



Child Protection Policy



1. Introduction

De Vrolijkheid is an organisation committed to the development of children and young people, including those who are involved in or at risk of situations involving abuse, exploitation and danger. This policy has been drafted to protect all children associated with De Vrolijkheid. De Vrolijkheid collaborates with project partners, freelance artists, coordinators, volunteers and interns—adults who have direct interaction with children and young people in asylum seekers' centres.

The standard for the rights and appropriate protection of children and young people from harm is set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). This convention states that the best interests of the child are paramount in all actions concerning children (Article 3). According to the convention, child abuse can be physical, emotional and sexual in nature and includes neglect, exploitation and harassment.

De Vrolijkheid defines child abuse as any form of physical, psychological, or sexual interaction that is threatening or violent towards a minor, imposed by parents or other persons in a position of authority or dependence. This abuse can occur actively or passively and poses a serious threat of physical or psychological harm to the minor.

De Vrolijkheid considers child abuse unacceptable (“zero tolerance”) under all circumstances and is committed to ensuring that it and its partners take the necessary measures to protect children’s rights and safeguard their well-being in all activities. Child abuse can occur in any group, society, culture and organisation.

By signing the Code of Conduct, each contractor agrees to this Child Protection Policy and the Integrity Code of De Vrolijkheid. These documents establish the basic standards



for promoting welfare and safety to support the optimal development of children.


This policy prioritises the best interests of the child in every action and is actively promoted by the staff of De Vrolijkheid and its project partners.

De Vrolijkheid aims to raise awareness of child abuse and contribute to its prevention. The organisation achieves this through stringent recruitment procedures, providing training to project partners, freelance artists, volunteers and interns on child abuse and fostering an open, approachable and professional culture within the organisation.

2. Child Abuse

The universal categories of child abuse are:

- a. Physical abuse: parents/caregivers injure the child or allow the child to be injured (other than as a result of an accident). Examples of physical abuse include hitting, punching, kicking, deliberately dropping, burning, poisoning, and suffocation. It also includes female genital mutilation, Shaken Baby Syndrome, and Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy.**
- b. Physical neglect: depriving the child of necessary requirements for physical health and development. Examples of physical neglect include insufficient or lack of appropriate food, clothing, shelter and medical, dental and mental health care. It also includes inadequate hygiene and supervision.**
- c. Psychological abuse: inflicting harm to the child's emotional and/or personality development. Examples of psychological abuse include threatening or scolding as a systematic pattern of belittling and denigrating, scapegoating, burdening with excessive responsibility,**



setting unattainable demands, exposing the child to extreme, unpredictable or inappropriate behaviour. It also includes locking up or tying up and when children witness violence in the family.

- d. Psychological neglect: failing to meet the child's needs required for mental health and development. Examples of psychological neglect include insufficient attention, respect, affection, love, contact and space for increasing autonomy. It also includes failure to ensure regular school attendance.**
- e. Sexual abuse: having or attempting to have sexual contact with a child to satisfy the sexual feelings of the parent/caretaker, and/or for monetary gain. Examples of sexual abuse include showing pornographic material, penetration by fingers, objects or penis, sexual assault and exploitation, or allowing this to happen where genital contact takes place, and inappropriate kissing, or fondling of breasts.**
- f. Partner violence: when a child witnesses partner violence, this falls under psychological abuse. Signs of partner violence include regular physical injuries, such as bruises, bite marks, or other injuries, as well as physical complaints caused by psychological problems, such as trembling, fatigue, anxiety and depression. It can also be recognised by a submissive position in the relationship, insecure or frightened behaviour, aggressive actions, and learning or concentration problems at school. Perpetrators often exert strong control over their partners.**



3. Strategies to Prevent and Combat Child Abuse


De Vrolijkheid focuses on creating a secure environment for children and young people through various strategies. These include raising awareness, empowering children and young people, educating staff on preventing child abuse, identifying signs of abuse, reporting incidents, and facilitating referrals for support.

It is essential that all persons interacting with children, regardless of their role, are well-informed about this policy. Therefore, this policy is publicly available on our website and integrated into our Code of Conduct.

A. Raising Awareness and Prevention

De Vrolijkheid undertakes to ensure that all employees, project partners and others are aware of child abuse and child exploitation, and the risks children face. We emphasize the role and responsibility of our employees and management in preventing child abuse. To this end, employees and project partners working with children undergo regular training on preventing and combatting child abuse. New employees are required to carefully read and comply with the policy and Code of Conduct, which are also regularly discussed in staff meetings.

De Vrolijkheid encourages employees and project partners to discuss matters relating to child abuse openly. To this end, De Vrolijkheid has designated contact persons, i.e. special-task employees of De Vrolijkheid. De Vrolijkheid requires its employees and project partners to sign the Code of Conduct. We also encourage project partners to develop their own detailed policies for more detailed implementation. De



Vrolijkheid requests a copy of those policies if they exist. If suspected child abuse is reported to De Vrolijkheid, and partners have their own policies that conflict with De Vrolijkheid's policy and Code of Conduct, the best interests of the child are paramount in any action to be taken.

