



**Accountable  
Now**

GLOBAL STANDARDS LOCAL TRUST

# Safeguarding Policy



## 1. Introduction

This policy seeks to reduce risk to children and adults in vulnerable situations, involved directly or indirectly in Accountable Now's work.

At Accountable Now, we believe that all children and adults in vulnerable situations have a right to be protected and kept safe.

Children and adults in vulnerable situations who come into contact with Accountable Now and its partners must be safeguarded to the maximum possible extent from deliberate or inadvertent actions that place them at risk of being exposed to:

- any form of abuse;
- exploitation;
- humiliation;
- neglect and exclusion;
- discrimination.

This responsibility falls upon everyone who comes into contact with Accountable Now and its projects, and our staff, trustees and partners have specific roles in achieving this.

## 2. Definitions that apply to the policy

Children are defined as persons under the age of 18 years, which is consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Child abuse is when anyone under 18 years of age is being harmed or isn't being looked after properly. The abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional or neglect. The abuse and exploitation of children happens in all countries and societies across the world. Child abuse is never acceptable.

Adults in vulnerable situations are those aged 18 years or more who either:

- identify themselves as unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves from harm or exploitation; or
- due to their gender, age, physical illness, mental health, learning or physical disabilities, as well as disasters and conflicts, are unable or unwilling as a result to identify themselves as vulnerable or subject to abuse, but are deemed at risk, because they are or may be unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves from harm or exploitation.

Abuse can take many forms and includes:

- Physical abuse – involves the use of violent physical force so as to cause actual or likely physical injury or suffering, (e.g. hitting, shaking, burning, female genital mutilation, torture, restraint or inappropriate sanctions.)

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- Sexual abuse – the use of a child or vulnerable adult for sexual purposes, this may include rape, sexual assault or sexual acts to which a vulnerable adult has not consented to or has been coerced into, the accessing or production of indecent images or using the internet, mobile technology or social media to communicate inappropriately with a child or vulnerable adult. Engaging a child sexually regardless of consent or a mistaken belief as to their age. Sexual Exploitation - means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. Psychological abuse - emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidating, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or support networks.
- Financial or material abuse – theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure regarding wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions. Misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions, or benefits. Neglect – ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services. Withholding of necessities of life: medication, adequate nutrition, clothing, and shelter.
- Discriminatory abuse: ageism, racism, sexism, based on disability, sexual orientation, religion, or other forms of harassment, slurs, or hate-crime.

It is expected that Accountable Now's staff, trustees and those who work with the organisation, including contracted partners, are committed to safeguarding children and adults in vulnerable situations with whom they are in contact.

### 3. Roles and Responsibilities

Protection and safeguarding of children and adults is a corporate and an individual responsibility.

- Accountable Now's **Executive Director** has overall responsibility for ensuring that safeguarding procedures are in place, are known and understood by staff and are followed.
- **Project Leads** are responsible for identifying the specific risks that occur within their own team's work and areas of responsibility and for taking advice from relevant experts, and determining appropriate processes and procedures.
- **Everyone** within the organisation is responsible for ensuring they and others within their care are aware of and follow the advice and guidance contained in the policy and procedures and that they identify and deal appropriately with safeguarding issues.

### 4. What we do

Accountable Now is fully committed to safeguarding children and adults in vulnerable situations and we have a zero tolerance policy. We advance this through the following means:

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- *Awareness:* Ensuring that all staff and those who work with Accountable Now are aware of the problem of abuse of children and persons in vulnerable situations and the risks to children and adults.
- *Prevention:* Ensuring, through awareness and good practice, that staff and those who work with Accountable Now minimise the risks to children and adults in vulnerable situations.
- *Reporting:* Ensuring that you are clear on what steps to take where concerns arise regarding the safety of children and adults in vulnerable situations.
- *Responding:* Ensuring that action is taken to support and protect children and adults in vulnerable situations where concerns arise regarding possible abuse.

In order for the above standards of reporting and responding to be met, this is what is expected of you:

If you are worried that a child or adult in a vulnerable situation is being abused or neglected, or you are concerned about the inappropriate behaviour of an employee or someone working with Accountable Now towards a child or adult in vulnerable situation, then you are obliged to:

- act quickly and get help
- support and respect the child or adult
- where possible, ensure that the child or adult is safe
- contact your Accountable Now manager with your concerns immediately
- keep any information confidential to you and the manager.

