

Isha Foundation

Child Protection Policy

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1. INTRODUCTION

Isha Foundation offers yoga programmes for children on a regular basis. It is important to put in place a Child Protection Policy to ensure that children are in a safe and secure environment when attending these programmes.

Safeguarding is defined as protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of health and/or development, ensuring that children grow up in the provision of safe and effective care and taking action to enable all children to have the best life chances.

Purpose of a Child Protection Policy

To inform parents, volunteers and teachers about Isha Foundation's commitment for safeguarding children. The purpose of this policy is also to enable everyone to have a clear understanding of how these responsibilities should be carried out.

Teachers & Volunteers

Teachers and volunteers involved in our programmes have responsibility to provide a safe environment for children and must be familiar with this Child Protection Policy. They will receive appropriate safeguarding children training, so that they are knowledgeable and aware of their role in the early recognition of the indicators of abuse or neglect and of the appropriate procedures to follow.

Mission Statement

To provide an environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to talk, and are listened to when they have a worry or a concern.

To ensure children know that there are adults in the Isha Foundation whom they can approach if they are worried.

When concerned about the welfare of a child, the teacher or volunteer should always act in the interests of the child.

Implementation, Monitoring and Review of the Child Protection Policy

The policy will be reviewed regularly. It will be implemented through the Isha Foundation's training programme, and as part of day to day practice.

2. STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

In order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, the school will act in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 2004
- Sexual Offences Act (2003)
- Section 26, The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (PREVENT duty)

3. THE DESIGNATED BOARD FOR CHILD PROTECTION

The Designated Board for Child Protection (The Designated Board) consists of Senior members of Isha Foundation and takes the lead responsibility for child protection. One of the members of the Designated board will be always available to discuss any safeguarding concerns with the parents, teachers and volunteers.

The members of the Designated Board:

- Jana Zbacnik (jana.zbacnik@ishafoundation.org, 07412780580)
- Avanthi Pethe (avantipethe@gmail.com, 07436246378)
- Anna Avramidou (INFO@annaavramidou.co.uk, 07817326262)

The broad areas of responsibility of the Designated Board are:

- To refer all cases of suspected abuse or neglect to the Local Authority Children's Services (Safeguarding and Specialist Services) and/ or Police (cases where a crime may have been committed)
- To act as a source of support, advice and expertise on matters of safety and safeguarding and when deciding whether to make a referral by liaising with relevant agencies
- Support teachers and volunteers who have concerns about the safety of a child

Training

The members of the Designated Board will undergo training with the aim:

1. To understand the assessment process for providing early help and intervention
2. To ensure that teachers and volunteers have access to and understand the Isha Foundation's Child Protection Policy and procedures
3. To be able to keep detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals
4. To encourage a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, among the teachers and volunteers, in any measures the Isha Foundation may put in place to protect them

4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF TEACHERS AND VOLUNTEERS

During the programmes for children a trained teacher supported by at least two adults will always supervise all the activities.

The teachers and volunteers will adhere to the Isha Foundation's code of conduct on how to interact with the participants and in particular they will avoid any physical contact with children.

If a teacher or a volunteer is concerned about a child s/he must inform a member of the Designated Board. The member of the Designated Board will decide on the next steps in accordance with this policy.

5. WHEN TO BE CONCERNED

A child centred and coordinated approach to safeguarding:

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is **everyone's responsibility**. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, teachers and volunteers in contact with children should make sure their approach is **child centred**. This means that they should consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child.

Teachers and volunteers should be aware of the main categories of maltreatment: **physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect**.

Physical abuse is deliberately physically hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age- or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact including both penetrative or non-penetrative acts such as kissing, touching or fondling the child's genitals or breasts, vaginal or anal intercourse or oral sex. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing; shelter, including exclusion from home or abandonment; failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate care-takers; or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Peer on peer abuse

If one child or young person causes harm to another, this should not necessarily be dealt with as abuse. When considering whether behaviour is abusive, it is important to consider:

- Whether there is a large difference in power (for example age, size, ability, development) between the young people concerned; or
- Whether the perpetrator has repeatedly tried to harm one or more other children; or
- Whether there are concerns about the intention of the alleged perpetrator.

Peer on peer abuse can manifest itself in many ways and different gender issues can be prevalent. Severe harm may be caused to children by abusive and bullying behaviour of other children, which may be physical, sexual or emotional.