Our recruitment and selection procedures include thorough checks such as assessing a candidate's suitability for working with children, verifying their criminal record (Certificate of Good Conduct), reviewing employment history, and checking references.


Employees and project partners are encouraged to report any concerns about children's safety and development with their supervisor.

B. Reporting, Protection and Intervention

De Vrolijkheid ensures that its employees, the employees of project partners and others understand the necessary actions to take when they have concerns or doubts about a child's safety. When reporting incidents of child abuse, De Vrolijkheid's Reporting Code should be followed.

De Vrolijkheid observes the following principles:

- Any concern raised will be taken seriously.**
- Where possible, measures are taken wherever possible to safeguard the child in question.**
- Children, employees or others who raise concerns can count on support from De Vrolijkheid.**
- De Vrolijkheid responds appropriately and effectively by instructing employees and others not to conduct independent investigations or interrogate individuals once an allegation or concern has been raised. These**



tasks are assigned to designated special-task employees, the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA), or local authorities. Employees are instructed to focus on documenting and reporting facts only.

- De Vrolijkheid listens to the child's views and wishes and takes them seriously.
- All reports and information are handled with strict confidentiality.

4. The Role of De Vrolijkheid's Special-Task Employees

Reports are dealt with by a special-task employee who maintains a written record for each report. These records are used during evaluations to assess the effectiveness of our policies.

When concerns or suspicions of child abuse are raised, one of the special-task employees, together with the management, takes a leading role in protecting the child and ensures appropriate action and proper reporting. The best interests of the child are paramount in all cases.

In cases where employees violate our policy and Code of Conduct, special-task employees or the manager inform them of the actions that will be taken. These measures may involve administrative and/or legal consequences. De Vrolijkheid reserves the right to terminate the employment contract or any other agreement accordingly.



5. The Special Role of National Project Managers and Programme Coordinators

National project managers and programme coordinators are responsible for recruiting employees, ensuring adherence to signed Declarations of Conduct, and providing guidance to employees and project partners. They observe these rules to prevent, stop and report the abuse of children participating in activities organised by De Vrolijkheid.

For the purposes of this policy and reporting procedure, “children” refers to all persons under the age of 18.

What do we do?

- 1. Familiarise yourself with the “Code of Conduct to Protect Children” and the “Reporting Code for Child Abuse and Domestic Violence”.**
- 2. Treat children with respect, regardless of origin, colour, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other belief, nationality, ethnic or social origin, disability, etc.**
- 3. Be aware that children are vulnerable to abuse, particularly those participating in activities organised by De Vrolijkheid are generally more vulnerable or may already be victims of abuse.**
- 4. Be mindful of situations that may pose risks, such as being alone with children, filming/photographing and conducting interviews. In these cases, proceed only if the situation is within the limits of this policy and after obtaining**



permission from a supervisor, parents/guardians (if known) and the child.

- 5. Plan and organise the work, workplace, or visits in a way that mitigates risks.**
- 6. As far as possible, be visible to others when working with or visiting children.**
- 7. Foster an open culture where problems or concerns can be expressed and discussed.**
- 8. Encourage a sense of responsibility among employees to ensure no inappropriate behaviour or potential abuse goes unnoticed.**
- 9. Talk to children about their interactions with employees or others and encourage them to raise any concerns.**
- 10. Empower children by discussing their rights, informing them about acceptable behaviour, and educating them on steps they can take if they encounter any issues.**
- 11. Report suspicions or incidents of child abuse to the appropriate people as outlined in the Reporting Code for Child Abuse and Domestic Violence.**

What do we not do?

- 1. Do not develop a physical or sexual relationship with children or any other relationship that could in any way be considered exploitative or abusive.**
- 2. Do not behave in a manner that is potentially abusive, exploitative or physically or emotionally harmful, and do not expose children to such risks.**
- 3. Do not spend time alone with a child, out of sight of others. This includes taking a child away from the project or having private meetings with a child. If privacy is required, another**



employee should be informed and the door should remain open.

- 4. Do not condone or engage in unlawful, unsafe or abusive behaviour towards children.**
- 5. Do not display physically inappropriate behaviour (e.g. fiddling with children or holding, kissing or touching children in a manner that does not respect the culture) and do not display sexual behaviour. Do not sleep with children in the same room or bed.**
- 6. Do not use corporal punishment or otherwise physically assault children.**
- 7. Do not display behaviour aimed at shaming, humiliating, belittling or demeaning children, or engage in any other form of emotional abuse.**
- 8. Do not discriminate against children, treat them unfairly without justification, or show favouritism.**
- 9. Do not allow children to do household or other work that is inappropriate given their age or stage of development, interferes with their education or exposes them to danger of injury.**
- 10. Do not allow systematic neglect of a child and protect a child from harm at all times.**
- 11. Maintain professional boundaries by refraining from taking on personal care responsibilities, such as becoming a donor or foster parent yourself.**

Note: While a large number of potentially harmful situations have been covered, the above list is far from exhaustive. The most important starting point is the best interest of the child and acting in that interest. If in doubt, contact a special-task employee of De Vrolijkheid.