



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

July 2023



Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	3
STANDARD 1 – POLICY	4
STANDARD 2 – PEOPLE	5
2.1 Code of Conduct for Staff.....	5
2.1.1 <i>Safe Programme Design</i>	5
2.1.2 <i>Appropriate and Inappropriate Behaviour</i>	5
2.1.3 <i>Good Use of Media and Data</i>	6
2.2 Recognising Abuse	6
2.3 Recruitment Process and Training	7
2.4 Designated Positions.....	8
2.5 Partners	8
2.6 Children and Families.....	9
STANDARD 3 – PROCEDURES	10
STANDARD 4 – ACCOUNTABILITY	12

INTRODUCTION

AKTI is a non-governmental and non-profit organisation based in Nicosia, Cyprus which aims to raise environmental awareness and promote sustainable development and social inclusion.

AKTI's mission is to promote sustainable development and the human right to live in a healthy environment through environmental education, research and advocacy.

Several of AKTI's activities involve children. Examples of such activities are educational beach cleanups, tree planting events, children's participation in competitions launched by AKTI, children's participation at educational activities that the organization implements within the framework of festivals, and so on.

AKTI recognises the importance of ensuring child protection and preventing child abuse, which is unfortunately a global issue.

Child abuse takes various forms including:

- physical abuse, physical harm caused by an adult who can be the parent, caregiver, an adult or even another child or children.
- sexual abuse, forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities that he or she does not fully understand and has little choice in consenting to.
- neglect and negligent treatment, harming the child's physical or mental health because of failure to meet the child's basic physical and/or psychological needs.
- emotional abuse, negatively affecting a child's emotional state due to emotionally ill-treatment like bullying.
- commercial exploitation, using a child for the benefit of others while harming the child's physical and mental health.

AKTI embodies the 'do no harm' principle which involves minimising harm to children during the activities of the organisation. For this reason, AKTI has developed the Child Protection Policy, presented herein. This document consists of four parts, in adherence to the International Child Safeguarding Standards: Standard 1 – Policy, Standard 2 – People, Standard 3 – Procedures, Standard 4 – Accountability.

STANDARD 1 – POLICY

This policy adopts Article 1 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), thus, defining a child as a person below the age of eighteen years.

AKTI's staff who are employees, interns and volunteers and associates are all committed to preventing harm to children at work and outside, recognising that they represent the organisation at all times.

AKTI recognises the equality of all children's rights and commits to the protection of children irrespective of ability, ethnicity, faith, gender, sexuality and culture. AKTI is aware that the challenges that children face can differ depending on the children's background.

AKTI commits to working in the best interest of children and recognises the organisation's duty of care to children who participate in AKTI's activities or who volunteer with AKTI or who can be affected by AKTI's activities.

Therefore, AKTI has adopted several policies and procedures to safeguard children, including:

- Child-centred risk assessment in every function of the organisation that involves children.
- Safe recruitment policies to ensure people are suitable for their positions and to minimise the potential for harm to children.
- Code of conduct which is a guideline for staff explaining how to behave next to children within and outside work environments.
- Training that is provided to all staff to ensure that they are aware of how to avoid, identify, and report child abuse.
- Designating responsibilities to specific individuals to ensure that the Child Protection Policy is implemented, and making the contact information of these focal points known to staff, and family of children engaged in AKTI's activities.
- Defining an assessment and review mechanism for the Child Protection Policy.

Ensuring the safety of children and the proper implementation of this Child Protection Policy is the responsibility of the Chairs of the Board of Directors of AKTI.

This Child Protection Policy, with all its Standards, has been developed in July 2023 and applies effective immediately. The Child Protection Policy will be updated annually.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'D.L.', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

28 July 2023

Signature

Date

STANDARD 2 – PEOPLE

2.1 Code of Conduct for Staff

This code of conduct provides guidelines for staff on how design safe programmes, recognise abuse, and what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour regarding children during and outside the work. For the purposes of this Policy, staff includes employees, volunteers, interns, and associates. The code of conduct is developed by considering the wide definition of child abuse explained above.

