Handala Child Safeguarding Policy

Procedures and guidelines for the protection of children and adolescents

Associazione Handala, Palermo

Version: 1.0

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Next review: within three years of approval, or earlier in the event of significant regulatory or organisational changes

This document is published on Handala's website. People working for the association and project partners are required to comply with it. To ask for clarification or to raise a concern, please contact the Policy Lead named above.

Introduction

Associazione Handala works with children and adolescents in the neighbourhoods of Palermo, in particular in contexts of urban marginalisation and social exclusion. The risk of abuse, maltreatment, exploitation and inappropriate conduct exists in every setting, and anyone working with children has a duty to ensure their safety and protection. Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) establishes the right of every child to be protected from all forms of violence, abuse, maltreatment or exploitation.

This policy sets out the principles, responsibilities and procedures through which Handala prevents risks and responds to concerns. Its purpose is to create a safe environment and an open, accountable organisational climate that protects children and, at the same time, everyone who works with them. Handala is committed to ensuring that its work always benefits children and never causes them harm.

The policy draws on the international minimum standards of Keeping Children Safe and on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It was developed with the contribution of staff and volunteers, and takes into account the experience of the people who take part in the association's projects.

1. Scope and recipients

The policy is binding on everyone engaged by Handala in any capacity, from people in positions of responsibility to volunteers, interns and external collaborators, as well as on anyone who visits the association's projects on a regular basis. It applies to both the professional and the private life of people working for Handala, to the extent that private conduct may affect the safety of children or the reputation of the association.

The policy also applies to staff and representatives of partner organisations who have direct contact with children in Handala's projects, unless it is formally agreed that the partner applies its own equivalent policy, as provided in section 10.

People who take part in activities occasionally receive a copy of the policy and undertake to comply with it in their relationships with the children involved.

2. Key principles

The policy rests on the following principles. Every child has an equal right to protection, to the promotion of their wellbeing and to participation, regardless of age, sex, gender identity, sexual

orientation, geographical or social background, origin, religion, economic condition and level of ability. All safeguarding actions must be taken in the best interests of the child.

Adults bear ultimate responsibility for safeguarding. Children can contribute to protecting themselves and others, but this does not shift responsibility away from adults. Safeguarding measures must be inclusive and non discriminatory, recognising that some children are more exposed to the risk of abuse, as described in section 6.

A climate of transparency and openness is essential. Abuse is more easily perpetuated when staff, children, families and the community do not feel able to raise a concern. Every concern relating to the safety of a child must be considered with care and attention. No organisation can protect children alone, which is why Handala works with the competent local organisations and services. Confidentiality and privacy are guaranteed throughout the reporting process. All actions are carried out in compliance with national and international law.

3. Principles for handling reports

Every concern, suspicion or certainty of abuse, maltreatment or inappropriate conduct is handled according to these guiding principles. The safety and wellbeing of the child come first: no child should be put at risk by the action taken, or by the failure to act.

All reports are handled professionally, confidentially and promptly. Handala takes every concern with the utmost seriousness, including those received anonymously, and ensures fair treatment for all parties. Child victims, witnesses and the people accused are entitled to confidentiality. Information is shared only with those strictly necessary for handling the case, according to the “need to know” principle, and at every stage, from the report to the storage of data and any disciplinary measures.

Cases are handled according to two criteria, discretion and transparency, which must be held together. Discretion concerns who is informed within the association: a small group, made up of those with an active role in handling the case, knows about it, and no one else. Transparency concerns the competent external bodies, such as social services, law enforcement, the judicial authorities and health services. Handala informs these bodies within the times and in the ways required by law and by the guidance of the services, even when this means giving up internal confidentiality. Confidentiality can never prevent a communication owed to the authorities, and transparency towards the authorities does not authorise sharing information outside the competent circuit, whether on social media or in the community.

All people involved, including the person accused, are treated with respect, dignity and sensitivity throughout the process. Anyone suspected or accused is informed as soon as possible that an internal procedure has been opened, unless the competent authorities indicate otherwise or unless communicating this is not in the best interests of the child.

