subject to the overriding principle that the person excluded from the group cannot be excluded from support contact, and this must be made clear to the person excluded from the group.

APPROVAL AND REVIEW

Version	Approved by	Approval date	Review period
1	Board of Directors, ratified by Board of Trustees	25 March 2024	Annually