

# Child Protection Policy

Payoke believes that all children and young people have equal rights to protection from harm, abuse, and exploitation. This policy outlines how Payoke will protect the rights and safety of the children and young people we serve and come in contact with in our work.

## Introduction

Payoke's vision is a **world without slavery** where everyone has the right and the means to live a decent life.

Our objectives are to re-integrate victims as full-fledged persons in our society or in their country of origin, to fight against the perpetrators, individuals or criminal organizations, nationally and internationally, in cooperation with victims, police and justice. We strive to raise awareness about the causes and consequences of human trafficking in all its forms throughout all sectors of society, nationally and internationally.

Payoke serves adult and minor victims of human trafficking.

Payoke **supports the rights of children** and is committed to their **safety** and **well-being**.

Payoke is committed to supporting and rehabilitate children deprived of liberty, who are amongst the most vulnerable, invisible and forgotten in our societies. We seek to safeguard their rights and create opportunities for their fullest development

We believe in the empowerment of children as **agents of change**. We are committed to help improve children's resilience, health and education as the foundation of more prosperous, sustainable, stable and safe societies.

## Scope

Payoke is committed to the prevention of all forms of harm and abuse and to the well-being of its members and clients, children, young people, adults and their families

Payoke strongly **condemns all forms of child abuse** and exploitation of children both within and outside of the organisation. In order to protect children in all our activities and to guarantee their respect and physical and emotional well-being, the present Child Protection Policy sets out **rules and procedures for exercising a duty of care to children** with whom Payoke works, is in contact with, or who are affected by the organizations' work and operations.

This policy applies to all children who are clients of our organisation, and to those with whom our personnel come into contact in the course of their work.

It applies to volunteers, staff, management and Board members of Payoke, and to any contracted personnel, whether on a remunerated or non-remunerated position.

Payoke members must follow the child safeguarding policy and Deontological Code within and outside the workplace. This means adopting appropriate behaviour themselves and reporting on concerns they have about a child whether at work or outside.

## Purpose

The purpose of this Child Protection Policy is to:

- provide a management strategy to prevent child abuse and protect children in the course of our work;
- protect Payoke staff and partners from unfair practices and processes; and
- provide Payoke staff and partners with clear guidelines on what to do in the case of suspected child abuse or improper conduct.

## Applicable standards and legislation

In all actions concerning child victims the **best interests of the child** shall be the primary consideration.

This Policy adheres to the following Acts:

- International Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union
- UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, linked to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000)
- Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of December 13 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography
- 2004 Flemish 'Decree on the legal status of the minor in the integrated youth assistance
- 2013 Flemish 'Decree Integrated Youth Aid'
- UNICEF Guidelines on the protection of child victims of trafficking (2006)

## Definitions:

**Child/minor:** Based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is considered to be anyone under the age of 18 years. A child victim of trafficking is any person trafficked under 18 years of age.

**Child protection** is the term used to describe the responsibilities and activities undertaken to prevent or to stop children being abused or ill-treated.

**Staff** is defined as those who are employed directly by or volunteer for Payoke whether full-time, part time or temporarily and including consultants, researchers, volunteers, interns, directors and executive board members. The policy applies also to staff and volunteers of partner organisations whilst they are working with children and young people in the care or supervision of Payoke.

**Child abuse or maltreatment** constitutes 'all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.(WHO)

For all other definitions, reference shall be made to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child.

## Responsibility of the Designated Person for Child Protection

The **Executive Director of Payoke** holds ultimate responsibility for child protection within the organization and for the implementation of the present Policy. The Executive Director is the Designated Person for Child Protection. The Executive Director can be contacted at [Klaus.vanhoutte@payoke.be](mailto:Klaus.vanhoutte@payoke.be).

The Designated Person for Child Protection may appoint a staff member to assist with the implementation of the present policy.

The Designated Person for Child Protection shall submit a monitoring report with recommendations to the Board one year after the approval of this Policy and henceforth every two years. The Board may request amendments to the Policy.

Payoke's Board shall monitor performance in child protection and hold managers to account in relation to child safeguarding.

## Responding and reporting alleged abuse and misconduct

Payoke will respond to suspicions and allegations of child abuse by a member of staff in a manner which best ensures children's immediate and long-term safety. It will treat suspicions or allegations against a staff member with the same seriousness as suspicions or allegations made against any other person.

Staff members have a **duty to report** all suspected misconduct. If a staff member has a child protection concern, they must inform the Designated Person as soon as possible.

If the staff member does not feel comfortable disclosing to the Designated Person, he shall disclose to any other person of choice within the Organization who can inform the Management or the Board. Unethical misconduct can also be reported anonymously through this [form](#) or by using an email that cannot be linked to the person.

Any report should be made as soon as **possible and in good faith**. A report of misconduct must include information or evidence to support a reasonable belief that misconduct occurred.

The Designated Person for Child Protection is responsible for ensuring that the procedure for reporting child abuse is effective and timely. The Designated Person will review all reports of possible wrongdoing it receives and inform the Board to determine whether the report is receivable for investigation.

The Designated Person and the Board will handle any issues of suspected child abuse in an appropriate manner in cooperation with **relevant public authorities**, and in line with the applicable legislation at national and regional level, so as to ensure the child's safety and protection of the child's rights.

In the event the report is submitted against the Designated Person, a member of the Management or the Board will handle the case.

The Designated Person must have access to advice and support where concerns or incidents arise.

The Designated Person for Child Protection must ensure that those who have reported child safeguarding concerns or are accused of child abuse are given appropriate care, support and protection in dealing with all aspects of the case including any safety concerns and potential reprisals which may arise from the incident or from the reporting of such concerns.

