

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy Statement

1. OUR SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

This Safeguarding and Child Protection policy applies to all staff, including managers and the board of trustees, volunteers, students or anyone working on behalf of **Mind the Gap**.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:-

1. Protect children who receive the services of **Mind the Gap**.
2. Protect Adults who receive the services of **Mind the Gap**.
3. Provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding and protection.

Mind the Gap acknowledges the duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and is committed to ensuring safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance, best practices and requirements.

3. GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT.

Mind the Gap RECOGNISES THAT:-

1. The welfare of the child is paramount as enshrined by the Child's Rights Law, 2007
2. All children, regardless of age, disability, gender, religious beliefs, ethnicity, disability or socio-economic background have a right to equal protection for all types of abuse.
3. Some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, dependency, communication needs or other issues
4. Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other relevant agencies is essential in promoting children's welfare.

4. DEFINITIONS

- **Child** – any person under 18 years as provided by the Child's Rights Law 2007 Laws of Lagos State of Nigeria.
- **Adult** – any person above 18 years as provided by the Human Rights Law 1999 Laws of Nigeria
- **Child protection** – Child protection is the process of protecting individual children identified as either suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect. It involves measures and structures designed to prevent and respond to abuse and neglect
- **Child Protection Unit, Ministry of Youth & Social Development**– the department responsible for safeguarding the development of the child through the prevention of all forms of abuse against children, coordinating response and investigation of suspected abuse and neglect and for providing care and protection to children found to be in need.

- **Designated person for child protection** – the manager/supervisor or designated person responsible for providing advice and support to staff where they have a concern about individual child or who want advice about child protection policy.
 - o **Disclosure** – information given to a staff member by a child, parent or caregiver or a third party in relation to abuse or neglect.
 - o **Physical abuse** includes acts of violence such as punching (hitting with a fist), kicking, whipping, beating with an object, choking, smothering, trying to drown, burning intentionally, or using or threatening to use a gun, knife or other weapon, regardless of whether or not it resulted in obvious physical or mental injury. It is not focused on acts of discipline, although many of those perpetrating the violence may be doing so in the name of “discipline”.
 - o **Safeguarding-** Safeguarding is a term which is broader than 'child protection' and relates to the action taken to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. Safeguarding is: protecting children from maltreatment; preventing impairment of children's health and development; ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.
 - o **Significant Harm** - Some children are in need of help and intervention because they are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. This is the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests and promotion of the welfare of a child. Significant harm can be considered as the severity of maltreatment, the degree, extent, duration and frequency of abuse and neglect; the extent of premeditation, presence or degree of threat, coercion, sadism and bizarre or unusual elements
 - o **Social Worker-** Social care qualified professionals with case responsibility including receiving and responding to child concerns/referrals.
 - o **Specialised Police Unit in the Nigeria Police (presently referred to as Juvenile Welfare Centre)**– the agency responsible for responding to situations where a child is in immediate danger and for working with the Child Protection Unit and investigating cases of abuse or neglect where an offence may have occurred.
 - o **Sexual abuse** includes any act that involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening. It is not necessary for the child to be aware that the activity is sexual and the apparent consent of the child is irrelevant. Sexual abuse can be, but is not limited to:
 - **Contact abuse:** touching breasts, genital/anal fondling, masturbation, oral sex, penetrative or non-penetrative contact with the anus or genitals, encouraging the child to perform such acts on the perpetrator or another, involvement of the child in activities for the purposes of pornography or prostitution.
 - **Non-contact abuse:** exhibitionism, exposure to pornographic or sexual imagery, inappropriate photography or depictions of sexual or suggestive behaviours or comments.

- o **Emotional abuse** – any act or omission that results in adverse or impaired psychological, social, intellectual and emotional functioning or development. This can include:
 - Patterns of isolation, degradation, constant criticism or negative comparison to others. Isolating, corrupting, exploiting or terrorising a child can also be emotional abuse.
 - Exposure to family or intimate partner violence.
- o **Neglect** –Neglect is the most common form of abuse and it has the potential of seriously impairing the child's health or development. Forms of Neglect include-
 - Physical- Looking rough and uncared for, dirty, without appropriate clothing, underweight), not providing the necessities of life like a warm place, food and clothing.
 - Emotional- Not providing comfort, attention and love.
 - Neglectful supervision- Leaving children without someone safe looking after them, no safe home to return to.
 - Medical Neglect- Failure to present a child for timely immunization, persistent nappy rash or skin disorders or not taking care of health needs.
 - Educational or Vocational Neglect- Allowing chronic truancy, failure to enroll in school or vocational training centers or inattention to education needs.

- **LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

1. Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989
2. African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 1999
3. Child's Rights Act, 2003
4. Lagos State Child's Rights Law, 2007
5. Prevention Against Domestic Violence Law, 2007
6. Criminal Law of Lagos State 2011
7. The Family Court of Lagos State (Civil Procedure) Rules 2012
8. EO/BRF/005OF2014, Lagos State Sex Offenders Monitoring Programme And Mandated Reporting, 2014

- **SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION**

Mind the Gap WILL SEEK TO KEEP CHILDREN TO KEEP SAFE BY:-

- a) Protecting and valuing them, listening to and protecting them,
- b) Creating an environment to encourage children to develop a positive self-image,
- c) Encouraging children to develop a sense of independence and autonomy in a way that is appropriate to their age and stage of development,
- d) Providing a safe and secure environment for all children,
- e) Sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers,
- f) Sharing concerns with relevant agencies and involving parents and children appropriately.
- g) Promote and prioritise the safety and well-being of children and young people.
- h) Ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and is provided with appropriate learning opportunities to recognise, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to children and young people.
- i) Ensure appropriate action is taken in the event of incidents/concerns of abuse and support provided to the individual/s who raise or disclose the concern.

- j) Ensure that confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored.
- k) Prevent the employment/deployment of unsuitable individuals.
- l) Ensure robust safeguarding arrangements and procedures are in operation.

- **DISSEMINATION**

The policy and procedures will be widely promoted and are mandatory for everyone involved in **Mind the Gap**. Failure to comply with the policy and procedures will be addressed

without delay and may ultimately result in dismissal/exclusion from the organisation.

- **MONITORING**

The policy will be reviewed a year after development and then every three years, or in the following circumstances:

- a) Changes in legislation and/or government guidance
- b) As a result of any other significant change or event.

- **REPORTING**

To report a safeguarding concern, especially related to children, it's crucial to act quickly and appropriately. Generally, the officer in charge will first approach the child or the person involved to listen to their account, reassure them, and gather information. Then, immediately share this information with our Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) who will investigate further and report the relevant authority, like Children's Social Care or the police, depending on the situation. If it's an urgent concern, call the following week emergency services :

Rape Helpline

- **Phone: 080072732255** (toll-free)

Women's Rights and Health Project (WRAHP)

- **Phone: 0807 658 7873**

Child Abuse Hotline

- **Phone: 08085753932, 08102678442, 080072732255**

This policy was last reviewed on the 16th Day of April 2025.



Signed:-.....

Tayo Olosunde
Executive Director