

STEKAskills Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults

Protection Policy and Procedures

1.0 Introduction

As a small charity we believe that everyone we come into contact with, regardless of age, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation or ethnic origin has the right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation. STEKAskills will not tolerate abuse and exploitation by staff or associated personnel, including Trustees and volunteers.

STEKAskills recognises its responsibility to protect children and other vulnerable persons with whom we may come into contact. We regard keeping them safe and promoting their interests is of paramount concern. We are also committed to the protection of children and vulnerable people from exploitative and potentially abusive relationships by ensuring that our staff and volunteers are carefully selected, trained and supervised in their work activities and through service audits involving the children and young people being supported.

STEKAskills considers it the duty of all those involved with the organisation to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse of all children and vulnerable people with whom they come into contact, including reporting any abuse discovered or suspected.

STEKAskills does not employ staff directly but we do and fund our partner, STEKA, to employ staff who may also work on projects which STEKAskills has helped co-produce. They are normally governed by STEKA's safeguarding policy. Consequently, the term 'staff' does not refer to 'employees' but to trustees, volunteers and consultants in the UK and overseas. This guide is for them. The purpose of the policy is to provide protection from harm, primarily to children and vulnerable adults to STEKAskills' staff and the organisation itself. It provides guidance to realise our belief that all children, as defined in the UNCRC as anyone under the age of 18, even where defined otherwise in national contexts, must be protected from abuse or exploitation. A vulnerable adult is afforded the same protection as a child. A vulnerable adult means a person aged 18 or over who has a condition of the following type:

- i. a learning or physical disability
- ii. a physical or mental illness, chronic or otherwise, including an addiction to alcohol or drugs
- iii. a reduction in physical or mental capacity.

This policy is reviewed every two years and any related procedures and their implementation are regularly monitored. The STEKAskills Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy has been approved by the STEKAskills Board of Trustees.

Concordance with the policy is mandatory for all STEKAskills staff and strongly encouraged for staff and volunteers of STEKAskills's partner organisations.

2. Principles

- All children and vulnerable adults have an equal right to development and their welfare is always promoted.
- Children and vulnerable adults are protected from any form of sexual, physical, verbal or emotional abuse or exploitation, from adults and other children.
- The health and safety of children and vulnerable adults is always paramount.
- Children and vulnerable adults are empowered to participate freely in decisions which affect their lives, recognising the importance of parents, families and other carers in their lives.
- Children and vulnerable adults are treated with respect, and valued as individuals and equals with respect to the context of their own culture, religion and ethnicity.
- Children and vulnerable adults are empowered to raise and discuss any concerns and are always listened to.
- Any allegation of abuse is treated seriously and dealt with appropriately and promptly.
- We take a victim-centred approach and victims and other involved parties are supported and perpetrators are held to account.
- Investigation of any Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection concern is conducted with reference to national laws and employment rights and immediately referred to relevant statutory authorities where appropriate.
- Staff are recruited, supported and trained with respect to the Child and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy.

3. Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Code of Conduct

STEKAskills staff must:

- Never hit or physically abuse a child or vulnerable adult
- Never deliberately place a child or vulnerable adult in danger or at risk of abuse.
- Never have sexual contact or use sexualised language with a child or vulnerable adult.
- Never develop personal relationships with a child or vulnerable adult which could lead to, or constitute abuse.
- Never fondle, hold, kiss, hug or touch a child or vulnerable adult inappropriately.
- Never intentionally behave in a way that frightens or intimidates a child or vulnerable adult.
- Never do things of a personal nature for a child or vulnerable adult that they can do for themselves.
- Never single out a child or vulnerable adult for special treatment.
- Never give a child or vulnerable adult presents or personal items unless authorised by Godknows or Helen Maseko.
- Never invite a child or vulnerable adult into their home or arrange to see them outside project activities unless authorised by the STEKAskills Malawi or UK safeguarding Officer. .
- Never stay alone overnight with a child or children or any vulnerable adult.
- Never take a child or vulnerable adult with them in their car, except in exceptional circumstances.
- Never hire a child or vulnerable adult for any service, or treat in any way which could be deemed exploitative.
- Never use internet resources such as social networking sites to make inappropriate contact with children or vulnerable adults which could lead to or constitute abuse.
- Never use racist, sexist, discriminatory, inappropriate, abusive or offensive language around children or vulnerable adults.
- Never intentionally humiliate or degrade children or vulnerable adults.
- Never smoke, use illegal drugs, consume or be under the influence of alcohol in the presence of children or vulnerable adults.
- Always treat children and vulnerable adults with respect.
- Always listen to children and vulnerable adults and their concerns.
- Always use sensitive language when a child or vulnerable adult reveals a serious issue (such as child abuse or sexual violence).
- Always endeavour to be accompanied by another adult when in the presence of children and vulnerable adults.

