

## **Best Safeguarding practices when engaging with children & young people.**

### **Our safe practice guidelines for staff, activists, and volunteers.**

#### **Do...**

- Ensure that children and young people are made to feel welcome at all Amnesty International UK events and activities, and that the environment is not intimidating or scary – this is particularly important when working with children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- Before a meeting or activity, ensure that you are aware of those who may have a special educational need or disability and have spoken with them and their parents/carers to make sure you are making reasonable adjustments to include them.
- Remind everyone of the purpose of the activity and the importance of treating everyone with respect and dignity.
- Respect the cultural, religious and ethnic background of the child or young person.
- Encourage, children and adults to constructively challenge attitudes and behaviours that are unacceptable to the group.
- Ensure that children under the age of 18 know the name of at least one person present to whom they can speak if they wish and with whom they can raise any concerns.
- Before the meeting or event consider any necessary health and safety requirements which may be needed within the risk assessment
- Ensure that any bullying or harassment taken place is addressed by speaking to the young people involved and contacting their parents or carers if needed.
- If you are concerned that a child or young person is at risk of abuse or harm, follow Amnesty International UK Safeguarding Procedure
- Respect a child's right to privacy when they share information, however if dealing with a potential disclosure of abuse or neglect never promise confidentiality.
  - In that case follow AIUK Safeguarding Procedure, making sure the child understands what you are doing and why.
- Plan your activities so that more than one person who is over 18 years of age is present or at least in sight and hearing of the activity.
- If you do need to work alone with a child or young person, remain in general view – not 'hidden away' behind closed doors.
- Pick materials carefully to make sure they are suitable for a young audience. Not all Amnesty International materials are suitable. Please check guidelines/materials beforehand and check appropriateness if necessary.
  - If you consider that the content of an event or activity will not be suitable for children or young people, clearly state a minimum age requirement.
- If you visit a school on behalf of Amnesty International UK, ensure that a teacher or other member of the school staff is always with you - you should not be left alone with students, especially if you do not have a criminal record check.
- Seek a child or young person's consent before taking any photographs or film them and obtain consent from their parent, carer or guardian for any promotional use of photographs or films of those under 18.

- Make available the telephone contact numbers which young people can ring if they are distressed:
  - Childline 0800 1111

### **Do not...**

- Spend time with children/young people 1:1, including online.
- Have private contact with children/young people through a personal social media or email account.
- Contact children or young people outside the requirements of the group, project or activity.
- Allow abusive behaviour or activities such as bullying.
- Promise confidentiality of a child or young person makes a disclosure to you
- Ignore any disclose made and think it is someone else's responsibility – safeguarding is everyone's responsibility
- Allow or engage in suggestive remarks, gestures or touching of a kind which could be misunderstood.
- Allow any physically rough or sexually provocative games, or inappropriate talking or touching, by anyone in any group for which you have responsibility.
- Allow yourself to be drawn into inappropriate attention seeking behaviours.
- Show favouritism to any individual.
- Believe "it could never happen to me", in terms of an allegation being made.

### **Consent...**

Good practice is that you always need to get parental consent for anyone under the age of 16, therefore if an under 16 is coming regularly, you should get their parent/carers contact details and consent for the child/young person to attend.

However, it is not always that simple, sometimes you will need consent for 16–18-year-olds, and sometimes you won't need consent for an under 16. Some good questions to ask yourself are...

- Are you travelling with the under 18 and are they able to get back from where you are going alone? If they aren't and you are taking responsibility for them, then you need parental details and consent. If it is a public event which they are travelling to alone, but meeting a group there to attend, for example a protest, then consent may not be needed.
- Are they attending regular meetings? If so, you need consent for an under 16 and for anyone 16-18 it is best practice to make sure their parents know where they are and have their contact details in case of an emergency.
- Do you or another adult need to give the young person a lift anywhere? You should avoid being left 1:1 with a young person, but if anyone under 18 needs a lift, you should have parental consent as this is a more vulnerable position for the young person.
- Are you taking responsibility for the young person in any way? If you are, then you should get parental consent as this ensures you are not putting yourself in a position where unfounded allegations about your intentions could be made.

- Are you going to be at a private venue/space (for example someone's home)? Generally, it is safer and more inclusive not to meet in someone's home, but if you are, then making sure the parents/guardians know where you are and have given consent for their child to be there, is good practice.

For any night activity, you need to follow the procedures for events, particularly the part about overnight stays. You will need to ensure that there is a lead activist in charge who has gone through safer recruitment measures and has an up-to-date criminal record check.

Overall, it is always good practice to talk through getting consent with the young person involved and discuss why you need consent, and their parents/carers contact details.

### **What if...**

#### **You suspect a child or young person is being abused or neglected:**

Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Record the date and facts which support your suspicions.

Refer to AIUK's Safeguarding policy and procedure for more information

**If a child is in immediate danger, call the police on 999.**

#### **A child discloses to you that they have or are being abused by someone else:**

**Listen carefully to the child.** Avoid expressing your own views on the matter. A reaction of shock or disbelief could cause the child to 'shut down', retract or stop talking.

**Let them know they've done the right thing.** Reassurance can make a big impact to the child who may have been keeping the abuse secret.

**Tell them it's not their fault.** Abuse is never the child's fault, and they need to know this.

**Say you will take them seriously.** A child could keep abuse secret in fear they won't be believed. They've told you because they want help and trust you'll be the person who will listen to and support them.

**Don't talk to the alleged abuser.** Confronting the alleged abuser about what the child's told you could make the situation a lot worse for the child.

**Explain what you'll do next.** If age appropriate, explain to the child you'll need to report the abuse to someone who will be able to help

**Don't delay reporting the abuse.** The sooner the abuse is reported after the child discloses the better. Report as soon as possible so details are fresh in your mind and action can be taken quickly.

Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead/ AIUK Safeguarding Manager

#### **A child discloses to you in a school:**

If a child discloses to you in a school, for example as an Amnesty volunteer speaker, then you should still listen to the child, but ensure the teacher responsible for your session is informed, so that they can inform their school Designated Safeguarding Lead. You should not be alone with a child or young person in a school setting.

Before leaving the school premises, you should ask the class teacher or the reception staff to speak to a Designated Safeguarding Lead to report the concern. You should also inform the AIUK Safeguarding Manager who will follow up with the school to ensure the concern is being addressed through the school's safeguarding procedure.

**AIUK Designated Safeguarding Leads:**

Charis Belcher, Safeguarding Manager

Email: [Charis.belcher@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:Charis.belcher@amnesty.org.uk)

Phone: 07879 123938 (accessible during work hours)

David Prince, Director of People and Culture

Email: [David.Prince@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:David.Prince@amnesty.org.uk)

If it is out of hours and emergency always call the police on (999), or the relevant local authorities children services Emergency Duty Team (EDT) – these can be found through searching online – you can find these and record them in advance of an activity/event in your risk assessment.

You can also contact the NSPCC Helpline on [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk) or **0808 800 5000**