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Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy

Contents

Section A	Introduction
Section B	Prevention of abuse <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Staff recruitment procedure2. Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults3. Working with partners4. Communications
Section C	Identifying and reporting suspected abuse <ol style="list-style-type: none">5. Signs of abuse6. Listening to a disclosure of abuse by a child or vulnerable adult7. Reporting suspected abuse
Section D	Responding to reports of suspected abuse <ol style="list-style-type: none">8. Investigation procedures9. Disciplinary action
Section E	Implementation and monitoring <ol style="list-style-type: none">10. Implementation11. Representative's commitment to this Policy
Appendices	
<u>Appendix 1</u>	Safeguarding Declaration
<u>Appendix 2</u>	Incident reporting form

Section A: Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- State the commitment of GNP+ to the safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults and the prevention of abuse, exploitation and neglect.
- Set out common values and principles and provide guidance on safeguarding and protection issues and good practice.
- Set out procedures that must be followed by GNP+ representatives.
- Ensure that all GNP+ representatives know their responsibilities in safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults from harm.

Scope

This policy provides guidance and procedures that must be followed by all GNP+ representatives, wherever in the world they are working. The term 'GNP+ representative' includes employees, interns, volunteers and trustees. It also applies to consultants, temporary staff and contractors (third parties, agents and suppliers) who are commissioned by GNP+ whose work requires them to be in contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults, or may bring children, young people and vulnerable adults into contact with other adults.

Definitions

- A '**child**' is a person who is under 18 years of age, as recognised in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).
- In this policy, '**young people**' refers to both "adolescents" who are defined as persons between the ages of 10-19 and "youth" who are defined as persons between the ages of 15-24 (unless otherwise specified in the text).
- In this policy, '**adult**' means a person aged 18 years or over.
- The definition of a '**vulnerable adult**' is a person aged 18 or over whose agency is limited by one or a combination of factors which include individual aspects like: physical or mental disability; illness; age; emotional fragility or distress; and social positions like: gender; sexual orientation, gender identity; race/ethnicity; origin and religious belief. A vulnerable adult is subject to unequal power relations, including unequal economic and social disparities, which inhibits their ability to avoid, prevent or expose violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation. Options available to vulnerable adults are often limited by the factors above, and they may be subject to duress or influence. Vulnerability can be context specific and can temporary or indefinite and should be seen as a continuum which reflects the shifting nature of vulnerability in the context of our work.
- **Harm** is ill-treatment (including sexual abuse and non-physical forms of ill-treatment) or the impairment of health (physical or mental) or development (physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural), as defined in The Children Act 1989. Neglect or inaction, particularly in the context of a relationship of responsibility or trust, can be forms of harm.
- **Safeguarding** is the process by which we protect children and vulnerable adults' health, wellbeing and human rights, enabling them to live free from harm.

Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the trustees and senior management at GNP+ to create an organisational culture that promotes safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults by upholding principles of transparency and accountability on such matters.

All representatives of GNP+ are expected to follow the guidelines and procedures of this safeguarding policy, including the reading and signing of the statement of commitment (Appendix 1) and an incidence reporting form (Appendix 2).

Principles

All children, young people and vulnerable adults have equal rights to safeguarding and protection.

GNP+ understands that children, young people and vulnerable adults form a special group of individuals who face great challenges due to the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Loss of parental care or living with HIV positive parents or caregivers increases children and young people's vulnerability. People with power and influential positions in communities, including development workers, can abuse or exploit children, young people and vulnerable adults. This calls for preventive action to protect them against abuse and appropriate responses where there are alleged incidences of violations.

GNP+ strives to ensure that measures and systems are in place to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults from all forms of abuse and maltreatment by any GNP+ staff member or other representative. The policy also recognises that children, young people and vulnerable adults have differing levels of capacity depending on age and development that can affect the ability to protect themselves and make decisions about their own lives. If it is critical that the use of the policy includes assessing the ability of individuals to understand and make decisions in any actions related to safeguarding.

This policy should be made easily accessible for all staff and other representatives. Staff should promote the policy (and associated Code of Conduct) in all situations where the organisation is responsible for bringing children, young people and vulnerable adults into contact with other adults.

Section B: Safeguarding

1. Safeguarding Framework

The GNP+ Safeguarding Framework identifies **all relevant policies and procedures** which contribute to making sure our staff, operations and programmes do no harm to children, young people and vulnerable adults, or expose them to abuse or exploitation, and includes protecting our staff from inappropriate behaviour such as bullying and all forms of harassment.

2. Staff recruitment procedure

The GNP+ recruitment and selection procedure foresees that current and potential employees with direct or regular contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults undergo a screening procedure to check for any safeguarding related criminal record.