- Always deal with any allegations or concerns relating to abuse immediately and appropriately in accordance with the Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Procedures.
- Always be aware of the health and safety of children and vulnerable adults and ensure that they are protected from harm when they are in our care.
- Always respect the rights of children and vulnerable adults and empower them to be aware of and act upon their rights.
- Always challenge the mistreatment of children and vulnerable adults and report any cases of abuse.
- Always ensure that images of children and vulnerable adults are respectful
- obtain permission from a child, vulnerable adult and/or their parent/guardian or carer before using their image.

4. Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Procedures

4.1 Definition of abuse

The Scottish Government's National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland gives the following definitions:

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting, or by failing to act to prevent, significant harm to the child. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. The following definitions indicate how the abuse can be experienced by a child but are not exhaustive, as the individual circumstances of abuse will vary from child to child. The same principles apply in relation to the protection of vulnerable adults.

Physical Abuse	Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child or vulnerable adult. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child whom they are looking after. This situation may be described as fabricated or induced illness by the carer.
Emotional Abuse	Emotional abuse is where persistent emotional ill treatment of a child or vulnerable adult causes severe and persistent adverse effects on their emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child or vulnerable adult that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children or vulnerable adults. It may involve causing children or vulnerable adults to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children or vulnerable adults. Some level of

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	emotional abuse is present in all types of ill treatment of a child or vulnerable adult, though it may occur independently of the other forms of abuse.
Sexual Abuse	Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or vulnerable adult to take part in sexual activities, whether or not they are aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children or vulnerable adults in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or in watching sexual activities, using sexual language towards a child or vulnerable adult or encouraging children or vulnerable adults to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
Neglect	Neglect is the persistent failure to meet the basic physical and/or psychological needs of a child or vulnerable adult, likely to result in the serious impairment of their health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, to protect a child or vulnerable adult from physical harm or danger, or to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child or vulnerable adult's basic emotional needs. Neglect may also result in a child being diagnosed as suffering from non-organic failure to thrive, where a child has significantly failed to reach normal growth and developmental milestones and where physical and genetic reasons have been medically eliminated."

Context specific examples include:

- **Physical Abuse:** Deliberately inflicting pain or injury (e.g., hitting, burning, shaking, or inappropriate restraint).
- **Neglect and Omission:** Failing to meet basic physical, medical, or emotional needs (e.g., withholding food, medical care, shelter, or hygiene).
- **Emotional and Psychological Abuse:** Causing mental anguish through threats, humiliation, harassment, isolation, or coercive control.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Involving someone in sexual activities or relationships they do not or cannot consent to, including exploitation and exposure to inappropriate content. Sexting, Sexploitation, Sextortion, Revenge Porn.
- **Bullying:** including on-line bullying with social media.
- **Discriminatory Abuse:** Mistreatment or harassment based on race, gender, sexuality, religion, or disability.
- **Institutional Abuse:** Poor care, rigid regimes, or systemic neglect within professional, residential, or hospital settings.
- **Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking:** Forcing, deceiving, or coercing individuals into labour, servitude, or sexual exploitation.
- **Cultural & Honor-Based Harm:** Includes forced marriage, FGM, Kusasa Fumbi, Fisi, Jando, Chinamwali, Wife Inheritance.
- **Self-Harm** – Cutting, burning, poisoning, refusal of food, water, ...
- **On-line Bullying, Sexting, Sextortion, Sexploitation, Revenge Porn**

4.2. Definition of terms in STEKAskills's Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

Term	Definition	Example
Malawi staff	Consultants or STEKAskills trustees based in Malawi on STEKAskills business	Gift Thompson, Godknows and Helen Maseko making presentations about STEKAskills or conducting interviews on behalf of STEKAskills (this will not cover their activities as part of the STEKA care home and organization has a separate policy).
UK staff	STEKAskills Trustees based in the UK.	As detailed on the STEKAskills website www.stekaskills.com
Locally contracted field office staff	Staff contracted locally working in a STEKAskills field office.	Future staff contracted for dialogue groups or other STEKAskills project .
Volunteer	<i>An unpaid</i> volunteer who works for STEKAskills in Malawi or the UK.	A volunteer who helps raise funds, runs market stalls or gives talks.
STEKAskills Manager	A member of staff who is responsible for managing STEKAskills projects in Malawi or overseas.	Godknows / Helen Maseko/Gift Thompson
STEKAskills Supervisor	A member of staff who is responsible for managing a designated volunteer.	Fundraising volunteers who are managed by a STEKAskillsTrustee.
Partners	Organisations which work on STEKAskills projects or fundraise for them .	Queen Margaret University, Charlie Miller

5. Awareness Raising

Partners should pay specific reference to **5.6 , 6.16, 7.10, 7.11, and 8.9**

5.1 STEKAskills's Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy is freely available to the general public and to all STEKAskills staff, Trustees, volunteers, partners and people supported by our partners. The Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy is available on the STEKAskills website and is regularly referenced in appropriate documents.

5.2 All new and existing volunteers, whose role involves contact with children and vulnerable adults may be required to participate in training on STEKAskills Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and are updated on the issues by their STEKASKILLS staff supervisor.

5.3 All STEKAskills Managers are responsible for ensuring that their staff have participated in training on child and vulnerable adult protection and have an understanding of the Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and its implications.

5.4 All new and existing STEKAskills staff in identified posts which have regular contact with children and vulnerable adults, including Child Protection Officers, are required to attend specialised training on child and vulnerable adult protection and may be required to attend further courses as necessary.

5.5 All new and existing staff, are required to follow the STEKAskills Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Code of Conduct and a signed copy is kept on file. Refusing to sign may result in disciplinary action for staff and the termination of a relationship with volunteers.

5.6 STEKAskills engages with overseas partners on child and vulnerable adult protection, explaining our commitments and if necessary encouraging partners to develop child and vulnerable adult protection policies and procedures which are relevant to their local context and compatible with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. STEKAskills provides partners with assistance to develop their policies.

5.7 Child and vulnerable adult protection issues, including health and safety issues, are always considered in relation to any STEKAskills event or visit.

6. Prevention Measures

Staff and Volunteer Recruitment

6.1 STEKAskills ensures that employment and recruitment procedures and practices comply with local laws and refer to '*Keeping Children Safe*' standards and recommendations. www.keepingchildrensafeglobal

6.2 Recruitment of both internal and external candidates for posts which have regular contact with children and vulnerable adults must include:

- specifying that posts are disclosure accepted posts for the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- reference to STEKAskills's commitment to child and vulnerable adult protection and the Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy in adverts and job descriptions.
- asking candidates specific questions about their previous experience of working with children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- ensuring that candidates can provide two referees who can comment on their work with children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- ensuring that appointed candidates complete the appropriate disclosure process below
- ensuring the identity of candidates appointed to identified posts is verified.

6.3 Job offers for posts which have regular contact with children and vulnerable adults are subject to a Disclosure Process which will include Self Disclosure through the application process and, where required. Enhanced Disclosure, or the relevant local checks through the relevant national government agencies where possible. Verification of qualifications and work history is also required.

6.4 Volunteers who are recruited or designated for work with children and vulnerable adults are required to complete a Self-Disclosure form, provide two suitable referees and, where required, complete an Enhanced Disclosure, or where possible relevant local checks through national government agencies.

6.5 Any new or existing staff or volunteers who are unwilling to complete the Disclosure Process are not deployed in any position that allows access to children and vulnerable adults.

