|  |
| --- |
| Child Protection Policy and Procedure |
|  |
| Date reviewedNext review | Sept 2024Sept 2026 |

**1.Scope**

This policy document identifies the key aspects of Volunteer Action’s policy to ensure at all times the maximum protection from any kind of harm for all children involved in any way with Volunteer Action. For the purposes of this policy a child is defined as any young person under the age of 18. There is a separate policy covering safeguarding vulnerable adults.

**2.Responsibility**

The Trustee Board has responsibility for ensuring this policy is put into practice and to ensure staff and volunteers working within Volunteer Action understand their role and responsibilities in safeguarding children. All staff and volunteers are expected to follow this policy.

The key objectives of this policy are for all employees and volunteers of Volunteer Action to:

* have an overview of child safeguarding
* be clear about their responsibility to safeguard children
* ensure the necessary actions are taken where a child is deemed to be at risk.

**3.Policy Statement**

Volunteer Action is firmly committed to the belief that all children have a fundamental right to be protected from harm, and fully recognises its responsibility for child protection.

Volunteer Action will drive unaccompanied children ONLY as part of their contract with Oundle School. All drivers who volunteer for these drives will undertake additional training supplied by Oundle School and commit to following their safeguarding policies and procedures.

<https://handbook.oundleschool.org.uk/downloadPublicPolicyDocument/117>

Volunteer Action will undertake other drives involving children only if there is an accompanying parent or guardian.

Volunteer Action believes

* That the safety and welfare of children should always be of paramount importance whatever the circumstances.
* That everyone with a role in working with children has a duty to safeguard and promote a child’s welfare particularly when it comes to protecting children from abuse
* That special care is needed in dealing with children whose age, inexperience or physical state makes them particularly vulnerable to abuse.

**4.Child Protection Code of Good Practice**

This Code has been developed to provide advice that not only will help to protect children, but will also help identify any practices which could be mistakenly interpreted and perhaps lead to false allegations of abuse. It is important that at all times firm appropriate boundaries must be adhered to. Politeness and helpfulness in your volunteer capacity is a good thing, over familiarity is not.

Good practice will also protect Volunteer Action by reducing the possibility of anyone using their role to gain access to children, in order to abuse.

If in doubt, consider how an action or activity may be perceived as opposed to how it is intended.

Wherever possible, you should be guided by the following advice:-

* don’t engage in or allow any sexually provocative games involving or observed by children, whether based on talking or touching
* never make suggestive remarks or discriminatory comments
* don’t engage in or tolerate any bullying
* don’t engage in or tolerate inappropriate physical activity
* never trivialise abuse
* never let allegations by a child go unreported, including any made against you

**5.Safeguarding Procedures**

1. **Roles and Responsibilities**
* All those working at Volunteer Action will accept responsibility for the welfare of the children who come into contact with the organisation.
* The Chief Executive & Charity Manager will be the nominated Child Protection representative who is responsible for child protection and the implementation of this policy. If the concern is about the manager, the Designated Safeguarding Trustee will be the nominated representative.
* All those working at Volunteer Action will be made aware of the named representatives and how best to contact them.
* All those working on behalf of Volunteer Action have a duty to ensure that any suspected incident, allegation or other manifestation relating to child protection is reported to the Charity Manager/ Trustee Safeguarding lead.
* If Volunteer Action, during the course of its normal activities, takes photographs of children participating in activities and events, at all times it will obtain written permission from parents / guardians before any photographic material is used in the public domain.
1. **Recruitment and training**
* All staff and volunteers will be required to provide references.
* All volunteer drivers will have an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check.
* All staff and volunteer drivers who drive for the Oundle School Community Action programme will be given a copy of the Child Protection Policy when they join and an overview of the policy will be included in their compulsory initial training. The policy will also be available on Volunteer Action’s website.
* All volunteers who drive for the Oundle School Community Action programme must be aware of and adhere to the Oundle School Child Safeguarding policy

<https://handbook.oundleschool.org.uk/downloadPublicPolicyDocument/117>

* All volunteers who drive for the Oundle School Community Action Programme must complete the online Child Protection training required by Oundle School and notify Volunteer Action when they have completed it.
1. **Reporting Procedures**

Take emergency action if a child is at immediate risk of harm/in need of urgent medical attention. Dial 999 for emergency services.

All volunteers who drive for the Oundle School Community Action Programme MUST follow the reporting procedures for Oundle School as described in their Safeguarding policy in the first instance and also inform VA Charity Manager ( see below).

* Any suspicion or allegation for all other children must be reported as soon as possible on the day of the occurrence to **Rachel Dixon (Chief Executive & Charity Manager). Office hours 01832 275433, out-of-hours 07835 958683*.*** If the allegation is against the safeguarding lead, seek advice from Sandra Church Safeguarding Lead for the trustees. Disclosure or evidence for concern may occur in a number of ways including a comment made by a child, physical evidence such as bruising, a change in behaviour or inappropriate behaviour or knowledge.
* Seek consent from the child concerned. If they are deemed not to have capacity to consent, log the decision to act without it.
* Collect all available relevant facts and appropriate information
* Make a written record of the concern
* Tell the child involved what is being done and note their views regarding how they wish the matter to be dealt with
* Tell only the people who need to know
* Consider the balance between listening to someone’s wishes and needing to let relevant authorities know in order to make the child safe and protect others who may be at risk
* Inform the person involved about the outcome of any process
* It is the responsibility of the Chief Executive & Charity Manager to liaise with other relevant agencies where necessary and seek clarification from Social Services if there is any concern about the validity of any concern
* All stages of the reporting procedure must be documented, marked CONFIDENTIAL and stored securely.
* If a child discloses abuse to you, it is important to react appropriately.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| DO:Remain calm and receptiveListen without interruptingOnly ask questions of clarification if you are unclear what the child is sayingMake it clear you take them seriouslyAcknowledge their courage in telling youTell them they are not responsible for the abuseCheck what they have said to you with them to ensure your understanding is rightLet them know you will do what you can to help them and, where possible, get their consent to inform the Charity Manager and Social services if appropriate.Be aware of your own safetyMake a written record of who, what, where, when and how | DO NOT:Ignore the allegationAllow your shock or distaste to showProbe for more information/ask other questionsMake assumptions/judgements or speculateDefame anyone Make negative comments about the alleged abuser or anyoneMake promises you cannot keepAgree to keep the information secretMake contact with the alleged abuserInvestigate further |

It is essential that everything possible is done to protect children who place their trust in us. If a child tells you that they are being, or have been, abused you must:

* make an immediate record of what the child has said, using their own words
* follow the instructions for reporting to the Chief Executive & Charity Manager/ Trustee Safeguarding Lead, as set out in this procedure
* never give an absolute guarantee of confidentiality BUT
* tell them that you **will have** to inform those who need to know ie the Chief Executive & Charity Manager / Trustee Safeguarding Lead and if appropriate, the Northamptonshire Social Care team.