

## Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

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### 1. Introduction

The work of Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights) is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Protecting children and young people is crucial to ensuring that they have the rights, information and space in which they can express their views and communicate effectively with other children, young people and adults. Human rights can only be respected, protected and fulfilled if children and young people are safeguarded from abuse, discrimination and harm of any kind, be it physical, sexual, emotional or neglect.

*"States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child."*

*Article 19, UNCRC*

Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights), at all times in our dealings with children and young people, seeks to promote their wellbeing and to protect them from harm in so far as we are able to do so. Children and young people have the right to protection from harm. Together undertakes to always pass on information which indicates that a child or young person may be at risk of significant harm. This policy offers Together's understanding of what our safeguarding responsibilities are, and what the agency will do if abuse or risk of harm is suspected.

### 2. Scope

The scope of Together's Child Protection and Safeguarding policy applies to:

- All staff; Trustee Board members; interns and volunteers.
- All those acting on behalf of Together, such as members, consultants or trainers.
- All those adults accompanying children and young people to events and activities organised by Together.
- All those who participate in Together events and meetings involving children and young people, including journalists, funders, policy makers, etc.

All those cited above who are likely to come into contact with children and young people, through their

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association with Together, will be expected to read Together's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. They will be asked to record that they agree to adhere to its principles and procedures. Throughout this Policy, all those within the scope of section 2 will be referred to as a 'Together representative'.

### 3. Definition of Abuse and Neglect

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child or young person by inflicting, or by failing to act to prevent, significant harm to them. Children and young people may be abused in a family or in an institutional or organisational setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. Abuse occurs in all sectors of society, regardless of age, religion, social class and sex. The following definitions show some of the ways in which abuse may be experienced by children and young people but are not exhaustive, as the individual circumstances of abuse will vary.

- **Physical abuse**

Physical abuse is the causing of physical harm to a child or young person. Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to someone they are looking after.

- **Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse is persistent emotional neglect or ill treatment that has severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve the imposition of age - or developmentally - inappropriate expectations on a child or young person. It may involve causing children and young people to feel frightened or in danger or exploiting or corrupting them. Some level of emotional abuse is present in all types of ill treatment of a child or young person: it can also occur independently of other forms of abuse.

- **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse is any act that involves the child or young person in any activity for the sexual gratification of another person, whether or not it is claimed that the child or young person either consented or assented. This other person may be an adult or another child who by age or development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.<sup>1</sup> Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children or young people in looking at, or in the production of indecent images or in watching sexual activities, using sexual language, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

- **Sexual and other exploitation**

**Sexual exploitation** involves sexual abuse by an adult and remuneration in cash or kind to the child, young person or a third person or persons, for the sexual gratification of another person. The child or young person is treated as sexual object. **Criminal and commercial exploitation** means exploiting a child or young person to work, participate in activities, or being forced to participate in illegal activities (such as forced begging, shoplifting and pickpocketing, cannabis cultivation, drug dealing, for the benefit of others and to the detriment of the child's or young person's physical or mental

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization. (1999). *Report of the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention*. Geneva, 29–31 March. Document WHO/HSC/PVI/99.1

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health, education, moral or social-emotional development. It includes, but is not limited to, child labour and trafficking.

- **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's or young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of their health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or failure to respond to, a child's or young person's basic emotional needs. Neglect, in its extreme form may result in children being at serious risk from the effects of malnutrition, lack of nurturing and stimulation. This can lead to serious long-term effects such as greater susceptibility to serious childhood illnesses and reduction in potential stature. With young children in particular, the consequences may be life-threatening within a relatively short period of time.

#### 4. Signs of abuse or neglect

If a child is subject to any of these forms of abuse or neglect their behaviour may change – for example they may be withdrawn or depressed; they may be fearful or destructive, or may have sexual knowledge or display behaviour which is not appropriate for the child's age and maturity. Whilst Together staff (paid and unpaid) should be aware of any behaviour which makes them feel uneasy, there can also be other explanations for such behaviour. Children and young people may also disclose information which suggests harm, actual or potential, in relation to either themselves or another child or young person. Keeping this in mind, all Together representatives should share concerns as follows:

#### 5. Child Protection Procedure

- **If a Together representative suspects abuse or neglect, actual or potential**, they must not act on this in any way other than to immediately inform the Together Director. The Director will report to a nominated Board Member, and they will agree what action is required.
- **If immediate action is necessary** because concerns are so serious and if the Director is not available, the Together representative should contact a nominated Board Member, whom failing call Police or Emergency Social Work services. They should share their concerns along with the name of the child if known, where the name is not known a description of the child should be given.
- **Under no circumstances** should the Together representative question a child or young person, beyond establishing the basic facts (name, address and concern). Nor should they discuss their concerns with a parent or accompanying adult. It is not the function of a Together representative who has received information and/or who has concerns about a child, or young person to investigate or make a decision about the information.
- **The Together representative should make a written note** of their concern including what the child or young person has said, and to whom (and when) these concerns have been reported. They should then give this to the nominated Board Member who will keep these notes in an agreed and shared secure place, in line with Together's Data Protection Policy.

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- **If a child discloses abuse verbally**, the Together representative must listen, not ask questions, not prompt the child or young person to go on and must not put words in a child's or young person's mouth. What the child or young person has said must be reported following the procedures as outlined above.
- The Together representative should also explain to the child or young person that they cannot keep quiet but must share their concerns and explain why and who with – to help keep them safe from harm.
- **Under no circumstances should such information or observations be ignored.** On receipt of concerning information, the Together representative should:
  - **receive** the information, listening actively and taking their concerns seriously
  - **re-assure** the child or young person
  - **record** the information
  - **report** their concerns as above.

## 6. Safeguarding

- **All staff of Together, all Board members and those working and volunteering with us (as identified in section 2) must be made aware of this policy as part of their induction.** *All Together staff should participate in a Child Protection and Safeguarding training session before or soon after working with the organisation. They should also read and confirm they understand the policy and procedure, having had an opportunity to discuss its contents.*
- Before undertaking any work, all staff will have undergone appropriate Disclosure and Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) checks, including for suitability.
- Together is committed to designing and delivering programmes that are safe for children. Risk assessments for events organized by Together are therefore conducted accordingly.
- If any member of staff, trustee, intern or volunteer who works with Together has any concerns about a child or young person who may be at risk of abuse or neglect the person must immediately share the concern with the Director of Together, or in their absence the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

## 7. Review

The Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be reviewed and approved by the Together Board of Trustees on an annual basis, or more frequently if required.