V-Aid (Victual Aid)
Health and Safety Policy

<u>Health and Safety Policy</u> approved by Trustees on 13/10/26

The policy will be subject to an annual review.

Signed: (Christin Lau on behalf of Trustees)

Health and Safety Policy

1. Purpose and statement of intent

V-Aid is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of people involved in its charitable work. This includes trustees, employees, sessional workers, volunteers, participants, beneficiaries, contractors, partner organisations and visitors who may be affected by V-Aid activities.

We aim to prevent accidents, injuries and work-related ill health by identifying risks, taking reasonable and proportionate precautions, providing appropriate information and supervision, and learning from incidents and feedback.
Safety is a shared responsibility. No activity should proceed where significant risks cannot be managed appropriately.

2. Scope

This policy applies to V-Aid activities including its small-scale emergency-food production and packing operations; Community Humanitarian Response (CHR) days at partner venues; preparation, loading, storage and delivery of equipment, ingredients and aid; training and volunteering; and associated administrative and outreach activity.

V-Aid CHR activities ordinarily involve weighing, mixing, filling, bagging and sealing dried food ingredients. They do not involve cooking meals. Food hygiene, allergen management and product safety are also subject to separate food-safety procedures and risk controls.

Where V-Aid undertakes activities involving unusual hazards, including overseas humanitarian journeys or work outside its routine operations, a separate activity-specific assessment and suitable safety arrangements will be required.

3. Responsibilities

Board of Trustees. The trustees retain overall responsibility for ensuring that suitable health and safety arrangements are established, implemented and reviewed, with appropriate resources and oversight.

CEO and operational management. The CEO, Tony Strutt, coordinates day-to-day health and safety arrangements, ensures significant issues are brought to trustees, and may delegate practical tasks to suitably competent staff or session leaders.

CHR session lead / nominated responsible person. For each activity, V-Aid will identify who leads the session, checks the work area, delivers the safety briefing, allocates tasks, supervises equipment use and coordinates the response to an incident.

Employees, volunteers and participants. Everyone involved must follow safety instructions, use equipment correctly, report defects and hazards promptly, and avoid actions that could endanger themselves or others.

Host organisations. At partner premises, V-Aid will agree relevant arrangements with the host, recognising that the host controls the building and may have established emergency, safeguarding and welfare procedures. V-Aid remains responsible for the safe management of its own activities and equipment.

4. Risk assessment and activity planning

V-Aid will take proportionate steps to assess the risks of each activity and record significant findings where appropriate. Assessments will consider the venue, people involved, equipment, food materials, manual handling, access and welfare, transport, emergencies and any additional needs.

Check the proposed venue, work surfaces, entrances, exits and available facilities before setting up.

Consider who may be affected, including people with disabilities, inexperienced volunteers, younger participants and others who may need adjusted tasks or closer supervision.

Identify practical controls and ensure they are understood before activities begin. Review arrangements when equipment, locations, methods or participant circumstances change, or after an incident or near miss.

5. Community Humanitarian Response days and partner premises

Before each CHR day, V-Aid will liaise with the host to confirm the suitability of the premises and the expected group, responsibilities, room access, toilet and handwashing facilities, emergency arrangements and any venue-specific restrictions.

At the start of the session, the responsible person will explain the activity, relevant hazards, safe working methods, personal hygiene, safe use of equipment, emergency exits, first-aid arrangements and how participants should raise concerns. Tasks will be allocated according to ability, age where relevant, and the level of supervision available. Work areas will be set out to avoid crowding, trailing cables, blocked routes and unsafe lifting. Equipment will be placed securely; spills and waste will be dealt with promptly. The area will be left clean and safe at the end of the session.

6. Food production, hygiene and allergens

V-Aid will maintain suitable food hygiene arrangements for its production unit and mobile CHR sessions, proportionate to the activities undertaken and relevant food-safety requirements. These include hygienic work surfaces, handwashing, clean utensils and

equipment, suitable protective clothing where necessary, and appropriate handling and storage of dry ingredients.

