



## Child Protection Policy

### BACKGROUND

At HM Forage we take safeguarding seriously and believe that protecting children from harm is everyone's responsibility.

The purpose of this Policy is to protect children from any harm that may be caused due to them meeting us through our work.

This policy sets out HM Forage's approach and practices around child protection in order to keep the people we work with, including the most vulnerable people – children, safe. HM Forage acknowledges it is our duty to act appropriately to ensure that the children we meet through our work are safe and feel safe.

This Policy applies to the HM Forage Board of Trustees, all HM Forage (and subsidiary charity) employees, including affiliate organisations, and to all paid and unpaid consultants, contractors, interns, secondees and volunteers that provide supplies, services or support, to HM Forage, or promote its work at any location in or out of the United Kingdom. All such parties are referred to as "stakeholders" in this document.

This Policy also applies to HM Forage's partners, vendors and other third parties, where it is included or referenced in relevant bid or tender documents, agreements, memorandums, purchase orders or contracts.

### POLICY STATEMENT

This policy sets out HM Forage's approach and practices around child protection in order to keep the people we work with, including the most vulnerable people – children, safe. HM Forage acknowledges it is our duty to act appropriately to ensure that the children we meet through our work are safe and feel safe.

HM Forage considers that a 'child' is everyone below the age of 18; this is in accordance with the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child).

We believe that children have a right to protection from abuse or exploitation. We will not tolerate any child abuse and this policy sets out the principles, values and practices that HM Forage's "stakeholders" must follow when working with children.

HM Forage has a policy that defines our position on safeguarding more generally, whilst this policy focuses specifically on Child Protection.

HM Forage's project portfolios change over time, however, we may have projects where we work directly with children. Children are also likely to be present in the community in projects where we work directly with adults.

It is vital to have a Child Protection policy and procedures in place so that all "stakeholders" recognise abuse and know what actions to take to prevent it.

The policy statement and procedures have been drawn up in order to enable HM Forage to:

- Promote good practice and work in a way that can prevent harm, abuse and coercion occurring.
- To ensure that any allegations of abuse or suspicions are dealt with appropriately and the child and their family receive support from us and the appropriate authorities.
- To stop the abuse occurring.

In order to implement the policy and ensure children's welfare, HM Forage will protect a child's right to:

- Live free from abuse and coercion to enable them to achieve their full potential.
- Have their health, safety, well-being and best interests considered as paramount.
- HM Forage managing our work in a way that values, respects children, promoting safety Child Protection Policy and preventing abuse.
- Have their needs identified within the context of their culture, family, religion and ethnicity.
- To recruit staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all appropriate employment references are obtained.
- To ensure that all staff, volunteers, consultants, agency workers, trustees, partners and anyone working on behalf of HM Forage are of aware of our Code of Conduct and this policy.
- To provide effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision and training

In order to respect these rights, HM Forage's Code of Conduct requires anyone working on behalf of HM Forage to:

1. Treat people with dignity and respect
2. Ensure their personal and professional conduct is of the highest standard
3. Take responsibility for their own safety, health and welfare and for those they manage and work with
4. To act with the upmost financial integrity
5. To protect HM Forage's reputation in how they behave
6. To steward (use) HM Forage's assets wisely
7. To make a commitment to report any incident or concern of a breach of the Code of Conduct

## SCOPE

This Policy applies to the HM Forage Board of Trustees, all HM Forage (and subsidiary charity) employees, including affiliate organisations, and to all paid and unpaid consultants, contractors, interns, secondees and volunteers that provide supplies, services or support, to HM Forage, or promote its work at any location in or out of the United Kingdom. All such parties are referred to as "stakeholders" in this document.

## CHILD PROTECTION PROCESSES

HM Forage has a duty of care to put measures in place that reduce the likelihood of abuse happening within our work, and ensuring that all children that come into contact with HM Forage are protected from harm.

