



Child Protection Policy - Follow This

Introduction (Purpose & Scope)

While the activities of Follow This predominantly do not involve direct interactions with children, there may be occasions where such interactions occur. In these instances, it is crucial to affirm Follow This's commitment to protect children from harm and abuse. This policy is applicable to all staff, volunteers, and anyone representing or working on behalf of Follow This.

Definition(s)

Children: Everyone who is younger than 18 years old.

Policy Statement & Principles

The welfare of the child is paramount.

All children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation, or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.

Follow This believes that a child or young person should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe. We are committed to practice in a way that protects them.

Code of Conduct

Staff and volunteers must always behave appropriately with children, ensuring that all interactions are professional and not subject to misinterpretation.

Any communication with children must be transparent and open to scrutiny. Sharing personal contact information with children without a professional reason and explicit consent from a guardian is prohibited.

Procedures

All staff (paid/unpaid) have a responsibility to follow the guidance laid out in this policy and to pass on any welfare concerns.

All concerns and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously by staff and volunteers and responded to appropriately. If necessary, immediate actions include removing the child from harm and providing necessary assistance. Subsequent steps involve reporting the concern as detailed below.

Roles and responsibilities

- **All Staff and Volunteers:** Everyone working for or representing Follow This, whether paid or unpaid, has the responsibility to adhere to the guidelines of the Child Protection Policy. They must conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with the policy, ensuring professional interactions with children and being vigilant about their welfare. They are also responsible for reporting any concerns or allegations of abuse by following the prescribed reporting pathway.
- **Reporter:** The initial person who identifies concerns or allegations of abuse. This individual has the responsibility to report these concerns following the policy's procedures to ensure that any potential harm to a child is addressed promptly.

- **Board Member:** The Board Member plays a crucial role in the reporting process. It is essential to report urgent matters to the Board Member promptly via email and verbally, except when they are discussed with the confidant (read below). Upon receiving a report, the Board Member must inform the supervisory board within three days and organize a meeting with a chosen employee (for example, the office manager) to assess if further investigation and additional actions are needed.
- **Supervisory Board:** In case the Board Member has been notified, he will notify the board within 3 days of the report. They play a role in overseeing how these concerns are addressed and ensuring that appropriate actions are taken to protect the child. If the confidential adviser is involved, it will depend on the agreements with the reporter whether the advisory board is informed.
- **Confidant (Rob Hulsman):** The confidant acts as an alternative reporting channel. Staff members who prefer not to report directly to the team and/or Board Member can submit their concerns to the confidant. The confidant will then, together with the reporter decide on the next steps. The confidant is committed to maintaining strict confidentiality; without the reporter's explicit consent, no details of the report will be disclosed both internally as externally, ensuring privacy.

Reporting pathway:

- **Reporting:** Concerns should be communicated immediately to the Board Member or to the confidant, both via email and verbally.
- **Notification and Investigation:** The next steps will be determined by the Board Member or the confidant (contingent upon receiving consent from the individual who reported the concern). A meeting will be arranged with the Supervisory Board and a designed employee to discuss the matter and to discuss next steps. These steps may involve engaging an external entity to conduct further investigation or implementing immediate measures like the dismissal of a colleague, should such actions be warranted.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as required to ensure compliance with legislation and best practices.

Awareness policy

We will ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of and understand this policy. This will be done in the following way: the policy will actively be shared with our current team by incorporating it in the onboarding package, and all new employees should read our policies before signing the contract. We will maintain a document where each colleague must indicate that they have read and accept all policies, including the Child Protection Policy.

The policy will be shared on our website (<https://www.follow-this.org/documents/>) and we will actively share this with current and new volunteers.