Use agreed food-handling methods and follow relevant food-safety and HACCP-based procedures.

Identify and manage ingredient allergens, cross-contact risks, labelling and traceability through the relevant food-safety arrangements.

Prevent contamination by separating food ingredients from chemicals, personal belongings and unsuitable materials.

Control dust from powdered ingredients through careful handling, ventilation as appropriate and suitable additional precautions where necessary.

Exclude people from food-handling tasks where illness, wounds or other circumstances create an unacceptable hygiene risk, in line with food-safety procedures.

This policy does not replace V-Aid's separate Food Safety, Allergen or HACCP procedures.

7. Machinery, tools and electrical equipment

V-Aid uses small machinery and electrical equipment, including scales and bag-sealing equipment. Equipment will be selected for the intended task, inspected before use and maintained in a safe condition in line with manufacturer instructions and assessed risk.

Only people who have received a suitable explanation or instruction will operate sealing or other potentially hazardous equipment.

Protect users from hot sealing surfaces, pinching points, moving parts, sharp edges and electricity; allow hot equipment to cool safely.

Do not use damaged plugs, leads, sockets or equipment. Isolate and report defects promptly.

Avoid overloaded sockets, unsuitable extension leads and cables across walkways. Arrange suitable examination, testing or repair where the equipment and risk assessment make this necessary.

Portable Appliance Testing (PAT)

V-Aid will ensure that portable electrical equipment is maintained in a safe working condition. Equipment will be visually checked before use, particularly when transported between venues.

New electrical equipment will not normally require formal PAT testing before first use, provided it is supplied in a safe condition and passes a visual inspection.

Formal PAT testing will be arranged by a competent person at intervals determined by the type of equipment, frequency of use, working environment and risk assessment. Annual PAT testing is not automatically required by law.

Appropriate records of inspections, testing, maintenance and repairs will be maintained.

8. Manual handling, storage and movement of goods

V-Aid activity may involve moving boxes of ingredients, packed meals, equipment and humanitarian supplies. Loads should be assessed before movement, and mechanical aids, team lifting, smaller loads or alternative arrangements used where appropriate. Heavy or awkward items will be stored safely, with access routes clear and stacks stable. Staff and volunteers will not be expected to lift loads beyond their ability. Vehicles will be loaded to avoid shifting loads and obstruction of safe access or visibility.

9. Premises, fire safety and welfare

V-Aid will take reasonable steps to maintain safe conditions in the production area it uses and in any temporary working space under its control. Floors, access routes, work surfaces, ventilation, lighting and welfare facilities will be considered when planning activities.

Before using partner premises, the session lead will identify the host's fire and emergency procedures, escape routes, assembly point and arrangements for people who may need assistance. Fire exits and access to extinguishers will not be obstructed by equipment or stock.

Suitable toilets, handwashing and drinking-water arrangements will be identified, and reasonable rest breaks provided during longer or demanding activity. Employees or volunteers should inform the session lead of a health or access need relevant to their safe participation; personal information must be handled discreetly.

10. First aid, emergency arrangements and accidents

For each activity, V-Aid will identify suitable first-aid provision, including the location of a first-aid kit, access to a trained first aider or other appropriate arrangements based on assessed need, and how to contact emergency services. The host organisation's arrangements may be used where clearly agreed and suitable.

If there is an immediate threat to life or serious injury, stop the activity, make the area safe where possible and call 999. Provide first aid only within the responder's training and competence. Report the incident promptly to the designated V-Aid lead and host contact as appropriate.

Accidents, work-related ill health and significant near misses will be recorded and reviewed. The CEO and trustees will consider whether notification to the Health and Safety Executive or another authority is required, including under RIDDOR where applicable.

