

Links Policy Safeguarding



Links International is committed to safeguarding the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk and protecting them from abuse. We believe that it is never acceptable for a child to experience abuse of any kind and that safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility within our organisation.

This policy will help foster a safe and positive environment for children and adults at risk and provide guidance for all employees and volunteers regarding acceptable behaviours and appropriate boundaries when working with children and adults at risk.

Links International will ensure all employees and volunteers are aware of and understand this policy so that the risk of abuse of children and adults at risk is minimised. We will ensure all volunteers and employees embarking on an overseas trip have a DBS check. We will ensure our Links Trip Leaders clearly understand what steps to take when concerns arise regarding the safety of children and adults at risk on Links Trips. We will immediately respond to and investigate all concerns and allegations.

Definition of Terminology

The terminology of child/children covers those under the age of 18 that we work with or encounter in communities on Links Trips regardless of nationality, sex or physical or mental capacity.

Value, Principles and Beliefs

Our values, principles and beliefs require that employees and volunteers

- Treat every child and adult at risk with dignity and respect at all times
- Conduct themselves in a manner consistent with their position as a positive role model for children and adults at risk
- Immediately report or raise concerns for the safety or wellbeing of a child or adult at risk to a Links Trip Leader
- Listen to children and adults and take any concerns raised seriously
- Be visible when working with children and adults at risk, endeavouring to ensure other adults are present. Avoid being alone with them
- Work in partnership with caregivers and/or other professionals to ensure child/adult at risk protection
- Not personally criticise a fellow employee or volunteer for perceived actions towards a child/adult at risk but immediately report alleged incidents to a Links Trip Leader.

Links Policy Safeguarding



Links International Employees and Volunteers will not

- Engage in any behaviour that is intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children/adults at risk
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice that is inappropriate, offensive or abusive
- Smack, hit, physically assault or apply extreme physical or emotional disciplinary measures
- Develop sexual relationships with children/adults at risk nor any kind of relationship that is deemed exploitive or abusive
- Spend excessive time alone with children/adults at risk away from others
- Act in ways that may be abusive or place a child/adult at risk of abuse
- Behave in a manner that is physically or verbally inappropriate or sexually provocative
- Sleep in the same bed as children/adults at risk.

Procedures

If an allegation is made the Links Trip Leader, in conjunction with the Links International CEO and Links Safeguarding Officer, will put in place, as a matter of priority, an action plan to ensure the safety of the child/adult at risk. Disciplinary procedures will be applied to employees or volunteers who are found to have acted outside the Safeguarding Policy guidelines. Confirmed cases will be reported to the legal authorities in conjunction with the laws of the relevant country.

Consensual Relationships

While we recognise the right of a young adult to engage in relationships past the lawful age of consent, employees or volunteers **may not**, at any time, engage in consensual relationships due to the ethical nature of the relationship between employee/volunteer and care recipient.

Policy approved by Andy Read January 2013

Links International, PO Box 198, Littlehampton, West Sussex BN16 3UQ, England
+44 (0)1903 778515
office@linksinternational.org.uk
www.linksinternational.org.uk

Links Policy Safeguarding



Code of Conduct

Background

The most effective way to prevent abuse of children/adults at risk is to be vigilant. By being vigilant in following this code of conduct for interaction with children/adults at risk we hope to protect them from abuse. All staff and volunteers with children/adults at risk are expected to interact in a mature, capable, safe, caring, responsible manner, with a high level of accountability. All adults working with children, young people and adults at risk are in positions of trust. It is therefore vital that workers ensure they do not, even unwittingly, use their position of power and authority inappropriately. All staff and volunteers are responsible for giving and accepting feedback from others in order to maintain a high level of professionalism.

This Code of Conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following expectations of staff and volunteers.

1. Adult-to-child behaviour

Visibility and overcoming isolation

- All work with children should be planned in a way that minimizes risks as far as possible. This includes being visible to other adults when working and talking with children. This can be accomplished by planning activities in areas where other adults are present and at a time when other activities are occurring.
- It is inappropriate to spend an excessive amount of time alone with children, especially where this blurs the boundaries between professional and personal/social contact.
- Generally, at least two unrelated adults should be present in work with children. When this is not possible, reduce isolation by having a minimum of two children present, informing the child's parent/another adult of your meeting, and doing it during a time and/or in a location where your interaction with the child is visible to others.
- Where confidentiality is important and a young person is being seen on their own, ensure that others know the interview is taking place and that someone else is in close vicinity.
- Particular care needs to be taken into account for the needs of children with disabilities and other vulnerable children as research has shown that abuse can often go unrecognised and unreported due to people's attitudes and assumptions about disability.

