

# ARKS FOUNDATION

## Child Protection Policy

This policy applies to all staff, including senior managers and the board of trustees, paid staff, volunteers and sessional workers, agency staff, students or anyone working on behalf of Arks Foundation.

### The purpose of this policy:

- to protect children and young people who receive Arks' services. This includes the children of adults who use our services;
- to provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection;
- Arks believes that a child or young person should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe. We are committed to practice in a way that protects them.

### Legal framework:

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children, relevant European and National guidelines and recommendations. These include

- United Convention of the Rights of the Child
- Data Protection Act
- Children Act
- Sexual Offences Act
- Protection of Freedoms Act
- Relevant government guidance on safeguarding children
- A child is defined as anyone under the age of 18, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

### The policy follows the following principles

- **Empowerment** - putting people first and helping those who lack mental capacity feel involved and informed
- **Protection** - supporting victims so they can take action
- **Prevention** - responding quickly to suspected cases of abuse
- **Proportionality** - making sure what we do is appropriate to the situation and for the individual
- **Partnership** - sharing the right information in the right way
- **Accountability** - making sure all agencies have a clear role

## **We recognise that:**

- the welfare of the child is paramount
- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

## **We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:**

- valuing them, listening to and respecting them
- adopting child protection practices through procedures for staff and volunteers
- developing and implementing an effective e-safety policy and related procedures
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training
- recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
- sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers
- sharing concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately.
- Safeguarding and Child Safety will be discussed regularly in coordination meetings, in the preparation of all events and the training and preparation of all staff for these events
- A safeguarding concern is any allegation or suspicion that someone associated with our work has caused or may be at risk of harm or abuse. Even minor concerns or suspicions of harm must be reported. The following types of harms which is not exhaustive that staff and representatives should be alert to:
  - Physical: Any physical contact that results in discomfort, pain or injury
  - Sexual: Coercion or force to take part in sexual acts of any kind
  - Emotional/Psychological: Action or inaction that causes mental distress
  - Exploitation: Misuse of power or control over another person for financial, social, sexual or other benefit
  - Bullying & Harassment: Unwanted behaviour which causes offense, intimidates or humiliates others
  - Sexual Harassment: Unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature
  - Institutional: systems or culture within an organisation that can result in any kind of harm or failure to prevent harm through acts of omission

## **Personal/Personnel Safety**

- A group of children or young people under sixteen should not be left unattended at any time.

- Avoid being alone with an individual child or young person for a long time. If there is a need to be alone with a child or young person (e.g. first aid or he/she is distressed) make sure that another worker knows where you are and why.
- At no time should a volunteer or worker from any external organisation arrange to meet a young person away from the activity without someone else being there.
- As such meetings should be planned and have the approval of a member of the Committee (this must be someone other than the organiser themselves).
- Teenage assistants should always be supervised.

## Communication about children

In communicating about children the following principles will apply

**Dignity:** The child's dignity must be preserved at all times. Languages must not degrade, victimize or shame the child. In images, children should always be dressed appropriately and should never be depicted in any poses that could be interpreted as sexually provocative.

**Accuracy:** The portrayal of children must not be manipulated or sensationalized in any way. Images and stories should provide a balanced depiction of the child's life and circumstances, balancing negatives with empowering images or showing the progress that children are making. Communications should avoid making generalisations, which do not accurately reflect the nature of the situation and pictures should not be taken and used out of context.

**Privacy:** Any information that could be used to identify a child or put them at risk will not be used. Information about a child/children's life and photographs of children (including information stored on the computer) will be kept in secure files. Access to these should be limited to those that need to use them during the course of their work. → The recorded images should focus on an activity and, where possible, feature groups of children rather than individuals.

**Complaints procedure:** Any complaints or concerns about inappropriate or intrusive images should be reported and recorded like any other child protection concern

## Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct includes guidance on ethical and proper standards of behavior of adults towards children, and also of children towards other children. It has been developed with the best interests of the child as the primary consideration and should be interpreted in a spirit of transparency and common sense. We aim for everyone, children and adults, to participate in a safe and happy way. →

- Be aware what constitutes child abuse and exploitation
- Know signs of abuse and reporting any suspicious observations immediately.
- Respect the basic rights of others by facing fairly, honestly, and tactfully, and by treating people with dignity and respect.
- Treat all children equally: be inclusive and involve all children without discrimination.
- Work actively to ensure the highest levels of respect towards each other.

