

# Child protection policy

## 1. Purpose and values

1.1. The purpose of this policy is:

- to protect children and youth who receive services through OFA-UK's partner organisations; and
- to provide trustees, staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding and child protection.

1.2. The welfare of children is paramount and therefore:

- all children and youth without exception have the right to protection from abuse regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or religious beliefs;
- we seek to keep children and youth safe by valuing them, listening to and respecting them; and
- no child or group of children will be treated any less favourably than others in being able to access services which meet their needs.

## 2. Safeguarding children

2.1. At all times, we act to promote the welfare of children and to protect them from harm.

We practise safeguarding which is a broader term than 'child protection' and is defined as:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's health and development;
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- acting to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

2.2. We work in partnership with local African organisations that are demonstrating a commitment to safeguard the orphans under their direct care (e.g., living in their orphanage) or their indirect care (e.g., living with guardians).

2.3. Our commitment to promoting children's welfare extends to working directly with children, youth, guardians or other agencies as necessary.

## 3. Primary prevention

### 3.1. Training and reporting

Our charity is committed to a safe recruitment, selection and vetting process for all trustees, staff and volunteers. Prior to contact with children, trustees, staff and volunteers are made aware of what is considered abuse and how to recognise it. This policy is reviewed and the steps for reporting suspected abuse are outlined.

### 3.2. Criminal record checks

3.2.1. All required criminal record checks must be no more than five years old.

3.2.2. Individuals within the charity must produce a criminal record check, using the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) prior to having any contact with children.

3.2.3. Anyone participating in a mission's trip sponsored by OFA-UK must have submitted a criminal record check prior to the trip departure.

3.2.4. Individuals working with the charity either by providing site visits or participating in short or long-term assignments in Africa must submit a criminal record check prior to their departure.

### **3.3. Access to children**

Adult workers are not permitted to have one-to-one access to children or youth.

### **3.4. Volunteering in Africa**

Inquiries may be received from individuals' unknown to the charity requesting assistance with volunteering with one of our African partner organisations. Due to the inability to properly screen these individuals, our charity is not involved with referring unknown individuals to volunteer to serve in Africa.

### **3.5. Sponsoring a child**

Child sponsors communicate exclusively with their child through OFA-UK. Sponsors and children receive identification numbers and no personal contact information is shared. At this time OFA-UK does not have volunteers available to accompany child sponsors to visit their child unless they participate in a scheduled mission's trip.

## **4. Reporting and evaluations**

### **4.1. External reporting requirements**

Allegations of child abuse by a UK national are immediately reported to the independent Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), in emergencies to the police, and to the Charity Commission. Staff, volunteers and/or trustees will consult the commission's detailed guidance on reporting serious incidents.

### **4.2. Internal evaluations**

Abuse allegations are additionally dealt with internally via a case-by-case review by the trustees of the charity.

### **4.3. Partner organisations**

Abuse allegations from within partner organisations are reported to the proper local and national authorities in the relevant African nation. The trustees may vote to transfer the partner organisation into inactive status during the completion of a formal investigation.

## **5. Administration**

### **5.1. Legal framework**

This policy has been drawn up based on law and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

- Children and Families Act 2014;
- Safeguarding children and young people, Charity Commission 2014; and
- Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, HM Government 2015.

### **5.2. Guidelines**

The following guidelines are followed:

- a code of behaviour for trustees, staff and volunteers – the consequences of breaching the code are clear and linked to disciplinary and grievance procedures;
- a process for recording incidents, concerns and referrals and storing these securely in compliance with relevant legislation and kept for the appropriate time period; and
- providing guidance on confidentiality and information sharing.

### **5.3. Application**

5.3.1. The policy applies to all trustees, staff and volunteers.

5.3.2. The policy is reviewed, approved and endorsed by the board of trustees annually or when legislation changes.

5.3.3. Partner organisations are informed of the policy and procedures as appropriate.