STEKAskills schools and children's groups

6.6 STEKAskills Partners who are involved in meetings with children during visits to the UK are briefed on STEKAskills Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and are asked to sign the Code of Conduct.

Children and vulnerable adults working as Volunteers

6.7 All children and vulnerable adults are supervised by their legal guardian or by a responsible adult approved by their legal guardian whilst undertaking voluntary work for STEKAskills.

6.8 STEKAskills supervisors ensure that children who are volunteering as individuals have obtained permission via their school or provided a completed Child Volunteer Permission Form. A new form is completed on every occasion, unless the volunteer works with STEKAskills more than once a month, in which case the Form is kept on file and renewed on an annual basis.

Communications and Media

6.9 STEKAskills ensures that the welfare of children and vulnerable adults is paramount and that their interests and safety always take priority over any editorial requirement.

6.10 The impact and possible consequences of any material which involves a child or vulnerable adult is carefully considered, both before and after publication or broadcast. The risks that children and vulnerable adults may face through their involvement in STEKAskills communications are continuously monitored and staff consider these on a case by case basis.

STEKAskills will use photos of children involved in short term projects such as fund raising on their website and social media only with written consent of their parents or legal guardians, or other person in loco parentis (e.g. teacher or group leader)

6.11 STEKAskills endeavours to ensure that images and/or stories about children and vulnerable adults cannot be misused or exploited and has .
separate guidance and consent for media production .

6.12 Communications about children and vulnerable adults always respect the individual's dignity and identity, and are not degrading. STEKAskills always endeavours to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are portrayed as realistically as possible and that language which implies any relationship of power is avoided.

6.13 Any material featuring in STEKAskills publications and website are suitable for a general audience, including children.

6.14 STEKAskills staff and volunteers, whether in UK or overseas:

- seek the informed consent of parents or legal guardians, or other person in loco parentis (e.g. teacher or group leader) before interviewing children and vulnerable adults, or film, photograph or sound recordings in which they appear. Where practical, permission should be in writing.
- seek the consent of parents or legal guardians, or other person in loco parentis, before publishing materials in which children and vulnerable adults appear.
- seek the consent of a child or vulnerable adult for their participation and respect their refusal to take part.
- ensure no financial inducements are offered to the child, vulnerable adult or parent/guardian to secure consent.
- obtain permission from the head teacher for filming or interviewing on school premises during school hours.
- gather material in a sensitive manner and consider the impact recounting experiences may have on a child or vulnerable adult.
- take steps to minimise any distress that may be caused by taking part in an interview *and ensure that interviewees are aware of their rights to refuse to answer any question and leave the interview at any point. Also that they are advised that they are entitled to withdraw their data (interview/picture) at a later date using our media production form.*
- are aware that certain children and vulnerable adults may need extra protection (for example, political refugees or those suffering from ill-health).
- conceal the identity and location of children and vulnerable adults (for example by withholding or changing names) when revealing their identity may lead to risk or distress.
- take additional steps to establish potential risks where it is not possible to obtain individual permissions (for example in large group shots taken from a distance) and conceal the identity and location of the children and vulnerable adults to mitigate risks
- use images in which children are adequately clothed.
- Ensure messages that are being communicated about children and vulnerable adults are fair and avoid stereotype or discrimination.

6.15 Where there is any doubt on use of images and/or stories, STEKAskills staff and volunteers seek the guidance of their Child Protection Officer, Emma Wood *or Christine Hoy.*

STEKAskills Partners

6.16 STEKAskills' partner agreements specify that all Partners should have Safeguarding measures in place and should produce and implement their own child and vulnerable protection policy. Partners must agree to abide by the STEKAskills Policy and Code of Conduct.

7. Reporting

7.1 STEKAskills staff and volunteers have a duty to ensure that the STEKAskills code of conduct is adhered to throughout the organisation.

