



SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Firefly International is a registered charity which supports partners operating in current and post conflict zones who offer educational and psycho-social programs to children and young people.

Currently we partner:

Svitac (Firefly in Bosnia) in Brčko, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Firefly for Syrians in Antakya, Turkey

ACT International/IMET2000 on a pilot project in Gaza.

Our partners in Bosnia and Turkey are registered and comply with the regulations in the countries where they operate.

Each project has developed its own safeguarding policy with the support of Firefly International and abiding by the principles laid out in this overarching policy.

We work with consideration of local context, culture and other specific constraints where our partners operate but share our expectations for working with them.

Firefly International volunteers, trustees and administrative staff do not have routine contact with children. Project coordinators who monitor our projects and spend time on the ground are registered through Disclosure and CRB checks compliant with UK legislation.

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1.KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

Firefly works with partners in areas deeply damaged by conflict, we support locally led projects that provide safe and inclusive spaces for children to learn and thrive. By focusing on education, the arts, health and well-being, we help to reduce local tensions and promote peaceful dialogue.

In order to deliver our aims and objectives we make the safety of children engaged in our programmes paramount. Firefly undertakes to inform partners we work with of our expectations of safeguarding and through discussion and dialogue work with our partners who are operating in their own unique contexts to develop appropriate policy for their organizations and local culture.

2. WHY WE NEED A SAFEGUARDING POLICY

As a charity working with children who have been affected by conflict, we want to demonstrate to everyone involved with us, and to potential stakeholders and partners, that we can be trusted to safeguard children.

We will ensure that all trustees, volunteers and associates understand their responsibility to prevent harm and minimise risk as well as know how to respond if they have concerns about a child. With this policy we recognise that all children have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation.

We also recognise that our standards may be more difficult or challenging to apply in some countries and local contexts than others, and we will need to work with partners to meet our minimum expectations.

3. OUR UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT CONSTITUTES ABUSE

Definitions of harm – taken from Keeping Children Safe (guidance for relief and development charities)

It is difficult to define “harm” to children because children can be abused in so many ways depending on the context and culture. They may be abused in a family, an institution, community or faith setting, or via social media/internet. They may be harmed by an adult or adults or another child or children. There are also practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM), forced or early marriage that cause significant harm to children.

The following definitions can be used as a guide:

Physical abuse: actual or potential physical harm perpetrated by another person, adult or child. It may involve hitting, shaking, poisoning, drowning and burning.

Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

Sexual abuse: forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities that he or she does not fully understand and has little choice in consenting to. This may include, but is not limited to, rape, oral sex, penetration, or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching. It may also include involving children in looking at, or producing sexual images, watching sexual activities and encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Child sexual exploitation: a form of sexual abuse that involves children being engaged in any sexual activity in exchange for money, gifts, food, accommodation, affection, status, or anything else that they or their family needs. It usually involves a child being manipulated or coerced, which may involve befriending children, gaining their trust, and subjecting them to drugs and alcohol. The abusive relationship between victim and perpetrator involves an imbalance of power where the victim’s options are limited. It is a form of abuse that can be misunderstood by children and adults as consensual.

Child sexual exploitation manifests in different ways. It can involve an older perpetrator exercising financial, emotional or physical control over a young person. It can involve peers manipulating or forcing victims into sexual activity, sometimes within gangs and in gang-affected neighbourhoods. It may also

involve opportunistic or organised networks of perpetrators who profit financially from trafficking young victims between different locations to engage in sexual activity with multiple men.

Neglect and negligent treatment: allowing for context, resources and circumstances, neglect and negligent treatment refers to a persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, which is likely to result in serious impairment of a child's healthy physical, spiritual, moral and mental development. It includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm and provide for nutrition, shelter and safe living/working conditions. It may also involve maternal neglect during pregnancy as a result of drug or alcohol misuse and the neglect and ill treatment of a disabled child.

Emotional abuse: persistent emotional maltreatment that impacts on a child's emotional development. Emotionally abusive acts include restriction of movement, degrading, humiliating, bullying (including cyber bullying), and threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.

Commercial exploitation: exploiting a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others and to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development. It includes, but is not limited to, child labour.

4. HOW WE AIM TO PREVENT HARM AND MINIMISE RISK TO CHILDREN IN ALL AREAS OF FIREFLY'S ACTIVITY

We will:

Ensure that everyone involved with Firefly's work understands our approach to safeguarding and the responsibility they have for preventing harm and reporting concerns.

Have a designated Safeguarding Officer, and procedures to follow for reporting concerns and taking action.

Have recruitment and induction procedures for trustees and volunteers that deter potential abusers and minimise the risk of harm to children within the scope of Firefly's work

Work with partner organisations overseas to share and uphold our safeguarding standards

5. PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING CONCERNS AND TAKING ACTION

Role of the Safeguarding Officer

Firefly International Safeguarding Officer: Diana McMicking, Firefly Director
She can be contacted on: diana@fireflyinternational.org.

