



## **SOS Children's Villages UK Policy on Safeguarding**

### **Introduction**

SOS Children's Villages UK (SOS CV UK) is committed to safeguarding all children and vulnerable adults coming into contact with the charity.

This Policy applies to anyone employed directly or indirectly by SOS Children's Villages UK and includes trustees, employees, volunteers, work placements, contractors, trainers and consultants. Throughout this policy the term 'personnel' includes all these roles unless otherwise described.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All SOS CV UK personnel who, during the course of their work, have direct or indirect contact with children or vulnerable adults, or who have access to information about them, have a responsibility to safeguard them and promote their welfare.

### **Review and Updating**

This policy was formally agreed by the Chair on behalf of the Board of Trustees, SOS Children's Villages UK on 3 August 2018 following a review of safeguarding carried out in April 2018.

The Policy has been designed in association with the SOS Children's International (KDI) Child Protection Policy (2008) which sets out the definitions, policies and procedures followed in the operations around the world that are funded by SOS CV UK.

A review of safeguarding concerns, action taken, and staff training and support will be conducted annually. This policy will be reviewed every three years or in the light of significant changes to best practice or legislation.

Date of next review: November 2023

### **Roles and responsibilities under this Policy**

Safeguarding responsibilities are as follows:

- The Board of Trustees of SOS CV UK is responsible for ensuring that those benefiting from or working with the charity are not harmed in any way through contact with it. The Board is accountable for SOS Children's Villages UK and therefore all safeguarding within the organisation.
- The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is accountable to the Board of Trustees for safeguarding and will ensure a clear framework for the management accountability of safeguarding is in operation.

- The Board of Trustees has appointed a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to ensure sufficient attention at the governance level to safeguarding at SOS CV UK. Concerns that cannot be raised with the CEO or senior staff can be raised directly with the DSL.
- The Senior Management Team is accountable to the Chief Executive for safeguarding within their departments, for giving leadership on safeguarding as a corporate issue and ensuring it is integral to their department's plan.
- A Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) has been appointed who acts as the first point of contact for SOS CV UK personnel for advice regarding safeguarding issues. The DSO has received training relevant to their role and is responsible for:
  - ensuring that the Safeguarding Policy is kept up to date
  - tracking safeguarding concerns and preparing reports to the Board of Trustees
  - ensuring that safer recruitment and induction procedures are followed
  - ensuring that all information and data relating to this Policy are logged and stored securely
  - liaising with the relevant departments at SOS Children's Villages International to coordinate and share information on safeguarding matters in relation to the children who are the beneficiaries of funds raised, wherever they are living.

## **Safeguarding Principles**

We seek to keep children and vulnerable adults safe by:

- A. ensuring that SOS Children's Villages UK practises safe recruitment in checking the suitability of individuals to work with children and vulnerable adults
- B. providing induction and training for personnel working with SOS CV UK regarding their safeguarding responsibilities and how to fulfil them
- C. raising awareness of child and adult protection situations, and our procedures for identifying and reporting concerns or suspected cases
- D. ensuring donors and supporters who come into direct contact with children have been assessed for their suitability for such contact and that they understand the restrictions on contact and their responsibilities for safeguarding
- E. building a culture of safeguarding where personnel are encouraged to raise concerns and concerns are taken seriously; and sharing this culture with 3<sup>rd</sup> party suppliers

We set out below the steps SOS Children's Villages UK takes and requires all SOS Children's Villages UK personnel to take in order to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.

### **A. Safer recruitment**

SOS Children's Villages UK's recruitment process ensures that thorough checks are made prior to appointment of personnel, in order to prevent any person using their position to harm a child or vulnerable adult.

For all posts at SOS Children's Villages UK, paid and unpaid, the following vetting checks are carried out prior to confirming the appointment:

- identity documents including photographic identity
- references including at least one professional reference using an SOS CV UK template, including information about disciplinary or capability procedures
- a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check

In addition, appointments to paid posts and governance level posts will require:

- a self-disclosure form to disclose previous spent/unspent convictions

SOS Children's Villages UK has a clear reference policy that also ensures any employment reference requests from current or previous employees may only be provided in writing by the Office Manager, in collaboration with the individual's Line Manager, using the Charity's headed paper.

