

# Childrens LoveCastles Trust

Access To Quality Education for All

# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

---

## **INTRODUCTION:**

This document is the Child Protection Policy for Childrens LoveCastles Trust which will be followed by all members of the organisation and followed and promoted by those in the position of leadership within the organisation.

*The purpose of the Organisation is to use technology to create, enhance and monitor the delivery of education in an affordable, scalable and modular manner, particularly for the benefit of poor children.*

We know being young makes children vulnerable to abuse by adults. The purpose of this policy is to make sure that the actions of any adult in the context of the work carried out by the organisation are transparent and safeguard and promote the welfare of all young people.

If any parent or young person/child has any concerns about the conduct of any member of the organisation, this should be raised with the CEO of our Organisation.

### ***Principles upon which the Child Protection Policy is based.***

- The welfare of a child or young person will always be paramount.
- The rights, wishes and feelings of children, young people and their families will be respected and listened to.
- Those people in positions of responsibility within the organisation will work by the interests of children and young people and follow the policy outlined below.
- Those people in positions of responsibility within the organisation will ensure that the same opportunities are available to everyone and that all differences between individuals will be treated with respect.

## **1. Purpose of the policy**

Principles Championed by Childrens LoveCastles Trust's Child Safeguarding Policy

- All children have equal rights to protection from harm, abuse, and exploitation.
- To promulgate and reinforce the organizations commitment to safeguarding children
- To ensure that the safety, care, protection, and welfare of the child are imperative to practice and adopt in whatever we do.
- To provide a protection mechanism to all children covered through the development initiatives of CLT India
- To establish a standard code of conduct and standard procedures for all staff members and associates of organisation to ensure that no harm or abuse is caused to any child.
- To provide a mechanism to ensure all staff members of organisation and associates are informed, empowered and self-equipped to ensure the safety and protection of children
- If organizations work with partners they have a responsibility to help partners meet the minimum requirements on protection as outlined in this policy.

## **2. Definitions and Terms**

**Child Safeguarding:**

Child safeguarding is the responsibility that organizations have to make sure their staff, operations, and programs keep children safe, promote their well-being, and do no harm to children. That is, that they do not expose children to the risk of harm and abuse, and that any concerns the organization has about children's safety within the communities in which they work, are reported to the appropriate authorities.

**Child Protection:**

Child protection, an aspect of child safeguarding, is a framework of principles, standards and guidelines to create a safe and positive environment for children who are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm, which protects them from intentional and unintentional harm.

**Terminology:**

**Child** - anyone under the age of 18, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**Staff member** - A staff member of CLT India would include all employees on the pay-roll, part-time or contractual duty or deputation of CLT India whether within CLT office premises or on field duty/project visit or elsewhere..

**Associates** – Contractors, consultants, volunteers, interns, donors, Board members, journalists or researchers, guests/visitors to CCI Volunteer - a person who is not paid by the organization  
This would include all consultants working with CLT India, all volunteers, interns, tele-callers, agency staff, contractors, vendors, and donors visiting CLT offices or work areas. This would also include all staff of CLT project partners and all volunteers and interns who would work with children and /or have access to and are party to CLT India's program and child data.

**Child abuse** - According to the World Health Organization, "child abuse" or "maltreatment" constitutes "all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development, or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power."

**Informed consent** - capacity to freely give consent based on all available information, according to the age and evolving capacities of the child. For example, if you seek consent from a child regarding taking their photograph and using it for publicity purposes, the child is informed as to how the photograph will be used and is given the opportunity to refuse. If a child is invited to provide input into the development of a child protection policy, they must be made aware of the time it will take, what exactly will be involved, their roles and responsibilities, and only then will they be able to give their "informed consent".

**Categories of Abuse:**

**Physical Abuse:**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused

when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms, of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after.

### **Emotional Abuse:**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child though it may occur alone.

### **Sexual Abuse:**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape or buggery) or non-penetrative acts. This may include non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material, or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways

### **Neglect:**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

**Bullying** – when an individual or group of people with more power, repeatedly and intentionally cause hurt or harm to another person or group who feel helpless to respond.

### **Categories of Bullying:**

- **Physical bullying** includes hitting, kicking, tripping, pinching and pushing, or damaging property. Physical bullying causes both short-term and long-term damage.
- **Verbal bullying** includes name-calling, insults, teasing, intimidation, homophobic or racist remarks, or verbal abuse.
- **Social/emotional bullying** when a person or group leaves another person out on purpose, spreads rumours or gossip about another person, mimics unkindly, plays nasty jokes, or tries to break up friendships with others. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation.
- **Cyberbullying** involves using digital technologies to send messages including abusive or hurtful texts, emails, posts, images, or videos, deliberately excluding others online, or imitating others online or using their log-in.

**Corporal punishment** - the use of physical force causing pain, but not wounds, as a means of discipline (includes spanking, rapping on the head and slapping).

**Commercial exploitation:** exploiting a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others and to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral, or social-emotional development. It includes, but is not limited to, child labor.

