

Child Safeguarding Policy

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Child Safeguarding Policy

Objective

- The policy's objective is to protect children from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and harm.
- The policy sets clear guidelines and procedures for staff and volunteers to follow when working with children, ensuring consistency and accountability.
- The policy includes mechanisms for reporting and addressing concerns about child abuse or potential risks promptly.

Scope and Applicability

This policy will apply to all employees, partners and consultants of Ek Tara

Effective Date

This policy will come into effect from 1st November, 2024

Definitions

Child Safeguarding Policy

- - Child safeguarding refers to a set of policies, procedures, and practices employed to make a business safe for all children they work with. Child protection is about making the world safe for children. It refers to actions done to protect specific children from concerns of risk or harm.
 - By adopting these principles of safeguarding, we can make sure that we try our best to protect the vulnerable from abuse.

Principles of Child Safeguarding:

- Child-centered approach: The welfare and best interests of the child are the primary consideration in all decisions and actions related to safeguarding.
- Prevention: Measures should be taken to prevent harm and abuse from occurring in the first place through proactive policies, procedures, and awareness-raising efforts.
- Proportionality: Safeguarding measures should be proportionate to the level of risk and tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of the child.
- Partnership and collaboration: Effective safeguarding requires collaboration among various stakeholders, including families, communities, organizations, and government agencies.
- Accountability: Caregivers and teachers at Ek Tara responsible for the safety of children should be accountable for their actions, ensuring transparency and a culture of reporting and addressing concerns.
- Continuity: Safeguarding efforts should be ongoing and adaptive, considering the evolving needs and risks faced by children and continuously reviewing and improving policies and practices.

Child Safeguarding Breach:

- A child safeguarding breach refers to any violation or failure to meet the established standards and protocols designed to protect the safety, well-being and rights of children.
- It can involve actions or behaviors that put a child at risk of abuse, harm, neglect, or exploitation.
- A breach may occur when an individual or the organization responsible for safeguarding children fails to fulfill their duty or violates the established policies and procedures intended to ensure the protection of children.

- - Examples of child safeguarding breaches can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, failure to report concerns, inadequate supervision, or breaches of confidentiality.

Examples of Child Safeguarding Breach:

- Physical abuse: This involves the intentional use of physical force that results in harm or injury to a child. It can include hitting, punching, slapping, shaking, or any other form of physical violence.
- Sexual abuse: Sexual abuse involves any form of sexual activity or exposure to explicit material that is not appropriate for a child's age or development. It includes acts such as molestation, rape, exploitation or grooming.
- Emotional or psychological abuse: This type of abuse affects a child's emotional well-being and involves behaviors that undermine their self-esteem, mental health, or overall emotional development. It can include constant criticism, humiliation, manipulation, or isolating a child from social interactions.
- Neglect: Neglect occurs when a caregiver fails to provide the basic necessities and care that a child requires for their well-being, such as food, infrastructure, clothing, education, or medical attention.
- Exploitation: Child exploitation involves the use of a child for personal gain or benefit, often in illegal or harmful activities. It can include child labor, child trafficking, or involving a child in criminal behavior in either a physical or virtual environment.
- Failure to report: Organizations and individuals responsible for the welfare of children have a duty to report suspicions or evidence of child abuse or neglect. Failing to report a known or suspected case of child abuse can be considered a breach of child safeguarding.
- Inadequate supervision: This occurs when children are not adequately supervised, leaving them vulnerable to harm or unsafe situations including exposure to harmful content on online platforms. It may involve leaving children alone for extended periods, not providing appropriate supervision in childcare settings, or failing to ensure the safety of children during activities.

- Breach of confidentiality: Sharing confidential information related to a child's safeguarding without proper authorization or legitimate need can compromise their safety and violate their privacy rights.

Addressing a Breach : Process and Protocol

Protocols for Addressing a Child Safeguarding Breach :

1. Breach Addressed by a Teacher / Support Staff Member

Immediate Actions:

- **Ensure Safety:** The teacher should prioritize the safety of the child involved, removing them from any immediate danger.
- **Listening and Support:** Provide a supportive environment for the child to express their concerns without judgment.

Documentation:

- **Detailed Record Keeping:** Document the incident meticulously, including dates, times, locations, individuals involved, and any direct quotes from the child regarding their experience.

Reporting Protocol:

- **Notify Designated Safeguarding Officer:** Immediately report the breach to the designated safeguarding officer (DSO) or their Reporting Manager.
- **Follow the Reporting Chain:** Ensure that the report follows the established chain of command as per the school's safeguarding policy.