## **B. Induction and training**

SOS Children's Villages UK's Induction process ensures an induction into the organisation for new personnel. As part of the induction process for staff and volunteers, the line manager must ensure they read this Safeguarding Policy, understand their personal responsibilities for safeguarding and the procedures for raising safeguarding concerns.

As part of the induction process for new Trustees, the CEO must ensure they read this Safeguarding Policy, understand their personal responsibilities for safeguarding and the procedures for raising safeguarding concerns

During the induction process appropriate safeguarding training for individuals will be identified, according to the nature of the role. Training will be undertaken within three months of the starting date in the case of paid personnel and volunteers and within six months of the starting date in the case of governance personnel.

SOS Children's Villages UK (SOS CV UK) will ensure that all personnel receive regular ongoing management support and feedback on performance, and the need for any additional training will be addressed during this process.

## **C. Procedure for raising safeguarding concerns**

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. SOS CV UK personnel have a duty to report concerns in line with these procedures. Failure to comply with these responsibilities will be seen as a serious matter which may lead to disciplinary action.

Situations where contact with children or young people is likely to occur include:

- visits to SOS Children's Villages projects, for example Villages, programmes or communities
- visits to schools or children's groups, for example as part of SOS CV UK's awareness raising or fundraising programmes
- undertaking public activities where children may be present, for example community fundraising activities
- while working with data about or images of children

Situations where contact with vulnerable adults may occur include:

- undertaking public activities where vulnerable adults may be present, for example community fundraising activities

The safeguarding policy also applies where any personnel have access or make use of data and images about and of children. All personnel should also be aware of the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) in relation to personal data and images.

All concerns and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to appropriately. This may require a formal referral to the appointed authorities, including the police.

If a member of SOS CV UK personnel is suspected of involvement in a safeguarding issue, this should be raised immediately with a line manager or other senior member of staff. From outside the organisation, a concern can be raised via [confidential@sosuk.org](mailto:confidential@sosuk.org).

A decision will be made on where to initiate SOS CV UK's disciplinary procedures, including suspension from duties, in consultation with the CEO and DSL. A decision on whether to inform appointed authorities will also be made at this point.

If a safeguarding concern about a third party, either as perpetrator or as target, has been raised with SOS CV UK personnel, this should be raised immediately with a line manager or other senior member of staff. A course of action will be determined in consultation with the CEO and DSL, including whether to inform the authorities.

Any safeguarding concern relating to personnel of other Member Associations of the SOS Children's Villages Federation or projects or programmes carried out by other Member Associations will be recorded by SOS CV UK and passed to SOS Children's Villages International through the reporting process on the SOS Children's Villages International website. The decisions made and actions taken by SOS CVI will be tracked and recorded by the DSO.

Recognising that the welfare of the child is paramount, considerations of confidentiality which might apply to other situations should not be allowed to override the right of children to be protected from harm. Personnel should never give absolute guarantees of confidentiality to anyone wishing to tell them about a safeguarding concern.

In all cases confidential records will be kept of the allegations and what actions were taken.

#### **D. Visitors to SOS Children's Villages programmes**

Visiting programmes can bring individuals into direct contact with children and preparing visits can involve the sharing of information. During the course of visits images may be produced.

A visit to an SOS Children's Villages project is inspiring and motivating for SOS CV UK personnel and our donors and supporters. Visits enable SOS CV UK personnel to understand and more effectively communicate our work. They also help donors to see how their financial support is making a real difference to the lives of children and can form a key part of the donor relationship.

Donors are permitted to visit the child they sponsor once per year on request if SOS CV UK believes it is in the interests of our work for them to do so and not contrary to the interests of the child in any way.

Other individuals (such as corporate sponsors, major donors, journalists and policy makers) may also be offered the opportunity to visit programmes, for example to raise the profile of our work or to

improve understanding of our work. Again, this will only be done where it is in the interests of the work of SOS CV UK to do so and not contrary to the interest of the child in any way.

For a programme visit to proceed, the Policy, the SOS Children's Villages Visitor's Guide and the SOS Children's Villages policy declaration will be discussed with the individual(s) who are planning to make the visit. They will be asked to familiarise themselves with the documents, sign the policy declaration and to complete a basic level DBS check. They will be informed of the policy on creating images during the visit and subsequent use of them.