3. Expected conduct to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults

GNP+ has a **Code of Conduct** to guide the behaviours and actions of employees, interns, volunteers and trustees. It also applies to consultants, temporary staff and contractors (third parties, agents and suppliers) who are commissioned by the organisation.

In addition, this Policy provides further guidance to avoid situations that increase chances of behaviour that may be classified as inappropriate when in the company of children, young people and vulnerable adults. This section should be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct and should be interpreted in a spirit of common sense, with the best interests of the child, young person or vulnerable adult as the primary consideration.

As noted in Section A, this policy is applicable to anyone acting as a representative of GNP+, and whose work requires them to be in contact with children and vulnerable adults or may bring children, young people and vulnerable adults into contact with other adults.

GNP+ representatives must not:

- Spend time alone with a child, young person or vulnerable adult, either at their home, in a car or any other secluded place without appropriate justification
- Carry out personal activities on a child or vulnerable adult like bathing and dressing

- Engage in inappropriate touch or physical contact with a child or vulnerable adult
- Make sexually provocative gestures towards a child or vulnerable adult
- Physically assault or abuse a child, young person or vulnerable adult
- Make use of language that causes mental or emotional harm to a child or vulnerable adult
- Exploit children or vulnerable adults in any way or form
- Discriminate (on race, colour, sex, language, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status, gender, sexuality, religion, or political or other).

In order to avoid the above from happening, it is encouraged that people take proactive action on risk minimisation by making efforts to try and:

- Avoid compromising situations that increase vulnerability
- Meet in public places as much as possible
- Have parent/carer present when visiting or meeting children/young people
- Avoid actions that can be subject to misinterpretation by a third party
- Get informed written consent from the parent or person with primary responsibility over the child, young person or vulnerable adult before taking photographs or a statement from a child.

4. Working with partners

GNP+ is aware of its responsibility to share and provide guidance on its safeguarding policies to its partners. At the same time, GNP+ expects partners and other groups working with GNP+ to uphold best practice on safeguarding in all activities involving children, young people and vulnerable adults.

GNP+ monitors safeguarding policies and procedures within contractual agreements with partners. All written agreements should reflect a strong commitment to the safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

5. Communication about children, young people and vulnerable adults.

In its communication and fundraising activities, GNP+ may at times use images and recordings of children and field texts. GNP+ has a responsibility towards the children, young people and vulnerable adults that are portrayed and should ensure that they are treated with dignity.

Section C: Identifying and reporting suspected abuse

This section identifies signs of abuse of children, young people and vulnerable adults and how you should manage any disclosure of abuse. It also sets out the responsibility to report any suspected signs of abuse.

6. Signs of abuse

Before any form of behaviour or act is reported as abuse, it is important that people get familiar with basic signs of abuse. However, it is crucial to note that abuse of children, young people and vulnerable adults is not an easy act to identify and care should be taken to put facts together and understand the context, as well as talk to the child, young person or vulnerable adult where possible before drawing conclusions.

Possible signs of sexual abuse

- Physical indicators on genital areas
- Sexualised behaviour inappropriate to a child's age or young person/vulnerable adult's stage of development
- Sexually transmitted infections
- Pregnancy (depending on age)

Possible signs of physical abuse

- Bruises, burns, bites, cuts and dislocations
- Excuses given to explain injuries

- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Aggressive behaviour towards others
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Fear of returning home or of having parents contacted
- Self-destructive tendencies

Possible signs of emotional abuse

- Delayed physical, mental & emotional development
- Increased anxiety
- Low self esteem
- Inappropriate emotional response to painful situations
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Fear of new situations

Possible signs of neglect

- Poor social relations
- Low self esteem
- Frequent hunger
- Non-attendance at school
- Poor personal hygiene

7. Listening to a disclosure of abuse

When a young child, young person or vulnerable adult makes comments or statements that relate to possible abuse, it is important to listen to what they are saying. Many vulnerable people mistakenly believe they deserve the abuse. Generally, it should be assumed that people do not make up stories about this topic. Do not try to force words or images on a child, young person or vulnerable adult in an effort to get more information. If you report suspected abuse, you do not need to prove that it occurred. A report is a request for an investigation.

What to do

- Accept what the child, young person or vulnerable adult says
- Keep calm & don't panic
- Do not appear shocked
- Assure them that they are not to blame for the abuse
- Never ask leading questions, and try not to repeat the same questions
- Never push for information
- Do not fill in words, finish their sentences, or make assumptions
- Be aware that the child, young person or vulnerable adult may have been threatened.
- is paramount in this stage of the process.
- Do not permit personal doubt to prevent you from reporting the allegation

At the end of the disclosure

- Reassure them that it was right to tell you. Where appropriate, to the capacity of the child, young person or vulnerable adult, ask them what they would like to see happen next
- Let the child, young person or vulnerable adult know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens. Let them know that you need to tell someone else (see reporting misconduct above).
- Write down **accurately** what the person has told you. Sign and date your notes. Keep all notes in a secure place for an indefinite period. These are essential in helping your organisation/ social services/ the police decide what is best for the person.
- Seek help for yourself if you feel you need support.