## 5. Policy Principles

Accountable Now staff and partners agree to abide by the following policy principles:

- *Personal responsibility:* All staff, representatives and partners of Accountable Now must adhere to the highest standards of behaviour towards children and adults in vulnerable situations both in their private and professional lives. They have a responsibility to understand, model and promote this policy. They must do all that they can to prevent, report and respond appropriately to any concerns or potential breaches of the policy.
- *Universality:* The policy includes mandatory requirements that apply to everyone in all aspects of Accountable Now's work regardless of how and where they work.
- *Standards based approach:* Accountable Now has adopted a standards and values based approach to safeguarding, as described in this policy. Our safeguarding standards and standards of behaviour are often higher than those of national laws and community customs or traditions. Nevertheless, it is our standards that representatives agree to when they partner with Accountable Now and it is against these that they will be held to account.
- *Openness:* Partners commit to creating an environment in relation to safeguarding issues, where any issues or concerns can be raised and discussed.

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- *Transparency and accountability:* This is essential in order to ensure that poor practice can be addressed, potentially abusive behaviour can be challenged and best practice promoted. By strengthening our internal systems, standards and practice partners will be more accountable to the people we aim to serve.
- When dealing with a safeguarding concern, the *best interest of the child or adult* in a vulnerable situation will be our priority and we will strive to ensure their safety, health and well-being including meeting their emotional, psychological and physical needs.
- *Confidentiality:* All safeguarding concerns/reports/investigations will be dealt with on a need to know basis and all records will be held securely. Likewise any communications will be kept confidential and secure.
- *Timeliness:* Given the potential for increased or repeated abuse, timely responses are essential for reporting and responding to concerns.
- *Uniformity:* This policy applies both during, after and in between work hours and to everyone involved in the work of Accountable Now, regardless of their role or seniority.

In contractual funding relationships, the policy requires:

- Partners to recruit only representatives who are suitable to work with children and adults in vulnerable situations and to apply safe recruitment practices.
- That partners and staff working on Accountable Now-funded projects are aware of their obligations under the policy and respond appropriately to issues of abuse and the exploitation of children and adults in vulnerable situations.
- That everyone who represents or partners with Accountable Now behaves appropriately towards children and adults in vulnerable situations and never abuses their position of trust
- That everyone who represents or partners with Accountable Now must actively work to create a safer environment for the children and adults in vulnerable situations who come into contact with the organisation.
- The policy applies to Accountable Now's staff, Trustees, members of the Independent Review Panel, as well as partner organisations (contractors, grantees and other partners) and their staff and volunteers fully or partially engaged on Accountable Now-funded projects.

## **6. Responsibilities of staff and representatives engaged in Accountable Now funded projects**

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Accountable Now's partners have a responsibility to ensure the following is observed by all staff and representatives engaged on Accountable Now-funded projects, or paid for with funds originating from Accountable Now.

Staff must:

- Always report situations where:
  - They see or suspect any form of abuse or inappropriate behaviour towards a child or adult in vulnerable situation.
  - An allegation of abuse is made to (or about) them
  - A child or any other person tells them about abuse
- Observe confidentiality at all stages and record information in writing.
- Treat all children and vulnerable adults with respect
- Provide a good example of acceptable behaviour, in a way that is consistent with Accountable Now's standards and core values during and outside of work hours.
- Be aware of any "power" (unequal) relationships that exist.
- Ensure that their actions cannot be misunderstood or cause offence and are acceptable within a relationship of trust.
- Be responsive to reports of abuse and investigate and report in accordance with this policy immediately.
- Plan to have at least one other responsible adult present during activities, such as in a car no matter how short the journey, or the home of the vulnerable adult/child.
- Remember that they are accountable to the adult in a vulnerable situation or the child, their carers/parents (if any) and Accountable Now.
- Immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence that relates to child exploitation and abuse, including those under traditional law, which occurred before or occurs during association with Accountable Now.
- Be aware of behaviour and avoid actions or behaviours that could be perceived by others as child exploitation or abuse

Staff must NEVER:

