

# **CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

**Family Wellbeing Centre**

## 1. INTRODUCTION OF CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Child Safeguarding Policy sets out our common belief and principles and describes the steps that will be taken by Family Wellbeing Centre to protect children involved in our activities. Family Wellbeing Centre doesn't allow anyone to engage in any form of child abuse, maltreatment or poor safeguarding practice. A child is anyone under the age of 18, and all children have an equal right to protection regardless of any personal characteristic, including their age, gender, ability, culture, racial origin, religious belief and sexual identity.

Family Wellbeing Centre recognizes the International Standards for Child Protection which provides benchmark for organizations and consultancy agencies working with children. We focus on child rights, child participation, and the best interest of the child. The aim of this policy is to ensure an open and aware environment where concerns for the safety and wellbeing of a child can be raised and managed in a fair and just manner, prioritizing the best interests of the child.

To contact the Child Safeguarding Officer, email - [childsafeguarding@fwcsrilanka.org](mailto:childsafeguarding@fwcsrilanka.org)  
The name of the Child Safeguarding Officer is listed on our website: [www.fwcsrilanka.org](http://www.fwcsrilanka.org)

**Abuse can be perpetrated on a child of any age, and can happen to and between children. Perpetrators can be men and women, boys and girls.**

## 2. OUR BELIEF AND PRINCIPLE

Family Wellbeing Centre believes that every child has a right to live free from abuse and exploitation. We uphold the rights of children as defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1 and believe that all children have a right to protection:

**“...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.”**

This policy applies to all Family Wellbeing Centre Employees and those associated with the delivery of FWC work both during and outside normal working hours; directors, officers, agency workers, seconded workers, volunteers, interns, agents, contractors, external consultants, third-party representatives, suppliers and business partners. Everybody has the responsibility to protect children from all forms of abuse, abandonment, neglect, exploitation, violence and discrimination.

### 3. CHILD SAFEGUARDING RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACCOUNTABILITIES

Creating a safe working environment at Family Wellbeing Centre is everyone's responsibility and failure to act on concerns or disclosures relating to child abuse and exploitation is not an option. Specific responsibilities for ensuring the localization, implementation, and monitoring of this policy are consistent with the safeguarding responsibilities.

### 4. APPROACH

Family Wellbeing Centre has adopted policies and procedures to ensure that all of its staff, representatives and members, are knowledgeable about child protection risks and aware of the specific measures that they must take in order to protect children in the work.

Family Wellbeing Centre works for implementing child protection policies which are appropriate to Sri Lanka context for operating the vulnerable groups of children.

**For the purposes of this Policy and FWC approach to Child Safeguarding, these definitions apply:**

- **Child:** Any person under the age of eighteen (18) years as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- **Child Rights:** Children have the "right to life, survival and development" where development encompasses physical, emotional, cognitive, social and cultural development.
- **Child Safeguarding:** The policies, procedures and practices employed to safeguard children who come into contact with Family Wellbeing Centre and all those associated with the delivery of our work from all forms of harm, abuse or exploitation and the responsibility of all personnel to embed these at the activity level to ensure Family Wellbeing Centre is a child safe organization.
- **Child Protection:** The prevention of and response to significant harm, abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children. Child Protection programming is an activity or initiative designed to protect children from all forms of violence. This includes the integration of child protection into all thematic areas of programming to enhance the protective environments for children in the community
- **Child Abuse:** Child abuse involves the abuse of children's rights and includes all forms of violence against children: physical, emotional and sexual abuse, neglect, family violence, sexual exploitation, abduction and trafficking, including for sexual purposes, involvement of a child in online child sexual exploitation and child labour as defined below.
- **Physical Abuse:** When a person purposefully injures, or threatens to injure, a child. Physically abusive behavior includes shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling and poisoning. It also includes cultural practices which can alter physicality in ways that cause distress, harm and/or cause lasting health ramifications such as Female Genital Mutilation.
- **Neglect:** The persistent failure, where there are means, or the deliberate denial to provide the child with clean water, food, shelter, sanitation or supervision or care to the extent that the child's health and development is placed at risk.
- **Emotional Abuse:** A persistent attack on a child's self-esteem. Examples include, but are not limited to – name-calling, threatening, ridiculing, shaming, intimidating or isolating the child.