Follow-Up:

- **Emotional Support:** Arrange for the child to receive appropriate emotional support or counseling.
- **Monitor the Child:** Regularly check in with the child to assess their well-being and ensure they feel safe.

2. Breach Addressed by the Respective ELC lead

Reporting and Investigation Protocol:

- The Leader should immediately write to the CSC with all details and documents (if the case be)

Communication with Stakeholders:

- **Informing Parents/Guardians:** If appropriate, inform the parents or guardians of the child involved, ensuring that the communication respects confidentiality.
- **Internal Communication:** Update staff on the situation (without disclosing sensitive details) to maintain transparency and encourage vigilance.

Note : These steps to be exercised in partnership with the CSC

3. Breach Addressed by a Student

Encouraging Reporting:

- **Creating a Safe Environment:** Foster a culture where students feel safe and supported in reporting concerns. This includes training staff to respond sensitively to reports made by students.

Immediate Response:

- **Listen and Validate:** When a student reports a concern, listen carefully and validate their feelings. Reassure them that their safety is the priority and that they did the right thing by speaking up.

Documentation and Reporting:

- **Document the Report:** Record all details of the student's report, ensuring accuracy and clarity.
- **Report to DSO:** Immediately inform the designated safeguarding officer about the student's report and initiate the appropriate investigation procedures.

Follow-Up Support:

- **Counseling and Support Services:** Offer the student access to counseling services and ensure they feel supported throughout the process.
- **Regular Check-Ins:** Keep communication open with the student, checking in on their well-being and providing additional support if needed.

4. Role of the Child Safeguarding Committee (CSC)

Committee Composition and Responsibilities:

- **Committee Structure:** The CSC typically consists of a chairperson, several members (including at least one woman and an external expert), and is reconstituted annually.
- **Review and Oversight:** The CSC oversees the investigation process, ensuring that it is conducted fairly and in a timely manner.

Investigation Protocols:

- **Timelines:** Clear timelines for investigations, aiming for completion within a specific period (7 days).
- **Evidence Collection:** The CSC collects and reviews evidence, including interviews, documentation, and any other relevant material.

Decision Making:

- **Findings Report:** After concluding the investigation, the CSC prepares a comprehensive report detailing findings, actions taken, and recommendations for future prevention.
- **Disciplinary Actions:** The CSC may recommend appropriate disciplinary actions based on findings, which could include training, suspension, or termination of involved staff.

5. Communication and Transparency

Reporting Outcomes:

- **Communicate Findings:** The CSC communicates the outcomes of the investigation to relevant stakeholders, ensuring that sensitive information is handled appropriately.
- **Feedback Loop:** Encourage feedback from all involved parties to enhance the safeguarding processes.

Policy Review and Improvement:

- **Continuous Improvement:** Use insights from the investigation to review and improve safeguarding policies, addressing any gaps identified during the process.
- **Training and Awareness:** Organize training sessions for staff and volunteers based on lessons learned from the incident, promoting a culture of vigilance and accountability.

Policy Framework

All teachers and caregivers as well as administrative members at Ek Tara are responsible both individually and collectively for safeguarding the children associated with Ek Tara directly or indirectly under their care and are responsible for redressing any violation or danger of violation through appropriate and timely escalation to the Complaint Redressal Committee. Violations observed directly or reported by a child concerning their own experience or the experience of others must be treated with equal alertness and speed.

Complaint Redressal Committee:

- A Committee of three members has to be present for the proceedings to take place.
- The Committee will include a chairperson and at least five members, one of whom shall be a lady and one of whom will be an external person with knowledge and experience in handling child safeguarding breaches.
- The Committee will be re-constituted at Ek Tara every year. The names of committee members and changes to the constitution of such committee will be communicated to all employees and stakeholders.