Children, families and guardians are informed, in ways appropriate to their age and language, of the procedures for reporting any concern. Anyone who receives a report is given basic training and can obtain specific support from the Policy Lead.

When a criminal offence is suspected, the child victim has the right to investigation and prosecution. Involving the competent authorities must always be considered.

4. Legal references

The policy is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 20 November 1989, ratified by Italy with Law no. 176 of 27 May 1991, in particular articles 2, 3, 6, 12, 19 and 34. It draws on the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, known as the Lanzarote Convention, ratified by Italy with Law no. 172 of 1 October 2012, and on the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, known as the Istanbul Convention, ratified with Law no. 77 of 27 June 2013.

At European Union level, the policy takes into account the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, in particular Article 24, and Directive (EU) 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and domestic violence, which lays down measures for the prevention of, protection against and support in cases of gender based and domestic violence, and which Member States must transpose by 14 June 2027.

At national level, the policy refers to the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure, in particular Article 331 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which requires public officials and persons in charge of a public service to report offences. For private individuals, reporting is optional under Article 333 of the same code. It also refers to Article 25 bis of the Consolidated Act on criminal records (Decree of the President of the Republic no. 313 of 14 November 2002), on requesting a criminal record certificate from people working with children, Law no. 71 of 29 May 2017 on cyberbullying, and Law no. 47 of 7 April 2017 on the protection of unaccompanied foreign minors.

For the processing of personal data, the policy applies Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR) and Legislative Decree no. 196 of 30 June 2003, as amended by Legislative Decree no. 101 of 10

August 2018. In particular, in Italy a child under fourteen cannot independently give consent to the processing of their data in information society services.
The policy is consistent with the Keeping Children Safe standards, as indicated in the introduction, and with the codes of ethics of the professions involved in the projects.

5. Definitions and forms of abuse

In this document, a child is any person under the age of eighteen. The World Health Organization defines abuse as “any act, or failure to act, that physically or psychologically harms a child, that directly or indirectly causes harm or precludes the prospects of healthy and safe development into adulthood”.
Abuse rarely presents as an isolated episode, and several forms often overlap, compromising the development and wellbeing of the child. Every form of abuse arises from an asymmetry of power and from the misuse of that power by the person who abuses. Abuse can also result from omissions, such as lack of supervision or failure to respond to a known risk. Peers can also commit abuse. More often, children experience abuse from people they know, in the family, in institutions or in the community. More rarely, abuse is committed by strangers, including online. The consequences can affect education, health and wellbeing, with lasting effects on future development.
The WHO recognises four main categories of abuse: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

Physical abuse

This includes any action that causes injury, pain or marks on the body, such as shaking, burning, pinching, biting, choking, jerking, hitting or other similar actions. Corporal punishment is not acceptable in any form.

Sexual abuse

This is the inducement or coercion of a child into any sexual activity, by an adult or by another child. It may involve physical contact, such as sexual violence, or acts without contact, such as sexual innuendo, requesting or producing sexual images, or encouraging sexually inappropriate behaviour. Other forms of abuse include asking for photographs of children undressed or with intimate parts exposed, entering into a sexual relationship with a child, making suggestive

comments about sexual physical development, and requesting unusual physical contact on the pretext that it is for the child's wellbeing.
Sexual exploitation consists of involving a child in sexual activities in exchange for money, gifts, food, accommodation or other benefits for the child or their family. It may be wrongly interpreted as consent, but it is not.

Emotional and psychological abuse

Emotional abuse occurs when an adult who is significant in a child's life undermines their self esteem through constant criticism, threats, rejection, isolation, humiliation or continuous mockery. Constructive criticism and shared jokes are not abuse. They become abuse when criticism stops being motivating and the joke hurts. Emotional abuse also includes discrimination and being treated badly for reasons the child cannot change, such as gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or disability.

