



# HRA Child and Youth Protection Policy

Policy accepted on: 21/10/2023

Policy reviews due on: 21/10/2024

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This policy applies to all people representing HRA staff and members, including directors, managers, advisory board members, paid staff, sessional workers, volunteers, member organizations or anyone else working on behalf of HRA. 'Staff and members' is used throughout this policy and encompasses all of the above.

For the purposes of work in educational establishments, HRA Staff and members should abide by the establishment's policies and procedures. HRA Staff and members will adhere to any extra measures imposed by the establishments that we are visiting.

HRA believes that children and young people should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe. We are committed to practice in a way that protects them.

This policy is applicable to those working with children and young people both in person and online.

This policy works in conjunction with the Code of Conduct for Adults working with Children and Young People. HRA staff and all members (organizational and individual) must be familiar with both documents.



HRA recognizes that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount, as enshrined in the international and European human rights legal documents, including particularly the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Articles 3 and 19 and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union in Article 24. All children without exception have the right to protection from abuse.
- Some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs and other issues.
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, caregivers and other organisations is essential in promoting young people's welfare.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse must be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- Everyone working on behalf of HRA and its member organizations has a responsibility to report concerns.
- No-one working on behalf of HRA will be alone on site when working with children and young people. Employees, volunteers, board members, project-based workers and contractors who undertake any work with children and young people will be subject to checks of personal criminal records.
- Any person working with young people on behalf of HRA should not arrange to meet a young person alone under any circumstances.

**Practice and Procedures:**

**We seek to keep children and young people safe by:**

- Valuing them, listening and respecting them
- Adopting child protection procedures
- Providing effective management of Staff and members and volunteers through supervision, support, training and quality assurance measures.



- Recruiting Staff and members and volunteers safely; ensuring all necessary checks are made
- Recording, storing and disposing of information professionally and securely.
- Using our child protection procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know.
- Using our procedures to manage any allegations against Staff and members and volunteers appropriately.
- Ensuring that we have effective complaints procedures in place

### **Recruitment:**

- Criminal record checks will be carried out for any person working with or applying to work with young people on behalf of HRA whether paid or unpaid prior to commencement of the work. Any offers of employment will be subject to a satisfactory criminal record check where the staff and members will be working directly with young people. A satisfactory criminal record check is one in which there are no convictions, cautions, reprimands or warnings relating to the safeguarding of children and/or young people.
- Two current forms of identification which include a signature, address and preferably a photograph will be sought from all individuals prior to a confirmation of job offer letter being sent out.
- References will be sought for all employees and volunteers who will be working directly with young people on behalf of HRA. At least one reference should relate to previous work or experience related to young people or children. If they have not had such previous experience, a reference stating suitability will be sought. References will be followed up (normally by phone) to confirm the identity, address and validity of the referee.



### **Induction:**

- Any person working with children and young people on behalf of HRA or a member organization will be given an induction into HRA's Child Protection policy. This will include discussion and review of relevant procedures.
- Volunteer training will include instruction on HRA's procedure for dealing with disclosure and how to respond to causes for concern in young people's attitudes and/or behavior (see below).
- Any person working with children and young people on behalf of HRA will need to sign and retain a copy of this Child Protection Policy.
- All Staff and members will receive regular training on child protection during their induction and throughout their career with HRA. Member organizations need to subscribe to the Child Protection Policy and their own staff accordingly.

### **Working with other organisations:**

- For the purposes of work in schools, clients will be asked to provide copies of the school's visitors' policy, including their Child Protection Policy, which will be shared with visiting members of Staff and members.
- Schools will be asked to supply the name and contact details of their Child Protection Coordinator/Safeguarding Officer.
- Any person working with young people on behalf of HRA will be made aware of the school's Child Protection Policy including how to deal with disclosure and causes of concern in a young person's attitudes and/or behavior. This policy will be followed within the school grounds and in the event that an individual is approached as a representative of HRA outside of school grounds.

For the purposes of work in other organisations, HRA will share our policy and ask for compliance. Failure to comply will result in termination of the contract.



