

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

September 2013

This policy is to be reviewed from time to time according to the needs of the Association or wherever there is a major change in the legislation concerning the protection of children.

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Policy Statement

“The Malta Girl Guides Association is fully committed to safeguard the well-being of its’ adult and young members. Leaders should at all times show respect and understanding of the children/young persons` rights, safety and welfare, and conduct themselves in a way that reflects the aim of the Association and abides by its mission statement”

Mission Statement of the Association:

Malta Girl Guides enable girls and young women to develop a sound character and discover their potential through an interactive programme, giving them a positive sense of direction and a world of opportunities as responsible citizens”

The Association provides to girls and young women, a non-formal educational programme where they develop leadership and life skills through self-development, challenge and adventure. Girl Guides learn by going through their 8-point programme and following their commitment of the Promise & Laws.

We do this by...

- *Ensuring that all leaders are carefully selected, trained and supervised to look after children/young people*
- *Assessing carefully all risks that children/young people encounter and taking all necessary steps to minimize them*
- *Giving parents, children/young people and leaders information about what we do and what can be expected from all parties involved in the development of the child/youth.*
- *Letting parents and children/young people know how to voice their concerns or complain if there is anything they are not satisfied with.”*

Responsibilities

The Malta Girl Guides Association:

- Accepts the moral and legal responsibility to implement procedures to provide a duty of care for children/young people, safeguard their wellbeing and protect them from harm and abuse;

- Respect and promote the rights, wishes and feelings of children/young people;
- Recruit, train and supervise leaders so as to adopt a mechanism of best practice to safeguard and protect children/young people from abuse, and themselves against allegations;
- All leaders are to adopt and abide by the said MGG Child Protection Policy and Procedures as well as the MGG Code of Ethics and Good Practice;
- Respond to any complaints about poor practice or allegations of abuse in a timely fashion.

The guidance given in the procedures is based on the following principles:

- This policy recognizes and builds on the legal and statutory definitions of a child;
- A child/young person is recognized as being under the age of 18 years;
- An adult has the moral and statutory duty for the care, custody and control of any child under the age of 18 under their supervision;
- The child's welfare is paramount;
- All young people, whatever their age, culture, any disability they may have, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse;
- All incidents of poor practice or suspicions of poor practice and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to appropriately;
- All children/young people have the right to participate in activities/meetings in an enjoyable and safe environment;
- Children/Young people have the right to expect and/or be guided to seek appropriate support in accordance with their personal and social development.
- It is the responsibility of the Child Protection Agency (Agenzija Appogg) to determine whether or not abuse has taken place but it is everyone's responsibility to report any concerns, and/or suspicions to the MGG Child Protection Board through its respective child protection officer;
- Confidentiality should be upheld in line with the Data Protection Act (1998).

Working in partnership with children/young people, their parents and other agencies is essential for the protection of children/young people. All those involved in the management of children/young people have a duty to ensure that they are:

- Allowed access to activities in a way that is appropriate for their age and ability;
- Not subjected to any form of discriminatory abuse from any source;
- Not subjected to bullying or undue pressure from any source;
- Encouraged to achieve their full potential at all levels;
- Afforded respect, confidentiality and privacy in a competing and training situation.

1.2 Definitions of Different Types of Abuse

Neglect

This occurs where adults fail to meet a child's/young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs. It may result in serious impairment of the young person's health or development (e.g. failure to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a young person from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment). It may also include refusal to give young people love, affection and attention. Neglect could include not ensuring young people are safe, exposing them to undue cold, heat or to unnecessary risk of injury.

Physical Abuse

This occurs where adults physically hurt or injure young people by hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, and burning, biting, scalding, suffocating, drowning or otherwise causing physical harm to a young person. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent feigns symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a young person whom they are looking after e.g. fabricated illness by proxy or Munchausen's syndrome by proxy

Sexual Abuse

Adults engaging in unacceptable sexual behavior with children/young people is also a form of abuse. This could include physical contact or the showing of pornographic material. Physical contact with young people could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed.

Emotional Abuse

The persistent emotional ill treatment of a young person such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the young person's emotional development. It may involve conveying to young people that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on young people. It may involve causing young people to feel frightened or in danger by being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted which may make the young person very nervous and withdrawn. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a young person. Emotional abuse may occur if young people are subjected to constant criticism, name-calling, sarcasm, bullying or unrealistic pressure to perform to high expectations consistently.

NOTE: The above definitions are adopted from Ministry of Education (1999) National Policy on Child Protection, p.13.

Bullying

Bullying is a form of emotional or physical abuse that has three defining characteristics:

- 1. Deliberate**—a bully's intention is to hurt someone
- 2. Repeated**—a bully often targets the same victim again and again
- 3. Power Imbalanced**—a bully chooses victims he or she perceives as vulnerable

Bullying occurs in many different forms, with varying levels of severity. It may involve:

- ✓ **Physical Bullying** : poking, pushing, hitting, kicking, beating up
- ✓ **Verbal Bullying**: yelling, teasing, name-calling, insulting, threatening to harm
- ✓ **Indirect Bullying**: ignoring, excluding, spreading rumours, telling lies, getting others to hurt someone

Cyber bullying

Cyber bullying is a growing form of bullying that is especially hard to see. Cyber bullying involves sending or posting hurtful, embarrassing, or threatening text or images using the Internet, cell phones, or other digital communication devices. Using these technologies, cyber bullies can reach a wide group of people very quickly

Their goal: to damage their victim's reputation and friendships.