Witnessing violence is a form of emotional abuse: it consists of experiencing physical, verbal, psychological, sexual or economic violence against caregivers or other emotionally important people, adults or children. Those who witness gender based violence in the family suffer harm even if they are not directly hurt.

Neglect

Neglect occurs when a responsible adult fails to provide food, shelter, clothing, medical care, education, supervision or emotional support. In educational settings it includes, for example, not knowing where children are during an activity, not providing adequate water and food during residential activities, or using an unsafe means of transport.

Bullying and cyberbullying

Bullying is violence carried out by a child or a group of peers against another person, through systematic acts of abuse in an unbalanced power relationship. It can be direct, physical or verbal, or indirect, such as spreading rumours, excluding someone from the group or systematic isolation. Cyberbullying takes place through social networks and digital devices and includes publishing or circulating offensive or humiliating messages, images or videos. Law 71/2017 provides its definition and the tools for protection. Violence between peers must not be minimised because it happens between children: it must be recognised and addressed promptly.

Images of sexual abuse

Images of sexual abuse are representations, by any means, of children engaged in explicit sexual activities, real or simulated, and representations of their sexual organs. Possessing, producing and circulating such images are criminal offences and must be reported without being forwarded.

Harmful practices

Some forms of violence are justified by tradition, culture, religion or beliefs about children's bodies and development. These include female genital mutilation, early marriage, corporal punishment and labour exploitation. These practices violate human rights and must be countered in every context. No cultural, religious or ethnic belonging justifies violence, and no community should be described as the origin of the problem. Violence against children occurs in all contexts, including Italian families and institutions, and Handala is committed to recognising it even when it is not presented as “cultural”.

Institutional abuse

Institutional abuse results from laws, procedures, actions or omissions of public institutions, services or individuals acting on behalf of a public body. It may consist of inadequate treatment of a child in a facility, an unjustified removal from the family, a lack of listening in proceedings that concern them, discrimination in access to services, or checks and identifications that disproportionately affect children because of origin, appearance, gender or social condition. Inertia, that is, failing to intervene in response to a report, also falls within this form of abuse. Handala considers these situations part of its safeguarding responsibility and reports them to the Policy Lead, who assesses how to intervene, including by requesting clarification or involving the competent authority.

Warning signs

Some behaviours can be indicators of abuse, but they have no diagnostic value on their own and must be read in context. These include: fear of being with certain adults, frequent or sudden anger, self directed or other directed aggressive behaviour, sexual knowledge or behaviour inappropriate for the child's age, strong isolation, unexplained injuries, recurrent physical

complaints with no medical cause, low self esteem, and thoughts or acts of self harm or suicide. Every indicator must be reported following the procedure, without personal interpretation.

6. Children with additional vulnerabilities

Some children are more exposed to the risk of abuse and exclusion, and require additional measures. This does not mean that they are more responsible for what they experience: vulnerability arises from the conditions in which they live and from the way society, institutions and often the adults around them respond to their presence. Handala recognises in particular the following situations.

Children with disabilities, whether physical, sensory, cognitive or psychosocial, may have difficulty communicating abuse, being believed or recognising inappropriate behaviour. Activities must be accessible and listening methods adapted to each person's communication needs.

Children of migrant origin, refugees or asylum seekers may not know the language, their rights or the services available, and may fear consequences for their own residence permit or their family's. When a child is not accompanied by a reference adult, protection is entrusted to the procedures provided for by Law no. 47 of 7 April 2017. Handala ensures, when necessary, the presence of a linguistic and cultural mediator during listening and provides information on procedures in a language the child understands.

Children belonging to ethnic, linguistic or religious minorities may suffer discrimination that exposes them to greater risks and makes it harder to ask for help. Responses must be built with communities, respecting their skills, without treating their belonging as a problem.

Children living in poverty, exclusion or urban marginalisation, as is the case in some of the neighbourhoods where Handala works, may have less family and institutional protection, less access to education and health, and greater risks of exploitation. In these contexts, prevention includes social and educational support as well as vigilance.

Children with a non conforming gender identity, or who experience their sexual orientation differently from what is expected in their family or community, are exposed to discrimination, rejection, violence and threats. Handala ensures respect for gender identity and chosen name, confidentiality on these aspects and non discrimination in activities. No behaviour that treats a child differently because of their gender identity is acceptable.

Children who live in families where gender based violence is present, or who have already suffered abuse or violence, may be at greater risk of further victimisation. In these cases, safeguarding includes attention to the child's safety in their relationships with the family and an assessment, together with services, of the need for protective measures.

In practice, people working for Handala undertake to know the vulnerabilities of those who take part in activities, to build relationships of trust, to assess the specific risks of each project and to use additional measures when necessary. Activities are organised so as not to exclude any child because of their condition, origin, disability, gender identity or economic situation.

7. Gender identity, gender based violence and domestic violence

Handala works with a transfeminist and intersectional approach, which recognises that gender based violence is one of the most widespread forms of violence affecting children, even when they are not direct victims. Gender based violence, domestic violence and witnessed violence affect the wellbeing, development and safety of children, and require a specific response.

In the association's activities, differences of gender and gender identity are recognised as a richness, not a risk. Staff are trained to recognise the gender stereotypes that can lead to underestimating the violence experienced by girls and boys, and to avoid language or behaviour that reinforces discrimination and gender hierarchies. The language used in materials and activities is inclusive.

Handala recognises the framework of the Istanbul Convention and of Directive (EU) 2024/1385, which consider gender based and domestic violence a violation of human rights, and takes it into account in training, in risk assessment and in listening to the children involved.

8. Roles and responsibilities

Child safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who works for Handala or on its behalf, at any level, adheres to the policy, promotes the wellbeing of children, reports any suspicion and any alleged breach of the policy, and helps create a safe working environment in the place where they carry out their activity.

The Board of Directors approves the policy, appoints the Policy Lead, ensures its implementation and receives periodic monitoring reports. The Board ensures that everyone who

works for or with Handala is informed of the document and invited to sign the declaration of acknowledgement and acceptance.

The Policy Lead is the association's main point of reference for the implementation and ongoing evaluation of the policy. The current Policy Lead is Francesco Montagnani, Board member, tel. +39 329 2161394, email ass.handala@gmail.com. The Policy Lead receives all reports, coordinates their analysis and the response, supports those responsible for individual projects in their decisions, ensures that the policy is integrated into all organisational processes, and updates the document at least every three years or sooner if necessary. The Policy Lead cannot handle a report that concerns them: in that case the report must be addressed to the Deputy Policy Lead.

The project Focal Point is a person designated for each project, with specific training and support. Their task is to promote the policy and the code of conduct in the project, check that partners adopt good practices, receive reports and pass them on to the Policy Lead. The Focal Point named for the association is Francesco Montagnani, who is also the Policy Lead. Any additional project Focal Points are named in the project start up document. The Focal Point cannot be the person who is the subject of the concern.

The Deputy Policy Lead is Agnese Pagani, Board member, tel. +39 3913281176, email ass.handala@gmail.com, for cases in which the Policy Lead is unavailable or involved. The name of the deputy is communicated to people working for Handala and to partners.

The coordinator of each activity is the first point of contact for staff in case of concerns, and passes the report on to the Policy Lead, handling it with their support.

Staff, volunteers and interns report any suspicion of maltreatment and abuse of children and any breach of the policy. They are aware of the actions that may be taken against the person reported, which include referring the report to the competent authorities for judicial investigation, according to the law of the country where the event took place, and starting disciplinary procedures, which may go as far as ending the employment or collaboration.

