
THE HANDS UP FOUNDATION
(*OPERATING NAME – ACTION SYRIA*)

SAFEGUARDING AND WELFARE POLICY

Charity no. 1156491

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Safeguarding and Welfare Policy for The Hands Up Foundation ("HUF")

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 HUF is a small charity, operating under the name Action Syria. We partner with local organisations in Syria and its neighbouring countries to provide the support and aid that vulnerable communities need the most. To do this to the best of our ability, safeguarding needs to be at the heart of our work.
- 1.2 Over recent years there has been increasing recognition of the way in which vulnerable people can be at risk of harm from organisations and institutions that are supposed to help them, either as a result of abuse and exploitation by individuals in positions of trust, or via programme activities in general.
- 1.3 It is clear that vulnerable persons can be harmed, or put at risk of harm, by organisations and institutions, and that abuse of vulnerable groups can happen in all types of organisations. Such harm may result from unintentional acts or deliberate actions.
- 1.4 Unintentional acts may lead to harm due to a lack of 'due diligence' or competence or through organisational negligence, such as inadequate care and supervision, lack of policies, procedures and guidance to inform programming and practice, or lack of staff compliance with legal requirements. Deliberate actions may otherwise be taken by people with intent to abuse vulnerable people.
- 1.5 As a consequence, there has been a significant increase in the efforts made by agencies to ensure that no harm comes to beneficiaries or target communities from contact with their staff and associates or as a result of any of the organisation's activities.

- 1.6 This duty of care extends beyond statutory safeguarding requirements. HUF does not directly engage in any activity with children or vulnerable adults that is regulated by domestic safeguarding legislation, but it does take seriously its obligations to operate in a way that ensures, so far as is possible, that its work (and that of third parties acting on its behalf) does no harm to anyone with whom it engages.
- 1.7 Given these values and in light of widely recognised risks, HUF has developed this policy to promote protection for all those people it comes into contact with, as well as staff and volunteers within HUF itself and the partner organisations with which it has relationships.
- 1.8 HUF is committed to creating and maintaining a safe environment for all individuals who come into contact with its work, including its ultimate beneficiaries, trustees, staff and those involved in programmes funded, promoted or associated with HUF. HUF is committed to protecting such individuals from abuse and mistreatment of any kind, regardless of their age, gender or role.
- 1.9 Whilst HUF will take actions generally to promote and maintain the welfare of all, the purpose of this policy statement is in particular:
- (a) to protect beneficiaries who receive HUF's services from harm (this includes the children of adults who use HUF's services);
 - (b) to outline HUF's commitments to safeguarding and protecting its beneficiaries; and
 - (c) to provide staff and volunteers, as well as beneficiaries, with the overarching principles and procedures that guide our approach.
- 1.10 This policy has been prepared on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children and vulnerable adults from harm.
- 1.11 Any suspected wrongdoing, including that involving staff, must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) in the first instance, who will escalate the concern as appropriate to the Chair of the Board, or the Lead Safeguarding Trustee.

2. Responsibilities

- 2.1 Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. The following people must follow this policy and the procedures contained within it:

HUF staff and contractors

- 2.2 Compliance with this policy is mandatory for all HUF staff. For the purposes of this policy 'staff' is defined as anyone who works for, or is engaged by HUF, either in a paid or unpaid, full time or part time capacity. This includes directly employed staff, senior managers, contractors, agency staff, consultants, volunteers, interns and equivalents.

Trustees

- 2.3 Trustees (i.e. board members) must act at all times in the best interests of HUF and its ultimate beneficiaries, and they are also expected to comply with this policy. This expectation is made clear to trustees during their induction.