The Designated Person will write a **report** for every disclosure of suspected misconduct they have received. The report will be kept in Payoke's records up to five years.

- **Confidentiality, and information sharing**

All Payoke volunteers and staff are bound by **professional secrecy**, as provided in article 458 of de Criminal Code.

Payoke volunteers and staff are also bound by the rules and standards on professional secrecy, confidentiality, and respect of privacy set forth in **Payoke's Deontological Code**.

When concerns are raised or reports made, the confidentiality of both of the referrer and also the child(ren)/adults involved must be ensured. Information must be shared strictly on a need-to-know basis as necessary to ensure the child is kept safe and appropriate assistance is given.

- **Data protection**

Payoke recognises that all staff must act within the legal requirements of the **law of July 30, 2018** concerning the protection of natural persons regarding the processing of their personal data, including General Data Protection Regulation (**Regulation 2016/679**), and other statutes.

Payoke can only process a child's personal data on the grounds of consent with the **explicit consent of their parent or guardian** up to the age of 13, as set forth by Art. 7 law of 30-07-2018 (Law on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data).

## Role and Responsibilities of Staff

### Recruitment

When opening a job vacancy, the commitment to keeping children safe must be included in details of any post sent to prospective job candidates.

Shortlisted candidates shall be requested to provide a **certificate of good conduct or criminal record extract**.

Payoke ensures that all staff, both paid and voluntary, have been appropriately vetted and screened. The screening procedure entail collecting enough information so that the organization can be satisfied, having assessed the risks, that the applicant is safe to work with children in the role they are applying for.

### Induction and training

The ability of staff to protect children in their care is critical. All staff will be expected to undertake **training** in child protection at a level appropriate to their position. Payoke will ensure that such knowledge is kept up-to-date and relevant.

Payoke recognises that induction training for new employees is critical to the safety of children and all staff whether paid or unpaid will attend induction training on child abuse.

All staff will **receive and sign a copy of the Child Protection Policy**. Reference to the Child Protection Policy will be made on a regular basis in staff meetings and training sessions, so that staff remain familiar with and up to date with statements and procedures.

Payoke believes that trained staff are essential and will provide time, resources and funding to support this process.

## Safe working practices

All staff are to have a clear understanding of, and to agree to Payoke's Deontological Code.

Staff are to inform their senior manager of any existing relationships with clients or their families which could constitute a conflict of interest, or place the staff member in a position of compromise.

Staff must ensure that all visitors in their area of responsibility, who are in contact with children through the organisation, are provided with and have signed and returned a copy of the Child Protection Policy. Visitors should be informed that they must comply with the policy in all contacts and communications with children during their visit.

### Projects and Research

Whenever minors are involved in projects or research, the Payoke team will apply the Ethical Standards for Counter-Trafficking Research and Programming developed within the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking, encompassing the WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Interviewing Trafficked Women (2003), and UNICEF Guidelines on the Protection of Child Victims of Trafficking. (2006).

These include twelve ethical principles that ensure the integration of ethical practices in day-to-day counter-trafficking research and programming:

1. Beneficence/'Do no harm', 2. Informed consent, 3. Confidentiality, 4. Anonymity, 5. Privacy, 6. Non-discrimination, 7. Safety and security, 8. Sensitivity, 9. Empowerment, 10. Beneficiary participation, 11. Data protection, 12. Child protection and the "best interests of the child".

### Communication

Payoke considers it essential to minimise the risk of inappropriate use of information, stories and visual images (photographs, video or social media) of children. Payoke's staff is committed to ensure compliance with the following practices:

-Images of children must be avoided whenever possible;

-Where images of children are used, permission by children and their parents/carers to take their image and use their information must be obtained through the signing of an informed consent form. • Images of children must not show them in states of undress or in inappropriate poses;

-Details attached to images and included in stories must not allow that child to be traced to his or her home or community;

-Distinctive buildings, street signs or landmarks should not be included in an image if they identify where a child lives or works;

-Geotagging of images should be disabled when taking photographs.

-The photographer/journalist/translator the organization has employed must be properly vetted and reference checked.

## Approval and accountability

The present Policy has been developed with the participation of volunteers, staff, management and Board members, and in consultation with organizations defending children's rights. The views of minors have been sought through consultations on a reader-friendly version of the policy.

Upon the approval of the Policy, all Payoke members, including board, managers, staff and volunteers must receive and sign a copy of the document.

Implementation of child safeguarding policies and procedures is regularly **monitored**. Learning from practical case experience informs policy review and changes to child safeguarding measures.

The Policy shall be **reviewed** one year after entry into force and henceforth every 2 years. The Designated Person for Child Protection shall submit a monitoring report with recommendations to the Board, based on a participatory approach involving volunteers, staff, management, Board members and minors. The Board may request amendments to the Policy.

Progress, performance and lessons learned are reported to the Executive Director and the Board and included in the annual reports.

Staff must ensure that children and families with whom the organisation works are aware of the Child Protection Policy and applicable local procedures, so that they know what behaviours they can expect from staff, associates and visitors and whom to report any concerns.

A **reader-friendly version** of the Policy shall be made available to children and other users.

The Child Protection Policy and its annexes shall be made publicly available to all those who come in contact with the organisation. The Policy and complaint form shall be published on Payoke's website, including an option for anonymous reporting of misconduct.

Because safeguarding children cannot be achieved by working in isolation, Payoke is committed to work with other organisations, agencies and institutions, as necessary and appropriate.

## Related documents:

Payoke Deontological Code

Consent form

[Misconduct report form](#)

Child-friendly version of the Policy

*Approved by the Payoke Board of Directors in August 2021.*





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Payoke, 2021

For more information, contact [admin@payoke.be](mailto:admin@payoke.be)