11. Cleaning products, substances and infection prevention

Cleaning products and other potentially hazardous substances will be stored and used according to the supplier's instructions, with relevant COSHH assessments and controls where required. Food materials must be kept separate from cleaning chemicals. Suitable precautions will be taken to limit infection transmission, including hand hygiene, cleaning of shared equipment and attention to current public-health advice when relevant.

12. Volunteer wellbeing, inclusion and safeguarding

V-Aid's activities should be welcoming and inclusive without compromising safety. Reasonable adjustments may include adapted tasks, accessible work areas, shorter work periods, additional explanation, translation support or closer supervision. Nobody should be asked to undertake a task they do not understand or feel able to perform safely. Where children, young people or adults at risk take part, the Safeguarding Policy and any agreed host procedures must also be followed. The health and safety briefing and supervision arrangements will reflect the needs of those attending.

13. Travel, driving and deliveries

Travel and deliveries undertaken for V-Aid will be planned with regard to road conditions, safe loading, driver suitability, fatigue, vehicle roadworthiness and any applicable insurance or licence requirements. Drivers must observe road traffic law and must not be pressured to drive when unfit or fatigued. Loading, unloading and parking arrangements should minimise risks to staff, volunteers and members of the public.

Any overseas humanitarian travel, convoy or unusual logistics operation will require additional, documented planning that addresses its specific risks; routine CHR arrangements alone are not sufficient for those activities.

14. Training, information and communication

Employees, sessional workers and volunteers will receive safety information and supervision proportionate to their roles. This may include induction, manual-handling guidance, safe equipment use, food hygiene, incident reporting, fire evacuation, first aid awareness and venue-specific briefing. Additional training will be arranged when duties or risks require it.

Anyone involved in V-Aid activities is encouraged to raise concerns and suggest improvements. Where a significant hazard cannot be controlled, work must be paused and escalated to the session lead or CEO.

15. Monitoring, records and review

V-Aid will retain relevant risk assessments, safety briefings, training information, equipment maintenance records and accident/near-miss records where appropriate. Personal and sensitive information will be handled securely and in accordance with V-Aid's Data Protection Policy.

The trustees will review this policy at least annually, or sooner after a significant incident, change in activity, new safety information or a change in legal requirements. Experience from CHR sessions and feedback from host organisations will inform improvements.

16. Related V-Aid policies and procedures

This policy should be read alongside the Safeguarding Policy, Equal Opportunities Policy, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Volunteer Policy, Data Protection Policy, relevant food-safety and allergen/HACCP arrangements, and site- or activity-specific risk assessments.

Appendix A – CHR day safety checklist

The following is a practical prompt for the nominated session lead. It does not replace a site-specific risk assessment.

Before arrival / pre-visit

Confirm the host, expected participants, room, access arrangements and any relevant additional needs.
Agree host and V-Aid responsibilities, first-aid and emergency arrangements.
Review food-handling, equipment, transport and manual-handling risks.

Before the session starts

Check tables, floor, lighting, ventilation, handwashing and access/escape routes.
Position scales, sealers and ingredients safely; protect cables and hot surfaces.
Check equipment for damage and confirm cleaning and allergen controls.
Identify first-aid kit, emergency telephone access, exits and assembly point.

During the session

Give the safety and hygiene briefing; explain who is supervising and how to report concerns.

Allocate suitable tasks; provide instruction before anyone operates equipment.
Keep work areas tidy; control spills, dust, lifting and cross-contamination.
Pause or change tasks if a safety concern arises.

At the end

Switch off and allow equipment to cool; clean and pack equipment safely.
Check stock, waste and heavy boxes are handled safely.
Record and report any accident, near miss or learning point; leave the venue safe.

Appendix B – Incident response reminder

Immediate danger or serious injury: stop work, protect people from further harm, call 999 and follow emergency instructions for the venue.

For other incidents: make the area safe, arrange suitable first aid, notify the session lead and host contact as relevant, make a factual record, and refer the matter to the CEO for follow-up and any required external reporting.

After an incident or significant near miss: review what happened and whether the activity, risk assessment, training, equipment or policy needs to change.