Partnership organisations

- 2.4 All organisations and partners funded or supported by HUF are required to adhere to this Safeguarding and Welfare Policy, or to have in place safeguarding policies and procedures that meet or exceed the standards set out in this policy. HUF will undertake due diligence to ensure that partner organisations' safeguarding arrangements are robust and reserves the right to require improvements or to withdraw funding if safeguarding standards are not met or maintained. This policy will be shared with partner organisations when there is an agreement made to work together or where the partner organisation does not have an appropriate policy in place.
- 2.5 HUF will ensure that each partner has appointed a member of staff who will be responsible for promptly reporting any safeguarding concerns that arise in the context of the partnership to the HUF Designated Safeguarding Officer, or, in the event that they are unavailable, the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer or the



Safeguarding Lead Trustee (or other appropriate person). The roles performed by each of these individuals are set out below:

Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO)	• Acts as the main point of contact for all safeguarding concerns. • Records and assesses reports, escalating as needed to the CEO (if the DSO is not the CEO) or Lead Safeguarding Trustee. • Ensures staff and partners understand and follow safeguarding procedures. • Oversees staff training and regular policy reviews.
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer (Deputy DSO)	• Supports the DSO and acts in their absence.
Lead Safeguarding Trustee	• Provides Board-level oversight of safeguarding and welfare. • Receives reports of incidents and ensures appropriate trustee awareness. • Supports and holds the organisation accountable for effective safeguarding practice.

3. Statement of Commitments

- 3.1 HUF aims to recognise and respond to all types of harm and abuse (more information on categories of which is included in Appendix 1) and commits to:

- (a) developing a zero tolerance to misconduct safety culture within HUF that creates and maintains protective environments in relation to safeguarding issues, including by making sure protection considerations are integrated into all aspects of the organisation;
- (b) ensuring that all HUF staff are aware of their obligation to comply with this policy as well as with HUF's code of conduct and ensuring that HUF staff and board members know how to recognise, respond to, report and record a safeguarding concern;
- (c) being vigilant in the recruitment practices by requesting two written references, and making checks on gaps in work history, confirmation that staff have the right to work in the UK (as applicable) as well as checking qualifications and certifications are up to date and valid;
- (d) increasing understanding and raising the awareness of staff of risks relating to safeguarding and developing criteria to ensure that staff understand what constitutes non-compliance;
- (e) taking appropriate and proportionate action if this policy is not complied with;
- (f) ensuring all staff are aware of their responsibilities to report concerns and of steps to take/who to contact in order to report such concerns;
- (g) carrying out appropriate due diligence on partner organisations, ensuring they have appropriate controls and safeguarding measures in place, and integrating safeguarding and onward reporting requirements in HUF's partnership or funding-related agreements;
- (h) carrying out proper due diligence when working with, or making grants to, any other bodies including but not limited to: delivery partners, trading subsidiaries of the charity etc and ensuring that any grant recipient or partner body is suitable, with suitable safeguarding procedures in place;
- (i) ensuring that safeguarding concerns are addressed promptly and through the appropriate channels;
- (j) reporting safeguarding incidents, allegations or concerns to relevant external authorities and regulators, as appropriate, and in accordance with best practice. HUF will fully risk assess such reporting to

ensure that making a report is not likely to cause further harm to the individual(s) to whom harm has already been caused (save for where a report is required to be made by law); and

- (k) ensuring that its privacy policy remains suitably updated so that it is clear that, in keeping with HUF's zero tolerance policy, it will report wrongdoing on the part of its trustees, staff and partners to appropriate authorities; will share such information as may be necessary to protect individuals from harm; and will provide fair and accurate references, which appropriately reflect HUF's experience and interaction with trustees, staff and partners.

4. Embedding organisational commitment

- 4.1 In order to make its policy commitments a practical reality, HUF will implement new and strengthen existing measures that focus on making sure this policy and associated procedures are in place, that people are supported to understand and work within the provisions of the policy, that it is fully and effectively integrated into all of our activities, and that it is subject to monitoring and review.
- 4.2 HUF staff will receive regular training/briefing every three years, or if significant changes are made on their responsibilities and obligations under this policy and it will form part of the induction for new staff and trustees.
- 4.3 All those subject to this policy will be expected to acknowledge and accept their responsibilities under this policy. Confirmation of acknowledgement is sent by email to the Operations Manager and Finance Executive, when new staff join HUF. Breaches of this policy by staff will be treated seriously and will be treated as a potential cause for disciplinary action, in line with our zero tolerance approach to misconduct.

