

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1. Our commitment to the childhood

Alice Società Cooperativa Sociale Onlus was founded in 1979 and has been committed all along to promoting wellness, preventing discomfort, and protect the rights of children and adolescents. Alice pays special attention to the child's world through the management of services to accompany him/her from early childhood until adulthood, detecting and welcoming the emerged and emerging needs, and providing professional qualified answers in order to promote conditions for a harmonious psychophysics growth, empowerment and self-determination.

It has many years of experience and well-established fact in the management of:

- multiple Nursery Schools;
- a day care centre for children, welcoming 14 members aged 6-11 years, with socio-educational purposes and educational-preventive program,
- a day care centre for teenagers, welcoming 14 members aged 12-18 years, with socio-educational purposes such training, socialization and integration, and with strong significance of prevention of risk of deviance,
- an Individual Educational Service for children at risk for personalized interventions of support to be carried out in the context of home care, social and territorial cohesion of belonging;
- a laboratory dedicated to children and adolescents with Specific Learning Disorder;
- a Neutral Space for conducting visitation between parents and children in the following possible situations: a) parents in separation regime and in serious conflict within the family, b) multiproblematic families, c) parents suspected of abuse, d) parents and children involved in the custody path;
- a Psycho-pedagogical support Centre for psychological support and psychotherapy addressed to children, adolescents, couples and families;
- projects for the children support and entertainment of women victims of violence, guests at the Refuge;
- awareness projects and training for the prevention and combat of child abuse.

2. Definitions of Child abuse

Child abuse is any form of physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm. It often occurs within a relationship of trust or responsibility and is an abuse of power or a breach of trust. Abuse can happen to a child regardless of their age, gender, race or ability. Even in situations where it may be felt that the child accepted or somehow invited the abuse, it is still abuse. Abusers can be adults (male or female) and other children, and are usually known to and trusted by the child and family. The abuser may be a family member, or they may be someone the child encounters in a residential setting or in the community, including during sports and leisure activities. An individual may abuse or neglect a child directly, or may be responsible for abuse because they fail to prevent another person harming that child or neglecting the needs of the child.

There are five main types of child abuse and children can suffer from one or a combination of these forms of abuse.

- Emotional - the emotional mistreatment of a child, which may involve telling a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only to meet the needs of another person. These may include imposing expectations or interactions that are inappropriate or beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limiting the child's ability to explore or learn or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction.
- Physical – causing bodily or physical harm e.g. hitting, poisoning, burning, giving children alcohol or drugs.
- Sexual – when adults use children to meet their own sexual urges; this may or may not include physical contact with the child (e.g. any sexual activity, intimate touching, sexually suggestive remarks).
- Neglect – when adults fail to meet the child's basic needs to an extent that is likely to result in serious impact on the child's health or development (e.g. failing to provide adequate food, shelter, failing to protect from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment).
- Witnessing violence – when the child experiences any form of ill-treatment made by acts of physical, verbal, psychological, sexual and economic violence to the detriment of reference people or other emotionally significant people, adult or minor. The child can experience it directly, indirectly and/or feeling the effects. It includes the witness to violence of children on other children and/or other family members and abandonment and ill-treatment to the detriment of domestic animals.

In addition, bullying is a form of child abuse although often, but not always, the person who is the bully is also a child.

Bullying means deliberate, hurtful behaviour towards another person that is usually repeated over a period of time. The outcome will always be painful and distressing for the victim.

There are four main types of bullying:

- physical (e.g. pushing, hitting, kicking, slapping or any use of violence);
- verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, name-calling, graffiti, threats, abusive text messages);
- emotional (e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring, isolating from the group); or,
- sexual (e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments).

3. Principles upon which the our Child Protection Policy is based

- The welfare of a child or young person will always be paramount.
- The welfare of families will be promoted.
- The rights, wishes and feelings of children, young people and their families will be respected and listened to.
- Those people in positions of responsibility within the organisation will work in accordance with the interests of children and young people and follow the policy outlined below.



- Those people in positions of responsibility within the organisation will ensure that the same opportunities are available to everyone and that all differences between individuals will be treated with respect.

Alice Società Cooperativa Sociale Onlus will not tolerate child abuse and is committed to:

- Taking into account, in all of our planning and activities, the interests and wellbeing of children;
- Respecting the rights, wishes and feelings of the children with whom we are working;
- Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from neglect and physical, sexual, psychological, emotional abuse and witnessing violence;
- Responding to all suspicions and allegations of abuse swiftly and appropriately; and,
- Recruiting staff to work with children with regard to their suitability for that responsibility and providing them with training in good practice and Child Protection procedures.

