



THE CAMBODIAN CHILDREN'S CHARITY

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY & GUIDELINES

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Policy Statement

The Cambodian Children's Charity (the "Charity") has a duty of care to safeguard all children involved in the Charity or the subject of the Charity's activities, from harm. All children have a right to protection and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account.

The Charity will ensure the safety and protection of all children involved in the Charity or its activities through the appointment of one of the Trustees as the Charity's **Child Protection Officer** and adherence to the **Child Protection Guidelines** adopted by the Charity.

The Charity does not intend, in the initial stage of its activities, to be directly engaged in the provision of welfare services to children, but to provide financial assistance and grants to organisations and institutions already providing such services. However, it is one of the Charity's main objectives that all organisations and institutions which benefit from the Charity's funding are encouraged to adhere to best practice in all areas of the provision of their services. It is therefore the Charity's aim to encourage all such organisations and institutions to adopt appropriate Child Protection Policies.

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18.

Policy aims

The aim of The Cambodian Children's Charity Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice:

- ➔ Providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of the charity or the subject of any of its programmes
- ➔ Allow all trustees / staff / volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues

Promoting good practice

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about the appropriate action to take.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and other institutions. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. An instructor, teacher, official or volunteer may have regular contact with young people and be an important link in identifying cases where they need protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

Good practice guidelines

All personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

Good practice means:

- ✓ Always working in an open environment avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication
- ✓ Treating all young people / disabled adults equally with respect and dignity.
- ✓ Always putting the welfare of each young person first
- ✓ Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with children (eg it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them)
- ✓ Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust and empowering children to share in decision making
- ✓ Keeping up to date with technical skills, qualifications and insurance
- ✓ Ensuring that if children are taken away for the day or night, they should always be accompanied by a male and female volunteer and that adults should not enter children's rooms or invite children into their rooms
- ✓ Being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people
- ✓ Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- ✓ Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people and disabled adults – avoiding excessive competition and not pushing them against their will
- ✓ Keeping a written record of any accident or injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given

Practices to be avoided

The following should be **avoided** except in emergencies. If a case arises where these situations are unavoidable (eg the child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital), it should be with the full knowledge and consent of the child's parents or legal guardian.

Otherwise, **avoid**:

- ✗ Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others

Practices never to be sanctioned

The following should **never** be sanctioned. You should **never**:

- ✗ Engage in rough physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- ✗ Share a room with a child
- ✗ Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- ✗ Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- ✗ Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- ✗ Reduce a child to tears as a form of control
- ✗ Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- ✗ Do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults that they can do for themselves
- ✗ Invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised

NB It may sometimes be necessary for staff / volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents or legal guardian. There is a need to be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him / her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

Incidents that must be reported / recorded

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to your supervisor or the Trustees and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents or legal guardian of the child are informed:

- if you accidentally hurt a child
- If he / she seems distressed in any manner
- if a child appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- if a child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done

Use of photographic / filming equipment

Poor and disadvantaged children are often in an environment where this could be used as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of them in vulnerable positions. All trustees, staff and volunteers should be vigilant and any concerns should be reported to the Child Protection Officer.

Approval to use photographs or film footage of children for any purpose, including the promotion of the Charity, must be obtained in writing from the parents or legal guardian of the child concerned and such photographs and films should be stored safely.

Recruitment and training of staff and volunteers

The Cambodian Children's Charity recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children.

Pre-selection checks must include the following:

- All volunteers / staff should complete an application form. The application form will elicit information about an applicant's past and a self-disclosure about any criminal record
- Consent should be obtained to seek information from the Criminal Records Bureau (if applicable)
- Two confidential references, including one regarding previous work with children. These references must be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact
- Evidence of identity should be provided (eg passport or driving licence with photo)

Interview and induction

All employees (and volunteers) will be required to undergo an interview and should receive formal or informal induction, during which:

- A check should be made that the application form has been completed in full
- Their qualifications should be substantiated
- The job requirements and responsibilities should be clarified
- They should sign up to The Cambodian Children's Charity's Code of Ethics and Conduct
- Child protection procedures are explained and training needs are identified

Training

In addition to pre-selection checks, the safeguarding process includes training after recruitment to help staff and volunteers to:

- Analyse their own practice against established good practice and to ensure their practice is likely to protect them from false allegations
- Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or possible abuse
- Respond to concerns expressed by a child or young person
- Work safely and effectively with children

Responding to allegations or suspicions

It is not the responsibility of the Trustees or anyone working in The Cambodian Children's Charity, in a paid or unpaid capacity, to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities.

The Cambodian Children's Charity's Trustees will assure all staff / volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone who in good faith reports his / her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child.

Where there is a complaint against a volunteer / member of staff there may be three types of investigation:

- a criminal investigation
- a child protection investigation
- an internal misconduct investigation

The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence the internal misconduct investigation, but not necessarily.

Action

1. Concerns about poor practice:

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice, the Child Protection Officer will deal with it as a misconduct issue
- If the allegation is about poor practice by the Child Protection Officer, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the Trustees who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

2. Concerns about suspected abuse:

- Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either a member of staff or a volunteer should be reported to the Child Protection Officer, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.
- The Child Protection Officer will refer the allegation to the social services or other relevant authorities which may involve the police, or go directly to the police if out-of-hours.
- The parents or legal guardian of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services or other relevant authorities.

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only.

This includes the following people:

- ➔ the Child Protection Officer
- ➔ the parents or legal guardian of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- ➔ the person making the allegation
- ➔ social services or other relevant authorities / police
- ➔ The Cambodian Children's Charity
- ➔ the alleged abuser (and parents or legal guardian if the alleged abuser is a child).

Seek advice from the social services or other relevant authorities on who should approach the alleged abuser.

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (eg that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

Internal enquiries and suspension

- ➔ The Cambodian Children's Charity's Child Protection Officer will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services or other relevant authorities inquiries.
- ➔ Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries The Cambodian Children's Charity's Trustees will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision, particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, The Cambodian Children's Charity's Trustees must reach a decision based upon the available information, which could suggest that on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

Support to deal with the aftermath of abuse

- ➔ Consideration should be given to the kind of support that children, parents and members of staff may need.
- ➔ Consideration should be given to what kind of support may be appropriate for the alleged perpetrator.

Allegations of previous abuse

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (eg by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member of staff who is still currently working with children).

Where such an allegation is made, the Charity should follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the social services or other relevant authorities or the police. This is because other children may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children. This is reinforced by the details of the Protection of Children Act 1999.

Action if bullying is suspected

If bullying is suspected, the same procedure should be followed as set out in 'Responding to suspicions or allegations' above.

3. Information for social services or other relevant authorities or the police about suspected abuse:

To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure / concern, which should include the following:

- The child's name, age and date of birth of the child.
- The child's home address or institution, where resident.
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
- Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have the parents or legal guardian been contacted?
- If so, what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details.
- If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so, what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.
- Where possible referral to the police or social services or other relevant authorities should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

Declaration

On behalf of **The Cambodian Children's Charity**, we, the undersigned, will oversee the implementation of the Child Protection Policy and take all necessary steps to ensure it is adhered to.

Signed: *B Sharpe*

J Purser

Name: **BENITA KATHERINE SHARPE**

Name: **JOANNA PETRINA PURSER**

CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER
THE CAMBODIAN CHILDREN'S CHARITY

TRUSTEE
THE CAMBODIAN CHILDREN'S CHARITY

Date: **19 October 2006**

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