



## CoCo's Foundation Safeguarding Policy

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**1.Guiding principles:** Everyone has a responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and for ensuring that they are protected from harm.

**2. Our Values:** The protection of children and young people is of paramount importance to Coco's Foundation. We believe everyone involved in the work of the Foundation has the right to feel safe, protected and to be treated with respect. We embrace cultural diversity and the right to individual expression and we recognize and respect the need to respond to cultural sensitivities when working in Africa.

2.1 In order to honour the hospitality and hope placed in us as a Foundation, we will ensure all volunteers and trustees are sensitive to issues of modesty, appropriate behaviour and good manners; and know what to do if concerns arise about the protection or welfare of any child or young person.

2.2 This policy applies to the African children supported by and the young people from the UK who are giving their time as volunteers.

2.3 The Foundation will ensure that volunteers and trustees are aware of and comply with the Mseleni Children's Home's child protection policy and Code of Conduct.

**3. Meeting the needs of the orphans.** The orphans, as well as their bereavement, have all suffered some form of abuse and trauma and as such are emotionally vulnerable. Their previous experience may influence how they perceive the actions of others, and how they themselves behave.

3.1 The Foundation recognizes that care should be taken about how we behave, and what we say when we are working with these children. We must take care not to make them feel threatened or humiliated.

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**4. Supporting the volunteers:** Everyone who has been to Africa for the Foundation has been moved by the experience of working with the orphans and challenged by working in a completely new cultural environment. Most of the volunteers supporting the work of the Foundation are young people themselves, and some will not have been outside the UK before.

4.1 The Foundation recognizes that volunteers will need support and encouragement in order to feel confident and safe in the community and to manage the emotional impact of working with these inspirational children.

### 5. Standards of dress and behaviour: (Trustees and Volunteers)

- Always behave in a safe, mature, respectful, fair and thoughtful manner. This includes using appropriate language, wearing appropriate dress and being careful how you touch or respond to others touching you - remember you are a guest in Africa and values are different there
- Clothing should be light and suitable for the climate and activities but you should not be dressing in "sexy" or provocative clothing. You should not go topless, or wander about in a state of half dress. This can offend locals and may confuse the orphans who may misinterpret your intention and could respond in a way that leads to you or others being placed in a compromising situation
- Avoid any behaviour that might lead others to question your conduct, intentions or suitability to work with vulnerable children:
  - Always treat the children and young people fairly. Never show any favouritism - never build 'special' relationships with individuals, do not give or accept special gifts, this can confuse things and might make others think you are being inappropriate or trying to bribe the child or young person
  - Always be careful about the way you touch the children and young people, make sure it is not in a manner which could be considered sexual, threatening or intimidating
  - Do not share or promise to keep secrets with the children or young people
- Always remember these children may have suffered sexual abuse, they may be easily upset by behaviour which you might think normal at home.
- Don't make remarks or jokes about them, their circumstances, their race or anything to do with sex - they may not understand the intended humour and they may feel intimidated, embarrassed or humiliated or they may think you are trying to abuse them or that you are asking them to be sexual with you
- Don't make arrangements to contact, communicate with or meet up with children outside of your volunteering work for the Foundation and never develop personal, romantic or sexual relationships with the children or any other members of the volunteer or foundation team.

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- Always be a model of good and healthy behaviours, never allow, encourage or condone children to act in an illegal, improper or unsafe manner e.g. smoking, drinking alcohol, be careful not to be sarcastic.

**6. Use of IT devices, photographs and social media. (Trustees and Volunteers)** It is important to remember that in the UK we can choose whether or not to share information about our lives with our friends on social network sites. The children the Foundation works with do not have access to social networks. In order to protect the welfare and privacy of the young people it is important that volunteers must not share images or information about the young people, their lives or where they are living on any social media or networking sites.

6.1 Trustees and Volunteers must ensure that the children involved in the project are not photographed without their agreement and never in a manner that could damage their dignity or privacy, unclothed, or in any other way that could be exploitative or demeaning.

6.2 With agreement, Trustees, volunteers and others from authorized organizations, may take and use images of the children and volunteers involved in the project for use on websites or for fundraising materials and publications.

6.3 Photographs can be subject to data protection and therefore should not be published, uploaded or otherwise broadcast via any social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, Twitter etc, and should not be sent directly to friends or family via phones, computers or tablets.