Alice's staff, who wish to work with children, are responsible for following this Policy at all times.

4. Our policy

Alice Società Cooperativa Sociale Onlus fully recognizes its responsibilities for child protection.

Our policy applies to all staff, governors and volunteers working in services addressed to children and adolescents. There are five main elements to our policy:

- ensuring we practice safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children,
- raising awareness of child protection issues and equipping children with the skills needed to keep them safe,
- developing and then implementing procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases, of abuse,
- supporting children who have been abused in accordance with his/her agreed child protection plan.
- establishing a safe environment in which children can learn and develop.

We recognize that, because of the day to day contact with children, the staff are well placed to observe the outward signs of abuse. Alice Società Cooperativa Sociale Onlus will therefore:

- establish and maintain an environment where children feel secure, are encouraged to talk, and are listened to,
- ensure children know that there are adults (reference Educators) whom they can approach if they are worried,
- include opportunities in the Educational Project for children to develop the skills they need to recognize and stay safe from abuse.

We follow the guidelines set out by the C.I.S.M.A.I. (Italian coordination of services against the child abuse) and take account of guidance issued by the Istituto degli Innocenti of Florence and the Documentation Center for childhood and adolescence.



Alice Società Cooperativa Sociale Onlus adopts the following indications:

- ensure that each coordinator of services for children is responsible for child protection and has received an appropriate training and support for this role,
- ensure that every member of the staff (including temporary and supply staff and volunteers) and the governing body knows the name of the coordinators responsible for child protection and their role,
- ensure that all the staff and the volunteers understand their responsibilities in being alert to the signs of abuse and responsibility for referring any concerns to the coordinators responsible for child protection,
- ensure that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on the single service and staff for child protection by setting out its obligations in the Cooperative Company prospectus,
- notify to the social services if there are signs and indicators that imply a suspected abuse,
- develop effective links with relevant agencies and co-operate as required with their enquiries regarding child protection matters including attendance at case conferences,
- keep written records of concerns about children, even where there is no need to refer the matter immediately,
- ensure that all records are kept securely and in locked locations,
- develop and then follow procedures where an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer,
- ensure that safe recruitment practices are always followed.

We recognize that children who are abused or witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth. They may feel helplessness, humiliation and some sense of blame, their behavior may be challenging and defiant or they may be withdrawn. The Cooperative's services may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of children at risk.

Alice Società Cooperativa Sociale Onlus will endeavor to support the child through:

- the content of the Educational Project,
- the Cooperative's goals promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment and gives children a sense of wellbeing,
- the activities are especially aimed at supporting vulnerable children. The Cooperative will ensure that the children know that some behavior is unacceptable but they are valued and not to be blamed for any abuse which has occurred,
- the liaison with other agencies that support the children such as social services, Child and Adult Mental Health Service, education welfare service and educational psychology services.



5. Staff selection

We recognise how important it is that we have safe and effective practices in place for recruiting people who will be working with children, and to prepare them for their role.

Alice requires the following requisites and precautions in selecting all persons with educational programme responsibility. The selection process is set out in detail in our Procedure included in the Quality Management System (UNI EN ISO 9001:2008).

Criteria and considerations regarding background and behaviour are stated in Selection Guidelines.

Applicants for a position of educator must show any possible information about their education, experience, interests and background.

Any status related to criminal activity, child abuse, drug/alcohol abuse, etc. is considered incompatible with the hiring.

6. Training

Safe recruitment practices of the staff must be followed by essential training for the roles they are undertaking. Our educators must all be trained to recognise the situations where abuse of children may occur in order to enable them to react appropriately if they have concerns.

Training after recruitment should help workers to:

- Understand the Behaviour Protocol;
- Consider their own practices against what is considered good practice;
- Understand and follow the Alice's procedures for reporting and recording concerns;
- Recognise their responsibilities;
- Respond to concerns expressed by a child;
- Recognise abuse indicators and act to protect the child when abuse is suspected;
- Work safely and effectively with children; and,
- Understand how Alice's Child Protection Policy also protects them in their work with children.

The Legal Representative

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BEHAVIOUR PROTOCOL FOR ADULTS WORKING WITH/IN CONTACT WITH CHILDREN

Premise

The following Behaviour Protocol for ALICE SOCIETA' COOPERATIVA SOCIALE ONLUS, is followed by all members of the organisation and followed and promoted by those in the position of leadership within the organisation.

The purpose of the organization is to promote the conditions for a harmonious and balanced growth of the child and to implement procedures to protect the children's interests and rights, safeguarding them from situations that may jeopardize their physical and/or psychological health.

