

<u>Approval required from</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Date approved</u>
Policy Owner:	Head of HR	June 2018
Responsible Director:	Finance Director	June 2018
Board approval	Board	July 2018

Queries on policy content: Contact the Policy Owner  
 Permission for derogation from this policy: Contact the Responsible Director

**Internal Ref/Version No:**

**HR19/000.01**

**Scope: All Employees, Trustees, Consultants, Volunteers and others acting on behalf of Practical Action or its subsidiaries**

**Effective Date of Policy:**

*N.B. This policy replaces the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy*

## **SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

- Practical Action will create a strong and effective enabling environment and a safeguarding culture to promote the rights and protection of beneficiaries, community members, staff, volunteers or anyone else impacted by our work.
- Practical Action firmly believes that no person should experience sexual exploitation or abuse at any time.
- Practical Action takes seriously its responsibility to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse of people who come in contact with our work.
- Practical Action will investigate and, where appropriate, respond to any suspected breach of this Policy, including through disciplinary action.
- Safeguarding people from sexual exploitation and abuse is an organisational and an individual responsibility. This policy applies to all employees and trustees of Practical Action and its subsidiaries, wherever contracted, and to consultants, volunteers and others acting on behalf of Practical Action, including partners.

### **CORE PRINCIPLES**

Practical Action upholds the following core principles:

- Sexual exploitation and abuse are acts of gross misconduct and represent grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.
- Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the local age of consent or local/national laws of the relevant country; ignorance or mistaken belief in the age of the child is not a defence.

- Exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour is prohibited. This includes the exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries.
- Sexual relationships between beneficiaries and anyone acting on behalf of Practical Action are strongly discouraged since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of Practical Action's work.
- When a Practical Action employee, Trustee, volunteer, consultant or partner develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual exploitation or abuse by a Practical Action employee or anyone acting on our behalf they **must report their concerns** via the established reporting procedures set out in appendix 3.
- Practical Action employees take action to create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of this Policy. Practical Action Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems that maintain this environment.
- All employees, trustees, volunteers, consultants, partners and others acting on behalf of Practical Action are expected to behave in ways that safeguard others from sexual exploitation and abuse. Specifically this includes, but is not limited to, avoiding all inappropriate physical contact with children or vulnerable adults, not making suggestive remarks or actions, remarks that embarrass, humiliate or degrade and being accompanied by a second work colleague whenever in the close presence of vulnerable adults and/or children and to never deliberately place themselves or others in a compromising situation.

## 1. SAFEGUARDING COMMITMENTS AND OBLIGATIONS

Across our entities, Practical Action's managers will ensure that we will:

- 1.1. Standards: incorporate this policy in induction for employees, trustees, volunteers, consultants, partners and others acting on behalf of Practical Action. Employees will be required to sign a declaration stating that they have received and understood it (using appendix 1 or via net consent).
- 1.2. Awareness and training: Create and maintain mechanisms to systematically make Practical Action employees, trustees, volunteers, consultants, partners, others acting on our behalf and the communities we serve aware of measures to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse. Training should make employees aware of appropriate behaviours and develop their understanding how to safeguard individuals.
- 1.3. Focal Point: Appoint, train and support a Safeguarding Focal Point to co-ordinate and implement the policy and handle reports of abuse initially.
- 1.4. Reporting mechanisms: Establish and ensure that mechanisms for reporting sexual exploitation and abuse are accessible, particularly to beneficiaries of Practical Action programmes, and that the Safeguarding Focal Point, responsible for receiving complaints, understands how to undertake their duties.
- 1.5. Recruitment: Aim to prevent people who are deemed unsuitable to work with children and vulnerable adults from gaining access to them through their work. In compliance with applicable laws and to the best of our abilities, we will prevent perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse from being employed at or engaged by Practical Action. We will do this by referencing our commitment to Safeguarding in job adverts and,

wherever possible, by undertaking appropriate background and criminal reference checks. Where formal background checks are not practical, appendix 2 must be completed by the individual and retained on file. Two employment references must be requested and, wherever possible, one of these should be from the person responsible for HR for a recent employer. All reference templates must ask for information about safeguarding issues. When relevant to the job, interview questions will include specific questions about the candidate's awareness of safeguarding. Where there has been proven Safeguarding misconduct issue, we must include this information in references to prospective employers.

- 1.6. Community awareness: Ensure measures are taken so that beneficiaries are aware of their right to, and how to, report their complaints and concerns.
- 1.7. Partnership: Ensure that when engaging in partnership, sub-grant or sub-recipient agreements, these agreements a) incorporate this Policy as an attachment; b) include the appropriate language requiring such contracting entities and individuals, and their employees and volunteers to comply with this Policy; and c) expressly state that the failure of those entities or individuals, as appropriate, to take preventive measures against sexual exploitation and abuse, to investigate allegations thereof, or to take corrective actions when sexual exploitation or abuse has occurred, shall constitute grounds for Practical Action to terminate such agreements.
- 1.8. Representation: Ensure that all representation of beneficiaries conforms to the guidelines on use of photographs and working with the media and communications materials (see below).
- 1.9. Policy Review: Undertake a review of this Policy at least every year.

## **2. Reporting**

- 2.1. Obligation to report: Should any individual receive any information about, or observe, actual or suspected abuse he or she must immediately inform the Safeguarding Focal Point or, if the safeguarding focal point is involved, another senior manager. Alternatively, concerns may be reported through the Complaints Framework via email, our online reporting tool, telephone, post or fax (see Complaints Framework for details)
- 2.2. Reporting procedures: Procedures on how to report sexual exploitation and abuse, appropriate to the local context, and our "Statement of Commitment to Safeguarding" must be clearly displayed to ensure that all individuals and communities are aware of these reporting procedures.
- 2.3. Protection of reporters: Individuals covered by this policy and communities are encouraged to report concerns over sexual exploitation and abuse. To the best of our abilities we will protect persons from retaliation when allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse are made in good faith. This protection may include anonymity.
- 2.4. Malicious reporting: Malicious and intentionally misleading reporting will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary action.