- **Sexual Relationship:** Includes but is not limited to a staff member or related personnel having a physically intimate relationship, or an online sexually related relationship via social media, text or telephone with a child.
- **Child Sexual Abuse:** When a child is used by another child, adolescent or adult for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification. Sexual abuse involves contact and non-contact activities which encompasses all forms of sexual activity involving children, including exposing a child to online child sexual exploitation material, or taking sexually exploitative images of children.
- **Family violence:** Includes verbal, physical, sexual or emotional violence within the household or family, which the child witnesses, usually on a regular basis.
- **Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children:** Comprises sexual abuse by the adult and remuneration in cash or kind to the child or a third person or persons. The child is targeted as a sexual object and as a commercial object. The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children constitutes a form of coercion and violence against children and amounts to forced labour and a contemporary form of slavery.
- **Online Child Sexual Exploitation:** Includes all acts of a sexually exploitative nature carried out against a child that have, at some stage, connection to the online environment. It includes any use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) that results in sexual exploitation or causes a child to be sexually exploited or results in or causes images or other material documenting such sexual exploitation to be produced, bought, sold, possessed, distributed or transmitted
- **Child Marriage:** A formal marriage or informal union before age 18, is a reality for both boys and girls, although girls are disproportionately the most affected. Child marriage is widespread and can lead to a lifetime of disadvantage and deprivation.
- **Grooming:** Generally, refers to behavior that makes it easier for an offender to procure a child for sexual activity. For example, an offender may build a relationship of trust with the child, and then seek to sexualize that relationship (for example favoring a child, isolating a child, giving excessive attention or gifts, using sexualized language or physical contact, or exposing the child to sexual concepts through online sexual exploitation material).
- **Online-Facilitated Child Sexual Abuse:** The act of sending an electronic message to a recipient who the sender believes to be under 18 years of age, with the intention of procuring the recipient to engage in or submit to sexual activity with another person, including but not necessarily the sender; or of sending an electronic message with indecent content to a recipient who the sender believes to be under 18 years of age.
- **Child Labour:** Often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children and interferes with their schooling and recreation. In its most extreme forms, child labour involves children being enslaved, separated from their families and exposed to serious hazards and illnesses.
- **Child Trafficking:** Relates to any role in the recruitment, transportation or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation, by means of threat, force or other forms of coercion. This includes abuse of power.
- **Military use of Children:** Where children are engaged in or exposed to military activity, including as soldiers or human shield.

- **Contact with Children:** Working on an activity or in a position that involves or may involve direct (including online contact with children) or indirect contact (such as use of children's images) with children. This can be either under the position description or as a result of performing the position such as coming into contact with children when working in communities.
- **Working with Children:** Working with children means being engaged in an activity with a child where the contact would reasonably be expected as a normal part of the activity and the contact is not incidental to the activity. Working includes volunteering or other unpaid works.

## 5. PREVENTION

Ensuring, through awareness and good practice, that staff and those who work with Family Wellbeing Centre minimize the risks of any form of child abuse and exploitation, including but by no means limited to conducting relevant vetting and background checks of staff as part of their recruitment process.

### Risk Assessments

When activities which directly interact with children are carried out in Family Wellbeing Centre name or as part of our activities, a child safeguarding risk assessment to ensure that any risk of harm to children's welfare is minimized.

### Recruitment, employment and engagement of individuals working with and on behalf of Family Wellbeing Centre

- Recruitment adverts (for staff and consultants) make reference to Child Safeguarding Policy and screening process.
- All interviews contain a question specifically relating to child safeguarding issues and where relevant the candidate's previous history and suitability of working for a child rights organization.
- All appointments are subject to two satisfactory references from previous employers. Where a candidate has previously worked for a children's organization, a reference is specifically requested from this organization.
- All references are verified to check they are genuine and referees are explicitly requested to confirm they have had no child safeguarding concerns relating to the candidate in question.
- Any unexplained gaps in employment history are checked to eliminate the possibility of previous dismissal and/or periods in custody as a result of suspicious activity.
- Individuals working directly with member organizations and with access to children's data and /or visual images are required to provide a police clearance certificate (HR will confirm which staff require police clearance certificates).
- All staff and consultants are required to sign a self-disclosure form to declare that they have no criminal convictions relating to offences against children.
- All staff and consultants sign acknowledgement that they have read and will comply with the Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct when starting work for or with Family Wellbeing Centre.