6. THE DISCLOSURE PROCEDURE

If a child discloses that s/he has been abused in some way, the teacher / volunteer should:

- Listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief.
- Accept what is being said.
- Allow the child to talk freely.
- Reassure the child, but not make promises which might not be possible to keep.
- Never promise a child that they will not tell anyone - as this may ultimately not be in the best interests of the child.
- Reassure him or her that what has happened is not his or her fault.
- Stress that it was the right thing to tell.
- Listen, only asking questions when necessary to clarify.
- Not criticise the alleged perpetrator.
- Explain what has to be done next and who has to be told.
- Make a written record which must be a clear, precise, factual account of the observations.
- Pass the information to the Designated Board without delay.

The Designated Board will review the disclosure at hand and decide whether the concerns should be referred to Children's services. If it is decided to make a referral to the Children's services, this will first be discussed with the parents unless to do so would place the child at a risk of significant harm by:

- The behavioural response it prompts e.g. a child being subjected to abuse, maltreatment or threats / forced to remain silent if alleged abuser informed;

- Leading to an unreasonable delay;
- Leading to the risk of loss of evidential material;

7. ALLEGATIONS INVOLVING TEACHERS AND VOLUNTEERS

An allegation is any information which indicates that a teacher/volunteer may have:

- Behaved in a way that has, or may have harmed a child.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against/related to a child.
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way which indicates s/he would pose a risk of harm if they work regularly or closely with children.

This applies to any child the teacher /volunteer has contact with during the Isha Foundation's programmes.

Isha Foundation has put in place a whistle blowing policy which provides the procedure for all teachers and volunteers to make known any concerns that they may have about the behaviour of any other person within the Isha Foundation.

The person to whom an allegation is first reported should take the matter seriously and keep an open mind. S/he should not investigate or ask leading questions if seeking clarification; it is important not to make assumptions. Confidentiality should not be promised and the person should be advised that the concern will be shared on a 'need to know' basis only.

Actions to be taken include making an immediate written record of the allegation using the informant's words – including time, date and place where the alleged incident took place, brief details of what happened, what was said and who was present. This record should be signed, dated and immediately passed on to the members of the Designated Board.

The Designated board will not investigate the allegation itself, or take written or detailed statements, but will assess whether it is necessary to refer the concern to the Local Authority Designated Officer:

Children's Services – 0300 1234043

SOOHS (Out of Hours Service-Children's Services) – 0300 1234043

If the allegation meets any of the three criteria set out at the start of this section, contact should always be made with the Local Authority Designated Officer without delay.

Where there are concerns about one of the members of the Designated Board, this should be referred to the other members of the Designated Board. In the event of expressed concerns being made against a member of the Designated Boards, if the teacher/ volunteer feels unable to raise an issue with other members of the Designated Board or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, allegations should be reported directly to the Safeguarding Children Board (tel. no: 0208 227 3578).

After closing an external investigation, the incident(s) triggering the investigation will be revised internally with an aim to assess whether any additional measures need to be put in place to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

8. RECORD KEEPING

All concerns, discussions and decisions made and the reasons for those decisions should be recorded in writing.

When a child has made a disclosure, the teacher/volunteer should:

- Record as soon as possible after the conversation.
- Do not destroy the original notes in case they are needed by a court.
- Record the date, time, place and any noticeable non-verbal behaviour and the words used by the child.
- Record statements and observations rather than interpretations or assumptions.

All records need to be given to the Designated Board promptly. No copies should be retained by the teacher or volunteer.

9. CONFIDENTIALITY

Safeguarding children raises issues of confidentiality that must be clearly understood by all teachers/ volunteers involved in the Isha Foundations programmes for children.

- All teachers and volunteers have a responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with the members of the Designated board and with the investigative agencies.
- If a child confides in a teacher/volunteer and requests that the information is kept secret, it is important that the teacher/volunteer tells the child in a manner appropriate to the child's age/stage of development that they cannot promise complete confidentiality – instead they must explain that they may need to pass information to other professionals to help keep the child or other children safe. This may ultimately not be in the best interests of the child.
- Teachers/ volunteers who receive information about children and their families should share that information only within appropriate professional contexts.

10. TRANSPARENCY

Isha Foundation will ensure that the Child Protection Policy is known, understood and used appropriately:

- To ensure the Isha Foundation's Safeguarding Policy is reviewed regularly.
- To ensure the Child Protection Policy is available publicly via the Isha Foundation webpage.