

The Hong Kong Girl Guides Association Child Protection Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 As a local youth uniformed group for female, the Hong Kong Girl Guides Association (hereafter referred to as the Association) is committed to ensuring the fulfilment of children's rights, including their rights to protection, as articulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- 1.2 The Association is committed to obligatorily putting in place all reasonable safeguarding measures to ensure the safety and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults, including those with whom we work directly and those involved in our work.
- 1.3 The purpose of this policy and associated procedures is to provide clarity to all on how they should engage with children, young people and vulnerable adults when working for, on behalf of, or in partnership with the Association.
- 1.4 This policy is intended to help us have a common understanding of protection issues, develop good practice across the areas in which we operate and thereby increase accountability of our work.
- 1.5 This policy constitutes the Association's policy. It identifies our minimum standards and may exceed the requirements of local legislation.
- 1.6 Any breach of this policy will be treated as a disciplinary matter, which may result in immediate termination of employment contract or withdrawal of volunteer status by the Association, and reporting to the police, relevant regulatory authority or other body.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 **Safeguarding** is the an organisation's responsibility that its employees, volunteers, partners, vendors, operations and programmes do no harm to children, young people or vulnerable adults (together referred to as 'vulnerable people' under this policy); that they do not expose a vulnerable person to the risk of discrimination, neglect, harm and abuse; and that any concerns the Association has about the safety of vulnerable people within the communities in which they work, are dealt with and reported to the relevant organisations or government departments. Safeguarding is also the responsibility that an organisation has for protecting its employees and volunteers when they are vulnerable, for example, when ill or at risk of harm or abuse.
- 2.2 **Child protection** is a central part of safeguarding issues. It is the process of protecting individual children identified as either suffering or at risk of significant harm as a result of abuse or programme of work. Child protection also includes measures and structures designed to prevent and respond to abuse.
- 2.3 **Abuse** is any behaviour that violates an individual's human and civil rights. It can take

the form of physical, psychological, financial and sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the health, survival, development or dignity of a child, young person or vulnerable adult. Abuse can be a single act or repeated acts and can be unintentional or deliberate. It can also be an independent or collective action. Abuse often involves criminal acts.

- 2.4 **Discriminatory abuse** is abuse motivated by a vulnerable person's age, race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or other personal characteristic.
- 2.5 **Financial or material abuse** includes theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, welfare or benefits.
- 2.6 **Neglect** is the persistent failure to meet a vulnerable person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of his/her health or development. Examples include failure to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter, failure to protect them from physical or psychological harm or danger; failure to ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inappropriate care-givers); or failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, vulnerable people's basic emotional needs.
- 2.7 **Physical abuse** includes hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions.
- 2.8 **Psychological abuse** includes emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation, withdrawal from services or supportive networks. Examples include not giving a vulnerable person opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, making fun of what they say or the communication between them. It may feature age or inappropriate expectations being imposed on a vulnerable person, which may include interactions that are beyond a vulnerable person's developmental capability.
- 2.9 **Sexual abuse** involves forcing, enticing or coercing someone to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the vulnerable person is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving a vulnerable person in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging a child to behave in inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse can be carried out by adults or other children.
- 2.10 **Child** – The Association regards a child as anyone under the age of 18 years. It is widely

recognised that children are generally more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation due to factors such as age, gender, social and economic status, developmental stage, and dependence on others.

- 2.11 **Vulnerable person/people** - for the purposes of this policy, this is an umbrella term which covers children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- 2.12 **Vulnerable adult** - a person, 18 years and above, who by reason of disability, age, gender or illness, may be unable to take care of or to protect him or herself against abuse, harm or exploitation in their context.
- 2.13 **Youth or young people** - individuals aged 15 to 24 - the Association recognises that this group spans the categories of 'children' and 'adults' but regards young people as having particular safeguarding needs and requiring distinct consideration aside from younger children and older adults.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

