

Child Protection Policy

Polylogos is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children and young people. We recognise our responsibility to take all reasonable steps to promote safe practice and to protect children from harm, abuse and exploitation. Polylogos acknowledges its duty to act appropriately to any allegations, reports or suspicions of abuse. Paid staff and volunteers must strive to work together to ensure a healthy work environment, which embraces difference and diversity, and respects the rights of children, young people and adults.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is

- (1) **to prevent** harm abuse and exploitation of children and young people who receive services from Polylogos;
- (2) **to protect** children and young people who receive services from Polylogos, including children of adults who use our services;
- (3) **to provide** staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection, and to ensure that all staff and volunteers abide by these standards.

Polylogos believes that a child or young person must never experience abuse of any kind. We understand and assume the responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, and to keep them safe. We are committed to working in a way that protects them as they grow, mature and are challenged in a healthy and safe environment.

Definitions

- **Child:** For the purpose of this policy, any person under the age of 18 is a child.
- **Child protection:** includes all activities undertaken with the aim of protecting children from risks and harm. It refers to all policies, prevention measures, response actions to allegations, and all other procedures designed to keep children safe and promote their development. The overall goal of child protection is to create a safe environment by preventing harm to children's development and to promote their well-being.
- **Child abuse:** occurs when a child is harmed by an adult or another child, physically, sexually, or emotionally, intentionally or through negligence.
- **Physical abuse:** occurs when an individual deliberately harms a child by causing physical harm. Physical abuse can take many forms, including hitting, kicking, slapping, and any other action that causes injury. Furthermore, physical abuse also occurs when the child is given drugs that he or she does not need by his or her caregivers, thus giving rise to/inducing illnesses.
- **Sexual abuse:** occurs when a child is forced, coerced, manipulated, or persuaded to engage in sexual activity by an adult or another child. Sexual abuse may include, but is not limited to, all forms of sexual violence, groping or molestation, incest, forced early marriage and voyeurism. Sexual abuse can happen both in person and online; when it occurs in person it does not necessarily involve physical contact, for example a child may be encouraged to behave in a sexually provocative manner, or may be exposed to pornographic material. The child may not be aware that he or she is being sexually abused.

- **Psychological/emotional abuse:** this type of abuse is characterized by various types of behaviour, including, but not limited to, humiliation, criticism, accusations, blaming, intimidation, threats, shouting, type abuse verbal, rejection and isolation. Psychological abuse is usually repeated in the time and can have a strong impact on the child's mental development. To some extent, all forms of abuse, exploitation and abandonment of children involve psychological abuse.
- **Sexual exploitation and exploitation:** the exploitation of children consists of using children for personal or financial advantage, sometimes in exchange for "something" that the child, or another person, needs or desires, for example money, accommodation, gifts, drugs. Unequal power dynamics are a component of exploitation in all cases. Child exploitation involves various forms of child abuse and can also occur online.

Scope

All representatives of Polylogos must read and comply with the measures outlined in this document, including:

- All staff (full-time and part-time employees and contractors)
- Mentors and special advisors
- Volunteers and interns
- Agencies or organisations employed to deliver services on our behalf

Objectives

- to provide activities for children and young people that help them develop from childhood into adulthood, and to support them in this process.
- to enable the children to express themselves in a free and healthy way.
- to assist the children in integrating into the larger community.
- to help children and young people appreciate the diversity of their cultures.

Risks

Children may face various risks and vulnerabilities in the context of our activities, including but not limited to:

- Exposure to inappropriate content or behavior.
- Contact with individuals who may pose a risk of harm.
- Potential exploitation or grooming by adults or peers.
- Physical or emotional harm due to inadequate supervision or care.

We recognise that

- The welfare of the child is paramount;
- All children, regardless of age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to equality and to protection from abuse;
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse must be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately;
- All members and employees of the organisation must be clear on how to respond appropriately to such suspicions and allegations.

Screening and Hiring Practices

Polylogos establishes and sustains proper hiring and volunteer, internship selection practices, including completed applications and reference checks. For collaborators, volunteers, interns and staff involved in projects that directly involve children, Polylogos also conducts criminal background checks, social security checks and documented personnel files, with specific reference to the Child Protection Policy.

