

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY

‘Giving Bright Girls the Chance to Shine’

CHARITY PURPOSE

The principle purpose of Precious Sisters is to provide four-year scholarships to young women from poor families to allow them to attend secondary school in Kenya. In addition, the Charity supports recipients through mentoring events and individual follow-up delivered by the charity’s programme staff.

Precious Sisters is governed by a UK and a Kenyan board and is registered with the Charity Commission in the UK and in Kenya by the NGO Board. Funding is predominately from individual UK donors.

INTRODUCTION

This document is the Safeguarding Children & Young People Policy for the Precious Sisters Charity. It is endorsed by the Trustees.

The beneficiaries of the Charity are children and young people. The majority of our recipients will be defined as children who are someone under 18 years of age. In addition, we provide support to alumni through college years and entry into the work place. The Precious Sisters Trustees wish to ensure that these children and young people are not harmed in any way through contact with the Charity. Trustees will act prudently and take all reasonable steps to ensure that the risks of harm to children and young people’s welfare are minimized.

All children and young people will be valued equally, irrespective of age, culture, disability, gender, ethnicity, language, sexual identity or religious belief.

The scope of the Policy applies to all trustees, staff, volunteers, donors and anyone else working on behalf of Precious Sisters and will be promoted by those in the position of leadership within the Charity.

The policy is described in detail below in six areas. It is accompanied by a ‘Code of Practice’.

1. Safeguarding

Policy Statement

Precious Sisters is committed to creating safe and trusting environments that allow young people to flourish. We will do everything possible to minimize the risk of harm to children and young people and will have ‘zero-tolerance’ for behaviour which contravenes our values and policy.

Our actions will be determined by the following principles:

- protecting the interests and wellbeing of children and young people;
- respecting the rights and feelings of children and young people with whom we work;

- taking all reasonable and practicable measures to protect them from neglect and abuse: physical, sexual and emotional;
- respecting the trust within which we operate;
- providing training and guidance to employees, volunteers and donors;
- ensuring clear accountability exists for any safeguarding matters;
- working proactively with our partners; families and schools.

Policy awareness and training

- Precious Sisters has a designated 'Safeguarding or Lead Trustee'; Wallace Garland, who is accountable for working with particularly the Kenyan Board to ensure adherence to, and focus on, the Policy. He provides an update at each Board meeting.
- Everyone who has contact with the Charity will be briefed on the policy and have access to the Precious Sisters' Code of Practice. Those that have contact with children and young people will receive training and sign their agreement to the 'Code of Practice'.
- The 'Lead Trustee' and staff will receive ongoing training specific to their roles.
- The recipients are informed of the policy and expectations as part of their induction to the programme. Awareness and understanding are built through mentoring events.

Safeguarding register

- The staff keep a confidential register of all safeguarding and related matters. These are reviewed with the designated 'Lead Trustee' on a regular basis and are included in staff member's monthly reports.
- The programme managers are encouraged to review any concerns, whether arising at Precious Sisters events, in the home environment or school with the Lead Trustee.
- Any incidents will be disclosed to Trustees and relevant authorities.

Investigation process

- Any concern or incident should be reported to either of the Programme Managers as the designated contact points. In addition, concerns can be raised with the 'Lead Trustee' or other Trustees
- It is not the responsibility of Trustees, staff or volunteers of Precious Sisters to decide whether or not a safeguarding issue has arisen. However, all parties have a responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting these to the programme managers.
 - Any reported incident will be investigated objectively and will involve listening carefully to all those involved.
 - The staff will manage the investigation process with the support of the 'Lead Trustee'. The investigation process will be documented.
 - Confidentiality will be maintained on a need to know basis.

Disciplinary process

- On completion of an investigation process the 'Lead Trustee' will take such steps as necessary to ensure the safety of the child/young person. The child/young person's welfare will be placed at the centre of the decision making and their welfare is paramount. The Lead Trustee will engage with any advisors as necessary during the process.
- Trustees will be informed of the outcomes of any investigations and external authorities will be notified if relevant.

2. Whistleblowing

Precious Sisters encourages recipients to raise any concerns immediately with school counsellors and the Project Managers. It acknowledges the importance of creating opportunities for recipients to raise any concerns confidentially and or anonymously within the constraints of the operating environment. Specifically, issues can be raised via:

- Regular one on one meetings with Programme Managers;
- Training sessions during mentoring events;
- An anonymous bi-annual survey which can identify specific issues;
- Anonymous 'comments' box available at mentoring events.