Individuals within the organisation need to be alert to the potential abuse of children both within their families and also from other sources including abuse by members of that organisation.

The organisation should know how to recognise and act upon indicators of abuse or potential abuse involving children. There is an expected responsibility for all members of the organisation to respond to any suspected or actual abuse of a child in accordance with these procedures.

It is good practice to be as open and honest as possible with parents/carers about any concerns.

However, you must not discuss your concerns with parents/carers in the following circumstances:

- Where sexual abuse is suspected
- Where organised or multiple abuse is suspected
- Where contacting parents/carers would place a child, yourself or others at immediate risk.

*What to do if children talk to you about abuse or neglect*

It is recognised that a child may seek you out to share information about abuse or neglect or talk spontaneously individually or in groups when you are present. In these situations you must:

- Listen carefully to the child. DO NOT directly question the child.
- Give the child time and attention.
- Allow the child to give a spontaneous account; do not stop a child who is freely recalling significant events.
- Make an accurate record of the information you have been given taking care to record the timing, setting and people present, the child's presentation as well as what was said. Do not throw this away as it may later be needed as evidence.
- Use the child's own words where possible.
- Explain that you cannot promise not to speak to others about the information they have shared.
- Reassure the child that:
  - You are glad they have told you;
  - They have not done anything wrong;
  - What you are going to do next.
- Explain that you will need to get help to keep the child safe.
- Do NOT ask the child to repeat his or her account of events to anyone.

### **3. Guiding Principles:**

- Non-discrimination, valuing and listening to children, and treating all children with respect and dignity.
- Best interests of the child are of prime importance and should guide all decisions made by CLT India; commitment to protecting children with and for whom we work.
- Meaningful participation of children to encourage them to share their views. CLT India seeks to create an environment where children feel free to express themselves and participate in the classroom and other educational environments and opportunities as well as in decisions that affect their lives.
- Zero tolerance towards child abuse.

#### 4. Applicability of the Policy:

This policy applies to:

- All staff members of CLT India, whether within office premises or on field duty / project visit or elsewhere
- All associates of organisation within CLT India office premises or on field duty or at project partner offices and /or elsewhere
- All visitors to CLT India offices
- Board members

#### 5. Code Of Conduct:

CLT staff, associates and visitors **MUST**:

- Respect the privacy and dignity of every child.
- Make proactive efforts to ensure safety of children by identifying and managing risks periodically in all spaces accessed by children.
- Be conscious of and sensitive towards making appropriate arrangements for the special needs of children, particularly physically and mentally challenged children.
- Be sensitive towards children's age, sex, ethnicity, background, sexuality, religion, etc.
- Create/enable an environment where children are respected and encouraged to discuss their concerns about abuse and rights.
- Handle all sensitive child data and information with adequate care, caution and confidentiality; to be shared in public only after written permission of a organisation authority.
- Always seek informed consent from children and their parents or guardians regarding the medium of communication and the purpose, before taking formal interviews, photographs of/with children, or recording videos of their activities and engagement.
- Respect the decision of children to say 'No' to an image being taken or a video being recorded.
- Ensure that all images/videos taken of children are respectful of their dignity – all children must be clothed adequately for images and videos with their private body parts covered appropriately.
- Ensure that all communication with children should take place within the boundaries of the profession and are in sync with organizational policy.
- Ensure that the language and/or conduct does not give rise to unnecessary speculation or comment.
- Ensure that children are not exposed to unsuitable material either in print or on the internet, including material having sexual connotations.

- Be sensitive to the issues of gender and socio-cultural issues.
- Respond and report any situation that might place a child at risk or harm.

CLT India staff, associates and visitors **MUST NOT:**

- Abuse any child and put the child at the risk of harm.
- Engage in any behavior to intimidate, bully, humiliate, shame, threaten, coerce or belittle any child.
- Physically abuse or hit any child or use any form of corporal punishment against any child.
- Engage in any behaviour in a manner that is viewed as offensive, sexually provocative, overt or otherwise.
- Hug, kiss, or caress children.
- Engage in any form of substance abuse (alcohol/smoking/drugs/tobacco, etc) in the presence of the children.
- Disclose the identity and /or personal information of children.
- Display or distribute images of children without informed consent from children and their parents and the appropriate authority of organisation.
- Stigmatize or discriminate against a child or show differential treatment to some children to the exclusion of others. Taking views of specific children, like during any research study, must be pre-approved.
- Act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse.
- Take images /videos 'in secret' or in situations that may be viewed as being secretive.
- Pass on gifts to children other than as part of specific programs designed and approved by ORGANISATION appropriate authority.
- Have social contact with children or their parents through any medium, online or offline, until it is approved by CLT India management.
- Use or access profiles of children on social networking sites, particularly pictures and photographs of children, unless approved by CLT India's appropriate authority.
- Share their own personal contact details and mobile numbers with children without prior permission of the appropriate authority of the organization.
- Refrain from asking children to undertake personal jobs or errands or asking children to do tasks that should be done by adults.
- Take children to their home/ residence or any other private space for the day or night and /or share a room with a child alone. Any emergency accommodation like medical attention must be approved by CLT India's appropriate authority.
- Patronize any service that employs children.
- Employ any child (as defined in the policy) in any official as well as personal space.