- Maintain high standards of personal and professional conduct both personally and in others.
- Protect the health, safety and well-being of yourself and others.
- Be aware of high-risk peer situations (e.g. unsupervised mixing of older and younger children and possibilities of discrimination against minors)
- Be aware of potential for peer abuse (e.g. bullying of children)
- Be concerned about the way in which your language, actions, and relationships with children could be perceived.
- Develop special measures/supervision to protect younger and especially vulnerable children from peer and adult abuse.
- Provide an enabling environment for children's personal, physical, social, emotional, moral and intellectual development.
- Encourage and respect children's voices and views.
- Limit access to and/or not expose children to any inappropriate electronic material.
- At all times respect the confidentiality of children's personal information.
- Ensure that when children with disabilities participate that all buildings are fully accessible for them.
- When participants are invited to stay overnight, room sharing arrangements are agreed in advance and with consent of the parents/guardians and children.

#### DON'T:

- Engage in any form of sexual activity with children
- Avoid any action or behavior that could be construed as poor practice or potentially abusive. For example, never behave in an inappropriate or sexually provocative manner.
- Never have a child stay overnight in the adult's room or sleep in the same bed (unless prior consent is provided by both the child and his/her parent/guardian).
- Do not perform activities for children that they can do themselves, including dressing, bathing and grooming.
- Do not discriminate, shame, humiliate, belittle, or degrade children. This includes anything that may be considered emotional abuse (e.g. use language that will mentally or emotionally abuse a child or tell a story/show pictures that will mentally or emotionally abuse a child).
- Do not hit or otherwise physically assault participants.
- Do not act in any way that may be abusive or place others at risk of abuse.
- Do not condone violations of this code by others – staff, interns, consultants, etc.
- Do not be alone with a child in any circumstances that might be questioned by others
- Do not allow children to engage in sexually provocative games with each other.
- Do not kiss, hug, fondle, rub, or touch a child in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way (e.g. do not initiate physical contact, such as holding hands, unless initiated by the child)
- Do not suggest inappropriate behavior or relations of any kind or encourage any crushes by a child.
- Do not use inappropriately contact details (including social media accounts) from children out of
- Report any suspicious observations or alleged abuse as well as any circumstances or situations, which may be subject to misinterpretation

All Staff should be made aware of the code of conduct and trained in child protection policy. This should be repeated in the planning of each event.

### **What is child protection?**

**Child protection is the response to the different ways in which a young person's or child's physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual health are damaged by the actions of another person.**

### **What you should do**

1. Listen to the child/young person
2. Look at them directly and do not promise to keep any secrets before you know what they are, but always let the child/young person know if, and why, you are going to tell anyone
3. Look at them directly and do not promise to keep any secrets before you know what they are, but always let the child/young person know if, and why, you are going to tell anyone
4. Take whatever is said to you seriously and help the child/young person to trust his/her own feelings. Take notes of exactly what is said to you avoiding assumptions and conjecture.
5. It is not the role of the worker to investigate any allegations (this would contaminate evidence if a situation went to court). Any disclosure by a child/young person must be reported to the named child protection officer.
6. Speak immediately to the supervisor or Local Authority for further advice and guidance.

### **What you should *not* do**

1. Project workers/volunteers should not begin investigating the matter themselves.
2. Do not discuss the matter with anyone except the correct people in authority.
3. Do not form your own opinions and decide to do nothing.

### **Things to say or do:**

- 'What you are telling me is very important'
- This is not your fault'
- 'I am sorry that this has happened/is happening'
- 'You were right to tell someone'
- What you are telling me should not be happening to you and I will find out the best way to help you'
- Make notes soon after the event. Try to write down exactly what the young person or child said. Avoid assumptions or conjecture.

**Things *not* to say or do:**

- Do not ask leading questions – Why? How? What?
- Do not say ‘Are you sure?’
- Do not show your own emotions e.g. shock/disbelief
- Do not make false promises

We are committed to training of all staff working with children

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

**This policy is confirmed and signed by the representative of the Arks Foundation and all staff are made aware of its components and details.**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel Lu-Deer". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a light grey horizontal line.

**Chairperson, Arks Foundation**

**10/1/2023**