When in contact with children you must:

- Be aware of situations that may present a risk of abuse and manage these
- Plan and organise work and the workplace to minimise risks to children
- Be, wherever possible, visible to others when working directly with, or around children
- Be open and create culture in which concerns and issues can be discussed, where children understand what is acceptable, what is unacceptable and what they can do if there is a problem

- Create a culture of mutual accountability to ensure that abusive behaviour can be challenged
- When in contact with children you must not:
  - Spend excessive time alone with a child
  - Take children to your home, especially where they will be alone with you
  - Hit or otherwise physically assault or abuse children
  - Develop any kind of physical or sexual relationship with children
  - Develop a relationship with children that could be in any way be deemed as exploitative or abusive
  - Act in ways that may place children at risk
  - Use language, make suggestions or offer advice that is inappropriate, offensive or abusive
  - Behave physically in a manner that is inappropriate or sexually provocative
  - Have a child or children that you are working with stay overnight at your home
  - Sleep in the same room or bed as a child or children you are working with
  - Do things of a personal nature that the child can do for themselves Child Protection Policy
  - Condone or participate in behaviour that is illegal, unsafe or abusive to children
  - Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, degrade or belittle
  - Discriminate, show different treatment to, including showing favour to a particular child to the exclusion of others
- When in contact with children you must encourage children not to:
  - Hit or otherwise physically assault or abuse fellow children
  - Say abusive words
  - Show disrespect to other children

## RECOGNISING SIGNS OF ABUSE

HM Forage believes that child abuse may include any of the following:

- Physical Abuse, include beating causing actual body harm e.g. bruising, burns, or injury to the child.
- Sexual Abuse, involving the child in sexual activities e.g. rape, defilement, oral sex, exposure to sexually explicit material or acts, or any other act which could be considered to be of a sexual nature
- Psychological or emotional abuse, including belittling, name calling, threats of harm, intimidation, isolation, creating continuous or sporadic fear
- Neglect or negligence, the failure of parents, or others, to fulfil their responsibilities towards children e.g. failure to feed, clothe, educate or provide medical care
- Discriminatory abuse, including racism, sexism, discrimination based on a child's disability or any other form of harassment, slur or similar treatment
- Abuse may be a single act or repeated acts

## RESPONSIBILITIES

This policy applies to all “stakeholders” working on behalf of HM Forage and managers must ensure that everyone working in connection with HM Forage is made aware of it.

The Board of Trustees are responsible for ensuring the implementation of all aspects of the Child Protection Policy in the areas of the business for which they are responsible. The Chair of the Board of Trustee holds overall responsibility for implementation of the policy.

Any member of staff found breaching this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. Other “stakeholders” breaching this policy will be subject to appropriate action such as termination of “stakeholders” contract.

HM Forage will also report concerns to the relevant local authority and the police.

## TRANSPORTATION

The transporting of children should be carefully considered. Resources such as child safety harnesses and travel seats must be used if children are being transported to ensure their safety.

## COMMUNICATION ABOUT CHILDREN

In its communication and fundraising strategy, HM Forage may at times use images and recordings of children. HM Forage has a responsibility towards the children that are portrayed and should ensure that children are treated with dignity as humans with rights by avoiding the following:

- Inaccurate representation of children through words and images.
- Communication that shames degrades or victimizes children.
- Taking pictures or statements from children without informed consent of their legal guardian
- Depicting children in sexually provocative poses
- No personal and physical information to identify the location of a child that could put them at risk, to be put on website or used in communications.
- The purpose for which images or information on children is to be obtained must be clearly explained and understood, and informed consent must come from the child or person able to give valid consent. In the UK there are systems in place in most institutions to gain and record consent. Outside the UK the HM Forage's Project Coordinator (or other senior staff member) should complete a 'Consent Form' to show that this has been verbally obtained.
- A copy of the 'Consent Form' shall be retained by HM Forage, and use of the personal data shall be carefully monitored and kept secure and within the control of HM Forage.

## REPORTING CONCERNS

HM Forage believes that everyone has a responsibility to prevent harm and abuse. Anyone who has concerns can discuss their concerns with either their manager, or where they feel this is not appropriate their country project coordinator or a Trustee, or if they prefer, they can raise their concerns by emailing [contact@hmforage.org](mailto:contact@hmforage.org) marking the subject Private and Confidential – Safeguarding Concern

Full details of reporting concerns and whistle blowing can be found in HM Forage's Whistleblowing Policy.