## **3. Response**

- 3.1. Responsibility to respond: Under no circumstance will concerns of abuse and inappropriate behaviour be ignored.
- 3.2. Welfare: The immediate physical and psychological safety of the child or adult at risk should always be of paramount importance.
- 3.3. Investigation: Any reports of actual or suspected exploitation or abuse will be appropriately investigated. This might include the use of appropriate interviewing practices with complainants and witnesses. We may engage professional investigators or secure investigative expertise as appropriate. Any investigation would be conducted in an impartial manner with the aim of establishing the facts and will not begin with preconceived ideas.
- 3.4. Notification: The Chief Executive and the Chair will be kept updated on any allegations that could constitute a serious incident as defined by the UK Charity Commission.
- 3.5. In some circumstances, depending on the nature of the incident, we will notify the police, local authority or other relevant regulator or statutory agency such as the Charity Commission in the UK.
- 3.6. Action: Breaches of this policy by employees are likely to constitute gross misconduct and result in suspension and termination of employment, in accordance with relevant disciplinary procedures. In the case of a breach by other representatives, including contractors, this may constitute breach of contract and appropriate action may be taken. As appropriate, those operating on behalf of Practical Action will be referred to the relevant authorities for appropriate action, including criminal prosecution, in the abuser's country of origin as well as the host country.
- 3.7. Monitoring: Provide high level oversight of sexual exploitation and abuse reports made and ensure appropriate action has been taken; we will continually improve efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse.

#### **4. COMMUNICATIONS AND REPRESENTATION**

- 4.1. Photographers and story gatherers will, whenever possible, explain to the beneficiary or child and the parent/guardian of the child, who will be taking a photograph and the kind of purposes it might be used for. No photographs will ever be used of children where permission has been refused.
- 4.2. Personal and physical information about beneficiaries that could be used to identify their location within a country should not be used in any form of public communication. First names only or invented personal names should be used. The immediate location where the subject lives should not be used unless their explicit and informed consent has been given.
- 4.3. Individuals or organisations requesting the use of third party resources such as videos or photographs should be required to agree in writing with the agency as to the proper use of such materials.
- 4.4. Wherever possible, feedback should be provided to the subject(s) or their parent/guardian(s) by sending copies of the photos and case studies (if possible translated into an accessible language).
- 4.5. Information about a beneficiary's life, including photographs of them, will be stored safely and in accordance with the current data protection policy.

## **GLOSSARY**

- Child/Children

Children are defined by the UN Convention of the Rights of a Child as being someone under the age of 18 years of age, regardless of the local age of majority/consent.

- Vulnerable adult

Vulnerable adults are those aged 18 or over who are less able to protect themselves from harm, exploitation or abuse. Adults may be at risk due to issues related to gender, age, frailty, mental health, physical capabilities, religion/socially excluded, minority groups, disasters or conflict. Individuals do not need to identify themselves as vulnerable to be covered by the protections outlined in this policy.

- Sexual Exploitation

Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another

- Abuse

Abuse is the harming of another person, usually by someone in a position of power, trust or authority. Abuse can come in many forms:

- Physical (including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, injuring, restraint or inappropriate sanctions),
- Sexual (including rape, sexual assault, molestation, sexual acts through coercion),
- Psychological (including emotional abuse, threats of harm or sanction, verbal abuse, isolation, intimidation, humiliation, restricted movement)
- Financial or material (including theft, fraud, exploitation, misappropriation of property),
- Neglect and exclusion (including ignoring medical or physical needs, failure to provide appropriate care, withholding of care or basic services), and
- Discrimination (including racism, sexism, ageism, faith, based on disability).

## **Appendix 1: Policy declaration form**

In order to comply with the Safeguarding policy this form must be completed and signed by all employees, trustees, consultants, volunteers, and others acting on behalf of Practical Action at the time of appointment.

Employees will sign this through net consent; all other individuals are asked to complete and return this form to your relevant contact.

- ✓ I have read and understand the Safeguarding policy
- ✓ I agree to apply the Safeguarding policy in its entirety

Full name (print):

Signed:

Date:

## Appendix 2: Self-declaration form

In order to comply with the Practical Action Safeguarding policy this form must be completed and signed by all employees at the time of appointment where a background clearance check is not available.

Full name (print):

Address (print):

Date of birth:

Place of birth:

1. Do you have any prosecutions pending or have you ever been charged or convicted of a criminal offence relating to the exploitation or abuse of a child or adult?

YES / NO

If YES, please state the nature and dates (s) of the offence:

Date of offence:

Nature of offence:

2. Have you ever been the subject of disciplinary procedures, or have left, or been asked to leave employment or voluntary activity due to inappropriate behaviour towards any individual?

YES / NO

If YES, please give details including date(s) below:

Name of employer:

Date of incident:

Nature of incident/inappropriate behaviour:

### Declaration:

I understand that, if it is found that I have withheld information or included false or misleading information above, I may be removed from my post whether paid or voluntary, without notice. I hereby declare that information provided above is accurate.

Signed:

Date:

### Appendix 3:

#### Practical Action - Our commitment to Safeguarding

*Practical Action firmly believes that no-one should experience sexual exploitation or abuse at any time. Practical Action takes seriously its responsibility to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse of those who come in contact with our work.*