No adverse consequences will occur as a result of concerns being raised.

3. HR Practice

Precious Sisters recognises the importance of having robust processes for staff and volunteer selection including ongoing review and development. As part of our HR practices the following policies will be followed.

Recruiting and managing paid staff

- a) Paid staff must recognize the position of trust in which they have been placed and ensure that their behaviour is appropriate at all times.
- b) Paid staff will:
 - I. Complete an application form or a letter of application. This includes: address, evidence of relevant qualifications, the reasons why they want to work with children and young people, work and voluntary work experience and a self disclosure statement about any criminal convictions;
 - II. Provide identification to confirm their identity;
 - III. Undergo an interview process, involving at least two interviews and meeting several Trustees;
 - IV. Provide at least two references which are followed up before a post is offered;
 - V. Be provided with a job description outlining their main responsibilities;

- VI. Undergo an induction period before being confirmed in post;
- VII. Sign to confirm receipt and understanding of the Charity's Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy;
- VIII. Receive supervision at least every 6 weeks by their line manager/a Trustee.
- IX. Be briefed to be alert to the potential abuse of young people (within their families and other sources) and bring this to the attention of the 'Lead Trustee' who will take responsibility for action within the Precious Sisters organisation;
- X. Be appraised on an annual basis against objectives, including compliance with the Safeguarding Policy;
- XI. Have an up to date Police Clearance Certificate.

Recruiting and managing volunteers

- Where not known to a Trustee, the lead trustee will take steps to check on the credentials of the volunteer to ensure suitability (e.g. seek a personal endorsement from a known volunteer).
- Volunteers will undergo an informal briefing and training before having any contact with the beneficiaries.
- Volunteers will be briefed on the Charity's Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and will receive a copy of the Code of Practice, covering interaction with children and young people of Precious Sisters.
- Volunteers may shadow an experienced volunteer before fulfilling the core aspects of their role.
- Volunteers will ensure that, in every respect, the relationships they form with the young people under their care are appropriate.

Donors

Precious Sisters recognises the generosity and support of its donors and the value their support including gifts, letters and emails brings to the young people. All contact with the recipients must occur via the programme managers.

4. Risk management

The Charity recognises that Safeguarding risks can occur in any environment and it has specific responsibility for events and activities arranged by the Charity. Staff members will regularly review with the boarding schools possible risks and concerns and they will support issues arising in the home environment. Specifically, programme managers will have an annual conversation with each school to review approach to safeguarding.

Guidelines for the organisation of events or activities in order to minimize the risk of safeguarding issues

Precious Sisters commits to ensure that all activities and risks are assessed and that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent children being harmed whilst participating in Precious Sisters' activities.

Use of Computers & Photographs

- At Precious Sisters events any computers/tablets used by children and young people while at PS events are equipped with "parental controls" to ensure safe internet use.
- All children and young people will be guided through an agreement about using the internet. This includes appropriate use of social networking sites.
- Photographs of beneficiaries will be used in a range of communications – e.g. website, newsletters, presentations, letters to sponsors. Care will be taken not to expose the young people to risks. Full names will not accompany photographs or videos of young people on our website.

5. Code of Conduct

Mandatory adherence to the Precious Sisters Code of Practice for those who come into contact with the children and young people of Precious Sisters.

- All parties interacting with the children will receive and sign acceptance of the Code of Practice (attached). They will be expected to behave appropriately and will be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to promote children and young people's welfare.
- All parties should be alert to possible sources of abuse - physical, emotional and sexual, and also to the problem of neglect.
- Bullying will not be tolerated. All forms of bullying will be addressed. Bullying can include: physical pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching, unwanted physical contact, name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing and emotional torment through ridicule, humiliation and the continual ignoring of individuals. It may also include sectarian/racial taunts, graffiti, rude gestures; sexual comments and/or suggestions. Anyone who reports an incident of bullying will be listened to carefully and be supported, whether it's the child/young person being bullied or the child/young person who is bullying. Any issues arising during a Precious Sisters event will be investigated by the programme staff. Programme staff will work with the schools and families to investigate issues raised in these places.

6. Governance

All Trustees are accountable for ensuring Safeguarding considerations are the heart of all Precious Sisters activities. The Kenyan Board has primary accountability for overseeing the implementation and adherence to this policy.