CHILD SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE: CONTACT INFORMATION

Complaint email ID: csc.ektara@gmail.com

<i>Name</i>	<i>Designation</i>	<i>Phone number</i>	<i>Email ID</i>
<i>Anupriya Bhattacharya</i>	<i>Co Chair</i>	<i>9163910529</i>	<i>anupriya@ektara.org.in</i>
<i>Manjusmita Bagchi</i>	<i>Co Chair</i>	<i>9836446830</i>	<i>manjusmita@ektara.org</i>

<i>Dipon Deb</i>	<i>Internal Member</i>	<i>9830421602</i>	<i>dipon@ektara.org.in</i>
<i>Titas Bhattacharya</i>	<i>Internal Member</i>	<i>9830588435</i>	<i>titas@ektara.org.in</i>
<i>Sarmila Mondal</i>	<i>Child Safeguarding Officer</i>	<i>8240002947</i>	<i>sarmila@ektara.org.in</i>
<i>Paroma Sengupta</i>	<i>Internal Member</i>	<i>9007325693</i>	<i>paroma@ektara.org.in</i>
<i>Papia Lahiri</i>	<i>Internal Member</i>	<i>9836614406</i>	<i>papia@ektara.org.in</i>
<i>Dr Sarfaraz Ahmed Khan</i>	<i>External Member</i>	<i>9831736144</i>	<i>sarfarazahmedkhan033@g mail.com</i>
<i>Kunal Chakraborty</i>	<i>Internal Member</i>	<i>8420598675</i>	<i>kunal@ektara.org.in</i>

The Process of Reporting a Child Safeguarding Breach:

- Gather information: Collect all relevant details about the alleged breach, including the date, time, location, people involved, and any supporting evidence or documentation.
- Contact the designated person or authority: Reach out to the designated person or authority responsible for receiving and addressing child safeguarding complaints. This may involve contacting the organization's designated safeguarding officer, child protection helpline, or relevant government agency.
- Provide a written record: Prepare a written report (in the format) detailing the nature of the breach, the individuals involved, and any supporting evidence. Be clear, and concise, and provide as much relevant information as possible.
- Follow the designated procedure: Follow the specific complaint procedure outlined by the organization. This may involve submitting the written complaint, participating in interviews or investigations, and providing additional information or evidence as requested.
- Maintain confidentiality and follow-up: Respect the confidentiality of the process and refrain from discussing sensitive information with unauthorized individuals. Stay informed about the progress of the complaint and follow up as necessary to ensure appropriate action is taken.

Protocols for ISC and Leadership and HR

- Take the report seriously: Treat every report of a child safeguarding breach with utmost seriousness and prioritize the safety and well-being of the child involved.
- Ensure the safety of the child: If the child is in immediate danger, take immediate action to ensure their safety and remove them from any harmful situation. Follow any necessary emergency protocols or contact relevant authorities for assistance.
- Document the report: Document the details of the reported breach accurately and comprehensively, including the date, time, location, individuals involved, and any supporting evidence or witness statements. Maintain confidentiality and ensure the information is securely stored.

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- Conduct an internal investigation: Initiate a thorough and impartial investigation into the reported breach. Assign qualified and experienced individuals who are trained in child safeguarding to conduct the investigation. The investigation should gather all relevant information, interview involved parties, and review any available evidence.
- Involve appropriate authorities: If required by law or policy, report the breach to the relevant child protection authorities or law enforcement agencies. Cooperate fully with their investigations and provide any necessary support or information.
- Support the child and their family: Ensure appropriate support and care for the child and their family. Provide access to counseling services, medical assistance, and any other necessary support to help them cope with the impact of the breach.
- Take disciplinary action: If the breach involves individuals within the organization, take appropriate disciplinary action based on the findings of the investigation. Follow the organization's policies and procedures regarding disciplinary measures, which may include suspension, termination, or other appropriate actions.
- Review and revise policies: Conduct a comprehensive review of the organization's child safeguarding policies, procedures, and practices. Identify any weaknesses or gaps that contributed to the breach and revise and strengthen them accordingly. Ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of the revised policies and receive adequate training.
- Communicate transparently: Communicate with all relevant stakeholders, such as staff, volunteers, parents, and the wider community, about the reported breach and the actions being taken to address it. Maintain confidentiality and follow legal requirements while providing necessary updates and reassurance.
- Learn from the breach: Continuously learn from the reported breach to improve the organization's overall child safeguarding efforts. Identify areas for improvement and implement necessary changes to prevent similar incidents in the future.
- The entire process of enquiry should be completed within 90 days and submitted to the trustees within 10 days after enquiry and thereafter made available to the parents/ guardians of the child.

<p>■ HR Policy Manual – Standard Terms & Control</p> <p>Panel ■</p>	<p>■ Authority ■</p>
<p>Ek Tara reserves the right to add, delete, amend, or modify in any manner any of its policies from time to time. The decision of the Management shall be final and binding on all concerned on any matter that needs resolution. Any clarifications with regard to this policy can be obtained from the HR department.</p>	
<p>Policy No EKTARA/HR/POL/09 dated 01/09/2023.</p>	<p>Approved by:</p>