

Shangri-La Orphanage Home (SOH)

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Version 1.0 — October 2024

Foreword

Every child has the right to be protected from all forms of violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect. These rights are recognized internationally in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) and nationally in the Children's Act of Nepal (2018).

At Shangri-La Orphanage Home (SOH), we recognize that children are inherently vulnerable due to their developmental, physical, and emotional needs. Child protection is not only a legal and ethical responsibility but also essential for the holistic development of every child in our care.

SOH is committed to creating a safe and nurturing environment where children can grow, learn, and participate in decisions that affect their lives. We uphold a zero-tolerance approach to any form of abuse, exploitation, or neglect, ensuring that every child feels secure and valued.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to clearly outline SOH's commitment to the protection, safety, and well-being of all children under its care. This policy applies to all SOH employees, management, volunteers, interns, consultants, contractors, and visitors associated with SOH.

The policy defines roles and responsibilities, reporting procedures, and preventive measures. It serves as a binding guide for staff and partners to ensure consistent and effective child protection practices.

Guiding Principles

SOH's Child Protection Policy is guided by the following principles:

1. **Equality of Rights:** All children, irrespective of age, gender, caste, religion, ability, or socioeconomic status, have equal rights to protection from harm.
2. **Best Interests of the Child:** Every decision or action affecting a child must prioritize their safety, welfare, and development.
3. **Zero Tolerance:** SOH will never condone, ignore, or tolerate any form of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
4. **Duty of Care:** All staff, volunteers, and associates have a responsibility to ensure the safety of children and to act in their best interests.
5. **Participation:** Children are encouraged to express their views, share concerns, and participate meaningfully in decisions that affect them.
6. **Accountability:** Staff and associates are accountable for their behavior and actions. Breaches of this policy will result in disciplinary action.
7. **Non-Discrimination:** Protection and care are provided without discrimination of any kind, ensuring all children are treated with dignity and respect.
8. **Whistleblower Protection:** SOH ensures that any child, staff member, volunteer, or associate who reports safeguarding concerns in good faith is protected from retaliation, intimidation, or discrimination.

Key Definitions

- **Child:** Any individual under the age of 18.
- **Child Protection:** Measures and actions to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

- Child Safeguarding: Internal systems and practices that ensure SOH is a safe organization for children.
- Physical Abuse: Intentional acts causing physical harm, such as hitting, shaking, burning, or withholding essential care.
- Emotional Abuse: Persistent mistreatment that undermines a child's emotional development or sense of self-worth.
- Sexual Abuse: Involvement of a child in sexual activity, or exposure to sexual material, whether or not the child understands or consents.
- Neglect: Failure to provide basic care, supervision, or protection necessary for a child's well-being.
- Exploitation: Using a child for labor, sexual purposes, or personal gain, including trafficking and online grooming.
- Safeguarding Breach: Any violation of this policy, including failure to report concerns.
- Online Abuse: Harm to a child through digital platforms, including cyber bullying, grooming, or exposure to harmful content.
- Retaliation: Any negative action taken against a person for reporting a safeguarding concern.

Legal Framework

SOH's Child Protection Policy aligns with national and international frameworks, including:

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- Children's Act, Nepal (2018)
- Constitution of Nepal (2015), which guarantees children's rights to protection, survival, and development
- Relevant Nepali laws regarding trafficking, child labor, and sexual exploitation
- Additionally, SOH adheres to international safeguarding standards, ensuring our practices meet globally recognized benchmarks for child protection.

Implementation and Responsibilities

Organizational Commitment:

SOH integrates child protection into all aspects of its work. Staff are expected to uphold this policy in daily activities, program planning, and interactions with children.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Director / Management: Ensure the policy is implemented and regularly reviewed.
- Child and Youth Safeguarding Officer: Receive and manage reports of abuse and guide response measures.
- Staff and Volunteers: Follow the policy, maintain professional boundaries, and report any concerns promptly.
- Children: Encouraged to speak up if they feel unsafe, with the assurance that their voices are heard.
- Visitors, donors, and external stakeholders must comply with this policy and sign a Visitor Code of Conduct before interacting with children.

Child-Safe Recruitment:

- Police clearance and self-declaration required.
- Reference checks mandatory.
- Signing of SOH Code of Conduct is compulsory.
- SOH reserves the right to terminate employment or engagement immediately if false or misleading safeguarding information is provided during recruitment.

Training and Awareness:

- All staff undergoes child protection and safeguarding training upon joining and receive refresher training at least every three years or more frequently if safeguarding risks increase or incidents occur.
- Children participate in educational activities to learn about their rights, body safety, and how to report concerns safely.