Director of Firefly for Syrians and their Safeguarding Officer: Fadia Shaker
fadia_shaker@hotmail.com

Director of Svitac (Firefly in Bosnia) and their Safeguarding Officer: Gordana Varcakovic
gordanavarcakovic@gmail.com

Project Coordinator for Syria: Maria Chambers maria@fireflyinternational.org

Project Coordinators for Gaza: Tamara Curtis and Cordelia Burch

Project Coordinator for Bosnia: Diana McMicking

Chair of Trustee: Margot Coles

Firefly's Safeguarding Officer acts as a focal point for Firefly's trustees, staff and volunteers if they have concerns about harmful treatment of a child or children in any area of our activity.

Each project has a Safeguarding Officer and they would communicate their concerns about a child to their Project Coordinator or directly to Firefly's Safeguarding Officer.

The concern may arise from observing or discovering harm, suspecting harm, or from disclosure by a child.

The Safeguarding Officers of each project decide when to refer a child abuse concern to their local authorities, after discussion with Firefly International's Safeguarding Officer, the Project Coordinators and in certain circumstances the Firefly International Chair of Trustees.

The Safeguarding Officer is responsible for:

- ensuring that the Safeguarding policy is communicated to everyone involved with Firefly through the project directors and project coordinators, and that it is monitored, reviewed and updated
- acting promptly to protect a child, and to maintain the integrity and reputation of Firefly

- following Firefly's procedures for dealing with allegations or disclosures of abuse – see Role of the Safeguarding Officer
- supporting trustees and volunteers with their safeguarding responsibilities

Definitions of 'child' and 'child abuse' may differ according to national and cultural understandings. However, we are clear that 'children' are defined as anyone less than 18 years of age, and that 'abuse' is the range of acts, intentional or not, which harm children. See "Our understanding of what constitutes abuse."

It will be part of our role to identify local legal, social welfare and child protection arrangements in the countries where we work.

We need to be prepared to take action locally when concerns arise and have information available on:

- local services;
- the authorities to whom we should report concerns;
- and organisations which can provide support to children.

Reporting and recording concerns about harm

Everyone involved in Firefly's work needs to be alert to signs that may suggest a child or young person is in need of help. Deciding whether to report can be a very difficult responsibility.

There is a simple model that helps:

When a child safeguarding concern is brought to our attention – ACT

Act on concerns, if in doubt speak out!

Child-centred – the protection of children is the most important consideration

Time counts – our response to safeguarding issues must be timely, effective, confidential and appropriate

Firefly expects everyone involved with our work to report concerns or suspicions immediately to the relevant Safeguarding officer, by phone or email. The SO will keep a formal record.

The SO will discuss the concern in confidence and consider:

- Does the concern meet our stated understanding of abuse?
- Is the local context fully understood? Involving our partners and professionals
- How the concern should be investigated
- Reporting to an appropriate authority

The Firefly Safeguarding Officer or the Project Safeguarding Officers will keep records of concerns and allegations and actions taken and store them securely.

Any transfer of information must maintain confidentiality and only be made available to relevant parties.

If an allegation is made against a Firefly trustee, member of staff or volunteer they will be suspended from all activity by the Firefly SO and the Chair of Trustees pending an investigation.

The process will be confidential and limited to those who need to know. Firefly's guiding principle is that the best interests of the child are paramount. We will act with honesty and integrity where failings in our people are found.

6. HOW WE IDENTIFY AND MITIGATE SAFEGUARDING RISK

We determine the local approach to child abuse and whether country laws and authorities are weak or strong in responding to abuse.

We use a mapping exercise to assess the local legal, welfare and child protection context, and gather information on local resources and sources of support for children.

Our local partners hold this information for their local area and Firefly International holds a list for each project.

We have a recruitment and induction process that ensures all trustees, staff and volunteers understand Firefly's expectations of their behavior and their responsibility to report concerns.

7. HOW WE RECRUIT STAFF, TRUSTEES AND VOLUNTEERS

Our recruitment process aims to deter potential abusers from working with Firefly and to fully inform applicants about the safeguarding responsibilities that come with any Firefly role.

We will make a fair assessment of suitability for a role or post and comply with regulation and good practice.

Firefly's current work is to support partners who work with children overseas. Trustees and volunteers do not have routine direct contact with children and these positions are not 'regulated' under the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000.

We require UK trustees, staff and volunteers to sign a Statement of Commitment to Firefly's safeguarding Policy.

We require local staff and volunteers to comply with their country equivalent to a vetting and barring scheme, if one exists, and to sign a Statement of Commitment to the Firefly's Safeguarding policy as well as the supplementary policy for their project.

Induction of trustees and volunteers

Induction will focus on understanding and carrying out the responsibilities described in the Safeguarding policy.