9. Prevention

Staff selection and recruitment

The selection of people who collaborate with Handala reflects the commitment to safeguarding children. For positions involving direct contact with children, Handala applies the following procedures: assessment of the CV and of the motivation for applying; specific questions on suitability to work with children; verification of at least two references for positions with close and regular contact; request for the criminal record certificate and the certificate of pending charges under Article 25 bis of Presidential Decree 313/2002; interviews conducted by at least two people, with a written assessment form.

Selected candidates are informed of the binding nature of the policy and of the code of conduct, and of the fact that they apply to both professional and private life. The same procedures apply to volunteers, interns and external collaborators who meet children.

Contracts and assignment letters include a clause referring to the policy and providing for disciplinary measures, up to termination of the relationship, in case of breach.

Code of conduct

The code of conduct is binding on everyone who works for Handala or on its behalf. It must be signed at the start of the relationship and accepted in all its points. It also applies in cases not explicitly covered, in which each person is expected to act in line with the policy.

Anyone working with children must always pursue the best interests of the child, respect their rights and identity, and promote their self determination. They work in the presence of at least one other adult, avoid being alone with a child, and organise activities in a way that is safe and suitable for all participants. They establish contact with children only in a professional capacity and for project purposes, using tools and channels known to the organisation, and do not exchange private contacts, gifts or money with them outside the planned activities.

It is never permitted to maltreat, abuse, exploit or have sexual relationships with children, regardless of the law of the country or beliefs about age. A mistaken belief about age is not an acceptable defence. It is not permitted to let a child sleep in one's home or in the same room without prior authorisation, nor to tolerate illegal or dangerous behaviour by children. A serious

breach of the code results in the termination of the relationship and, in cases of criminal offences, the consequences provided by law.

Training

All staff, including volunteers and collaborators who meet children, receive initial and periodic training on the policy, the code of conduct, the forms of abuse, children's rights and reporting procedures. The Policy Lead and the Focal Points receive specific training on listening and case management. Training takes into account the local and cultural context, without ever justifying behaviour that is harmful to children.

Risk assessment

Every project activity, including those involving contact with children through digital tools, is assessed before it starts in order to identify risks to child safeguarding and to put adequate control measures in place. The assessment is updated during the project and revisited in the final evaluation.

Digital technologies and social networks

Contacts with children by phone, messaging, social networks or other digital tools take place only through professional channels known to the organisation. Private contacts with children, friend requests on social media and the exchange of personal images are not permitted. Photos and videos of activities are managed according to section 11. Anyone using digital technologies in work with children must report any inappropriate request or behaviour received online. In case of online abuse, evidence is not deleted: images, messages and materials are kept and reported to the authorities, without being forwarded.

Children's participation

Children have the right to be informed about what to expect from staff and how to report inappropriate behaviour. They have the right to feel safe in projects and to take part in defining the rules of activities and the ways of reporting. Communication methods are adapted to each person's age, language and abilities, using child friendly, respectful and culturally appropriate language. Children are also involved in periodic reviews of the policy, within the limits of their age and maturity.

10. Collaboration with partners

In projects involving partner organisations, Handala signs a written agreement that sets out the shared commitment to child safeguarding and the procedure to follow in case of reports. The agreement clarifies who intervenes and with what responsibilities, how to avoid duplication, how to protect the child from unnecessary questions and how to manage activities carried out together.

In choosing partners, Handala assesses their approach to child protection. A partner may apply its own policy only if it is equivalent or superior to Handala's standards. Handala reserves the right to verify partners' procedures and may suspend collaboration with anyone found responsible in cases of abuse. Handala supports the development of partners' capacities in the field, with shared training and tools.

11. Communication, images and data protection

Images and information about children are handled with the utmost care, because they can expose children to risks even when they seem harmless. No photograph, video recording or personal information is collected or published without consent. For children, consent is requested from the child, if they are able to understand, and from the family or guardian. In Italy, consent to the processing of data in information society services can be given independently from the age of fourteen.