**If Staff and members are concerned about the behavior of another person who is working on behalf of HRA or another adult working with young people/children:**

- Staff and members must inform the executive directors of HRA. In the case of a child being in immediate danger, contact should be made by telephone. If the executive directors of HRA cannot be reached, the police should be called.
- Staff and members should ensure that they make detailed notes of their observations. They must keep written records of their concerns, the timing, setting, personnel present, as well as decisions made, actions taken and subsequent events. They should use the HRA Child Protection Record Form. Written records must be kept securely behind a password electronically or in a locked draw.

**If a young person tells a staff that they are being abused:**

1. Staff and members should explain that if they feel that the young person is at significant risk of harm or of harming themselves that they will have to pass on the information to someone who can offer support and help.
2. Staff and members should assure the young person that the information will not be passed on to their peers and will be shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis.
3. The young person should be allowed to speak without interruption. Staff and members should accept what they say and not directly question them. They should not ask leading questions as this may invalidate a case if it is later pursued. Instead, they should ask open questions such as "Anything else to tell me?".



4. Staff and members should not at any time attempt to investigate. They must refer any suspicion or allegation to others who must ensure that no one is placed in a position which could cause further compromise.
5. Staff and members should try to alleviate any feelings of guilt and listen but not pass judgements.
6. Staff and members should explain who they will have to pass the information onto and why. They should seek their support for this action but in a child protection situation, they are obliged to do it regardless of their wishes.
7. Staff and members must keep written records of the timing, setting, personnel present, and the discussion with the young person as well as decisions made, actions taken and subsequent events. They should use the HRA Child Protection Record Form. They should be objective in their recording, including statements and observable things not opinions or assumptions. Written records must be kept securely behind a password electronically or in a locked draw.
8. In addition, they need to also follow the guidelines below:
  - For their own protection, it is necessary that Staff and members report any disclosures (clearly informing the person of their action) to the executive directors of HRA. Under no circumstances should they withhold information that has been given that indicates that a child/young person has/is being abused. It is the responsibility of individual Staff and members in discussion with the executive directors to decide what action (if any) needs to be taken. If necessary, it is the responsibility of the executive directors to share the disclosure with Staff and members in any partner organisation.
  - They must follow and undertake any actions required in the policy of the institution within which they are working.



- Staff and members should give a copy of their written records to the executive directors.
- In the case of volunteers, the executive directors will follow up the case and will act as a liaison on behalf of the volunteer in case any further involvement is required.
- The board directors will also offer those dealing with disclosure the opportunity to discuss their feelings about events and will aim to provide any additional support needed.
- If a child or young person is in immediate danger, staff and members must make immediate contact with the school's designated safeguarding lead or the police if necessary. It is important that they keep a record of what has happened using the Child Protection Record Form, found in the Policies and Procedures folder on Dropbox, making sure that their account is accurate, factual, written as close to the event as possible and dated.



**If Staff and members are concerned about a young person's attitudes and/or behavior:**

- Staff and members should inform the executive directors of HRA, ensuring that they have an accurate written record of their concerns. Under no circumstances should they withhold information that indicates that a child/young person may be at risk of abuse. It is the responsibility of individual Staff and members in discussion with the executive directors to decide what action (if any) needs to be taken. If necessary, it is the responsibility of the executive directors to share their concerns with Staff and members in any partner organisation.
  
- Staff and members must follow and undertake any actions required in the policy of the institution within which they are working.
  
- Staff and members must give a copy of their written records to the directors.
  
- In the case of volunteers, the board directors will follow up the case and will act as a liaison on behalf of the volunteer in case any further involvement is required.
  
- The board directors will also offer those dealing with concerns the opportunity to discuss their feelings about events and will aim to provide any additional support needed.

If a child or young person is in immediate danger, Staff and members must make immediate contact with the school's designated safeguarding lead or the police if necessary. It is important that they keep a record of what has happened using the Child Protection Record Form, found in the Policies and Procedures folder on Dropbox, making sure that their account is accurate, factual, written as close to the event as possible and dated.





## **Upholding the Child Protection Policy**

If a breach of the Child Protection Policy or accompanying Code of Conduct for working with Children and Young People is made by a member of Staff and members, or if an allegation of a breach is made against a member of Staff and members, this will be investigated by the directors using the HRA Disciplinary Procedure.

If a staff or members becomes aware of any breaches of the policy or code, they must report them to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Ratified by the Advisory Board on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2023

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**I have read and understood this policy. I have also received my own copy.**

Name:

Signature:

Date: