



Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy

1. Purpose

SocialFokus is dedicated to ensuring the safety, dignity, rights, and well-being of children. This Policy outlines how we prevent harm, respond to concerns, and embed a child-safe culture throughout our work.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to **all** employees, trustees, board members, subcontractors, consultants, interns, volunteers, students, partners of SocialFokus, and anyone working on behalf of **SocialFokus**. It applies across all settings where our work involves children or contact with children.

3. Definitions & Risk Behaviours

- **Child:** person under 18 years.
- **Safeguarding / Child Protection:** prevention, detection and response to harm or risk of harm relating to children.
- **Risk and abuse types** include:
 - Physical abuse
 - Emotional / psychological abuse
 - Neglect
 - Sexual abuse / exploitation
 - Bullying (including cyberbullying)
 - Grooming
 - Inappropriate behaviour / boundary violations by adults
 - Harassment, discrimination, forced marriage (if applicable)
 - **Unacceptable behaviour:** any action or omission that puts children at risk or breaches professional boundaries (e.g. sexualized language, inappropriate touching, giving personal contact outside programme, etc.)

4. Guiding Principles

- **Best interests of the child** will be paramount.
- **Zero tolerance:** no form of abuse will be tolerated.
- **Accountability and transparency:** roles and responsibilities are defined.
- **Confidentiality:** as far as compatible with duty to report to appropriate authorities.
- **Non-retaliation:** no adverse action will occur against those who report concerns in good faith.
- **Participation / empowerment:** children's voices and perspectives will be respected in decisions affecting them, in a safe manner.

5. Safe Recruitment, Vetting & Onboarding

5.1 Role design and advertisement

- Job descriptions and volunteer roles must explicitly state child safeguarding expectations.

5.2 Screening & checks

- Verification of identity (ID documents).
- Criminal / police record checks (or equivalent).
- Reference checks (including specific child safeguarding questions).
- Interviews include probing on safeguarding attitudes and scenario questions.

5.3 Probation / conditional employment

- New staff/volunteers may undergo a probation/trial period with additional oversight.

5.4 Contracts / agreements

- Contract or agreement must include a clause binding on child protection responsibilities, code of conduct, reporting obligations.

5.5 Induction & orientation

- Safeguarding module mandatory in induction.
- All new staff must read and sign this Policy, code of conduct, and reporting protocol.

6. Code of Conduct / Behavioural Expectations

- Set of clear “must / must not” rules:
 - Always maintain appropriate physical boundaries.
 - No taking children alone in closed spaces or private transport without permission.
 - No use of inappropriate language, sexualized talk.
 - No accepting or giving gifts of a personal nature without oversight.
 - Use of digital communication must be transparent, with parental consent where applicable.
 - Staff shall always act as role models, with integrity and respect.

7. Training & Capacity Building

- Initial training on safeguarding for all staff/volunteers before commencing work with children.
- Regular refresher training (at least annually).
- Ad hoc briefings whenever policy or legal changes occur.
- Additional training tailored to high-risk roles (e.g. field workers, facilitators).
- Opportunities for learning, scenario discussion, peer review.

8. Designated Child Protection Officer (CPO)

- SocialFokus appoints one CPO.
- The CPO is responsible for:
 - Receiving disclosures or reports.
 - Assessing the information and deciding next steps.
 - Activating the internal process (investigation, support, documentation).
 - Liaising with external child protection/health/justice services, as required.
 - Keeping accurate, secure records.
 - Providing guidance, updates, and oversight on safeguarding across SocialFokus.
- The contact details of the CPO(s) shall be widely known (staff, children, families, partners).

9. Reporting, Investigation & Referral

9.1 Reporting

- Any staff or volunteer who becomes aware or suspects any form of harm to a child must immediately report it to the CPO.
- Oral disclosure should be documented in writing (date, time, persons involved, what was said, any actions).
- Anonymous reports will also be accepted.

9.2 Assessment & Triage

- CPO conducts initial screening to determine severity, risk, and whether external referral is required.
- If emergency (child at imminent risk), immediate referral to emergency services / police is mandatory.

9.3 Internal investigation & action

- A documented procedure for investigation must be followed:
 - interviews (child, witnesses, alleged perpetrator)
 - support & protection measures
 - disciplinary action, suspension if needed
 - follow-up, corrective measures, learning lessons

9.4 External referral / cooperation

- Where required by law, cases must be reported to relevant child protection authorities or law enforcement.
- The CPO will cooperate with official investigations, while documenting internally.

9.5 Support & Safeguarding Aftercare

- SocialFokus must provide support (psychosocial, counselling, safeguarding) to the child, family, staff involved.
- The welfare of the person who made the report is also supported.

10. Confidentiality & Data Management

- All reports, records and internal communications are confidential, with restricted access.
- Data retention period defined (e.g. 7 years) in line with legal requirements.
- Storage: secure, encrypted where digital, locked cabinets if paper.

- Only those “needing to know” have access; sharing beyond must follow the official reporting procedure.

11. Monitoring, Audit & Review

- Regular monitoring of safeguarding compliance (e.g. audits, spot checks).
- Annual report to senior management / board on safeguarding incidents, trends, lessons learned.
- Formal policy review at least every two years, or in response to:
 - changes in law/regulation
 - new safeguarding risks
 - incidents or near misses
 - changes in SocialFokusal structure or context
- Children (where appropriate) and staff shall be consulted in policy review.

12. Communication & Public Availability

- This Policy will be published on the SocialFokus’s website and shared with all stakeholders (staff, volunteers, partners, parents, children).
- A child-friendly version / summary will also be developed and made available.
- All staff / volunteers / contractors must acknowledge receipt and understanding (via signing).