The purpose of this policy is to make sure that the actions of any adult in the work context of Alice Cooperativa Sociale are transparent and uphold the welfare of all young people.

The organisation undertakes activities with children with their parents/carers' consent but – with reference to in-home educational programmes – has the opportunity to observe the young persons/children's welfare within their family setting. Parents/carers remain responsible for their children's welfare throughout all the work undertaken by the organisation.

Part one: In case of child victim or alleged victim

Immediate Action to Ensure Safety

Immediate action may be necessary at any stage in involvement with children and families.

In all cases it is vital to take whatever action is needed to safeguard the child/ren, i.e.:

- If emergency medical attention is required this can be secured by calling an ambulance (dial 118) or taking a child to the nearest Accident and Emergency Department.
- If a child is in immediate danger the Security Force has to be contacted (dial 112) as they alone have the power to remove a child immediately if protection is necessary, via Police Protection Order.

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Recognition of the types of Abuse

Abuse or neglect of a child is caused by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting: by those known to them or more rarely by a stranger.

- Physical Abuse: It may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. 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 is commonly described using terms such as, fabricated illness by proxy or Munchausen Syndrome by proxy.
- Emotional Abuse. It is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children 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. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child though it may occur alone.
- Sexual Abuse. It involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape or buggery) or non-penetrative

acts. They may include also non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material, or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

- Neglect. It is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.
- Witnessing violence. It is the experience, by the child, of any form of ill-treatment made by acts of physical, verbal, psychological, sexual and economic violence to the detriment of reference people or other emotionally significant people, adult or minor. The child can experience it directly, indirectly and/or feeling the effects. It includes the witness to violence of children on other children and/or other family members and abandonment and ill-treatment to the detriment of domestic animals.

Workers within the organisation need to be alert to the potential abuse of children both within their families and also in other contexts that he/she attends.

The members of the organisation have to know how to recognize and act upon indicators of abuse or potential/suspected abuse involving children. There is an expected responsibility for all members of the organisation to respond to any suspected or actual abuse of a child in accordance with these procedures.

It is good practice to be as open and honest as possible with parents/carers about any concerns, unless the suspicions concern the parents themselves.

However, you must not discuss your concerns with parents/carers in the following circumstances:

- where sexual abuse is suspected
- where organised or multiple abuse is suspected
- where fictitious illness by proxy (also known as Munchausen Syndrome by proxy) is suspected
- where contacting parents/carers would place a child, yourself or others at immediate risk.

What to do if children talk to you about abuse or neglect

It is recognized that a child may seek you out to share information about abuse or neglect, or talk spontaneously individually or in groups when you are present. In these situations, you must:

- Listen carefully to the child. Do NOT directly question the child and Do NOT ask questions that could influence his telling or alter his memories.
- Give the child time and attention.
- Allow the child to give a spontaneous account; do not stop a child who is freely recalling significant events.
- Make an accurate record of the information you have been given taking care to record the timing, setting and people present, the child's presentation as well as what was said. As soon as possible, write down the literal words used within the telling listened: it may be useful for a written report and later be needed as evidence.
- Use the child's own words where possible.
- Explain that you cannot promise not to speak to others about the information they have shared.
- Reassure the child that:
 - you are glad they have told you;

- they have not done anything wrong;
- what you are going to do next.
- Explain that you will need to get help to keep the child safe.
- Do NOT ask the child to repeat his or her account of events to anyone.

Consulting about your concern

The purpose of consultation is to discuss your concerns in relation to a child and decide what action is necessary.

You may become concerned about a child who has not spoken to you, because of your observations of, or information about that child.

It is good practice to ask a child why they are upset or how a cut or bruise was caused, or respond to a child wanting to talk to you. This practice can help clarify vague concerns and result in appropriate action.

If you are concerned about a child you must share your concerns. At first, you must talk to the coordinator of your service. If you need further support you can address to Responsible of the sector "Services for children and youth", who is specifically trained on the theme of child abuse.

A supervisor, specialized in childhood psychology, is also available for counselling.

Before writing a referral, it is strictly necessary to consult the governor body, that is the only one authorised to sign it.

Consultation is not the same as making a referral but should enable a decision to be made as to whether a referral to Social Services or the Police should progress.

In any case, if you are in doubt ... consult.