## **Training and Awareness**

Ensuring that all staff, representatives and third parties connected to family wellbeing centre is aware of the high standards of behaviour and conduct expected of them to protect children from any form of abuse and exploitation in their private and working lives.

- All new staff are given an introduction to the child safeguarding policies and procedures as part of their orientation.
- Child safeguarding training, including awareness raising and reporting systems, is provided to relevant staff on a regular basis.

## **Visual images and written content**

Family Wellbeing Centre has a duty of care to the children who feature in all visual and written material and at all times must put their interests first. Any portrayal of children and their experiences must protect their identity, preserve their dignity and be accurate, balanced and fair. Any visual or written material will be gathered in accordance with the Visual Images Policy. A brief summary of the policy:

- Fully informed verbal consent (in their first language) must be obtained from parents/guardians or careers and the children before taking and using photographs, film footage, audio recordings or personal histories.
- The visual identity of any child will be obscured if dissemination of the image could make the child vulnerable to stigma, discrimination, abuse, violence or exploitation.
- Visual images or written material will not enable the specific location of a child to be identified - either from the imagery or accompanying captions/text.
- Portrayals of children should be accurate and balanced, with emphasis upon their dignity.
- All content and data (names, photos, and case studies) will be stored securely, and access will be restricted only to individuals who need it.

## **Ramifications of misconduct**

- Any child safeguarding concerns relating to inappropriate conduct of Family Wellbeing Centre staff and volunteers will be dealt with under the Family Wellbeing Centre Disciplinary Policy.
- Any child safeguarding concerns relating to inappropriate conduct of a Family Wellbeing Centre consultant will result in immediate suspension of the contract whilst an investigation into the claim is undertaken.
- Failure to act upon any child safeguarding concern (reported or suspected) in relation to a third party (for example interpreter, photographer etc) will also be deemed to be professional misconduct that constitutes a failure on the part of Family Wellbeing Centre to protect children from real, potential or suspected harm. Any individual who is found to be concealing information brought to their attention in relation to child safeguarding will be subject to disciplinary procedures.

## **6. REPORTING AND RESPONDING**

Ensuring that all staff and those who work with Family Wellbeing Centre is clear on what steps to take where suspicions or concerns arise regarding allegations of child abuse or exploitation.

Ensuring that immediate action is taken to identify and address reports of child abuse and exploitation, and to ensure the safety and well-being of the child/ren involved.

To help you identify incidents of child abuse, exploitation and poor safeguarding practice the following are examples of prohibited behaviour and practice, which are not tolerated by Family Wellbeing Centre:

- a) Physically, sexually, or emotionally harming or threatening to harm a child. This includes beating them or any other form of physical or humiliating discipline.
- b) Engaging in any form of sexual activity with anyone under the age of 18, regardless of age of consent or custom locally FWC External Facing Child Safeguarding Policy.
- c) Exchanging money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviours. This includes exchange for assistance that is due to beneficiaries and their families.
- d) Sending private messages to children you have met through Family Wellbeing Centre, for example private messaging on social media or by mobile phone.
- e) Engage anyone under the age of 18 in exploitative and harmful labour.
- f) Employees engaging in commercial exploitation of children, for example a hotel employee facilitating sexual abuse by hotel guests or indirectly.
- g) Causing the death of or seriously injuring a child due to reckless or careless driving.
- h) Failing to ensure the required health and safety at construction or other sites where services are being provided and work implemented on behalf of Family Wellbeing Centre.
- i) Failing to follow the law or required procedures and regulations which result in the death or harm of a child.

