

EVC Uganda Child Protection Policy August 2024

How we safeguard the children and young people we work with

1. Introducing the Child Protection Policy

Eva Uganda is a Registered Charity whose aims are to to raise funds for school fees for poor and destitute children in Uganda and to provide essential school buildings and supporting facilities.

For the purposes of this document the term 'volunteers' refers to all Board members and anyone else involved in our activities who give voluntarily of their time.

Presently, fund-raising for the charity will be mainly UK based, but increasingly our people in Uganda will be raising funds as well. In the majority of instances it is unlikely that EVC volunteers will have contact with children. However, those who visit schools in the UK, or go on visits to Uganda, will have significant contact with children. In most cases, these contacts will be supervised by other members of EVC staff or staff in the schools.

In carrying out its work, EVC Uganda has a fundamental duty of care towards all children we engage with. This document sets out our policy with regards to safeguarding and the procedures we will adopt to keep children safe.

A knowledge of and, compliance with this policy, is mandatory for all EVC volunteers.

This policy is for UK based volunteers only, whether they are in the UK or Uganda. It does not apply to Ugandan staff, volunteers or carers, who are covered by their own child protection policies.

This policy is in compliance with the UK Children's Act 1989, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 and NSPCC guidelines.

2. Definition of Child Abuse

A child is defined as anyone who has not reached their 18th birthday, irrespective of the local laws in Uganda.

There are four main categories of abuse ;

- Physical abuse. The causing of physical harm to a child. This includes bullying.
- Emotional abuse. The persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and long lasting effects.
- Neglect. The persistent failure to meet the child's basic physical and psychological needs and likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's physical and cognitive development.

- Sexual abuse. The forcing or enticing of a child to take part in sexual activities whether or not the child is aware of what is happening or gives consent.

Abuse can be face to face or virtual, via written or electronic means.

3. Preventative Actions and Procedures

3.1 The Child Protection Guardian

In order to assist with the implementation of this Child Protection Policy, EVC Uganda has appointed Judi Fawcett, a Trustee of EVC Uganda, as its Child Protection Guardian.

The role of the Child Protection Guardian, is to act as a first point of contact on all child protection issues which may arise from a volunteer visiting the projects and causing a child protection issue. The Child Protection Guardian is there to provide advice and support, to decide what action is to be taken and, if appropriate, to escalate matters to the EVC Board of Trustees (via the chairman). When required, the Child Protection Guardian will inform relevant outside child protection or law enforcement agencies and keep records of allegations.

3.2 Recruitment

All new Trustees will be interviewed by at least 2 existing Trustees. They will then be recommended to and approved by the EVC Board of Trustees.

If volunteers are affiliated with EVC and are visiting Uganda, they will be DBS checked - basic or through an umbrella organisation - the decision of which type of check will be done will be taken on a case by case basis and agreed by 3 members of the Board. A complete and updated record will be kept by the Child Protection Guardian.

When visiting the projects, it is not usual for EVC volunteers to be left alone with children or vulnerable adults. Being alone with children will not be allowed if volunteers have not been DBS checked.

3.3 Training, supervision and support

One month prior to the date of each AGM, the Child Protection Guardian will send out, by email, this Child Protection Policy with updates, to all EVC volunteers. Each volunteer will reply and confirm that they have read and are aware of the policy and procedures and, any updates. A record will be kept of all replies.

EVC volunteers and accompanying friends or relatives, including sponsors visiting Uganda, will be DBS security checked and made aware of this Child Protection Policy document prior to the visit.

EVC Uganda seeks to work in ways that are culturally sensitive and we will respect the diverse nature of the people we work with. Visitors to Uganda will attend a training session organised by the Chairman. This will cover conditions in Uganda, what to expect and, code of conduct necessary for their visit. The session will be led by the Child Protection Guardian and one other Trustee.

Safeguarding procedures are in place at the two EVC Uganda Primary schools. The teachers have received training in this area and, have updated training on a regular basis.

All Trustees will read the document 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'.

3.4 Communications between sponsors and sponsored children

EVC will as far as possible, not reveal the location of sponsored children.

All communications from a sponsor to a child will be via the email mailbox@EVCUganda.org. All letters to children will be vetted by the Head of Operations in Uganda or by another member of EVC Staff, before being passed to a child.

Communications from children to their sponsors will be through the EVC office in the UK and all letters will be checked by staff on the ground in Uganda.

3.5 The media, social media and promotional material

EVC volunteers will ensure that all images of and, stories regarding children and their guardians, are respectful.

Images and stories used in promotional material will have the permission of the child, if they are able to understand, or their parent or guardian.

EVC volunteers will not communicate images and information to outside media, newspapers, radio, television or social media, either in written or in electronic format, without having the article checked and approved by the Chairman.

EVC volunteers will be made aware of the need to exercise care when using social media, Facebook etc and, those appointed to update social media will be entrusted to do so in agreement with 2 Trustees.

4. Reporting and responding to allegations and concerns

When visiting the projects, it is the responsibility of all EVC volunteers to act on reports of abuse or to report their own serious misgivings. It is not the responsibility of the EVC volunteers to decide whether or not abuse has taken place.

- All allegations will be taken seriously. Allegations can be about the abuse of a child or the misconduct of an EVC volunteer or child guardian in relation to children.
- No allegation will be kept private as a personal confidence.
- When in Uganda, all allegations will be reported immediately to the Child Protection Guardian in the school.
- The EVC volunteer will not report to anyone else, either in the UK or Uganda, or discuss the allegation with anyone else.

The Child Protection Guardian in the school will :

- Objectively document the allegation exactly, 'word for word'

- Decide what action is to be taken
- Offer advice and support
- Refer the matter to any relevant child welfare or law enforcement agency
- If appropriate, refer the matter to the Child Protection Guardian in the UK.
- Document what action is being taken and, if no action is being taken, why not
- If the matter involves a volunteer committing abuse in any form, with the approval of the Board of Trustees, the matter will be referred to relevant authorities in the UK.
- Not act as an investigative authority
- Keep all actions, decisions and progress up to date and confidential
- Report to the next Board of Trustees' meeting on the on-going allegation, maintaining confidentiality of all parties concerned.

5. Child Protection Records

In the UK it is important that any records which are created in the course of an allegation are created, managed, protected and disposed of correctly.

An accurate and objective record should include :

- Date and time of the incident
- Parties involved including witnesses
- What was said or done and by whom
- Any further action
- The reasons for no further action
- Name of the person reporting the allegation.

All records will be kept electronically by the Child Protection Guardian in a secure storage area.

The only persons authorised to see child protection records are the Child Protection Guardian, the Chairman and relevant outside bodies.

An allegation can only be signed off and dated as dealt with and completed, when it is jointly signed by the Chairman and the Child Protection Guardian.

All records will be kept for a period of 10 years and, thereafter, deleted and disposed of with the joint agreement of the Chairman and the Child Protection Guardian.

Approved by the EVC Uganda Board of Trustees

Ted Fawcett
Chairman
EVC Uganda

3rd August 2024