2.1.1 *Safe Programme Design*

Safe programme design must be used to minimise harm to children. A safe programme design involves risk assessment in every activity that the organisation carries out, considering the impact of the activity on children, unintended and intended consequences and the environment of the activity. Risk mitigation strategies will be developed which are suitable for the activity. In some cases, where children are not the direct beneficiaries of an activity, but their caregivers might be, safe programme design should consider the potential indirect negative effects on children stemming from the implementation of the activities (e.g. arranging childcare for the children of the participants at the event).

2.1.2 *Appropriate and Inappropriate Behaviour*

The following constitute appropriate behaviour of staff when interacting with children within and outside the work environment:

- Be aware of what constitutes child abuse, exploitation, peer abuse like bullying and high-risk peer situations like mixing older and younger students and report concerns immediately to the designated person in the organisation.
- Be mindful about the way in which your language, actions, and relationships with children could be perceived.
- Maintain high standards of personal and professional conduct.
- Protect the health, safety and well-being of children.
- Provide an enabling environment for children's personal, physical, social, emotional, moral and intellectual development.
- Encourage and respect children's voices and views.
- At all times respect the confidentiality of children's personal information.
- Ensure that there is a minimum of two staff members present in meetings with children (to allow one to go out to deal with any immediate needs of children).
- Ensure that when children with disabilities participate all facilities are fully accessible for them.
- Report any concern regarding child abuse within and outside the work, immediately.

To avoid inappropriate behaviour:

- Do not take photos, film or request personal information, if not required for the activities and if explicit consent by the parents or caregivers of the children has not been provided.
- Do not contact children directly through any means outside the predefined activity (this includes contacting children through social media).
- Do not discriminate, shame, humiliate, belittle, or degrade children. This includes anything that may be considered emotional abuse such as showing a photo which can affect the child.
- Do not hit or otherwise physically assault participants.
- Do not act in any way that may be abusive or place others at risk of abuse.
- Do not engage in any form of sexual activity with children.

In the breach of Code of Conduct by a staff, AKTI has the right to remove the person immediately from their contract/position.

2.1.3 Good Use of Media and Data

The organisation implements the following practices concerning the use of media when children are involved and the storing of children's data:

- The written, informed consent of parents must be taken to be able to take and share images of the children.
- Images must not show children in inappropriate poses and dressing.
- Media must not show or indicate the home of the child.
- Adults who take photos of the children must be properly checked.
- Personal data must be kept in accordance with national law.
- Children's personal information must not be shared with third parties and cannot be accessed by people outside of the organisation. Only the first names of children should be used in videos.

2.2 Recognising Abuse

AKTI's staff that come in contact with children need to be able to recognize the following forms of self-disclosure of abuse by children:

- direct– children making specific verbal statements about what has happened to them.

- indirect – children making ambiguous verbal statements which suggest something is wrong.
- behavioural – displaying behaviour that signals something is wrong (this may or may not be deliberate).
- non-verbal – writing letters, drawing pictures or trying to communicate in other ways.

For different reasons, children may not disclose that they are abused. It is important that staff recognises the signs of abuse:

- Physical abuse: bruises, burns or scalds which are not generally on bony areas. Bruises on bony areas like the elbow tend to happen when children fall or trip. If a child does not explain the reason for the injury or the child is frequently injured, there is a sign of abuse.
- Neglect: multiple and persistent signs over time indicate neglect. For example, children are hungry, dirty, have inadequate clothing, stay alone for a long time, have untreated injuries and unsuitable home environment.
- Sexual abuse: anal or vaginal soreness or itching, bruising or bleeding near the genital area, discomfort when walking or sitting down, an unusual discharge, sexually transmitted infections (STI), pregnancy or using sexual language which you would not expect from children.
- Emotional abuse: use language, act in a way or know about things that you would not expect for their age, struggle to control strong emotions or have extreme outbursts, seem isolated from their parents, lack social skills or have few, if any, friends, fear making mistakes, fear their parent being approached regarding their behaviour, self-harm.

2.3 Recruitment Process and Training

AKTI incorporates practices to ensure that staff recruitment is consistent with its child protection philosophy.

Job descriptions clearly state the commitment of the organisation to child protection and state whether the job involves contact with children.

Regardless of the position, every applicant must declare any criminal conviction.

All interviews include discussion about the protection of children and applicants' understanding of the Child Protection Policy.

All staff, managers, employees, volunteers and interns, whether they work in the organisation temporarily or permanently, must read and sign the Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct upon joining the organization.

All staff and new employees will have access to Child Safeguarding Induction which will inform them about their responsibilities and educate them to identify the harm which children might be exposed to.

2.4 Designated Positions

Within AKTI, responsibilities for child safeguarding are designated as follows:

- Dr. Xenia I. Loizidou, Chair of the Board of Directors is responsible for maintaining and updating AKTI's Child Safeguarding Policy, and reviewing progress on an annual basis. Dr. Loizidou is also responsible for ensuring that recruitment processes are in line with AKTI's Child Safeguarding Policy, and that all new employees read, sign, and return copies of the Policy.
- Ms. Demetra Petsa & Ms. Demetra Orthodoxou are responsible for ensuring that all new employees receive child safeguarding training that is relevant and appropriate to their engagement within the organization, and that all children and families with whom the organization works are aware of AKTI's Child Safeguarding Policy.

These individuals are also the point of contact for the staff, families and children if a concern regarding child safeguarding arises. The contact details of these employees are available to the staff and families.

They are responsible for giving appropriate care, support and protection to children when a case arises. The designated positions will have access to advice and support from the (local organisations/lawyers?) when a case arises. They will support each other to be effective in their positions.

2.5 Partners

AKTI recognises the importance of ensuring partners' commitment to child safeguarding. Therefore, the following steps are taken when working with our partners:

- Partners are aware of (read and sign) AKTI's Child Safeguarding Policy.
- AKTI assesses the child safeguarding policies of the partners and reviews their practice of reporting.

- If partners will work with AKTI directly on issues involving or affecting children, AKTI and its partner will come to an agreement as to how to achieve compliance with Child Safeguarding Policies, how the organizations will support each other under the Child Protection Policy, and clarify each organisations' responsibilities.
- Partnerships will be terminated if the partner does not fulfil its commitments.

2.6 Children and Families

AKTI recognises that cooperation with the families of children involved in our activities is important to ensure the effectiveness of the child safeguarding policies. To this end, the following will be done when children are involved in AKTI's activities¹:

- Obtain parental or caregiver consent for the child's participation.
- Obtain parental or caregiver consent for obtaining and storing personal information about the children (e.g. name, age, gender).
- Obtain parental or caregiver consent for taking photographs of the children.
- Ensure AKTI's staff has contact information for the parents/caregivers of involved children.
- AKTI's staff will be easily identifiable, for example by wearing an AKTI t-shirt or badge.
- Parents/caregivers are aware of AKTI's Child Safeguarding Policy, and who the points of contact regarding concerns and complaints are.
- Where possible, AKTI will obtain feedback from children and parents/caregivers at the end of each activity, regarding the child safeguarding processes implemented.

¹ These steps are not required when AKTI is invited to implement activities within the framework of school classes/work, as in such case schools are responsible for engaging, informing and obtaining consent from parents or caregivers.

STANDARD 3 – PROCEDURES

AKTI is committed to ensuring that all children that are involved in our activities, or come in contact with our staff, are protected. To ensure this is the case all staff and collaborators must report even minor concerns or suspicions of harm, using the reporting procedure outlined here.

When abuse or suspected abuse is disclosed to one of our staff, staff will act in the manner described in Figure 1.

When there is an allegation against staff or partners, staff will report it to the local authorities according to national law. Internal safeguarding procedures will start and depending on the decision of the national authorities, action will be taken and cases must be recorded. If there is no need to report to local authorities, internal safeguarding procedures must start immediately and a decision must be made.

When an allegation is made against a person outside of the organisation it will be reported to the local authorities if necessary. If not, the case will be recorded internally and appropriate action will be taken while providing support and care to children.

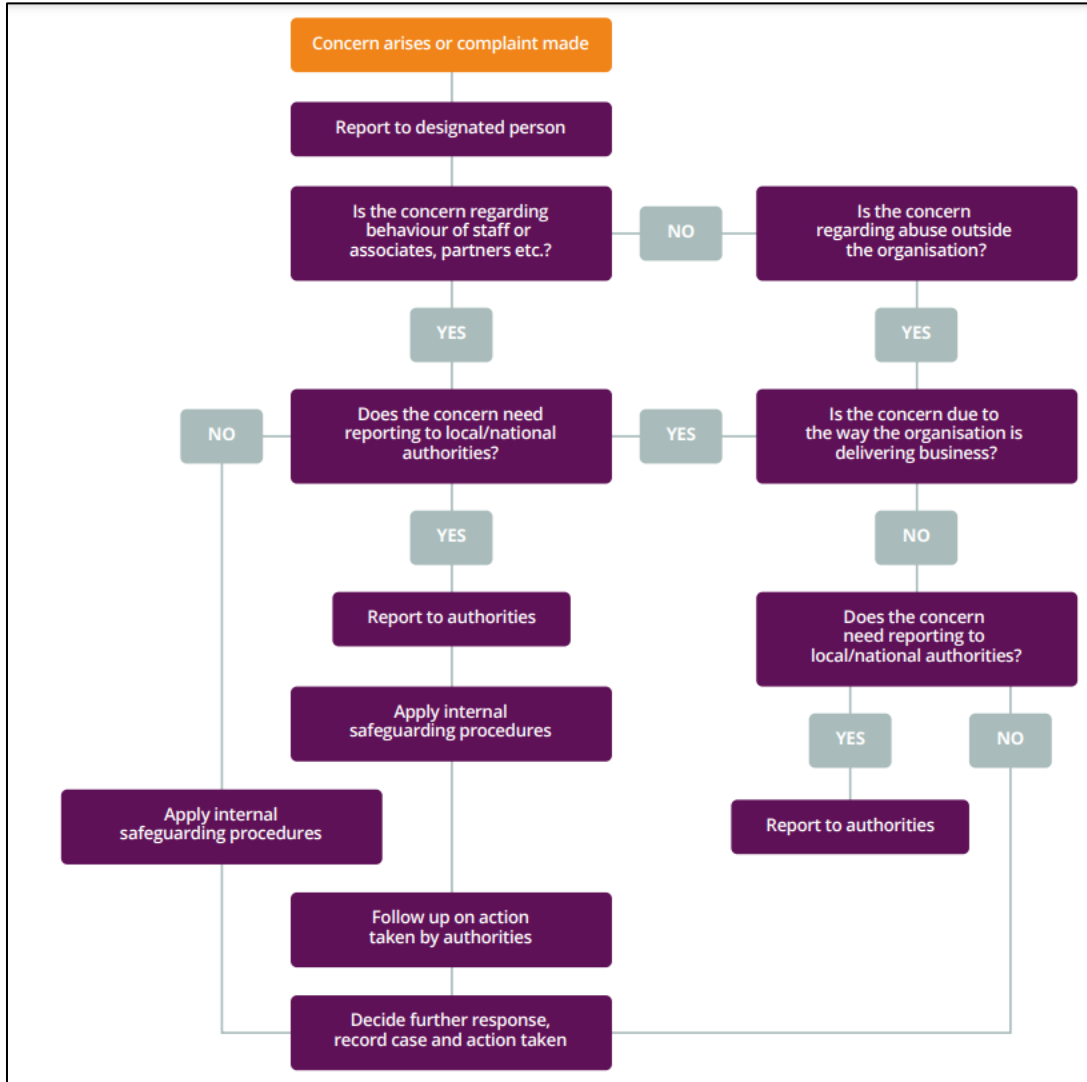


Figure 1 Response to suspected cases of child abuse (taken from <https://www.keepingchildrensafe.global/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/KCS-CS-Standards-ENG-200218.pdf>)



STANDARD 4 – ACCOUNTABILITY

The Child Protection Policy will be updated annually.

Any incidences will be considered to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement of the Policy.