

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

This Policy applies to the FutureSense Group, which includes Challenges Abroad (referred to as CA) and the FutureSense Foundation (referred to as FSF). This policy outlines our Safeguarding policy for children and vulnerable adults.

Safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults is the measure to protect their health, wellbeing and rights to live free from abuse, harm and neglect.

A “child” is defined as every person below the age of 18 as per United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child.

A “vulnerable adult” is anyone who can be considered vulnerable due to their personal circumstance, background or due to any factor causing them to be vulnerable during a specific activity.

1. Our Commitment to Safeguarding

We have a zero tolerance for any form of exploitation or abuse. We recognise our responsibility in safeguarding everyone we work with, including children and vulnerable adults, from all forms of violence, abuse – including sexual abuse, harassment, discrimination, demeaning or culturally inappropriate behaviour, physical punishment, neglect and negligent treatment, maltreatment, and exploitation, including sexual exploitation and harassment.

We recognise that all individuals shall be treated equally irrespective of their age, gender, status, class, caste, nationality, ethnic or social origin, faith, visual appearance, language ability, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, or any factor that may distinguish them from others.

We recognise the role of our partner organisations as the primary guardians, care takers or Designated Safeguarding Leads or officers for any child or vulnerable adult participating in our programs. We accept that it is responsible for ensuring that an official guardian, caretaker or Designated Safeguarding Lead or officer is always present during any interactions with children or vulnerable adults. We require that all foundation representatives follow the safeguarding standards outlined in this policy, at all times when representing the foundation.

The foundation recognises its responsibility to work together with its partner organisations to safeguard all children and vulnerable adults coming into contact with its programs by ensuring adequate safeguarding standards are upheld by collaborating with safeguarding leads, educational institutions, parents, guardians, care takers and government authorities. We acknowledge its responsibilities in line with:

- the UN convention on Human Rights,
- the UN convention on the Rights of the Child,
- Applicable national child safeguarding and vulnerable people safeguarding legislation in the countries where we operate, for example (in the UK):
 - Children and Families Act, 2014
 - Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act, 2006

- Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2022
- Equality Act, 2010
- Local and regional safeguarding laws

2. Who this Policy Applies to

This policy applies to all representatives and individuals engaged with our work. This includes any person representing us, including but not limited to all staff, interns, project participants, contractors, consultants, trustees, advisors, visitors, and partner organisations.

The policy aims to protect all children and vulnerable adults engaged with the organisation, irrespective of them being beneficiaries or associated with the delivery of program activities.

3. Policy Aim

This policy aims to ensure that all children and adults who come into direct or indirect contact with us are kept safe from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect, harassment, and exploitation. This includes ensuring a safe environment and upholding of the basic needs of children, vulnerable adults, and participants during any program activities, in order to ensure their safety and wellbeing, and enabling their best possible physical and mental development.

The policy aims to ensure that it is applied equally to all regardless of age, gender, status, class, caste, nationality, ethnic or social origin, faith, visual appearance, language ability, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, or any factor that distinguishes them from others. Ensuring a safe and secure environment where each individual feels valued, respected, and safe to express themselves, their opinions and needs. We recognise that persons living with physical or mental disability may require additional safeguarding measures to be implemented in order to keep them safe from harm.

The policy aims to adhere to internationally recognised standards and local laws while giving due consideration to local traditions and cultural values.

4. Prevention & Implementation

To safeguard children and vulnerable adults, and prevent abuse and misconduct, we are committed to implementing the following practices.

We commit to:

- Ensuring that all beneficiaries, representatives, and individuals engaged with us are aware of our policies, their rights and responsibilities, and mechanisms through which they can raise concerns.
- Ensuring all programs and program activities are subject to a documented risk assessment and safeguarding review. This must include identifying safeguarding risk and mitigations, and measures to take to continually monitor and assess the known risks.

- Ensuring all individuals engaging with children have undergone a national working with children's check or criminal records check of equivalent standing and a personal reference check. We do not knowingly hire or engage with anyone posing a risk to children or vulnerable adults.
- Ensuring all representatives and individuals engaging in program delivery with us have completed a physical and psychological health declaration. Declared conditions of serious nature will require approval to participate from a health professional.
- Ensuring all representatives and individuals engaging with us have been appropriately vetted, inducted and reference checked. Including an induction covering all our policies.
- Ensuring there are contracts and/or MOUs with all staff, contractors and partner organisations, which requires each individual to read, sign and adhere to our Safeguarding Policy, Social Media Policy, PSEAH Policy, Whistleblowing Policy and Code of Conduct.
- Ensuring all representatives and individuals engaging with us have been adequately trained on safeguarding processes and know their responsibilities.
- Ensuring that our partners are trained and informed on the policy, and their obligations to report and uphold the safeguarding standard.
- We ensure all staff members and contractors are trained to identify risk, mitigate risk, identify early warning signs, follow reporting procedures, and provide basic psychological first aid.
- We ensure all teams have a trained designated first responder and that they are able to provide basic first response including basic physical or psychological first aid.
- Ensuring there is adequate staffing and safeguarding officers and leads for the number and specific needs of the activities and the children or vulnerable adults engaged.
- Ensuring that all program activities are of voluntary nature with the child or vulnerable adult being able to decide to not participate.
- Ensuring that children and vulnerable adults have safe, secure, accessible, and private facilities during the entirety of the program activities.