Consent is informed: before requesting it, Handala explains how images will be used, where they will be published, how long they will be kept and what risks their dissemination involves. Anyone who gives consent can withdraw it at any time. People must be told that, once published, an image may not be removable from all channels. Where possible, fictitious names or first names only are used, elements that make a person recognisable, such as faces, schools, logos and usual places, are obscured, and images in situations at risk of misuse are avoided.

Handala processes children's data in compliance with the GDPR. It collects only the information necessary for the purposes of the activity, stores it securely, accessible only to authorised people, and deletes it at the end of the project or when it is no longer needed. Information on cases of abuse is handled with the utmost confidentiality and is not disclosed.

Handala's public communications, on social networks, on the website and in publications, respect the dignity of children and do not present them as victims in a sensational way. Testimonies are collected with informed consent and with the possibility of remaining anonymous.

12. Concerns and reports

Principles for listening and responding

To guarantee the right to protection, a simple and transparent procedure is needed. Reporting a concern is important so that risks of abuse are not ignored, even when the suspicion concerns a person we know or a colleague. The Focal Point and the Policy Lead support anyone who reports a concern in good faith, even when the concern turns out to be unfounded. Reports made in good faith have no consequences for the person making them. Reports made in bad faith or with the intention to harm may instead lead to disciplinary measures.

What to report

Every concern, suspicion or certainty of abuse, maltreatment, exploitation or risk to a child, committed by anyone, and every breach of the code of conduct by a person working for Handala or for a partner, must be reported. Situations in which a child discloses abuse or provides information that gives rise to fear of abuse, for themselves or for other children, must also be reported. The same applies to reports from a community member who describes harm or risk, to episodes of bullying and cyberbullying, and to inadequate practices. Practices of institutions, services and public bodies that put the safety of a child at risk, including the forms of institutional abuse described in section 5, must be reported too. This list is not exhaustive.

When to report

A report must be made as soon as possible and in any case within twenty four hours of becoming aware of the situation, except in exceptional circumstances that make it impossible or impractical to do so. Promptness is essential for the child's safety. Doubt about whether the concern is well founded is not a reason to delay reporting.

Who to report to

Reports must be made to the Policy Lead and Focal Point, Francesco Montagnani, tel. +39 329 2161394, email ass.handala@gmail.com. If the Policy Lead is involved or cannot be reached, the report must be made to the deputy, Agnese Pagani, tel. +39 3913281176, email ass.handala@gmail.com. If the person who is the subject of the concern is the activity coordinator, the report must be made directly to the Policy Lead. If the concern relates to a public body, a service or a person working for an institution, the report must still be made to the Policy Lead, who decides how to involve the competent authorities.

In an emergency, or when a fact is believed to constitute a criminal offence, the priority is to contact the emergency number 112 or health services immediately, and to inform the Policy Lead right afterwards. Public officials and persons in charge of a public service, under Article 331 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, are required to report offences they become aware of in the exercise of their functions. Private individuals may file a report in a personal capacity, and Handala does not obstruct this possibility.

How to report

A report may initially be made orally, but it must be put in writing as soon as possible, including the elements listed in the section “Writing the report”. A confidential communication, in person or by email, is preferred. Anyone who receives a report from a child receives it as described in the section “Receiving a child's account”.

What happens after a report

The person who receives the report passes it to the Policy Lead immediately and analyses the available information, assessing the seriousness of the situation. The Policy Lead, immediately and never later than twenty four hours, analyses the information, discusses with the person who forwarded the report how to proceed, establishes the degree of urgency and the timing, and ensures urgent protective measures for the child as well as the necessary medical, psychological or social support, based on the local map of services indicated in section 13. The Policy Lead informs the Board and, together with the person who received the report, forms a case management group.

The case management group, under the responsibility of the Board, first of all ensures the safety of the child and of the other people involved. It sets out an action plan with timelines, roles and responsibilities, considers involving external consultants and professionals, assesses reporting to the judicial authorities, law enforcement and social services, decides whether to start a disciplinary measure, keeps the documentation in a secure place, and ensures feedback and support for the people involved until the case is closed. It always acts according to the principles of the policy and in accordance with current legislation.