How to write a report/referral

There are two kinds of report: Report with information purpose and Report with purpose of exposé

- Report with information purpose
 - It draws up if necessary or requested by the Social Services according to the following tracks:
 - Analysis of the intervention in terms of objectives achieved, not achieved and potentially achievable and its determinants and conditioning;
 - Synthetic evaluation regarding some critical parameters, observed and selected in a targeted way, including in the different areas of treatment (cognitive-behavioral, affective-emotional, relational, educational);
 - Narration of specific episodes, directly or indirectly noticed, that they can better explain and substantiate anything observed;
 - Conclusive considerations tightly integrated with suggestions and proposals for action.
- Report with purpose of referral/exposé
 - It is about the "notice of a crime of which a minor has been the victim or alleged victim, to bring a prosecution for the investigation and punishment of the offender."
 - A referral involves giving Social Services (or Security Force) information about concerns relating to an individual or family in order that enquiries can be undertaken by the appropriate agency followed by any necessary action. In some cases (urgency/emergency), the level of concern will lead straight to a referral without external consultation being necessary. Parents/carers should be informed if a referral is being made except in the circumstances where family members are involved as abusers. However, inability to inform parents for any reason should not prevent a referral being made. In this case, it will be

essential to share the decision with Social Services about how and when the parents should be approached and by whom.

- It draws in the presence of clear and established factors and risk indicators and situations of serious injury to the physical and / or psychological and / or emotional health of the child.
- It must take into account the art. 331, 332, 362 - Code of Criminal Procedure.
- The report must contain all the factual circumstances (usually the behavior and statements of the child) known to the operator, the time and manner of knowledge. Such knowledge can be derived from a direct perception or from what others have told him/her.
- It is sent to Social Services to be forwarded to the Prosecutor's Office. Subordinately, and only in some cases, it can be directly sent to the Prosecutor's Office.

Action to be taken

- Ensure that you keep an accurate written record of your concern(s) made at the time.
- Put your concerns in writing to send to Social Services (within 48 hours).
- Accurately record the action agreed or that no further action is to be taken and the reasons for this decision.

Information required

Be prepared to give as much of the following information as possible (in emergency situations all of this information may not be available). Unavailability of some information should not stop you making a referral.

- Your name and position.
- Full name of the child.
- The names of professionals' known to be involved with the child/family.
- The nature of the concern; and foundation for them.
- An opinion on whether the child may need urgent action to make him safe.
- Your view of what appears to be the needs of the child and family.
- Whether the consent of a parent with parental responsibility has been given to the referral being made.

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Confidentiality

The organisation ensures that any records made in relation to a referral are kept confidentially and in a secure place.

Information in relation to child protection concerns are shared on a "need to know" basis. However, the sharing of information is vital to child protection and, therefore, the issue of confidentiality is secondary to a child's need for protection.

Part two: General behaviour within Alice Società Cooperativa Sociale

All persons involved in educational programmes must be made aware of and comply with these rules, which include forbidding:

- Any sexual intimacy or the appearance of sexual intimacy;
- Use of narcotics;
- Underage drinking; and,
- Any form of abuse, corporal punishment or intolerance.

The staff assessment is periodic and effected according to the criteria set out in detail in the related Procedure, provided from the Quality Management System (UNI EN ISO 9001:2008). The Human Resources Director and the Coordinator of the Service are the responsible of the assessment process.

Violation of any of above-mentioned rules will lead to consequences up to and including exclusion from work. Violation of some of these rules may lead to consequences up to and including informing the appropriate external authorities.

Part three: Health and safety within Alice Società Cooperativa Sociale

To ensure the physical protection of children, their health and safety must also be provided for. Alice's policy includes specific requirements for:

- The ratio of adults to children;
- Upholding all local public health/ health and safety standards and laws;
- Ready access to medical care;
- Healthy diet and nutrition; and,
- Accommodation of special needs, to the fullest extent possible.

Part four: Behaviour and communication outside of Alice Società Cooperativa Sociale

People in positions of programme responsibility must understand that they are in a position of trust at all times in relation to the children for whom they are responsible. This means that all contact with children before or after a programme should reflect the same values and behaviour. Abuse can take place not only in person but also through other forms of contact (e.g. phone, text messages, emails, social networking sites).

It is important to encourage safe online or distance communication and to understand that our responsibility to children extends to any contact we have with them, be it by phone, text, chat, social network sites etc.

It is particularly important to recognize that online communications present many positive, but also negative opportunities.

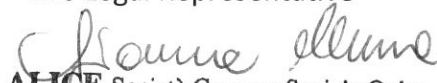
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Part five: In closing

Alice Società Cooperativa Sociale has adopted the present Behaviour Protocol that every single adult involved in an educational programme and/or a position of responsibility should respect and put into practice at all times.

All staff and volunteer will be given a copy of this Protocol during training or volunteer orientation and must become familiar with its requirements, by regarding and understanding the Protocol.

The Legal Representative


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