Links Policy Safeguarding



Accountability

- Always be accountable to other adults regarding your interactions with young people or children.
- Parents and/or supervisors are to be notified beforehand of any activities with young people or children.
- In an emergency situation, find someone to go with you if at all possible, or notify whoever is available.

Supervision

- Supervision also reduces risk. The person responsible for safeguarding children/adults at risk within the organisation should periodically and randomly inspect areas where children and adults are together.

Technology

- Technology should be used appropriately to protect children or young people from abuse and exploitation, for example, family safe filter/parental control programmes to prevent downloading pornographic material from the Internet, access to inappropriate emails, chat rooms, or films.
- Instant messaging, texting and other forms of social networking between personnel and children/adults at risk should not be used inappropriately.
- Clear guidelines should be available in relation to communication via all social media, social networking, and related technologies.

Touch

Healthy, caring touch is valuable to children/adults at risk but unhealthy touch is abusive. However, touch needs to be used in a culturally appropriate way. The following should be noted:

- Touch should be open rather than secretive. A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors.
- Touch should be in response to the need of the child/adult at risk, and not the need of the adult.
- Touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child rather than the adult. It should be with the child's permission and any resistance from the child should be respected. Touch should always communicate respect for the child/adult at risk.
- Adults should avoid doing things of a personal nature for children that they are able to do for themselves, including dressing, bathing, etc.
- Adults and other young people or children should not hit, slap, pinch, push, hold against their will, or otherwise assault children.
- The following signs of affection are generally appropriate within specific contexts:

Links Policy Safeguarding



- i. verbal praise
- ii. side hugs
- iii. pats on the shoulder, back, or head (when culturally appropriate).
- iv. for smaller children, touching their hands, faces, shoulders and arms, arms around their shoulders, hugs, or holding them when others are present.
- The following behaviours between staff or volunteers and children/adults at risk are inappropriate or may be perceived as inappropriate and should not be engaged in:
 - i. touching buttocks, chests, genital areas, or thighs
 - ii. showing affection in isolated areas or when alone with a child
 - iii. sleeping in bed with a child/adult at risk
 - iv. inappropriate comments that relate to physique or body development
 - v. flirtatious or seductive looks or behaviour
 - vi. any form of affection that is unwanted by the child
 - vii. showing sexually-suggestive videos or playing sexually-suggestive games with any child/adult at risk
 - viii. any behaviour that could be interpreted as sexual in nature.
- Team members should monitor each other in the area of physical contact, helping each other by pointing out anything that could be misinterpreted.

Inappropriate actions

It is inappropriate for anyone to:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault children/adults at risk.
- Develop physical/sexual relationships with children/adults at risk.
- Develop relationships with children/adults at risk which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive
- Engage in behaviours which could be regarded as grooming or controlling.
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive.
- Help children/adults at risk in areas of a personal and private nature that they are able to do for themselves.
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children/adults at risk, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse, discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favour particular children to the exclusion of others.
- Be involved in discrimination, prejudice or oppressive behaviour or language in relation to any of the following: race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexuality or political views.



2. Child-to-child behaviour

Children and young people have always been curious about other children - the same or opposite sex - and/or experimented sexually. However, where a child is in a position of power, has responsibility over another child (as in a babysitting arrangement) and abuses that trust through engaging in sexual activity, this is likely to be regarded as abusive. The same applies where one child introduces another child to age-inappropriate sexual activity or forces themselves onto a child. This is not mutual exploration. Such situations should be taken as seriously as if an adult were involved, because the effects on the child victim can be as great. Approximately one third of sexual offences are committed by children and young people.

Instances such as these would be investigated by the child protection agencies in the same way as if an adult were involved, though it is likely that the perpetrator would also be regarded as a victim in their own right. The possibility is that they have also been abused. Since sexually harmful behaviour can be addictive and other children could be victims now or in the future, it is important to take the matter seriously and Links will need to deal with this as we would any other allegation. It cannot be assumed that young people will grow out of it. Most adult sex offenders started abusing in their teens (or even younger).

- Child-to-child sexually harmful behaviour includes all types of abuse defined in these guidelines.
- Other factors considered in evaluating whether sexually harmful behaviour has occurred include differences in responsibility, trust, power, development, awareness and understanding, coercion, and threats, whether implied or verbal.
- In addition, the following actions may involve sexually harmful behaviour of one child to another and should be prohibited: bullying, hazing, derogatory name-calling, ridicule or humiliation, or singling out a child for negative treatment or exclusion.
- In normal circumstances Links will not allow anyone under 16 to be left formally in charge of any children of any age. However, some local/national legislation may require this to be 18 years of age.
- We will take any disclosure of abuse from a child about another child seriously and follow the safeguarding procedures in the same way as for any other disclosure.
- We will be prepared to engage with other professionals and statutory agencies that have expert knowledge in this area.
- We will offer ongoing pastoral care and support to the perpetrator, victim and both families through a risk assessment or counselling if necessary.

