



# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Arci Cassandra aps

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## Introduction

**Arci Cassandra aps**, in short Arci Cassandra, has its roots in the history of Italian mutuality and solidarity and in the democratic values born from the struggle for liberation from Nazi-fascism, values which find full affirmation in the Constitution of the Italian Republic. In its Statute it refers to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and all the UN Conventions on social, cultural, women' and migrants' rights. It works for their affirmation.

Founded in 2006 by a group of young people from 'Capo di Leuca', in the southernmost part of the Apulia Region, Arci Cassandra has grown with its members making use of the skills they have gained in the fields of study and professional life, in Italy, Europe and around the world. It is now an Association that promotes social inclusion, mutuality, participation and community development and contributes to the cultural and civil growth of its members and the community in which it operates.

Arci Cassandra recognizes that minors are holders of all the rights recognized to human beings as such, for example the right to life and physical integrity, the right to respect for private and family life, the right to equality without distinctions of ethnic origin, sex and gender, language, religion, personal and social conditions. It recognizes that minors are holders of their own rights as subjects in training, first of all the right to 'special' protection in consideration of the vulnerability of the condition of minors<sup>1</sup>.

It also recognizes that minors have the right to be involved in decisions that concern them by expressing their opinion and that this opinion, with increasing intensity according to the age and maturity of the subject, must be duly taken into consideration by adults called to decide<sup>2</sup>.

Arci Cassandra believes that in the areas in which it operates and deploys its intervention directly or indirectly involving minors, it is essential to adopt all the necessary measures to prevent and minimise risks of prejudice and to ensure their well-being.

It also recognizes the importance of interventions aimed at minors as they are strategic for promoting participation and social inclusion, for reducing inequalities and for ensuring health, well-being and good education as to break the cycle of poverty and social exclusion across generations<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Art. 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC); art. 24, par. 2 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

<sup>2</sup> Art. 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC); art. 24, par. 1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union; 1<sup>st</sup> thematic area of the *Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the European Child Guarantee - European Commission*.

<sup>3</sup> Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 of 14 June 2021 establishing a European Child Guarantee.

## Definitions

**Child** – For the purposes of this document, 'child' means any person under the age of 18 as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>4</sup>.

**Child abuse** – According to the World Health Organisation, 'child abuse' or 'maltreatment' constitutes *'all forms of physical and/or emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglectful treatment, commercial or other exploitation, resulting in potential harm to the health, survival, development or dignity of the child in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power'*<sup>5</sup>

**Child protection** – A broad term to describe philosophies, policies, standards, guidelines and procedures to protect children from both intentional and unintentional harm. In the current context, it applies in particular to the duty of Arci Cassandra – and persons associated with the Association – to the children in their care.

**Child safeguarding** – The policies, procedures and practices employed to safeguard children who come into contact with Arci Cassandra and all those associated with the delivery of our work from all forms of harm, abuse or exploitation and the responsibility of all personnel to embed these at the activity level to ensure Arci Cassandra is a child safe organisation.

**Child Protection Policy** – *'A statement of intent that demonstrates a commitment to protect children from harm and clarifies all that is required in relation to child protection. It helps to create a safe and positive environment for children and demonstrates that the organisation is taking its duty and responsibility to care seriously'*<sup>6</sup>.

**Participation of children** – Any person under the age of 18 participates in a process or plays a role in a process at their level, according to their evolving abilities. Children and young people think for themselves, express their opinions effectively and interact positively with other people. Involve children in decisions that affect their lives, the lives of the community and the wider society in which they live.

**Organisations' responsibility** – It is the responsibility of Arci Cassandra to ensure that staff, operations and programmes do not harm children, i.e. that they do not expose them to the risk of harm and abuse, and that the organisation's concerns about children and their safety. 'Do no harm' is a principle that has been used in the humanitarian sector but can also be applied to the development sector. It refers to the responsibility of organisations to minimise the harm they may inadvertently cause as a result of their activities<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Art. 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

<sup>5</sup> Report of the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention WHO – 1999.