7.2 Safeguarding Concern Report forms are freely available to all STEKAskills staff and volunteers.

7.3 STEKAskills staff should respond sensitively to all safeguarding issues that they witness or are disclosed to them and treat the issue confidentially. If a child or vulnerable adult discloses that he or she is being abused, STEKAskills staff and volunteers should:

- stay calm
- listen carefully and take the allegation seriously
- not promise to keep it secret but explain that they need to tell someone else
- stress that the individual was right to tell them, that they have taken it seriously and that they have understood what they have been told
- only ask questions for clarity and not ask for explicit details
- reassure the individual that they will take steps to help them and tell them what will happen next

7.4 STEKAskills staff and volunteers should be confident that the serious disclosure of any allegation will not impact on their position or reputation within STEKAskills.

7.5 Any STEKAskills staff member who witnesses or is informed of any potential breach of the Safeguarding Code of Conduct must complete the Child Protection Concern Report Form and inform their line manager or other available Trustee of the concern as soon as possible.

7.6 Any other volunteer who witnesses or is informed of any potential breach of the Child Protection Code of Conduct must complete the Child Protection Concern Report Form and inform their designated STEKAskills supervisor of the concern as soon as possible.

7.7 STEKAskills managers, supervisors or volunteer coordinator must inform a designated safeguarding Trustee of any allegation or concern immediately so that the concern can be managed with urgency.

7.8 A named Trustee is responsible for the management of the investigation of all concerns. Staff and volunteers should not seek to conduct their own investigation or discuss the issue with any other parties such as members of staff or volunteers.

7.9 The Safeguarding Officers (Emma Wood / Christine Hoy) are responsible for ensuring that records of a breach of the code of conduct, in Scotland or Malawi respectively, are full and detailed, are treated confidentially and stored securely on a password protected computer.

STEKAskills Partners

7.10 Partners must inform STEKAskills of any safeguarding concerns as soon as possible.

7.11 Any safeguarding concern relating to Partners raised by staff, volunteers or members of the public must be properly recorded and raised with the Administrator/Manager or Trustee who will manage a response.

8. Responding to Concerns

8.1 A named Trustee *Emma Wood or Christine Hoy* is responsible for ensuring a thorough investigation of a concern is conducted as soon as possible where there has been a breach of the Code of Conduct by a member of staff or a volunteer. They may decide to report the concern to the Board of Trustees.

They will also refer any significant incident which is being investigated to the Scottish Charity Register (OSCR) as soon as possible to enable them to offer advice and support. The Scottish Government also requires to be informed of any suspicions or actual incidents while we are in receipt of funding from them. It is important to note that this does not only apply to incidents directly related to any Scottish Government funded projects but to any situation which would affect the governance or culture of the STEKAskills and therefore impact on our relationship with the Scottish Government.

8.2 In some instances it may be necessary for the Trustee to ensure that the concern is immediately referred to the relevant statutory authorities (i.e. Police or Child Welfare Authority) to ensure that the child or vulnerable adult is protected from further harm. In these instances the Trustee should always refer any reported concern to the Chair of the Board who will report this immediately to the Board of Trustees.

8.

8.4 STEKAskills will endeavour to ensure that any child, vulnerable adult or other party who has been affected by any breach of the code of conduct is given immediate and appropriate support and care and steps are taken to ensure that the child or vulnerable adult will receive appropriate long term support if necessary.

8.5 STEKAskills will endeavour to ensure that any member of STEKAskills staff who has been suspended whilst an investigation is

taking place is given appropriate support. It should be clear that suspension during an investigation does not constitute disciplinary action or imply guilt and if no breach has taken place. Records of investigations will be destroyed within one year of the investigation.

8.6 The Trustee is responsible for ensuring that an investigation report is produced. . Any investigation will always be conducted with reference to national laws and employment rights and where any concern could constitute a criminal act the details will be immediately referred to any relevant statutory authorities.

8.7 Following full investigation, STEKAskills may implement the relevant disciplinary action for staff.. Staff have the right to respond to this.

STEKASKILLS Partners

8.10 Partners should report the outcome of any internal investigation regarding a Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection concern to STEKAskills as soon as possible. STEKAskills's Partners must ensure that appropriate actions are taken in relation to a concern and report the action taken to STEKAskills. In cases where STEKAskills judge that sufficient actions have not been taken, STEKAskills may choose to end a partner relationship.

Reviewed every two years	Board of Trustees
Policy Date	
Next Policy Review Date	August 2026

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