## 6. Key Responsibilities Under the Policy:

As an organisation with child rights at the core of whatever we think, plan and do, we are committed to applying high standards of behaviour towards children. CLT India representatives will meet its commitment to protecting children from any harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation through the fulfilment of their responsibilities and the following measures, but not limited to:

### 1. Awareness

- Directors / functional heads/program heads will ensure that organisation representatives are aware of the organisation's commitment to the prevention of child abuse and exploitation.
- All organisation representatives will read, sign, and abide by organisation's Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct of policy.
- Organisation management will also ensure the development of standard operating procedures to ensure the proper implementation of the policy.
- HR function will ensure that all organisation representatives have access to a copy of this Child Safeguarding Policy and Standard Operating Procedures.

- HR function will conduct orientation of all new staff during the induction program.
- Organisation Representatives will be aware that a breach of this policy or the Child Protection Code of Conduct constitutes an act of misconduct and is grounds for disciplinary action and/or termination of employment or engagement.

## 2. Prevention :

- Organisation's staff recruitment process will continue to be supported by recruitment and selection measures that are designed to minimize the risk of recruiting persons who may pose an unacceptable risk to children.
- Organisation will partner with organizations/associates that agree to comply with child protection standards at least as high as Organisation's standards in its operations and activities.
- Organisation representatives will use their best efforts to ensure that children are not put at risk of abuse or exploitation.
- Organisation will ensure informed consent from children (parents or guardian in case of young children), parents or caregivers/guardian before taking images (photo/videos etc.) and present children in a dignified and respectful manner rather than vulnerable, sexually suggestive, submissive or impacting their privacy negatively. They'll also respect the children's decision to say 'No' to an image being taken.
- Case studies, stories and images of children should be based on the child's best interest. Organisations will limit the identifying information accompanying images of children and adhere to country laws related to the same.
- Organisation representatives will obey the country's laws, attaining high standards towards laws relating to children in professional as well as personal lives in order to maintain the reputation of the organization as child safe organization.
- Staff will also empower themselves by understanding the Child Safeguarding Policy, related standard operating procedures and country protection mechanisms.
- Organisation management will provide suitable guidelines and procedures to meet the principles mentioned in this policy.
- Organisation management will ensure that local procedures are in place and concerns are documented and responded as per such procedures.
- Organisation management will ensure that procedures are developed considering the local laws, obeying the statutory compliances of reporting and responding to child protection concerns.
- Organisation staff and associates must update knowledge and information about child safeguarding and child rights
- Organisation staff and associates must follow the laws of the country and carry the intent of the policy outside work also.

## 2. Reporting:

- Organisation staff and associates will ensure that they are fully aware of Organisation's standard reporting requirements in the event of suspicion or allegations of child abuse or exploitation, for any internal and external incident of abuse.
- Reporting any abuse is mandatory and Organisation representatives should report as soon as possible and within 24 hours of learning of or witnessing the alleged abuse or exploitation, by anyone coming in the scope of the policy or by anyone while implementing/supporting any activity with children (directly or indirectly) primarily to



Human Resources, Chief Executive Officer, or any other body/channel informed as per standard operating procedure.

- As part of reporting, the suspicion and allegation be fully documented in line with Organisation standard operating procedures on reporting and as per prescribed templates, including the time, place, and any witnesses to the alleged abuse or exploitation.
- Confidentiality is crucial to a fair and effective reporting procedure hence the allegations, updates and follow-ups will be shared on a 'need-to-know basis only. Organisation representatives will not disclose any allegation/suspicion of abuse or personal information of children/families, to the general public unless the disclosures are in accordance with Organisation policy and procedures or approved by the relevant authority.
- Organisation representatives will cooperate in the investigation process.

#### 4. Responding

- Organisation will ensure that action is taken to support and protect children coming in contact with the organisation where concerns arise regarding child abuse or exploitation.
- The first response to address the complaint should come as soon as possible and within 48 hours of reporting of the incident.
- When child abuse or exploitation is reported, an appropriate investigation process will be followed and conducted as approved by HR focal point and CEO – who may construct a team and consult with legal operations and/or the authorities if appropriate, and steer the investigation process accordingly.
- Adherence to the Child Safeguarding Policy is mandatory and any breach of this policy or procedures will be investigated under this policy either by consideration of referral to statutory authorities for criminal investigation under the law of the country in which they work and/or by organisation in accordance with disciplinary procedures. This may result in disciplinary sanctions and / or dismissal of engagement with the organisation.
- Internal investigation will undertake a confidential, thorough, impartial and prompt process. Organisation will not tolerate any form of coercion, intimidation, reprisal or retaliation against anyone who reports any form of abuse or exploitation or provides any information or other assistance in an investigation.

#### 7. Call to Action

In case any members of the staff or visitors witness the issues cited above, the following person(s) may be contacted immediately –

- CEO