**7. Roles and Responsibilities: TRUSTEES:** Trustees will be responsible for Safeguarding and Volunteer Welfare.

7.1 **Safeguarding;** In the event of any concern or allegation of abuse or harm involving a child/ren or young person/s, whether from the orphan community or a volunteer, the **Trustees will ensure:**

- All necessary steps are taken quickly and sensitively to provide immediate protection for that child or young person and other children and young people
- The concerns are immediately passed to the relevant authority who will deal with the situation and advise the Trustees on next steps
  - For members of the orphan community; the local African authorities
  - For volunteers; the relevant UK authority; as soon as possible or immediately on return home.
  - Parents are informed as soon as possible and any necessary repatriation arranged as a matter of urgency

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- Depending on the allegation, it may be necessary to inform authorities in both locations
- The concerns are logged in detail including:
  - Date of the alleged incident and what has or is said to have happened
  - Names of those involved including the alleged victim, the alleged abuser and the person making the referral
  - Details of any evidence provided or witness statements from the incident
  - What action has been taken, including any support and guidance provided or received from the lead support agencies
- Information is carefully managed to avoid unnecessary distress to those involved or others in the group

**7.2 Allegations of abuse against Foundation staff or volunteers:** Where an allegation is made against an individual involved in the work of the foundation that they have abused, harmed or behaved inappropriately towards a child or young person, Trustees are responsible for ensuring appropriate action is taken to ensure the protection of all parties; **Trustees will:**

- Inform the relevant local authorities in Africa and or UK
- Ensure that the individual has no further contact with the child and other children and young people until and unless the matter has been satisfactorily investigated and resolved and it is determined safe to do so by a qualified person
- Provide or facilitate support for those involved as necessary
- Ensure that anyone disclosing inappropriate behaviour or making an allegation against colleagues or others is listened to and supported.
- Ensure that anyone facing an allegation of inappropriate behaviour or abuse is treated fairly but is asked to refrain from direct contact with children and young people and if necessary asked to return home early.

7.3 In the event that an allegation is against one of the Trustees, the other Trustee present will follow the procedure above.

7.4 **Volunteer Welfare;** the **TRUSTEES will** ensure volunteers are aware of and understand:

- Relevant health and safety precautions and practice - preparing to travel and while away
- Dressing appropriately; including issues of modesty and cultural sensitivity
- Being an Ambassador for the Foundation and how behaving appropriately while part of the project contributes to their own safety and wellbeing, including:
  - Making safe and appropriate relationships with the orphans, other members of the trip and the local community

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- Restrictions on the use of IT devices, photographs and social media and why this is necessary
- Who to tell and what action to take if a volunteer has concerns about
  - their own or another's welfare or where abuse or harm has occurred
  - any behaviour by staff, children, volunteers or others in the foundation or community that is inappropriate, or may cause harm
  - any incident or exchange with any individual whether an adult or a child which causes distress or anxiety

**8. Roles and Responsibilities: VOLUNTEERS:** Volunteers are responsible for their personal wellbeing and must comply with the following expectations:

8.1 As Volunteers, you are ambassadors for the Foundation and for the UK and you must ensure that you behave and dress appropriately at all times. Africa is culturally different and has different values and traditions. Inappropriate behaviour by volunteers can put everyone at risk.

8.2 Volunteers must uphold the Foundation's values of

- being safe and protected
- respecting each other
- embracing diversity
- responding to cultural sensitivity.

8.3 Volunteers have a responsibility to take care of themselves and each other. If during volunteering someone behaves inappropriately towards or:

- You are harmed or abused
- You have a concern that someone else is being harmed or abused either because something you have seen or heard, or because of something you have been told;
- You must tell one of the Trustees, ideally whilst on the trip?
- You must not keep any concerns about abuse, harm or the welfare of children or young people to yourself. You must:
- Pass on any concerns to the Trustees and write down:
  - what happened,
  - when it happened and
  - who you told
- Be discreet and keep it confidential – you should not discuss the situation with other volunteers. The Trustees will support and protect you and help you through any difficult times.

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### 9. Appendix 1. Definitions

**\*Abuse and harm in the context of this policy:**

This refers to any and all known types of abuse.

(This also applies to volunteers who are under 18).

\*Formal definitions of abuse and significant harm can be found at <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/>  
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### 10. Appendix 2. Disclosure; what to do if a child or young person tells you they have been abused (Trustees and Volunteers)

Sometimes children and young people who are being (or have been) abused will choose to tell a person they trust about what is happening to them. If a child or young person tells you they are being or have been abused you should:

- Listen, don't interrupt, let them talk freely and don't ask questions
- Make sure they know they are believed and will be helped
- Make sure they understand that you cannot keep things secret and that you have to tell the Trustees or if you are a Trustee that you will have to tell the appropriate protection authorities
- Pass the information on to the Trustees or if you are a Trustee to the relevant authorities as soon as possible, using the child's own words where possible.
- Do not make the child or young person repeat what they have told you – they will have to do so later to the police and social workers and it is traumatic every time for them
- Write down what they told you as soon as possible, using the same words they used, date and sign it
- Remember to be discreet- keep the information to yourself – what they have chosen to tell you is difficult and upsetting for them and they deserve confidentiality and respect
- Ask for emotional support from the Trustees who will know how to access counselling and advice.