The documents must be completed and returned to SOS CV UK before any arrangements for a visit are made by SOS CV UK. Documentation will be shared with other SOS Children's Villages personnel along with the outcome of the DBS check for the purposes of facilitating the visit.

All visits to programmes are at the ultimate discretion of the programme director. Completing this process does not guarantee access to a programme. Member Associations may have their own policy relating to visits which will also be followed.

SOS CV UK strongly discourages visits by members of the public and donors made independently and not arranged through the UK office. Where we become aware of such visits, we will inform SOS Children's Villages International and the relevant Member Association that SOS CV UK has not undertaken any screening or background check.

#### **E. Building a culture of safeguarding at SOS Children's Villages UK**

With our focus on supporting some of the world's most vulnerable children and our aspiration to play a constructive role in the UK charity sector, SOS CV UK is striving to build a culture in which those with whom it works and those on whose behalf it works can be confident of a safe environment at all times.

SOS CV UK will take part in relevant sector training and seek to maintain best practice in child safeguarding in the UK. We will also seek to positively influence policy and practice at the SOS Children's Villages Federation level.

This Policy is consistent with our policy on disclosure of public interest matters (whistleblowing), which can be found in section 30 of the SOS CV UK Employee Handbook. Employees' safeguarding duties are also referred to in the Employee Handbook in section 39, Use of IT, section 46 Data Protection and section 61 Good Conduct.

The Policy is available to independent contractors and suppliers and should be implemented as good practice. All staff are required to draw the attention of contractors and suppliers to the Policy.

This Policy on Safeguarding will be available on the SOS Children's Villages UK website and accessible to all site visitors.

## **APPENDIX: LINKS AND CONTACT DETAILS**

### Links

SOS CV UK Policy: <https://www.soschildrensvillages.org.uk/news/policy-and-research/child-protection>

KDI Child Protection Policy: <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/publications/policies>

Charity Commission: safeguarding duties for charity trustees  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-duties-for-charity-trustees>

### Contact Details

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) since 2018 is Michael Brewer who can be contacted at [mbrewer@btinternet.com](mailto:mbrewer@btinternet.com)

Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) since 2018 is Karis Mulholland who can be contacted at [Karis.Mulholland@sosuk.org](mailto:Karis.Mulholland@sosuk.org)

The SOS Children's Villages International contact for safeguarding and child protection is Coenraad de Beer, Team Leader Care and Child Safeguarding who can be contacted at [coenraad.debeer@sos-kd.org](mailto:coenraad.debeer@sos-kd.org)

## **APPENDIX: Safeguarding role definitions**

### Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO):

The DSO is the person who has responsibility for ensuring the SOSUK Policy on Safeguarding is adhered to.

#### The DSO:

- ensures the Policy on Safeguarding is up to date with regulatory requirements and best practice
- ensures the Policy is publicised and drawn to the attention of staff, volunteers and other stakeholders so that everyone understands their responsibilities under the Policy
- manages and monitors SOSUK's safer recruitment processes
- ensures that all staff and volunteers have received appropriate training as determined by the Policy
- is the first point of call for staff, volunteers and other stakeholders who have safeguarding concerns
- liaises with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to ensure governance and executive oversight

### Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):

As a member of the SOSUK Board of Trustees, the DSL leads the Board's oversight of SOSUK's safeguarding policies and procedures, which are designed to ensure a safe environment for all those who come into contact with the charity.

#### The DSL:

- Supports the Board's discussion of safeguarding practice and issues, helping to ensure appropriate resourcing and decision making to support SOSUK's commitment to safeguarding.
- Ensures the Board of Trustees allocates sufficient time to understanding and discussing its obligations under legislation and as advised by the Charity Commission. This includes undertaking any training the Board identifies as relevant to their roles.
- Ensures the Board of Trustees receives and considers timely and informative safeguarding reports from the management as requested by the Board or as required by regulation
- Supports the Designated Safeguarding Officer in carrying out his or her functions, in particular
- Provides a point of contact for staff or volunteers who may wish to raise safeguarding issues and who cannot do so with their line manager or the CEO