- use language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate;
- engage children under the age of 18 in any form of sexual intercourse or sexual activity, including paying for sexual services;
- invite unaccompanied children into private residences, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger;
- sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary, in which case the supervisor's permission must be obtained, and ensuring that another adult is present if possible (noting that this does not apply to an individual's own children);

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- use any computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras or social media to exploit or harass children, or access child exploitation material through any medium;
- expose a child or adult in vulnerable situation to inappropriate images, films and websites including pornography and extreme violence;
- use physical punishment on children;
- hire children for domestic or other labour: which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage; which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities; or which places them at significant risk of injury;
- permit abusive behaviour, e.g. bullying, ridiculing or taunting; have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with others; encourage inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour such as infatuations or 'crushes' from, including sleeping in the same bed as, a child or vulnerable adult or doing things of a personal nature that a child or adult in vulnerable situation could do for him or herself e.g. grooming, dressing or bathing;
- show favouritism to anyone or spend excessive amounts of time on one child or vulnerable adult;
- make suggestive remarks or actions, even in jest;
- engage in or allow sexually provocative games to take place;
- deliberately place yourself or others in a compromising situation.

#### Typically:

- Whenever working with children or vulnerable adults, where possible be accompanied by another adult. Choose open, public locations for your activities
- Avoid inappropriate use of the internet or email, such as visiting pornographic websites
- Do not contact or accept 'friend' requests on social media from children or adults in vulnerable situations and only interact with them through official Accountable Now social media accounts.

#### Staff must observe the following at all times:

##### Sexual behaviour

- Do not have sex with children.
- Do not engage in or allow sexually provocative games or banter with children or vulnerable adults.
- Do not touch a child or adult in a vulnerable situation in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way.
- Do not engage in transactional sex or prostitution in any form.

##### Physical behaviour

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- Do not physically chastise adults in vulnerable situation or children
- Do not engage in physical contact, such as hugging or holding hands, which may be appropriate behaviour for a carer / parent of a child or adult in vulnerable situation, but is not appropriate for an Accountable Now representative.

#### Psychosocial behaviour

- Be aware of the power relationship between an adult in a vulnerable situation and children, and between NGO workers and beneficiaries or users, and do not take any advantage of this.
- Use language that mentally and emotionally empowers children and adults in vulnerable situations. Do not embarrass, humiliate or degrade children or adults in vulnerable situations.
- Show neutrality and impartiality according to race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, beliefs, sexuality or political persuasion.

### 7. Systems and procedures

#### Accountable Now partners must:

- Provide guidance to all who work, fully or partially, on Accountable Now funded projects, on how to provide immediate responses to risks and abuse
- Disseminate clear procedures on how to report abuse, appropriate to their organisation and context
- Ensure safeguarding checks are factored into recruitment of staff, volunteers and partners
- Integrate this policy with other policies including recruitment and selection, Code of Conduct, Whistleblowing, Disciplinary and Grievance Policies.
- Ensure that all staff understand the guidelines relating to confidentiality and security of storing confidential information.
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### 8. Training and staff development

#### Accountable Now partners must:

- Provide training that describes appropriate behaviour with children and vulnerable adults and develops understanding of the risks and threats that children and vulnerable adults face in the local context. Develop and maintain an action plan.
- Ensure staff understand how to respond to allegations against anyone working in any capacity of an Accountable Now-supported programme.

### 9. External

#### Accountable Now partners must:

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- Ensure that at a minimum, key partners and key persons within the communities we work are aware that all who work on Accountable Now supported programmes are accountable under this policy.
- Ensure that all representation of children and vulnerable adults conform to good practice on use of photographs and working with the media and communications materials.
- Ensure that appropriate measures are taken so that all participants within Accountable Now programmes are made aware of their ability to report their complaints and concerns.
- Reporting, investigation and follow-up
- Partners must report breaches of this policy to Accountable Now immediately, and cooperate with any investigations.

Following an investigation, if it has found that any form of abuse or harm has been committed in relation to children or adults in vulnerable situations, which are either criminal, grossly infringe the child's or adults in vulnerable situation's rights, or contravene the principles and standards of this policy, the partner will take immediate disciplinary action and any other action appropriate to the circumstances of the act or offence.

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