Each representative and/or individual engaged by us, must:

- Read, sign and adhere to this Safeguarding Policy, the Social Media Policy, the PSEAH Policy, the Whistleblowing Policy and have signed the Code of Conduct.
- Never coerce or force anyone to participate in program activities but allow anyone not wishing to participate in a program activity to not do so and uphold the voluntary nature of them.
- Ensure, where possible, that another adult is present when working with children and/or vulnerable adults.
- Report any safeguarding concerns to a local manager, Safeguarding Lead or Officer.
- Ensure all activities involving children have informed consent from their parent or guardian, and the child.

5. Reporting

We are committed to fully investigating all claims of exploitation, abuse, misconduct, or noncompliance of policies.

5.1 Reporting & Whistleblowing

Anyone suspecting or witnessing a safeguarding incident, misconduct or policy violation must report their concern as soon as possible, within 24 hours of the incident occurring, to a manager or a safeguarding officer.

The confidentiality will be maintained at all times on a need-to-know basis to ensure the safety and protection of the individual reporting an incident or suspected incident, the survivor and the subject of complaint.

The individual reporting the incident will be protected under our Whistleblowing Policy.

Individuals can report a suspicion or incident directly to the Global Safeguarding Manager in instances where there is a conflict of interest, a senior manager or safeguarding officer or lead is implicated, or if the claim cannot otherwise safely or comfortably be raised.

Such incidents should be reported directly to the Global Management team by emailing safeguarding@futuresense.co.uk

5.2 Investigation

We will carefully examine allegations and where deemed necessary will immediately carry out a full investigation, led by the Safeguarding Manager or Board of Trustees, followed by possible disciplinary actions being taken. This can include suspension of contract, termination, or criminal conviction under the local laws of the nations affected by the violation/crime.

Investigations will be carried out irrespective of if the accused individual is still involved, engaged with, or working with us.

During the time of investigation, the foundation will follow steps to ensure a do-no-harm approach and ensure a full risk assessment of the investigation and associated actions is carried out. This includes any accused individual may be transferred to other duties that do not involve working with children or vulnerable adults, until a conclusion has been reached. During the investigation, the foundation will uphold full confidentiality, ensuring the individual's safety and right to receive fair treatment.

5.3 Recording Claims

Records will be maintained of all investigations and shared with relevant partners and government authorities as required.

In the case of a false or malicious claim all records implicating a specific individual will be removed. In case of substantiated claims, actions will be taken, and processes will be reviewed to enhance safeguarding practices.

5.4 Support

We are committed to ensuring any child, vulnerable adult or representative survivor of exploitation, abuse or any other form of violence receives access to the services they may require, including health care support in their local language. Ensuring this can be facilitated through the governmental support system or through their mandated private insurance.

We will seek to provide guidance to ensure anyone having been subjected to malicious or unsubstantiated claims can receive the support they need to ensure their wellbeing and their ability to return to work.

5.5 Disclosure by a Child or Vulnerable Adult

It must be acknowledged that a child or a vulnerable adult survivor may be the one making the report or claim. In such instances it is important to follow the below steps.

1. Ensure the individual is physically unharmed and not needing immediate medical treatment – do not take the individual to a closed or remote place for privacy, but instead find alternative solutions such as providing them with a blanket or finding a quiet but not isolated corner.
2. Listen calmly to the individual without interrupting – do not ask probing questions, offer suggested answers, or ask repeat questions or ask them to repeat what they have said as they may think you do not believe them or want a different answer.
3. Reassure they have done the right thing by reporting the suspicion or incident and explain to the individual what you are going to do and what will happen next – do not promise to keep the information secret but explain the process and how you will be with them to support them during the process.
4. Ensure they are not left alone, and that their physical and psychological wellbeing is upheld.
5. Record and report the incident immediately, following the reporting chart.
6. Remember to maintain a high level of confidentiality and only inform those who need to know in order to keep the survivor safe.
7. Ask the survivor if they want to be with a person they trust.
8. Ensure the accused is immediately and discreetly removed from any engagement with children or vulnerable adults until the investigation has been completed.

This policy is reviewed annually or in any case of any major incident.