<sup>6</sup> Introducing Child Protection (Child Protection Manual, Stage 1), UNICEF.

<sup>7</sup> Child Safeguarding Standards – and How to implement them. Keeping Children Safe.

## Purpose

The aim of this Policy is to regulate the way Arci Cassandra operates, directing it so that children are safeguarded, prioritising the best interests of the child and promoting their well-being, and that the Association's interventions do not cause them any harm, including by raising the awareness of its collaborators and partners.

Although the Safeguarding policy adopted tends to be comprehensive, given the wide range of interventions carried out by Arci Cassandra, it is likely that there may be circumstances that are not sufficiently covered or where there are questions about its application. In such situations, the Association's Policy Advisor, appointed by the Directors' board, should be contacted for further advice or support at the email address [policy.advisor@arcicassandra.it](mailto:policy.advisor@arcicassandra.it)

In particular, the purpose of this Child Protection Policy is to:

- take into account, in all of our planning and activities, the interests and wellbeing of children;
- respect the rights, wishes and feelings of the children with whom we are working;
- take all reasonable steps to protect children from neglect and physical, sexual, psychological and emotional abuse;
- treat children with respect regardless of ethnic or social origin, national, sex, gender, language, religion, political or other opinions, disability, birth or other status;
- not use language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate;
- empower children: discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is any problem.

Our responsibility to children extends to any contact we have with them, be it direct, by phone, text, chat, social network sites, etc.

In the use and production of images, pictures and films we are committed to:

- before photographing or filming a child, assess and endeavour to comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images;
- before photographing or filming a child, obtain consent from the child or a parent or guardian of the child. As part of this we must explain how the photograph or film will be used;
- ensure photographs, videos and other formats present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Children should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive;
- ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts;
- ensure file labels do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically.

In particular, when addressing minors both in research or training activity, parents/guardians and the minors themselves will be asked to sign a specific informed consent declaration where all aspects of children's involvement will be clarified. The minor as well as the parent/guardian written permission is required for the publication of a picture of a minor.

## Recruitment and application of the policy

This policy ensures that all the staff of Arci Cassandra as well as external staff and stakeholders involved in projects are aware of this '*Child Protection Policy and Procedures*'. A Child protection advisor is responsible for this, appointed by the Directors' board.

Recruitment procedures include checks on suitability for working with young people. Concerning youth workers, the recruitment procedure includes the verification of the criminal record and the CV. In particular, we ensure that the staff of Arci Cassandra is clear on what steps to take where concerns arise regarding the safety of children. The staff will participate in an entry information meeting on the Child protection policy.

At the beginning of all projects, the management team is committed to brief partners' representatives and staff on the Child Protection Policy, on how to reduce risks and create child safe environments, on how to promote child safe practices which keep children safe during the project and in their own community, and provide information about child protection to the children and communities in which we work, especially for the staff working directly with children. Any external staff who will participate in a project will also be made aware of this policy. Concerning photographers, filming crews, journalists or visitors:

- make sure that photographers and filmmakers are not allowed to spend time with or have access to children without supervision. They have to be accompanied by Arci Cassandra's staff at all times.
- In order to protect the confidentiality and privacy of the children, Arci Cassandra must be notified as to how the photographer or filmmaker intends to use the images or stories. Arci Cassandra reserves the right to refuse use if it is felt that, in doing so, we are not acting in accordance with our Child protection policy and our media and communication principles.
- If an image or any material is to be used by another organisation, it must be credited to Arci Cassandra/Photographer's Name © with an appropriate caption.

This information will also concern how to report child abuse if they have concerns about a staff member of Arci Cassandra and information on state, regional and local laws regarding what individuals must do when aware of youth in potentially harmful situations.

This Child Protection Policy applies to all part-time and full-time employees as well as to independent

Contractors, freelance and other professionals, interns and volunteers, associate firms and sub-contractors working with Arci Cassandra on the implementation of the project.