HM Forage will respond to allegations of harm or abuse by:

- suspending the member of staff accused, pending the disciplinary process
- immediately reporting the accusation to the appropriate local authorities

- where appropriate conducting a thorough investigation, as part of our disciplinary policy
- supporting any criminal investigation

Single or repeated incidents of harm or abuse will be considered as gross misconduct and will result in dismissal without notice.

The Charity Secretary will be responsible for ensuring that all reports of harm or abuse are logged and reported in line with this policy.

All incidents will be reported to the Board of Trustees

All incidents will be reported to the local authority and the police

Where an incident is proven and meets the definitions of a serious incident, it will be reported to the Charity Commission, through its serious incident reporting process

## RESPONSE

HM Forage will follow up incidents and concerns according to policy and procedure, and legal and statutory obligations (see Procedures for reporting and response to safeguarding concerns in our Complaints Policy and Whistleblowing Policy).

Where appropriate, HM Forage will:

- conduct a thorough investigation
- suspend any the member of staff accused, pending the disciplinary process
- report the accusation to the appropriate local authorities
- report the accusation to the police and support any criminal investigation

“Stakeholders” found to be in breach of this policy will be subject to the appropriate action by HM Forage. This will include:

- members of staff being subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.
- ending volunteer relationships
- termination of a “stakeholder’s” contract

The Charity Secretary will be responsible for ensuring that all reports of harm or abuse are logged and reported in line with this policy.

All incidents will be reported to the Board of Trustees

Where an incident is proven and meets the definitions of a serious incident, it will be reported to the Charity Commission, through its serious incident reporting process.

HM Forage will offer support to survivors of harm caused by “stakeholders”, regardless of whether a formal internal response is carried out (such as an internal investigation). Decisions regarding support will be led by the survivor.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

It is essential that confidentiality is maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns. Information relating to the concern and subsequent case management should be shared on a need-to-know basis only and should be kept secure at all times

## **ASSOCIATED POLICIES:**

Code of Conduct

Safeguarding Policy

Complaints Policy

Whistleblowing Policy

Equality and Diversity Policy

Bullying and Harassment Policy

## **PROCEDURE AND TIMING FOR REVIEW OF THIS POLICY**

This policy will be approved by the Board of Trustees and reviewed as a minimum every three years. Comments or suggestions on how this policy is operating should be sent to the Charity Secretary.

## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

### **Beneficiary**

Someone who directly receives goods or services from HM Forage’s programme.

Note that misuse of power can also apply to the wider community that the NGO serves, and can include exploitation by giving the perception of being in a position of power.

## **Child**

A person below the age of 18

## **Harm**

Psychological, physical and any other infringement of an individual's rights

## **Psychological harm**

Emotional or psychological abuse, including (but not limited to) humiliating and degrading treatment such as bad name calling, constant criticism, belittling, persistent shaming, solitary confinement and isolation.

## **Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)**

The term used by the humanitarian and development community to refer to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse of affected populations by "stakeholders". The term derives from the United Nations Secretary General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13).

## **Safeguarding**

In our sector, we understand Safeguarding to mean protecting people, including children and at risk adults, from harm that arises from coming into contact with our "stakeholders" or programmes. In HM Forage we adopt the UK Charity Commission guidance that describes Safeguarding as meaning a person or group of people eligible to benefit from a charity. Safeguarding puts beneficiaries and affected persons at the centre of all we do.

## **Sexual abuse**

The term 'sexual abuse' means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

## **Sexual exploitation**

The term 'sexual exploitation' means 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. This definition includes human trafficking and modern slavery.

## **Survivor**

The person who has been abused or exploited. The term 'survivor' is often used in preference to 'victim' as it implies strength, resilience, and the capacity to survive, however it is the individual's choice how they wish to identify themselves.

## Version Control

<i>Version No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>By (Name, Position)</i>	<i>Details of changes</i>	<i>Reviewed and approved by Board of Trustees</i>
1	12/12/2023	Graham Hawkes, Trustee & Secretary	N/A	07/01/2024