- 3.1 The Association has zero tolerance against abuse and exploitation of vulnerable people. The Association also recognises that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and has an obligation to put in place reasonable measures to ensure, as far as possible, the safety and wellbeing of the vulnerable person with whom we work or serve.
- 3.2 The Association works to the following key principles to protect vulnerable people:
 - 3.2.1 Everyone has an equal right regardless of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or having a child, gender reassignment, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin. They are protected from abuse and exploitation regardless of property, disability, birth or other status.
 - 3.2.2 As a local youth uniformed group for female, we endorse the 'United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child' general principle, that all the rights guaranteed by it must be available to all children without discrimination; and article 19 which accords equal rights to protection for children from abuse. Culture must not be used as an excuse to abuse children, young people or vulnerable adults.
 - 3.2.3 The best interests of the vulnerable person are paramount and shall be the primary consideration in our decision-making.
 - 3.2.4 The Association will take responsibility to meet our obligations regarding our duty of care towards vulnerable people, and take action where we believe that a child, young person or vulnerable adult is at risk or is actually harmed.
 - 3.2.5 The Association will ensure that employees and volunteers are introduced to our 'Child Protection Code of Conduct' (Appendix 1) and trained in our procedures as a key part of the recruitment and induction process.
 - 3.2.6 The Association will ensure that all partners are informed of and in compliance

with our protection policies and procedures. When working with employees, volunteers, partners or contractors, the Association will carry out due diligence checks to ensure that their protection procedures are consistent and in line with the principles and approaches set out in this policy.

- 3.2.7 Where the Association recognises that an element of risk exists, and while we may never be able to totally remove this, we need to do all we can to reduce it or limit its impact.
- 3.2.8 The Association respects confidentiality and has a responsibility to protect sensitive personal data. Information should only be shared and handled on a need-to-know basis, that is, access to the information must be necessary for the conduct of one's official duties. Only individuals who have legitimate reasons to access the information are allowed to receive it. Details can be found in the Association's Personal Data Privacy Policy.
- 3.2.9 The Association seeks always to work in ways which are culturally sensitive and that respect the diverse nature of our Movement and the communities in which we work. We recognise that there are many different ways of thinking and taking care of vulnerable people to make sure they are protected. It is acknowledged that protecting these groups of individuals and being culturally sensitive can be a difficult balancing act.
- 3.2.10 The Association commits to monitoring the implementation of the protection policy. This policy will be reviewed every three years if necessary. The Educational Programme Team will submit updates on safeguarding issues to the Management Committee.

4. SCOPE

- 4.1 The responsibilities set out in this policy are obligatory for all employees, volunteers, partners, contractors or any others engaged on the Association's business. For clarity, this policy is applicable to all employees and volunteers of the Association.
- 4.2 This policy demonstrates how the Association will meet its legal obligations and reassure employees, volunteers, partners and members of the public:
 - 4.2.1 That the Association is able to put in place the expected measures to safeguard and protect vulnerable people.
 - 4.2.2 That they are able to safely voice any concerns through an established procedure.
 - 4.2.3 That all incidents of abuse or potential abuse are dealt with in a solemn and serious manner.
 - 4.2.4 That there is an efficient recording and monitoring system in place.
 - 4.2.5 That employees, volunteers, partners and contractors receive appropriate induction on the organisation's protection policy.
 - 4.2.6 That a robust safe recruitment procedure is in place.
- 4.3 The Association will also put in place additional procedures that apply to those that work

or have contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1 All employees, volunteers, partners, contractors and visitors are obliged to follow this policy and maintain an environment that prevents exploitation or abuse and which encourages reporting of breaches of this policy using the appropriate procedures.
- 5.2 Managers at all levels are responsible for ensuring employees, volunteers, partners, contractors and visitors are aware of the policy, supporting the implementation of the policy at work, as well as creating and encouraging a management culture of child safeguarding. They must ensure that they are responsive, acting immediately if they become aware of any safeguarding problems, and supportive towards employees or volunteers who complain about breaches in this policy.
- 5.3 The Association's designated child protection committee is responsible for handling reports or concerns, about the protection of vulnerable people, in accordance with the procedures that underpin this policy.
- 5.4 The Association's designated child protection committee members include:
 - 5.4.1 Chief Commissioner
 - 5.4.2 Deputy Chief Commissioner (Region Development)
 - 5.4.3 Deputy Chief Commissioner (Educational Programme)
 - 5.4.4 Chief Executive
 - 5.4.5 Deputy Chief Executive (Child protection officer) (Tel: 235968 19 /Email:cpo@hkgga.org.hk)
 - 5.4.6 Relevant department heads
- 5.5 The Child Protection Officer is responsible for:
 - 5.5.1 monitoring and recording safeguarding concerns
 - 5.5.2 ensuring referrals of the problem to the relevant regulatory person without delay
 - 5.5.3 providing the latest training in the protection policy for all employees
 - 5.5.4 ensuring this policy is reviewed every three years or earlier if necessary
 - 5.5.5 ensuring the policy is implemented throughout the organisation and providing relevant training
 - 5.5.6 ensuring monitoring and recording procedures are implemented
- 5.6 Deputy Chief Commissioners and Assistant Chief Commissioners (hereafter referred to as the Commissioners' Team of the Association) are responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of this policy and associated procedures and ensuring that everyone linked with the Association is equipped and supported to meet their responsibilities.
- 5.7 The child protection committee holds ultimate accountability for this policy. Committee members and the Commissioners' Team jointly provide oversight and support on the protection policy.