## Contrasting and reporting child abuse

Arci Cassandra is committed to providing a management strategy to prevent child abuse and protect children in the course of its work, delivering to the staff clear information on what to do in the case of suspected child abuse in order to respond to all suspicions and allegations of abuse swiftly and appropriately.

In the case of suspected or actual child abuse, our first priority is always for the safety and welfare of

the child and that no child is ever left in an unsafe situation.

Information about suspected abuse must be accurate and a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure or when the concern arises. It should include, if known and applicable, as much details as possible concerning the incident (the cause, the date, the time and location, etc.) as well as the identity of the perpetrator(s) and the victim(s).

Where it is suspected that any form of criminal behaviour is taking place at a programme or outside the organisation, the Child protection advisor and the President/Legal representative of the association should be informed immediately.

Following this procedure, the appropriate local authorities should be informed and their advice followed.

## Guidelines for adults working with children

Adults who work with children within the projects of Arci Cassandra are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.

The following behaviours won't be accepted when working with children and youth:

- use any form of degrading treatment to punish a child. The use of sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments towards children and young people is not acceptable in any situation.
- Use of alcoholic beverages and tobacco products in the presence of children and youth.
- Engage in any form of sexual activity with children.
- Actions or behaviours that could be construed as poor practice or potentially abusive. For example, never behave in an inappropriate or sexually provocative manner.
- Never have a child stay overnight in the adult's room or sleep in the same bed (unless prior consent is provided by both the child and his/her parent/guardian). Perform activities for children that they can do themselves, including dressing, bathing and grooming.
- Hit or otherwise physically assault participants.
- Act in any way that may be abusive or place others at risk of abuse.
- Be alone with a child in any circumstances that might be questioned by others
- Allow children to engage in sexually provocative games with each other.
- Kiss, hug, fondle, rub, or touch a child in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way (e.g. do not initiate physical contact, such as holding hands, unless initiated by the child).
- Suggest inappropriate behaviour or relations of any kind or encourage any crushes by a child.
- Take photos, film or request personal information if not required for Arci Cassandra's activities.
- Inappropriate use of contact details (including social media accounts) from children out of Arci Cassandra's programmes.
- Condone violations of this code by others – staff, interns, consultants, etc.

Adults acting in the projects of Arci Cassandra are called to treat each minor with respect and care, ensuring that minors are properly supervised at all times, thus providing them a safe environment.



The same professional standards should always be applied and should be sensitive to differences expressed through culture, disability, gender, language, ethnic origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity.

All adults who work with, and on behalf of children are accountable for the way in which they exercise authority, manage risk, use resources, and safeguard children and young people.

Adults should work and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way. Whenever possible, we try to have another adult present when it needs to work with minors in an unsupervised setting. Meetings with children and young people outside agreed working arrangements should not take place without the agreement of senior managers and parents or carers.

All documents bearing personal information, including registration forms, medical information forms, permission to treat forms, etc., are to be treated as being confidential, minimising the number of people who have access to any such documents and securing the documents at all times.

Adults should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others. They should report and record any incident with this potential. Communication between children and adults, by whatever method, should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries. Adults should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny.

Adults should treat their interaction with youth on social networking sites as though the interaction were occurring in public, in front of other adults and young people. In other words, if it would not be appropriate to say to a young person in public, it should not be said as a comment on a social networking site either.

Every partner organisation of the projects of Arci Cassandra will inform and educate its members on these guidelines, providing a copy of the guidelines to each staff member.

## Date of adoption, scheduled review and contact person

This *Child protection policy* will be available on Arci Cassandra's website. Its adoption date is February 20th 2024. It will be revised every 3 years.

The Association's Policy Advisor, appointed by the Board of Directors, can be contacted for further information, advice or support at the email address [policy.advisor@arcicassandra.it](mailto:policy.advisor@arcicassandra.it)