All prospective staff members, volunteers and interns are requested to provide information about past work history, volunteer experience, and education.

All application forms must include a statement explaining that Polylogos has a zero tolerance for any emotional, verbal, physical or sexual abuse, and any other kinds of inappropriate behaviour by staff members.

Principles of Conduct when coming in contact or working with children

- A. Prior to performing any work duties, staff members, volunteers and interns must sign and date a copy of the Child Protection Policy.
- B. The Child Protection Policy must be maintained in the personnel file and is annexed to the employment contracts of staff, volunteers and interns.
- C. The core team and board of mentors at Polylogos must review the Child Protection Policy once a year, and share it with all staff, volunteers and interns, who must sign it.
- D. All external collaborators and associates who work or may come in contact with children through the organisation's activities, are provided with a copy of the Child Protection Policy and must sign it prior to any involvement.
- E. Polylogos' Code of Conduct includes the procedures for data collection and treatment of data about children and young people. Data privacy and protection issues shall comply with relevant EU rules (especially the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679. If personal data about children and young people needs to be collected, written informed consent must be sought from their parents or legal guardians. The data will be collected and used only for the specific purposes for which they are provided. Staff working directly with children and needing to collect personal data about children or young people must refer to the Data Protection Policy of Polylogos and to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679. Polylogos does not share the personal data it collects with any other entity, unless formal explicit consent is given.
- F. Staff, volunteers or interns who may come in contact with personal data of research participants is required to sign a declaration of confidentiality before engaging in research. The declaration of confidentiality is specific to each case/project.
- G. All publications must comply with the Child Protection Policy, before being publicised or shared.
- H. Data, including images, of children and young people are only collected if strictly necessary and foreseen as specific activity or project implemented by Polylogos. Their use is therefore only limited to the duration of the project, and to the specific purpose for which they were collected. Prior to any collection or sharing of data, Polylogos always obtains permission from the child's parents or legal guardians, as well as approval from the child. Explicit consent from the child's parents or legal guardians and themselves is a prerequisite for gathering or sharing any data about the child, in accordance with GDPR and national law. Acquired images and data are stored on Polylogos' local server and are accessible only by the staff, volunteers and interns who have signed the Child Protection Policy, and therefore have credentials to access these.

- I. The rules and expectations stated in this Child Protection Policy must be shared with each new staff member, volunteer and intern, and are regularly reinforced with existing staff, volunteers and interns. This is included in the induction training, as well as through specific children's rights and child protection trainings.
- J. All members of staff, volunteers, interns, external collaborators and associates have the obligation to report any suspicion or knowledge of child abuse. Staff, volunteers and interns are instructed to report any perceived gaps between policy and practice. Staff, volunteers and interns working directly or coming in contact with children must be instructed on the correct procedures to follow in case they suspect or have knowledge of a situation of child abuse.
- K. Reporting of suspected breach of the Child Protection Policy follows a standard procedure, which all staff, volunteers and interns are instructed on as part of the induction training. The reports will be received and managed by Polylogos' Child Protection Policy Officer, a role currently held by **Camilla Bocaniala** (camilla@polylogos.eu).
- L. Any member of staff, volunteer, intern, external collaborator or associate found in breach of the Child Protection Policy, will be immediately suspended from their position, pending investigation, internal or by statutory authorities depending on the specific case. Disciplinary action will be undertaken, including and up to termination of employment/cessation of the professional engagement with Polylogos. In case of an alleged or certain crime, the staff will be immediately removed from their position and their contract terminated.

Children's Rights Training

All staff members (at minimum, all staff members, volunteers, and interns working directly with children and youth) must participate in a comprehensive initial children's rights and child abuse prevention training, and in further training throughout their employment period, which includes information on the Rights of the Children (UNCRC, Lanzarote Convention, National regulation), Communicating with Children, Sexual abuse, Prevention, Early Identification, Responding, Documenting, and Reporting.

External collaborators and associates who may come in contact with children and young people in the fulfilment of their tasks as assigned by Polylogos are obliged to take part in the same children's rights and child abuse prevention training.

This policy was adopted by Polylogos and signed on behalf of the team.

Name Liviu Daniel Bocăniață

Role President

Review date 01.01.2024

Signature 