6. PROCEDURE OVERVIEW

Recruitment and Selection

- 6.1 Safe recruitment and vetting processes are followed for all employees, volunteers, contractors and any individual who represents the Association (see the 'employee and volunteer recruitment policy').
- 6.2 Where an employee or other representative of the Association (including tutors and contractors) is engaged in 'regulated activity' (direct work with vulnerable people), a Sexual Conviction Record Check will be undertaken as part of the recruitment process. For details of 'regulated activity', please contact the Human Resources and Membership Development Team.
- 6.3 All employees, volunteers and other representatives of the Association must read, sign and abide by this policy and the code of conduct (see appendix 1).

Training and Support

- 6.4 The Association will provide advice, support and training on the protection policy to all employees, volunteers and others on:
 - 6.4.1 What they should do in the event of a disclosure
 - 6.4.2 What to do if they have concerns about the welfare of a child
 - 6.4.3 How to recognise signs of abuse
 - 6.4.4 What to do if they have concerns about a volunteer, employee or partner of the Association
 - 6.4.5 How to go for advice and support within the Association
- 6.5 The Association will ensure that clear processes for reporting and dealing with safeguarding problems are widely communicated, regularly reviewed and consistently applied. Where allegations are made about an employee, careful consideration must take place about the appropriateness of the person continuing to work with the Association. (For more detailed guidance, refer to the Association's code of conduct policy.)

Data Privacy

- 6.6 The Association will ensure that personal information is kept confidential unless we have the agreement of the individual and/or their parent/guardian, and where it is necessary, pass the information to a specialised child welfare or law enforcement agency to prevent relevant incidents from happening. For further information, please see the Association's Personal Data Privacy Policy.

Media

- 6.7 The use of actual names and images, including photographs and recordings. This should be applied in all situations. Specifically relating to protection of children, young people

and vulnerable adults, the Association will:

- 6.7.1 Use names and images of children, young people or vulnerable adults which are respectful and not expose them to further vulnerability (not degrading or showing sexual images of children naked or partially clothed).
- 6.7.2 Use images and display names of children only where we have the written permission of their parents/guardians. It is also possible for a child/parent to withdraw their consent at any time.
- 6.7.3 Use images and display names of young people and vulnerable adults in the most appropriate way only where we have their written permission or that of their parents/guardians.
- 6.7.4 Make clear to vulnerable people and their families that agreement to providing information or images is not a condition of involvement in the Association's activities and programmes and that they can withdraw their consent at any time.
- 6.7.5 Inform employees, volunteers and partners about the Association's policy in relation to the use of technology (email and IT), and understand that they must not use this technology for the purpose of accessing, producing or distributing any information, violent or sexual images that are harmful to vulnerable people. This includes child and adult pornography.
- 6.7.6 In line with the Association's external communications policy, any employee or volunteer using images and names they have taken for the Association (e.g. to produce a report or poster) must share a copy of the consent form with the Public Relations Team and provide a copy of the photograph to be stored in the Association's photo library in line with the Association's Personal Data Privacy Policy.