### **Reporting mechanism for concerns and referrals**

The designated Child Safeguarding Officer (CSO) is the first point of contact for reporting and referring concerns about child protection issues and also a resource for individuals to share concerns and discuss appropriate actions. The CSO reports to the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR of Family Wellbeing Centre who is responsible for the implementation of the policies and procedures.

## **Child Protection Referral Form**

- Individuals are informed of and have access to a designated CSO within the Secretariat. The CSO is available to discuss concerns and dilemmas related to child safeguarding and to receive any child safeguarding related referrals.
- Individuals have a responsibility to notify, without any delay, the CSO of any concerns that they may have about the safety and wellbeing of any child or the worrying behaviour of any adult, irrespective of how they know the adult.
- Individuals have a responsibility to notify the CSO of any concerns regarding the behaviour of other individuals.
- No retaliation or punitive action will be taken against anyone who, in good faith, raises a child safeguarding concern.
- All information in relation to child safeguarding concerns will be kept confidential. Any information shared will be done so on a 'need to know' basis and with the knowledge of those concerned.
- Any records related to child safeguarding referrals and concerns will be kept in a central location, with access to this strictly limited. If action is taken against a member of staff then a note of this will be made on their confidential HR file, and will be disclosed by the Executive Director if a reference is sought.
- Where judged necessary, in line with the reporting matrix, appropriate referrals will be made to the relevant member in the country where the concern has been raised. The concern will then be investigated in line with the member's child safeguarding policy and a referral made to the most relevant protection and investigating agency if appropriate. A report will be shared with the Secretariat within one month of the referral.
- Where judged necessary, in line with the reporting matrix, in countries where no member is present a referral will be made to the most relevant protection and investigating agency if appropriate. Permission will be sought from the source of the information before passing on their contact details. Details will not be passed on if it is detrimental to the interest of the child.
- Once a concern has been reported it will be the responsibility of the CSO and Executive director to determine an appropriate response.

## **7. DISCLOSURES FROM CHILDREN**

Family Wellbeing Centre will ensure that it will handle disclosures from children with sensitivity and will take alleged abuse seriously. If a child or young person informs you that they are being or have been abused, you are advised to:

- Listen to the information being shared, but don't press for further information
- Ask open questions, and only enough questions to give you an idea of the facts? E.g. "Can you tell me what happened?", "Is there anything else you want to tell me"
- Reassure the child or young person that they have done the right thing by telling you.
- Let them know that you will need to pass on the information to another person, what you will do next and that you will let them know what happens



- Do not conduct any investigations or question the alleged abuser
- Assess whether there is an immediate risk to the child or young person over the next day or two.
- Take steps to mitigate these risks, seek advice from the CSO
- Complete a Referral Form and pass this onto the CSO immediately.

## **8. MONITORING AND REVIEW**

Implementation of the policy will be monitored in accordance with the organization's monitoring and evaluation framework. Child safeguarding policies and procedures will be reviewed every 2 years.

## **9. CHILD SAFEGUARDING CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct serves to protect the reputation of Family Wellbeing Centre and the people who work. All individuals connected to Family Wellbeing Centre who is in contact with children:

- Discriminate, prejudice or display oppressive behaviour or language in relation to: race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexuality or political views;
- Spend time alone with children away from others;
- Develop physical/sexual/exploitative relationships with children under 18 years of age, regardless of local laws;
- Develop relationships with children under 18 years of age, which could in any way be deemed abusive or exploitative, regardless of local laws;
- Hold, kiss, hug or touch children in an inappropriate, sexually provocative or culturally insensitive manner;
- Do things of a personal nature which the child can do themselves such as toileting, bathing and dressing;
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive;
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade;
- Condone or participate in behaviour which is illegal, unsafe or abusive;
- Behave in a manner which is abusive, exploitative, inappropriate or sexually provocative;
- Seek to deliberately or intentionally support or develop any initiatives which contravene the rights of children as laid out in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child.

Non-compliance with this Code of Conduct will be taken seriously. In accordance with the Child Safeguarding Policy immediate reporting and investigation of all concerns and suspicions is mandatory and will include referral of cases to the police and/or social services if child rights laws have been violated.