5. Reporting & responding to concerns

- 5.1 When concerns regarding safeguarding are reported to HUF, they may be managed in several ways depending on the nature of the incident or allegation.
- 5.2 HUF staff are required to immediately report any concerns or suspicions of possible/actual harm to a beneficiary, including abuse, exploitation and neglect and

policy non-compliance, or risk of such, resulting from action or inaction by anyone covered by this policy. Reports should be made in line with the process set out within this policy. This includes any suspected historical abuse. In the first instance these concerns or suspicions should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Officer.

- 5.3 **The person making the report should otherwise keep the matter strictly confidential and not seek to investigate the incident or suspicion. As far as possible, confidentiality is crucial, however the welfare of the person potentially at risk of harm is paramount.**
- 5.4 The Lead Safeguarding Trustee, who sits on HUF's board of trustees, will have oversight of safeguarding and welfare arrangements and will receive reports of any safeguarding and welfare incidents that arise. The Safeguarding Lead Trustee will have a regular slot at meetings of the board of trustees to ensure that trustees are appropriately apprised of matters that arise.
- 5.5 The names and contact details of the Designated Safeguarding Officer and Safeguarding Lead Trustee can be found in the 'Contact Information' section at section 7 of this policy.
- 5.6 HUF is committed to reporting all relevant incidents to the Charity Commission for England and Wales via a Serious Incident Report. We will also report incidents to other regulatory bodies and government departments or funding bodies, where appropriate. Where there is evidence that criminal activity may have taken place, or concerns have been raised in relation to a child or vulnerable adult, we will report to the relevant police and/or safeguarding authorities as appropriate (for example to the relevant Local Authority Designated Officer or Adult Safeguarding Board). Decisions to report to external authorities will be fully risk assessed and anonymization/pseudonimisation considered when necessary. Reporting will not be avoided on the basis that it may harm HUF's reputation or give rise to litigation and any concerns in relation to data protection will not act as a barrier to reporting, although will be carefully considered to ensure that the disclosure is made within the legal framework for so doing.

- 5.7 Existing systems for risk management, due diligence, monitoring and evaluation, audit and review, and other organisational performance mechanisms will be adapted to include indicators and processes by which implementation of the safeguarding policy can be measured and these processes will be periodically reviewed to ensure that they remain effective and up to date in respect of best practice.
- 5.8 HUF will encourage a culture of openness and accountability wherein staff and members of the public are, respectively, confident that they can raise any matter of genuine concern without fear of reprisal in the knowledge that they will be taken seriously and that matters will be investigated appropriately and managed on a need-to-know basis, with appropriate remedial action taken.

6. Policy Review and Associated Documentation

- 6.1 We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice regularly. This policy will be reviewed by the board of trustees at least every three years or when there is a change in UK law and/or best practice or when an incident occurs that highlights a need for change.
- 6.2 This policy should be read in conjunction with:
- (a) Code of Conduct
 - (b) Whistleblowing Policy
 - (c) Data Protection Policy
 - (d) Grant Making Policy
 - (e) Risk Management Policy
 - (f) Diversity & Equal Opportunity Policy
 - (g) Safeguarding Register

7. Contact information

Role	Individual
Designated Safeguarding Officer	Rose Essam (CEO) rose@actionsyria.org.uk
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer	Louai Hulou (Programme Coordinator) louai@actionsyria.org.uk
Safeguarding Lead Trustee	George Butler 07789713115 gbutlerillustration@gmail.com

These individuals have access to the designated email inbox for reporting concerns, which is at Safeguarding@actionsyria.org.uk

If you are not comfortable with submitting your report via email to that address, please call 07871886316 and ask to speak directly with the relevant person.