Links Policy Safeguarding



The Welfare and Rights of Children Statement

We affirm our belief in the right of all children to be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence, as set out in the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC).

A child or young person has the right:

- to have their health, safety, well-being and best interests considered paramount
- to have their welfare and development promoted and safeguarded so that they can achieve their full potential
- to be valued respected and understood within the context of their own culture, religion and ethnicity, and to have their needs identified and met within this context and within the context of their family wherever possible
- to be listened to and to have their views given careful consideration, and to be encouraged and helped to participate in decisions which affect them

In order that these rights are respected, when staff, volunteers and others are in contact with children, they should:

- at all times treat children with respect and recognise them as individuals in their own right
- regard them positively and value them as individuals who have specific needs and rights and a particular contribution to make
- work with them in a spirit of cooperation and partnership based on mutual trust and respect
- value their views and take them seriously
- work with them in ways that enhance their inherent capacities and capabilities, and develop their potential
- strive to understand them within the context in which they live

Links Policy Safeguarding



Definitions of Abuse

While it is recognised that local and/or national definitions of child abuse may vary, and there are racial, cultural, religious, and ethnic differences in child rearing and relating to children and adults at risk and understandings of what constitutes abuse, we need to remember that all children have basic human rights.

The following five categories of abuse are universally found.

The full text and definitions below come from the World Health Organisation (WHO). A child is defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as “Every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable the child majority is attained earlier”.

Preamble to the Definition

Abuse has serious physical and psychosocial consequences which adversely affect health. It refers to any act or failure to act that violates the rights of the child/adult at risk, and that endangers his or her optimum health, survival and development.

Awareness of cultural factors must remain high as they influence all aspects from the occurrence and definition through its treatment and successful prevention. Any intervention, to be successful whether for data gather, prevention or even increasing public awareness, must take into consideration the cultural environment in which it is to occur. Background or baseline conditions beyond the control of families or caretakers, such as poverty, inaccessible healthcare, inadequate nutrition, unavailability of education can be contributing factors to child abuse. Social upheaval and instability, conflict and war may also contribute to increases in child/adult at risk abuse and neglect.

General Definition

Child/adult at risk abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse of a child/adult at risk is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction or lack of an interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents.

Links Policy Safeguarding



Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse includes the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate, supportive environment, including the availability of a primary attachment figure, so that the child/adult at risk can develop a stable and full range of emotional and social competencies commensurate with her or his personal potentials and in the context of the society in which the child/adult at risk dwells. There may also be acts towards the individual that cause or have a high probability of causing harm to their health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. These acts must be reasonably within the control of the parent or person in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Acts include restriction of movement, patterns of belittling, denigrating, scapegoating, threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.

Neglect and negligent treatment

Neglect is the failure to provide for the development of the child/adult at risk in all spheres: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter, and safe living conditions, in the context of resources reasonably available to the family or caretakers and causes or has a high probability of causing harm to their health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. This includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children/adults at risk from harm as much as is feasible.

Sexual Abuse

Child/adult at risk sexual abuse is the involvement of an individual in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the person is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violate the laws or social taboos of society. Sexual abuse is evidenced by this activity between a child/adult at risk and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person. This may include but is not limited to:

- The inducement or coercion of a child/adult at risk to engage in any unlawful sexual activity.
- The exploitative use of child/adult at risk in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices.
- The exploitative use of individual in pornographic performances & materials.

Exploitation

Commercial or other exploitation of a child/adult at risk refers to use of the person in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour and child prostitution. These activities are to the detriment of the individual's physical or mental health, education, or spiritual, moral or social-emotional development.

Links Policy Safeguarding



Additional definition of Abuse (note: *not* from WHO):

Spiritual Abuse

Linked with emotional abuse, spiritual abuse could be defined as an abuse of power, often done in the name of God or religion, which involves manipulating or coercing someone into thinking, saying or doing things without respecting their right to choose for themselves. Some indicators of spiritual abuse might be a leader who is intimidating and imposes his/her will on other people, perhaps threatening dire consequences or the wrath of God if disobeyed. He or she may say that God has revealed certain things to them and so they know what is right. Those under their leadership are fearful to challenge or disagree, believing they will lose the leader's (or more seriously God's) acceptance and approval.