8. Reporting misconduct, including suspected abuse

See Appendix 2 for a reporting form.

Section D: Responding to reports of suspected abuse

This section sets out the responsibilities of GNP+ staff in responding to and managing cases of suspected abuse.

9. Investigation procedures

The GNP+ Management will convene a team to obtain further information, assess the concern, decide next steps and inform authorities as necessary. The team may include the relevant Manager, a representative from Human Resources or a Safeguarding Focal Point. The team may appoint and delegate the investigation to an investigating officer if the matter requires further investigation.

Based on the evidence and careful deliberation on the case, the team will decide on whether the matter should be dropped, further handled internally or referred to an external investigator or the police depending on the level of assessed gravity and complexity. Where the allegation relates to a GNP+ partner, the team will liaise with the senior management of that organisation to ensure appropriate steps are taken.

The process leading to decision making should be well documented and all facts or written allegations and responses stored securely by the Office Manager.

When a case is immediately dropped, the reasons for doing so shall be communicated to the person who reported the matter. Thorough investigations will be carried out before such a decision or action is taken.

Arrangements will be made to provide supervision and support to those affected during and following an allegation.

The team will be responsible for reporting to the Executive Director and external bodies including the police in line with GNP+'s Policy.

10. Disciplinary action

For employees only: following the completion of the investigation, and with the advice of Human Resources, the line manager will decide on appropriate next steps to take based on available evidence.

Reports that are made maliciously or not in good faith could be considered an act of gross misconduct. Disciplinary action, which may result in dismissal, will be taken against any employee making such an allegation.

Section E: Implementation and Monitoring

This section sets out how the policy will be shared with all GNP+ representatives.

11. Implementation

All staff and other representatives will be made aware of GNP+' Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy and be requested to read it and sign the statement of commitment (see appendix 1).

It is the relevant manager's responsibility to ensure safeguarding measures are put in place. Support is provided by the Safeguarding Focal Points. Where necessary, training will be provided for specific staff, e.g. those having direct contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults; or researchers who would need training on children and young people's participation and the sharing of information on children.

The Safeguarding policy will be reviewed every three years but can be adjusted before then to reflect global changes and developments.

12. Representative's commitment to this Policy

By signing the statement of commitment (Appendix 1) and the GNP+ Code of Conduct, employees and GNP+ representatives (see Scope above) confirm their commitment to adhere to the guidance in this Policy.

Appendix 1 Safeguarding Declaration

Name:	
Have you ever been known to any children's services department or police as being a risk or potential risk to children?	YES / NO <i>(if yes, provide information below):</i>
Have you been the subject of any disciplinary investigation and/or sanction by any organisation due to concerns about your behaviour towards children?	YES / NO <i>(if yes, provide information below):</i>
Declaration <i>(tick boxes below)</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> I agree that the information provided here may be processed in connection with recruitment purposes and I understand that an offer of employment may be withdrawn or disciplinary action may be taken if information is not disclosed by me and subsequently comes to GNP+' attention.	
<input type="checkbox"/> In accordance with GNP+' procedures, I agree, if requested, to provide a valid DBS certificate (or equivalent if overseas), and I consent to GNP+ clarifying any information provided on the disclosure with the agencies providing it.	
<input type="checkbox"/> I agree to inform GNP+ within 24 hours if I am subsequently investigated by any agency or organisation in relation to concerns about my behaviour towards children or vulnerable adults.	
<input type="checkbox"/> I understand that the information contained on this form, the results of the DBS check or equivalent, and information supplied by third parties may be supplied by GNP+ to other persons or organisations in circumstances where this is considered necessary to safeguard children or vulnerable adults.	
Signature:	
Position:	
Print name:	
Date:	

Appendix 2 Incident Reporting Form

Please complete this form if you believe that a child, young person or vulnerable adult's safety is in danger. All protection concerns should be reported immediately. The information in this form should be kept strictly confidential.

A: Personal information

Your name:

Job Title:

Place of work:

Relationship to the child, young person or vulnerable adult:

.....

Contact details:

B: Child/Young Person/Vulnerable Adults information

Name of individual:

Gender:

Address:

Guardians:

C: Safeguarding concern

Is concern based on observation or suspicion?

If concern is based on secondary source, give name of information source

.....

Did the child, young person or vulnerable adult report the incident to you?

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Give the nature of alleged abuse:

.....

.....

Date of alleged incident:

Time and place of incident:

.....

Name of alleged perpetrator:

Job title:

Describe your personal observations (factually):

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Give actual record of what the source said to you:

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Provide names of witnesses if applicable:

.....

Any other comments:

.....

.....

Action taken:

.....

Signed: Date: