

Inclusion Europe

The European Association of Societies of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities and their Families
L'Association Européenne des Organisations des Personnes Handicapées Mentales et leurs Familles

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Internal Procedures

4. Child Protection Policy and Procedures

This is an official policy of Inclusion Europe and thus is part of any employment contract. It is also obligatory for all partners, staff and volunteers active in projects that involve children and young people with and without disabilities.

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1 Introduction

As an organization defending the human rights of children, young people and adults with intellectual disabilities, Inclusion Europe is committed to and encourages respect for human rights and dignity. Inclusion Europe believes that every child who participates in Inclusion Europe activities has the right to enjoy a safe environment and be protected from harm. In line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that all children have a right to protection, Inclusion Europe believes that it has a duty of care and obligation to protect those children for whom we are given responsibility.

We believe that the welfare of children is the highest priority and that it is the responsibility of everyone in Inclusion Europe to ensure that they are protected. This policy sets out Inclusion Europe's commitment to Child Protection and aims to promote good practice in:

- providing children with appropriate safety and protection while participating in activities organized by Inclusion Europe; and,
- allowing all volunteers and staff to make informed and confident responses to specific Child Protection issues.

2 Definitions

Child: anyone under the age of 18 (in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child). Adult: anyone aged 18+.

Participant: every person who attends a Inclusion Europe programme, who is not a "person in a position of responsibility". *Note that in some programmes, participants are adults. Though not children, they have the same right to expect a safe environment and appropriate behaviour from other participants and persons in positions of programme responsibility.*

Person in a position of responsibility: Any staff, Board member, leader or other person who has responsibility for all or aspects of delivering a Inclusion Europe programme. *Note that in some cases, such persons may be 'children' (e.g. self-advocates aged 16/17), who are, therefore, both responsible for and covered by this Child Protection Policy.*

Child Protection: refers to the actions taken in order to prevent or stop all behaviours considered dangerous for the physical and psychological health of children.

Child abuse: is any form of physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm. It often occurs within a relationship of trust or responsibility and is an abuse of power or a breach of trust. Abuse can happen to a child regardless of their age, gender, race or ability. Even in situations where it may be felt that the child accepted or somehow invited the abuse, it is still abuse.

Abusers can be adults (male or female) and other children, and are usually known to and trusted by the child and family. The abuser may be a family member, or they may be someone the child encounters in a residential setting or in the community, including during sports and leisure activities. An individual may abuse or neglect a child directly, or may be responsible for abuse because they fail to prevent another person harming that child or neglecting the needs of the child.

There are four main types of child abuse: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. Children can suffer from one or a combination of these forms of abuse.

- Emotional – the emotional mistreatment of a child which may involve telling a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only to meet the needs of another person. These may include imposing expectations or interactions that are inappropriate or beyond the child’s developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limiting the child’s ability to explore or learn or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction.
- Physical – causing bodily or physical harm e.g. hitting, poisoning, burning, giving children alcohol or drugs.
- Sexual – when adults use children to meet their own sexual urges; this may or may not include physical contact with the child (e.g. any sexual activity, intimate touching, sexually suggestive remarks).
- Neglect – when adults fail to meet the child’s basic needs to an extent that is likely to result in serious impact on the child’s health or development (e.g. failing to provide adequate food, shelter, failing to protect from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment).

In addition, bullying is a form of child abuse although often, but not always, the person who is the bully is also a child.

Bullying means deliberate, hurtful behaviour towards another person that is usually repeated over a period of time. The outcome will always be painful and distressing for the victim. There are four main types of bullying:

- physical (e.g. pushing, hitting, kicking, slapping or any use of violence);
- verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, name-calling, graffiti, threats, abusive text messages);
- emotional (e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring, isolating from the group); or,
- sexual (e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments).

3 Part 1: Our Policy

Inclusion Europe will not tolerate child abuse and is committed to:

- Taking into account, in all of our planning and activities, the interests and wellbeing of children;
- Respecting the rights, wishes and feelings of the children with whom we are working;
- Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from neglect and physical, sexual, psychological and emotional abuse;
- Responding to all suspicions and allegations of abuse swiftly and appropriately; and,
- Recruiting Inclusion Europe volunteers and staff to work with children with regard to their suitability for that responsibility and providing them with training in good practice and Child Protection procedures.

Inclusion Europe volunteers and staff, who wish to work with children, are responsible for following this Policy at all times.

3.1 Review

The policy will be reviewed every 2 years or whenever there is a major change in the organization or in relevant legislation. Compliance with procedures will be regularly monitored and reviewed.

3.2 Our Policy and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Inclusion Europe's Child Protection Policy is based on the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It provides a comprehensive framework for the protection, provision for and participation of all children without discrimination to ensure their survival and development to the maximum extent possible.

3.3 Our Policy and National Laws

As an international organization, Inclusion Europe has members in more than 30 European countries. Inclusion Europe's Head Office is based in Belgium and must observe the laws of Belgium. When implementing activities alone or with national partners in other countries, we must observe the laws of this country. It is therefore essential that we find out about the relevant laws that govern how we can operate and deliver Inclusion Europe programmes and develop procedures, guidance and training in line with both local law and this Policy. At the same time, Inclusion Europe has rules and standards that seek to create a consistent approach and which, in some cases, may be stricter than national or local laws. This Policy must, therefore, be followed in addition to the relevant national and local laws on Child Protection.

4 Part 2: Our Rules

Inclusion Europe promotes and expects behaviour that is sensitive, respectful, caring and that contributes to creating a healthy and safe environment for children and adults; an environment where children and adults feel able to come forward with concerns and receive support from those around them.

4.1 Adult Code of Behaviour

Inclusion Europe has adopted an Adult Code of Behaviour that every single adult involved in a Inclusion Europe programme and/or a position of responsibility within Inclusion Europe, should respect and put into practice at all times. All volunteers will be given a copy of this Code of Behaviour during training or volunteer orientation and must become familiar with its requirements, by reading and understanding the Code. The Code can be found in Annex 1.

4.2 General Behaviour within Inclusion Europe Programmes

All persons involved in Inclusion Europe programmes must be made aware of and comply with these rules, which include forbidding the following in programmes:

- Any sexual intimacy or the appearance of sexual intimacy;
- Use of narcotics;
- Underage drinking; and,
- Any form of abuse, corporal punishment or intolerance

Violation of any of these rules will lead to consequences up to and including exclusion from the programme or termination of contract. Violation of some of these rules may lead to consequences up to and including informing the appropriate external authorities.

4.3 Health and Safety within Inclusion Europe Programmes

To ensure the physical protection of children, their health and safety must also be provided for. Inclusion Europe programme policy includes specific requirements for:

- The ratio of adults to children;
- Upholding all local public health/ health and safety standards and laws;
- Ready access to medical care;
- Healthy diet and nutrition; and,
- Accommodation of special needs, to the fullest extent possible.

4.4 Behaviour and Communication outside of Inclusion Europe Programmes

People in positions of programme responsibility must understand that they are in a position of trust at all times in relation to the children for whom they are responsible. This means that all contact with children before or after a programme should reflect the same values and behaviour.

Abuse can take place not only in person but also through other forms of contact (e.g. phone, text messages, emails, social networking sites).

It is important to encourage safe online or distance communication and to understand that our responsibility to children extends to any contact we have with them, be it by phone, text, chat, social network sites etc.

It is particularly important to recognise that online communications present many positive, but also negative opportunities. Many Inclusion Europe members (youth and adult) have a personal account on other social networking sites. Whenever using social network profiles, programme staff and leaders should always bear in mind their responsibility as adults in a position of trust. Inclusion Europe expects them to keep the distance online with young people that they would keep in the 'offline' world. Inclusion Europe further expects that they would not maintain any online friendship on a social media site with a child they know to be under the minimum age required by such sites. Please refer to Annex 2 - Safety and Social Networking Sites for rules and expectations on communication with children via social media.

4.5 Photography

The use of photos on websites and in other publications poses direct and indirect risks to children and young people. Even if the child's personal identity (full name, address) is kept confidential, any other details accompanying the photo, such as an organisation or club they belong to, or a band they like, can make them identifiable and therefore vulnerable. There is also a risk that the photo itself is used inappropriately by others. Photos can easily be copied and adapted, perhaps to create images of child abuse, which can then find their way on to other websites.

Inclusion Europe will use images that appropriately represent our organisations and the activities of project. Inclusion Europe and its partners will think carefully about any images showing children and young people for website or in publications.

- Never supply the full name(s) of the child or children along with the image(s).
- Use alternative names instead of real names (you may ask the child about the name he or she wants to use in the publication)
- Only use images of children in suitable dress.
- The picture legend should focus on the activity, rather than on the child/children

Before taking pictures or using pictures it is necessary to ask for parental permission to use an image of a child or a young person. Parents should be aware of and support Inclusion Europe and the project partners' policy on using children's images, and of the way these represent the organisation or activity.

- For pictures taken during an event, consent can be given through registration.
- For pictures to be published online or in publication, a parental consent form for use of images of children should be signed before and kept. If the child is not in the care of his parents, the legal guardian should sign the consent form.

Partners should send electronic copies of the authorisation to Inclusion Europe and keep the original at their association.

It is also necessary ask for the child's permission to use their image. This ensures that they are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the activity. A children's permission form is one way of recording their consent. But consent can also be orally agreed. In that case, please record the day and time as well as how this was agreed with the child.

Please refer also to Annex 2 - Safety and Social Networking Sites for rules and expectations on use of photographs in social media.

5 Part 3: Selection

Inclusion Europe relies on our dedicated volunteers and paid staff. We recognise how important it is that we have safe and effective practices in place for recruiting people who will be working with children and to prepare them for their role.

Inclusion Europe requires the following steps and precautions in selecting all persons with Inclusion Europe programme responsibility¹.

5.1 Age Requirements

Every adult in a position of trust and responsibility in Inclusion Europe programmes should be at least 21 years old. Junior staff or leaders (aged 18/19) are only permitted in some programmes, where there are others aged 21+.

5.2 Application Requirements

Applicants for a position of responsibility in Inclusion Europe must complete an application form, giving information about their experience, interests and background. They must also sign to say that they do not have history of criminal activity, illness, child abuse, drug/alcohol abuse, prejudice etc. that would disqualify them from participation in Inclusion Europe.

5.3 Criminal Record Check

Police checks are required for all staff at Inclusion Europe. Applicants must provide a certificate of good conduct (Führungszeugnis / Certificat de bonne conduite) issued by the authorities of their place of residence.

It is essential under all circumstances to find out whether an applicant has a criminal record of convictions or arrests, which would make them unsuitable to take on a role of trust with children in a Inclusion Europe programme.

The following are considered inappropriate for a position of leadership and trust in Inclusion Europe and cannot be chosen for positions of programme responsibility:

- Persons who are listed on a national Child Protection Register
- Persons who have been charged with or convicted of serious criminal activity. Serious criminal activity includes, but is not limited to: murder; a serious sex offence; an offence committed by an adult involving intentionally wounding or causing grievous bodily harm; indecency offences; kidnapping; offences connected with child prostitution or child pornography.

There are also some conditions or tendencies, which could make someone unsuitable for a position of programme responsibility. Persons with a history of conviction or treatment for the following behaviours, except in cases of unusual circumstances, are considered inappropriate for a position of responsibility in Inclusion Europe:

- Alcohol / drug abuse;
- Dishonesty;
- Prejudice or intolerance;
- Violence or lack of self control;

¹ On occasion, people withdraw and replacements have to be found very quickly. In all cases, however, each of the steps must be followed before a person can be selected for a position of programme responsibility.

- Unable to handle stress appropriately.

Having a criminal record, in itself, does not necessarily mean that the person cannot assume a role of responsibility. It depends on the contents of the record and whether it relates to 'serious criminal activity' or other behaviours or attitudes that would make the person unsuitable for a position of trust with children.

5.4 Interview

All applicants will be required to attend an interview with Inclusion Europe representatives.

- A check should be made that the application form and procedures have been completed in full.
- The requirements and responsibilities of the role should be clarified so that they understand what is expected of them and what they can expect.

6 Part 4: Training

Safe recruitment practices of volunteers and staff must be followed by essential training for the roles they are undertaking. Our programme leaders, staff and host families must all be trained to recognise the situations where abuse of children may occur in order to enable them to react appropriately if they have concerns.

Training after recruitment should help volunteers to:

- Understand the Adult Code of Behaviour;
- Consider their own practices against what is considered good practice;
- Understand and follow the Inclusion Europe procedures for reporting and recording concerns;
- Recognise their responsibilities;
- Respond to concerns expressed by a child;
- Work safely and effectively with children; and,
- Understand how Inclusion Europe's Child Protection Policy also protects them in their work with children.

7 Part 5: Acting to Protect the Child When Abuse is Suspected

Part of providing a high standard of care is reacting appropriately when something does happen, or is suspected to have happened, and there is a need to protect the endangered child.

In the case of suspected or actual child abuse, you must ensure that your first priority is always for the safety and welfare of the child and that no child is ever left in an un-safe situation.

It is often very hard to admit that abuse is taking place within our organization, especially to children we know and particularly by people we trust. We cannot assume that because we work in a voluntary organization that all individuals are caring individuals, as this may lead us to fail to hear or recognise or deal with the possibility that abuse is happening.

If you have a child protection concern, it can be difficult to know what to do. You may be worried about raising your concern and may think it is best to keep it yourself, perhaps feeling that it's none of your business or only a suspicion. Inclusion Europe will always treat your concerns seriously and if you have such concerns, we want to hear from you – we all have a responsibility to protect the children in our care.

It is important in all circumstances to share your concern with someone who can make sure that the matter is looked at and dealt with as soon as possible. You should always pass on your concern to the 'person in charge' or, where your concern is about them, to the Director, the President or other Board members.

7.1 Hearing a child's disclosure

It is not the responsibility of the person first hearing or encountering a case of alleged or suspected abuse to decide whether or not abuse has taken place; it is their responsibility to immediately report the concern.

Inclusion Europe should create a positive atmosphere where children will feel free to come forward in cases of abuse. It may be that the abuse is taking place outside of the programme, in the child's home or community. Every child has the right to be listened to. It is our duty to listen to any concern they may have and to take them seriously, especially when talking about harm or abuse. It is helpful to ask 'open' questions that need more than 'yes' or 'no' responses but no attempt should be made to investigate.

It is important to tell a child who discloses abuse that such information must be shared and cannot be kept 'secret' or confidential. The child should be told that the information will be only be shared with those who need to know.

7.2 Reporting to the Inclusion Europe person in charge

When someone has a concern, they must immediately discuss the concern with the 'person in charge'. The 'person in charge' will generally be the Director.

The 'person in charge' is responsible for letting the person who has reported the concern know how it will be dealt with. The person reporting the concern should ensure they receive this information.

The 'person in charge' will then contact the President immediately, or as soon as possible that day.

If the concern is about the Director or the President, another member of the Board should be approached.

The Director is responsible for responding within 12 hours and then, as soon as possible, investigating and/or seeking relevant professional advice, advising the programme staff and leaders and ensuring that the incident is documented and reported on an Incident Report Form (see below).

7.2.1 Recording, reporting and documenting a concern

Inclusion Europe staff and volunteers should understand their responsibility to immediately report any concerns they have regarding the behaviour or welfare of a child or another volunteer to the person in charge (see above). In some countries there will be a legal requirement to report such concerns to the appropriate authorities (see 5.2.3). After a concern has been reported it is important to record or document the concern. When documenting a concern, care should be taken not to record personal opinion, only facts. If an injury e.g. bruise, cut, has been observed, the location of this injury should be noted on a body chart.

7.2.2 Filling in a report form

An Incident Report must be completed whenever an incident – requiring medical attention, involving criminal behaviour and/or violation of Inclusion Europe Guidelines – occurs at a Inclusion Europe programme or activity. In case of doubt, an Incident Report should still be completed. Anyone who feels there is a matter that should be reported can fill out a Report.

Information about suspected abuse must be accurate and a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure or when the concern arises. The information given on an Incident Report should include the following:

- The child's name, age and date of birth of the child;
- The child's home contact details;
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else;
- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information;
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay;
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries using the body chart to indicate the location of such bruises or injury. Also details of any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes;
- Details of witnesses to any incident/s;
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred;
- If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so what was said?
- Details of the alleged abuser, if known.

7.2.3 Reporting to the Authorities

Where it is suspected that any form of criminal behaviour is taking place at a programme, the appropriate local authorities should be informed immediately and their advice be followed. If it is suspected that some form of abuse or criminal behaviour is occurring in the child's home or home community, the appropriate authorities in that community should be involved.

7.3 Confidentiality

Where there are concerns about a child's welfare, every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and shared on a need to know basis only. This includes the following people:

- The person making the allegation;
- The Inclusion Europe 'person in charge' (Director or President or Board Member);
- Parents of the child;
- Social services/ police/doctor.

In cases referred to them, the social services/ police/ doctor will advise on who should approach the alleged abuser or, where the alleged abuser is under 18 years of age, their parents.

7.4 Internal Inquiries and Suspension

If the person accused of abuse is in the programme, the Director will also need to consider how to deal with that person. Guidance must be sought from the appropriate local authorities.

- The Director will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries.
- If the alleged abuser is at an international event, the Director will decide, on the advice of the authorities, whether they should be asked to return to their home country.
- Following their inquiries, social services or police inquiries may decide not to pursue the matter. The Director will still assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated and/or retrained and how this could be sensitively handled. The welfare of the child must be the highest priority throughout the child's involvement within Inclusion Europe.

Inclusion Europe keeps a record of all incidents reported, inquiries made and actions taken.

8 Annex 1: Adult Code of Behaviour

As a person in a position of programme responsibility you are in a position of trust at all times in relation to the children for whom you are responsible.

Good Practice

- DO treat everyone with dignity and respect
- DO set an example you would wish others to follow
- DO treat all children equally – show no favouritism
- DO respect a child's right to personal privacy
- DO avoid unnecessary physical contact with a child – your actions, no matter how well- intentioned, might be misinterpreted by them or someone else
- DO avoid unacceptable situations within a relationship of trust; for example, a sexual relationship with a participant, even if they are over the age of consent
- DO have separate sleeping accommodation for children and adults
- DO plan activities that involve more than one other person being present, or at least are within sight and hearing of others – avoid spending time alone with a child in private or out of sight/hearing of others.
- DO allow children to talk about any concerns they may have
- DO encourage others to challenge any attitudes or behaviours they do not like
- DO avoid being drawn into inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour from children, such as tantrums and crushes
- DO keep other leaders informed of where you are and what you are doing
- DO take any allegations or concerns of abuse seriously and refer them immediately to the person in charge, i.e. the Programme Director or local/ national Risk Manager

Poor Practice

- DO NOT trivialise or belittle abuse or concerns
- DO NOT form an intimate relationship with a child or any other relationship that would be an abuse of trust
- DO NOT allow abusive activities between children such as initiation ceremonies or bullying
- DO NOT engage in inappropriate behaviour or contact – physical, verbal, sexual
- DO NOT make sexually suggestive remarks or threats to a child, even in fun
- DO NOT use inappropriate language, whether speaking or writing – in person or by phone, email or through use of social media
- DO NOT allow a child to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- DO NOT let allegations, suspicions, or concerns about abuse go unreported

9 Annex 2: Safety and Social Networking Sites

In addition to the Adult Code of Behaviour, here are some guidelines on how to behave appropriately toward children online or in other forms of communications.

- Remember you are in a position of trust and are a role model at all times.
- Conduct yourself appropriately, as you would face-to-face.
- Do not engage in one-to-one communication with children or via text messages, instant messaging or chat facilities unless it relates specifically to your Inclusion Europe responsibilities.
- Before sharing your social media accounts with a child, consider the things you like to share with your peers – would they be suitable or appropriate to share with that child?
- When using a social network account, you should always think of how any digital communication might appear to someone else. Compared with a conversation in the real world, technology increases the potential for messages to be seen out of context, misinterpreted or forwarded to others.
- Do not provide personal details about children on your website or social networking group.
- Always ensure you have parental permission to use any photographs of children and only use their first names on any caption.
- Only use appropriate photographs on your site – remember that everyone can view them.
- If you are concerned about the way a child is attempting to contact you, report it immediately to your local Risk Manager.
- If you need to email children, always copy the message to another adult.
- **WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT YOU NOT USE YOUR PERSONAL SOCIAL NETWORKING ACCOUNT TO COMMUNICATE WITH CHILDREN.**