8. HOW WE ENSURE THAT EVERYONE INVOLVED IN FIREFLY'S WORK UNDERSTANDS OUR APPROACH TO SAFEGUARDING AND THE RESPONSIBILITY THEY HAVE FOR PREVENTING HARM AND REPORTING CONCERNS

The Safeguarding policy, with associated procedures, is reviewed annually by the Trustees.

We publicise the policy to all current staff and volunteers, with a request for their written commitment to it. We will encourage questions and discussion and respond fully to individual queries and concerns. The policy will be available on the public section (under About Us) of the Firefly website. It will also be posted on Facebook.

New staff/volunteers will undertake induction on safeguarding with the project's safeguarding officers/directors.

9. HOW WE WORK WITH PARTNER ORGANISATIONS OVERSEAS TO UPHOLD OUR SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS WHEN WORKING TOGETHER ON PROJECTS

Firefly funds, monitors and supports partner organisations – our current partners are:

Svitac in Bosnia,
Firefly for Syrians in Antakya, Turkey
IMET2000/ACT International with a pilot project for PTSD counselling in Gaza.

How Firefly International works with our Partners:

Support in Fundraising

- researching and submitting grants applications
- maintaining and expanding donor relationships
- supporting partners to submit applications

- networking and attending sector conferences

Support in Management and Administration

- producing project reports for major donors
- ensuring compliance with OSCR requirements
- project monitoring and evaluating
- writing annual reports
- accounting and filing annual return

Support in Raising Awareness

- website, social media and digital activity
- regular updates through newsletters and blogs
- promotional/fundraising events
- building and maintaining supporter's databases

Support in Volunteer Recruitment

- recruiting and managing volunteers for FF activity in the UK. The majority of our work in the UK is done voluntarily
- Recruiting volunteers for our international projects

Our partner organisations overseas are usually working in difficult and professionally challenging circumstances.

An organisation may not have a fully formed safeguarding policy and their country may have differing legal and cultural approaches to preventing harm to children. Firefly aims to develop relationships with partners within which we can be open about our safeguarding standards and acknowledge their constraints and areas of difference.

In every type of partnership we will share our Safeguarding policy and ask the partner to share their own or commit to developing appropriate safeguarding measures.

Before discussing safeguarding with an overseas partner we will find out what we can about their local laws and systems for protecting children from harm, and also gather information on local resources and sources of support for children. See 'Checklist of local information and resources'.

We will be culturally sensitive while never condoning any acts that harm children.

At a minimum we will want to see a policy or development work that shows:

- Awareness of children's rights to be safe, and to know where to go for help if they are being abused
- How staff, volunteers and others can raise concerns
- Clear mechanisms for dealing with concerns and incidents and reporting to local Authorities
- the kinds of local checks that are made on adults directly involved with children.

Where no formal checks exist we will discuss with the partner how they determine the integrity of staff and volunteers working with Firefly.

We will also establish **guidelines** for acceptable and unacceptable behaviour by staff in relation to the children they are working with.

For our part we will tell our partners that:

- Firefly volunteers, staff and project coordinators working on the ground with partners will adhere to our policy.
- The lines of communication for all staff, volunteers and trustees to follow should they want to report a concern for a child
- The Firefly Safeguarding Officer will report the concern to the partner's senior management and expect to be kept informed of progress and outcomes.
- If the concern is about a Firefly volunteer the Safeguarding Officer will inform the partner about how it is dealt with.

10. HOW WE MONITOR, REVIEW AND PUBLICISE THIS POLICY

We are committed to monitoring how well we are living up to the commitments we are making and asking of others. As a small charity we rely on our trustees for oversight and governance of the policy.

They will require information maintained by the SO, the Chair of Trustees and feedback from Firefly staff, volunteers and partners.

The trustee's meetings will be the main forum for monitoring the effectiveness of the policy.

There are a number of actions we can take to check our progress and learn from safeguarding situations that arise:

- Report on the roll-out of the policy to current staff, trustees and volunteers
- Assess the impact of the policy on recruitment practice and outcomes
- Feedback the experience of sharing safeguarding practice with partners
- Assess the effectiveness of the Safeguarding Officer role in inducting new people, and dealing with safeguarding issues
- Monitor effectiveness of lines of communications when concerns are made known.
- Have a slot for safeguarding issues on every Trustee meeting agenda
- The Safeguarding policy will be formally reviewed and amended annually, at the last trustee meeting of the year

We will expect to find that:

1. Staff, trustees and volunteers are familiar with the policy, can discuss safeguarding openly, and know how to deal with any concern about a child or children
2. Recruitment of staff, trustees and volunteers includes clear discussion, understanding and acceptance of the policy and its responsibilities
3. We have shared the policy with all partners we work with during the year and gained their commitment to our minimum expectations of safeguarding practice.
4. We may want to make amendments to the policy or procedures based on the experiences of the year.

Diana McMicking – Safeguarding Officer for and Director of Firely International

Margot Coles – Chair of Trustees