

The Safeguarding Code of Conduct contains the essential principles and rules that reflect the behaviours and standards Link Education (Link) expects of staff, volunteers and representatives in promoting Link values and to protect its reputation. It is the responsibility of us all individually and collectively to ensure our behaviour is consistent as set out in this Code of Conduct.

The basic values of Link require that we observe the laws, customs and traditions of the countries where we work or are visiting. In cases where such laws, customs or traditions contravene the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child or the UN Declaration of Human Rights, then the latter two shall prevail. They are founded on the conviction that all children and adults are of equal value, children have special rights and everyone has a responsibility to uphold those rights.

For staff, representatives and third parties, this Code of Conduct covers behaviour in and outside of working hours and sets an ethical framework which applies **24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year**.

Link representatives MUST ALWAYS:

- Work actively to protect all by complying with Link's Child Safeguarding and Safeguarding policy and procedures.
- Create a safe environment for children and anyone we seek to help (including vulnerable adults) to prevent them from all forms of abuse and harm, including physical, sexual or emotional exploitation or abuse, harassment or neglect.
- Challenge any attitude or behaviour of an employee or other representative working for or on behalf of Link in any capacity, and members of the communities where we work, which contravenes Link's Code of Conduct.
- Treat all children and anyone we are trying to help with the same respect and provide support and aid according to their needs.
- Be aware of how conduct and behaviour may be interpreted by children, beneficiaries and people from different social/economic and cultural contexts.
- Provide space and opportunity for children, vulnerable adults and anyone we are trying to help to talk about and raise their concerns.
- Uphold and adhere to all Link policies and procedures.
- Respect the basic rights of others by acting fairly, honestly and tactfully, and treat all with dignity and respect.
- Maintain high standards of personal and professional conduct at all times avoiding any behaviour which may be detrimental to Link, its partners and/or beneficiaries, including acting appropriately around the Link logo.
- Protect the safety and well-being of themselves and others.
- Protect the organisation's assets and resources.
- Report within 24 hours any matter that breaks the standards contained in this Code of Conduct.

Link representatives MUST NEVER:

- Abuse, exploit or develop physical or sexual relationships with anyone under the age of 18. Sexual relations are prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief regarding age is not a defence.
- Have sexual relationships with sex workers or any adult beneficiaries, since these are based inherently on unequal power dynamics, undermine the credibility and integrity of Link and are strongly discouraged.
- Take part in any form of discrimination, harassment, bullying, humiliating behaviour or abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, verbal), intimidation or exploitation, or in any other way infringe the rights of others. This includes behaviour towards intimate partners.
- Engage in harmful traditional practices including Female Genital Mutilation, Child Early and Enforced Marriage.
- Use anyone under the age of 18 as a domestic worker.
- In anyway trivialise child abuse or the exploitation and harassment of adults.
- Supply alcohol or harmful substances to a child or vulnerable adult.
- Do things of a personal nature for a child or anyone we helping that they can do themselves, such as bathing.

# Safeguarding Code of Conduct

- Place children or any beneficiary in unsafe situations or conditions.
- Send private messages to children or anyone from a vulnerable community met through Link, for example private messaging on social media channels, unless from the vulnerable community and communicating with family members.
- Fail to report a safeguarding concern or breach of the code of conduct or any other Link policy or procedure. This includes allowing any suspicion of abuse or poor practice to go unreported.
- Interfere with the complainant, witnesses or hamper any investigation or enquiry, which is being carried out into a child safeguarding, staff or beneficiary concern or breach of one of Link's policies.
- Use computers or other electronic devices to view, download, distribute or create indecent or inappropriate materials, such as pornography.
- Distribute gifts or financial support to a child or beneficiary. Support must go through official channels via Link.
- Show favouritism, which includes giving personal gifts to beneficiaries.
- Take photographs or recordings using personal devices. Staff may do so, if cleared in advance with the line manager, and if images or recordings are uploaded to a Link computer and then deleted from the device within 48 hours.
- Engage in social media relationships or post or share images or recordings of beneficiaries on social media.
- Drink alcohol or use any other substances in a way that adversely affects the ability to do the job or affects the reputation of Link.
- Accept bribes or significant gifts from governments, beneficiaries, donors, suppliers or others, which have been offered as a result of your employment.
- Be in possession of, nor profit from the sale of, illegal goods or substances.
- Behave in a way which threatens the security of yourself or others.

**Any staff found to be in contravention of any of the above will be subject to Link's disciplinary procedures as detailed in the Employee Handbook. Failure to adhere to this code by consultants, partners, contractors, volunteers and other third parties may lead to termination of contracts or agreements and any relationship with Link. Other visitors, such as funders, will be reported to the appropriate authorities.**

## Declaration

I \_\_\_\_\_ fully understand and agree to abide by Link's Code of Conduct. I understand that any breaches of the Code of Conduct will be reported to the International Programme Director of Link International and appropriate action will be taken in accordance with the relevant policies and procedures.

I have read this document and all associated documents.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Definition of terms

**'Bullying'** is behaviour that hurts someone else. It usually happens over a lengthy period of time and can harm a child both physically and emotionally. Bullying includes:

- verbal abuse, such as name calling
- non-verbal abuse, such as hand signs or glaring
- emotional abuse, such as threatening, intimidating or humiliating someone
- exclusion, such as ignoring or isolating someone
- undermining, by constant criticism or spreading rumours
- controlling or manipulating someone
- racial, sexual or homophobic bullying
- physical assaults, such as hitting and pushing
- making silent, hoax or abusive calls.