Child Participation:

- Children are empowered through regular Child Club meetings, discussions, and feedback mechanisms.
- Child-friendly materials (posters, illustrations, and simple-language explanations) will be used to help children understand their rights and reporting mechanisms.

Prohibited Conduct

The following behaviors are strictly prohibited:

- Physical punishment or any form of violence
- Sexual comments, jokes, gestures, or behavior
- Favoritism or providing special privileges to individual children
- Being alone with a child in private or secluded spaces
- Emotional manipulation, threats, humiliation, or degrading treatment
- Giving or receiving personal gifts, money, or favors
- Using children for personal, financial, or reputational gain

Complaint and Reporting Procedures

Who Can Complain:

- Children, staff, volunteers, parents, guardians, donors, or visitors.

Types of Complaints:

- Misconduct or inappropriate behavior by staff
- Physical, sexual, or emotional abuse
- Neglect, bullying, or harassment

Reporting Channels:

- Directly to the Child and Youth Safeguarding Officer
- By email or formal letter
- Through the anonymous feedback box

Handling Procedure:

1. Receiving the Complaint: Child and Youth Safeguarding Officer records details and ensures confidentiality.
2. Classification: Complaints are categorized as sensitive or non-sensitive.
3. Referral: Sensitive complaints are immediately escalated to the Protection Committee.
4. Investigation: Conducted confidentially and fairly, involving only necessary personnel.
5. Feedback: Complainants are informed whether the complaint was substantiated.
6. Action: Confirmed cases result in disciplinary action or referral to authorities.
7. Immediate measures will be taken to ensure the child's safety, including temporary removal of the alleged perpetrator from duties if necessary.
8. Children will receive psychosocial, medical, and emotional support where required.

Confidentiality:

All reports are treated strictly confidentially. Any breach results in immediate disciplinary measures to protect complainants, children, and witnesses. All safeguarding records will be stored securely with restricted access and shared strictly on a need-to-know basis.

Complaint Handling Committee:

- Child and Youth Safeguarding Officer
- Home In-Charge
- Psychologist or Health Coordinator
- One Executive Committee member
- Program Director

Support for Survivors

SOH adopts a child-centered and trauma-informed approach. Children affected by abuse or exploitation will be provided with:

- Psychological counseling
- Medical assistance
- Legal referrals where required
- Ongoing monitoring and emotional support

Prevention and Quality Management

SOH ensures child safety by:

- Embedding child protection in all programs
- Conducting risk assessments for all activities
- Regularly reviewing policies and procedures
- Monitoring implementation and making adjustments as necessary
- Regular internal audits will assess compliance with this policy.
- Feedback from children will inform policy improvements.

Empowering Children

Children are empowered through:

- Workshops on rights, personal safety, and consent
- Regular discussions and feedback sessions
- Encouraging children to support peers in reporting concerns
- Peer-support mechanisms will be encouraged so children can safely support one another in reporting concerns.

Review and Endorsement

This policy is effective from October 2024 and will be reviewed every three years or earlier if required.

Annex 1: Self-Declaration of Criminal Convictions Form

Confidential Form:

I declare that I have never been convicted of any offense involving child abuse or exploitation.

Full Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____

☐ No convictions ☐ Convictions (list below)

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Annex 2: Child Protection Incident Reporting Form

To: Child and Youth Safeguarding Officer

Date/Time/Venue: _____

Type of Concern: ☐ Physical ☐ Sexual ☐ Emotional ☐ Neglect ☐ Other

Name of Child: _____

Description: _____

Reporter: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Annex 3: Code of Conduct

All staff, volunteers, and visitors must:

1. Treat all children with respect.
2. Maintain professional boundaries.
3. Never use violence, threats, or degrading language.
4. Never engage in or condone sexual activity with a child.
5. Obtain consent for any child images.
6. Avoid being alone in private with a child.
7. Report all concerns immediately.
8. Protect children's privacy.
9. Do not give or accept personal gifts.
10. Serve as positive role models.

Annex 4: Risk Analysis Questions

For Children:

- Do you feel safe daily?
- Who can you talk to if uncomfortable?
- Do you know what to do if someone makes you uncomfortable online?

For Staff:

- What situations pose risks?
- Are procedures clear and training adequate?
- Do you understand whistleblower protections and reporting timelines?

For Visitors/Guardians:

- Do you know the child protection policy?
- How can you raise concerns?
- Did you read and sign the Visitor Code of Conduct?