7. RAISING AND RESPONDING TO CONCERNS

- 7.1 The Association places a mandatory obligation on all employees, volunteers, contractors and partners to report concerns, suspicions, allegations and incidents which indicate actual or potential abuse or exploitation of vulnerable people or which suggests this policy may have in any other way been breached. It is not the responsibility of the employees to decide whether or not abuse has taken place, however, concerns should be raised with an individual's immediate supervisor, department head or a designated protection officer who will initiate the procedure for dealing with suspected or actual incidents of abuse. (For details, refer to the 'guide for managing safeguarding concerns'.)
- 7.2 Designated protection officers are responsible for ensuring that the reporting procedure is followed so that suspected or actual cases of abuse are responded to appropriately and effectively, and referred to the relevant statutory authority.
- 7.3 The Association will ensure that all such situations are handled appropriately and effectively:
 - 7.3.1 Reports must be made, and decisions and actions taken (for details, refer to the

‘guide for managing safeguarding concerns’).

- 7.3.2 The Association is not an investigative authority. It is essential that the Association makes referrals to the relevant law enforcement agency to ensure that appropriate protection and support is given to the vulnerable person, and that any evidence is collected in accordance with the law.
 - 7.3.3 All sensitive and personal data must be kept confidential (including the names of anyone who makes a report of abuse), and be shared on a strictly ‘need to know’ basis, that is, access must be necessary for the conduct of one’s official duties. How data are handled is set out in the Association’s privacy policy.
 - 7.3.4 Where a Management Committee member is the subject of an investigation, the lead designated protection officer will lead the case.
 - 7.3.5 Where an employee is the subject of the investigation, the case will be handled as set out in the disciplinary policy.
- 7.4 Where an individual is concerned that a protection problem has not been handled appropriately, they should follow the Association’s whistleblowing policy.

APPENDIX 1 – THE HONG KONG GIRL GUIDES ASSOCIATION CHILD PROTECTION CODE OF CONDUCT

All employees, volunteers, contractors and other representatives of the Association have an individual duty and responsibility to comply with the policy and to abide by the code of conduct.

1. Representatives of the Association must never:

- 1.1 Physically assault or abuse vulnerable people.
- 1.2 Develop physical or sexual relationships with vulnerable people.
- 1.3 Develop relationships with vulnerable people that could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive.
- 1.4 Act in ways that may be abusive or may place a vulnerable person at risk of abuse.
- 1.5 Use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive to vulnerable people.
- 1.6 Behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative to vulnerable people.
- 1.7 Have a vulnerable person/people with whom they are working, regardless of gender, to stay alone overnight at their home unsupervised.
- 1.8 Have a vulnerable person/people with whom they are working to sleep alone in the same room or bed.
- 1.9 Do things for vulnerable people of a personal nature that they can do for themselves.
- 1.10 Condone or participate in behaviours with vulnerable people that are illegal, unsafe or abusive.
- 1.11 Shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade vulnerable people in any form of emotional abuse.
- 1.12 Discriminate against, target, exclude or favour particular vulnerable people and show different treatment.

This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list. The principle is that representatives of the Association should avoid behaviour which may constitute poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour.

2. When representatives of the Association are in contact with vulnerable people:

- 2.1 Be aware of situations which may present risks and manage these.
- 2.2 Plan and organise the work and the workplace so as to minimise the risk of vulnerable people being harmed.
- 2.3 Be visible in working with vulnerable people.
- 2.4 Ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any problems or concerns to be raised and discussed.
- 2.5 Ensure that a sense of accountability exists between representatives of the Association so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged.
- 2.6 Talk to children about their contact with representatives of the Association and

encourage them to raise their concerns.

- 2.7 Empower vulnerable people - discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem.
- 2.8 Report to a designated protection officer any concerns, suspicions, allegations and incidents which indicate actual or potential abuse or exploitation of vulnerable people or which suggests this policy may have in any other way been breached.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the Hong Kong Girl Guides Association Child Protection Policy (launched on 1 September 2021). I am prepared to abide by the behaviours set out in the Association's protection code of conduct above.

A scanned copy of this signed form will be saved by the Association.

Signature: _____ Name: _____
Job/Volunteer/Role Title: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Witness: _____ Name of Witness: _____
Job/Volunteer/Role Title: _____ Date: _____

Please send the HKGGA Child Protection Policy to region.admin@hkgga.org.hk or fax 2568 8036 .