Bullying can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. When bullying happens online it can involve social networks, games and mobile devices. Online bullying can also be known as cyberbullying.

**‘Child’** is anyone under the age of 18 years old.

**‘Child abuse’** consists of anything which individuals, institutions or processes do, or fail to do, which directly or indirectly harms children or damages their prospect of safe and healthy development into adulthood. The main categories of abuse are defined by WHO as Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Harassment, Neglect and Negligent treatment, Sexual Abuse and Exploitation. An annex detailing how to recognize signs of child abuse is attached.

**‘Child labour’** is work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It is work that:

- is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and
- interferes with their schooling by:
  - depriving them of the opportunity to attend school;
  - obliging them to leave school prematurely; or
  - requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

If a young person, under the age of 18 is part of an apprenticeship scheme within the statutory law of the country and does not meet any of the above, this would not be considered by Link as child labour. However, any contractor or sub-contractor must inform Link of the name of any apprentice who will be directly involved with our work.

For Link it is not acceptable for any staff or representatives to engage anyone under the age of 18 to work as domestic help in their place of work or at home.

**‘Child safeguarding’** is the responsibility of organisations to make sure their staff, operations and programmes do no harm to children or expose them to abuse or exploitation.

**‘Child sexual exploitation’** is a type of sexual abuse. Young people in exploitative situations and relationships receive things such as gifts, money, drugs, alcohol, status or affection in exchange for taking part in sexual activities. Young people may be tricked into believing they're in a loving, consensual relationship. They often trust their abuser and don't understand that they're being abused. They may depend on their abuser or be too scared to tell anyone what's happening. They might be invited to parties and given drugs and alcohol before being sexually exploited. They can also be groomed and exploited online. Some children and young people are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Child sexual exploitation can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults and involve multiple perpetrators.

**'Child trafficking'** is child abuse. It involves recruiting and moving children who are then exploited. Many children are trafficked from one part of a country to another, or from a completely different country. Children are trafficked for:

- child sexual exploitation
- benefit fraud
- forced marriage
- domestic servitude such as cleaning, childcare, cooking
- forced labour in factories or agriculture
- criminal exploitation such as cannabis cultivation, pickpocketing, begging, transporting, drugs, selling pirated DVDs and bag theft.

**'Emotional abuse'** is persistent and, over time, it severely damages a child's emotional health and development. It involves:

- humiliating, putting down or constantly criticising a child
- shouting at or threatening a child or calling them names
- mocking a child or making them perform degrading acts
- constantly blaming or scapegoating a child for things which are not their fault
- trying to control a child's life and not recognising their individuality
- not allowing them to have friends or develop socially
- pushing a child too hard or not recognising their limitations
- manipulating a child
- exposing a child to distressing events or interactions such as drug taking, heavy drinking or domestic abuse
- persistently ignoring them
- being cold and emotionally unavailable during interactions with a child
- never saying anything kind, positive or encouraging to a child and failing to praise their achievements and successes.

**'Female genital mutilation' (FGM)** is the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It's also known as female circumcision or cutting. Religious, social or cultural reasons are sometimes given for FGM. However, FGM is child abuse. It's dangerous and a criminal offence. There are no medical reasons to carry out FGM. It doesn't enhance fertility and it doesn't make childbirth safer. It's used to control female sexuality and can cause severe and long-lasting damage to physical and emotional health.

**'Neglect'** is persistently failing to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs usually resulting in serious damage to their health and development. Neglect may involve a parent's or carer's failure to:

- provide adequate food, clothing or shelter
- supervise a child (including leaving them with unsuitable carers) or keep them safe from harm or danger
- make sure the child receives appropriate health and/or dental care
- make sure the child receives a suitable education
- meet the child's basic emotional needs – parents may ignore their children when they are distressed or even when they are happy or excited. This is emotional neglect.

**'Physical abuse'** is the non-accidental use of physical force that deliberately or inadvertently causes a risk of/ or actual injury to a child. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing non-accidental physical harm to a child. Physical harm can also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness or temporary, permanent injury or disability of a child.

**‘Sexual abuse’** is forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. It doesn’t necessarily involve violence and the child may not be aware that what is happening is abuse. Child sexual abuse can involve contact abuse and/or non-contact abuse. Contact abuse happens when the abuser makes physical contact with the child.

**‘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 sexual exploitation or another.

**‘Sexual harassment’** is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, which has the purpose, or effect of violating the dignity of a person and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Such conduct may take place on a single occasion or on several occasions. Sexual harassment may take the form of unwelcome physical, verbal or nonverbal conduct, which may include, but is not limited to, the following: (a) Unwanted physical contact, ranging from touching to sexual assault and rape. (b) Verbal forms of sexual harassment including unwelcome innuendoes, suggestions and hints, sexual advances, comments with sexual overtones, sex related jokes or insults or unwelcome graphic comments about a person’s body made in their presence or directed toward them, unwelcome and inappropriate enquiries about a person’s sex life, and sexual orientation, directed at a person or group of persons. (c) Non-verbal forms of sexual harassment including unwelcome gestures, whistling, indecent exposure, or the unwelcome display of sexually explicit pictures or objects. (d) Unwelcome messages of a sexual nature that are sent via email, SMS, skype, voice messages and other electronic means, whether using Link devices or personal mobiles/equipment. (e) Sexual harassment that is linked to recruitment/employment opportunities, promotion, training or development opportunities, and the offer of salary increments or other employee benefits in exchange for sexual favours.

**‘Vulnerable community’** is any community in which Link Education is operating.