8. Publishing this policy

- 8.1 Rose Essam will ensure that this policy is at all times publicly accessible on HUF's website.



Signed: *R. Fossan*

Date of adoption of policy: 1st June 2026

Date of next review of the policy: May 2029

Appendix 1

Categories of abuse and neglect as defined by the Care and Support Statutory Guidance

Physical abuse

Assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate physical sanction.

Domestic violence

Psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse; so called 'honour' based violence.

Sexual abuse

Rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting.

Psychological/emotional abuse

Emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.

Financial or material abuse

Theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult at risk's financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Modern slavery



Slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.

Discriminatory abuse including hate crime

Forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment; because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.

Organisational abuse

Neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one's own home. This may range from one-off incidents to on-going ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

Neglect and acts of omission

Ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

Appendix 2

Reporting and Responding to Concerns Process

When a safeguarding concern, allegation or incident is reported, HUF will ensure that it is handled promptly, securely and in line with this policy and the Charity Commission's guidance on safeguarding and serious incident reporting.

Handling and recording

- All safeguarding concerns, allegations, or incidents must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) or, if unavailable, the Deputy DSO or Safeguarding Lead Trustee.
- All reports must be logged by the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) or Deputy DSO in a secure safeguarding register.
- Records will include the date, nature of concern, actions taken, and outcome, and will be stored in line with HUF's data protection policy.
- The individual reporting the concern must maintain confidentiality and must not investigate the incident themselves.

Following Policy and acting quickly

- All actions must follow this policy and the relevant procedures.
- Concerns should be acted upon immediately — delays in reporting can increase risk of harm.
- Where the concern arises within a partner organisation, the partner's designated safeguarding contact must report the concern to the HUF DSO as soon as possible.
- HUF will provide partners with guidance on how to report concerns and ensure that all partners are aware of their reporting obligations under this policy.

Differentiation based on location of incident or individual involved

- Where a concern involves a HUF staff member, trustee, or volunteer based in the UK, the response will follow UK statutory and regulatory requirements, including, where appropriate, reporting to the Charity Commission, local authorities, or police.
- Where a concern involves a partner organisation or arises in an overseas context (e.g. Syria, Lebanon, Turkey), the DSO will consider both HUF policy requirements

and local legal or regulatory obligations to determine appropriate next steps, including whether local authorities need to be informed, while prioritising the safety of those affected.

- In all cases, the DSO will assess risks related to reporting to local authorities in overseas contexts, including the potential for further harm, and will document the rationale for any decisions made.

Reporting to external agencies and regulators

- The DSO, in consultation with the Lead Safeguarding Trustee, will assess whether the incident constitutes a *Serious Incident* requiring a report to the Charity Commission for England and Wales.
- Reports will also be made to other relevant bodies (e.g. funders) where appropriate.
- Where criminal or statutory thresholds are met, the DSO will report to the relevant local authority, police, or regulator without delay.

Communications and confidentiality

- A plan will be developed, if needed, to manage communications with the individuals involved, trustees, staff, partners, and the media.
- Information shared will be limited to what is necessary and appropriate, balancing transparency with confidentiality and data protection obligations.
- Reporting will not be avoided because of reputational concerns.
- All those involved in handling the concern must maintain strict confidentiality, except where disclosure is required to protect individuals or by law.

Review and learning

- Following any safeguarding incident, the DSO and Lead Safeguarding Trustee will ensure a review is undertaken to identify lessons learned and actions to prevent recurrence.
- Findings will be reported to the Board and incorporated into training, procedures, and future policy reviews.
- Where incidents involve partner organisations, HUF will work collaboratively with the partner to review the incident and strengthen joint safeguarding practice.

Support for those affected



- HUF will ensure that appropriate support is offered to those affected by safeguarding concerns, including staff, volunteers, beneficiaries, and others, whether in the UK or overseas.