During case management, the criterion of discretion described in section 3 applies: information is shared only with people who have an active role. Transparency towards the competent authorities, however, must be ensured within the required timeframes. Anyone who has made a report must not investigate, must not question the person named as the perpetrator or other children, and must not inform the person accused. If the concern relates to abuse within the family, the ways and timing of informing the family are defined together with the judicial authority or services.

Writing the report

Every written report clearly and legibly contains: the name of the child, the date, time and place; the name and role of the person reporting and their relationship with the child; the facts observed or reported, indicating what, who, where and when, with the child's exact words where possible; information on the person suspected, if known; the child's current safety situation; any actions already taken and people already informed. The report is signed and dated by the person who writes it. The writer avoids judgmental language and personal opinions, unless they are supported by concrete evidence.

Receiving a child's account

Children who experience abuse often need above all to feel listened to, believed and protected. They may be attached to the person who abuses, feel guilty or have been threatened into keeping the secret. For this reason, the listener tries to:

find a space for conversation without physical barriers, sit at the child's eye level, stay calm and not show shock, fear or disgust that could frighten the speaker. Let the person tell their story at their own pace, without questioning them, and use open questions to clarify, such as “can you

tell me more?". Assess whether the person is in immediate danger. Acknowledge their feelings, tell them clearly that it is not their fault and that they were right to speak. Not promise to keep the secret, but honestly explain what will be done, who will be approached and why. Thank them for their trust and courage.

When an adult tells the story, the listener stays calm, reassures the speaker for having raised the matter, takes what is said seriously, avoids assumptions and negative comments about the person accused, and collects only the information needed to understand what happened, where, when and who was present.

In every case, the person named as the perpetrator is not informed, the truthfulness of the facts is not investigated, and no questions are put to the person accused or to other children. In cases of online abuse, images or messages are not deleted, as they may be evidence, but they must not be forwarded electronically as part of the report.

13. Services and useful numbers

In case of immediate danger, call the emergency number 112. For support and listening for children and adolescents, the Telefono Azzurro helpline is available on 1.96.96. For cases requiring assessment and protection, Handala turns to the social services of the Municipality of Palermo, the local health authorities, the competent Public Prosecutor's Office and Juvenile Court, and the centres specialised in child protection present in the area.

The Policy Lead keeps the list of local services up to date, with reference contacts for each area where Handala operates, and makes it available to people working for the association and to partners.

14. Monitoring, review and approval

This Policy will be regularly reviewed and updated to incorporate new information, best practices, and emerging trends, ensuring that our commitment to safeguarding children and young people remains current and effective. The document has been finalised by relevant staff of the organisation, including: the Policy Lead, together with the management and the Focal Points, monitors the application of the policy in each project at least every six months, through documented self assessments that identify strengths, good practices and areas for improvement. On the basis of the results, an action plan with responsibilities and deadlines is

defined. The evaluation process is participatory and involves staff, partners, the funder and, where possible, children and their families.

The policy is reviewed every three years, or earlier in the event of changes in legislation or organisational processes. Each version shows the date of approval, the version number and the date of the next review.

Lara Salomone (President), Vivian Celestino (Vice-President), Francesco Montagnani (Board secretary), Agnese Pagani (Board secretary).

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15. Declaration of acknowledgement and acceptance

This declaration is signed by each person who works for Handala or on its behalf, by volunteers, interns and external collaborators, before the start of activities.

I, the undersigned, first and last name _____, role _____, declare that I have received, read and understood Handala's Child Safeguarding Policy, and I undertake to know it, accept it and work in accordance with it, including the code of conduct. I also declare that I have no pending criminal proceedings or convictions for offences against children, and that I am not aware of any reason why anyone might consider me unsuitable to work with children. I understand that a breach of the code of conduct may result in termination of the relationship and further disciplinary or judicial proceedings. I undertake to communicate immediately any change to what I have declared.

Place and date _____ Signature _____