Cyber bullying can involve:

- ✓ Spreading rumours or posting false or private information
- ✓ Getting other people to post or send hurtful messages
- ✓ Excluding someone from an online group

Young people cyber bully for many reasons. Some do it to deal with their anger, seek revenge, or make themselves appear better than their peers. Others do it for entertainment or for the pleasure of tormenting others. Still others do it simply because they can. By remaining anonymous and avoiding face-to-face contact, cyber bullies may not realize the consequences of their actions. As a result, they are more likely to say and do things they might hesitate to say or do in person. And young people are often hesitant to report cyber bullying because they are afraid that doing so will lead to restrictions on their own Internet or cell phone use or they believe nothing can be done to stop it.

1.3 Indicators of Abuse

Indicators that a young person may be being abused include the following:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries;
- An injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent;
- The young person describes what appears to be an abusive act involving her;
- Someone else (a young person or adult) expresses concern about the welfare of another young person;
- Unexplained changes in behaviour (e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outburst in temper);
- Inappropriate sexual awareness;
- Encouraging sexually explicit behaviour;
- Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected;
- Has difficulty making friends;
- Is prevented from socializing with other young people;
- Displays variations in eating patterns including overeating and loss of appetite;
- Loses weight for no apparent reason;
- Becomes increasingly dirty or unkempt.
- It should be recognized that this list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is actually taking place. A good working relationship with the parent will help to identify any concerns that a young person may be experiencing e.g. family bereavement.
- It is not the responsibility of leaders to decide that child abuse is occurring but it is their responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting the case to the appropriate staff.

Identifying and Dealing with Bullying

Warning Signs

A culture of silence often surrounds bullying. Many children who are bullied never tell anyone. Most bullying is **not** reported because children . . .

- Don't recognize it as bullying
- Are embarrassed
- Don't want to appear weak

- Believe they deserve it
- Want to belong
- Fear retaliation
- Don't know how to talk about it
- Don't have a trusted adult to confide in
- Think adults won't understand
- Think nothing can be done about it

Just because you don't see it, and children don't talk about it, doesn't mean bullying isn't happening. Even when children fail to report bullying, they often show warning signs.

What are some warning signs of bullying?

- Unexplained damage or loss of clothing and other personal items
- Evidence of physical abuse, such as bruises and scratches
- Loss of friends; changes in friends
- Reluctance to participate in activities with peers
- Loss of interest in favourite activities
- Unusually sad, moody, anxious, lonely, or depressed
- Problems with eating, sleeping, bed-wetting
- Headaches, stomach-aches, or other physical complaints
- Decline in school achievement
- Thoughts of suicide

Some children may withdraw, while others may get angry and seek revenge. Don't assume the problem will go away on its own: Invite children to talk about what is bothering them. If you find out a child *is* being bullied, show support, help develop a response strategy, and follow up to make sure the bullying does not continue.

CHAPTER 2 - SAFE RECRUITMENT

2.1 Process of Recruitment (Appointment, Warrant, Training)

Section Leaders

Recruitment of leaders can be in house or external.

Procedure of Internal Recruitment of Section Leaders

Starting as a Young Leader

- Upon the decision on embarking on the YLS Scheme, the DC in a formal promise ceremony gives the appointment card as a symbol of the official start of the leadership journey.
- The Ranger Guider asks the Young Leader to fill in the application form, which she then sends to the Training Commissioner, cc District Commissioner.
- There are two components of the Scheme, the Progressive Self Development & Meet the Challenge.
- The Progressive Self Development is the theoretical part, which is the WIT More Modules include *Dealing with Children* which refers to MGG Child Protection Policy.
- To Meet the Challenge, for the hands on practice of the programme, the young leader chooses a section and during this period, she will be in direct contact with the children/youths under the supervision of the warranted guider of that section. Refer to criteria of the scheme.
- The Young Leadership Scheme offers various ways of support such as Young Leaders forums for sharing practices and mentoring by the MGG trained pool of mentors.
- The Young Leadership Scheme needs to be completed in a minimum of two years and a maximum of three years. At the end of the journey, the District Commissioner will recommend her for the warrant of a Section Leader.
- Prior to award of the warrant she signs the Duties and Responsibilities document which refers to the Code of Ethics.

Starting the leadership journey at 18 year or older

- When the 18 + Adult Volunteer decides to start the WIT More, she has an informal one to one meeting with DC.

- Following three months helping out in the Unit, the DC in a formal promise ceremony gives the appointment as a symbol of the official start of the leadership journey.
- The appointed leader fills in the application form for the WIT More and sends it to the Training Commissioner cc the District Commissioner.
- The criteria for obtaining the warrant, contains the practical and the theoretical part. The latter refers to the ten modules of the Warrant Induction Team, including *Dealing with Children*, referring to the MGG Child Protection Policy.
- A section leader needs to complete the WIT more in a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 3 years. At the end of the journey, the District Commissioner will recommend her for the warrant of a Section Leader.
- Prior to award of the warrant the leader signs the Duties and Responsibilities document which refers to the Code of Ethics.

Procedure of External Recruitment of Section Leaders

- Fill in application form and hand it in together with a CV and an official police conduct certificate not older than 6 months to the other Section Leader/s within that Unit. The District Commissioner meets the new recruit for a one to one informal interview.
- Once recruitment is approved, the District Commissioner assigns a mentor to the new recruit and asks her to start observing and gradually joining in the planning and running of Unit's activities and weekly meetings with the girls.
- Following 3 months being active in the unit, the new leader will be officially appointed during a formal promise ceremony during which she is given the appointment as a symbol of the official start of the leadership journey.
- Meanwhile the new recruit needs to start the WIT Programme, a set of 10 compulsory training modules including the Module *Dealing with Children*, which is a specific reference to MGG Child Protection Policy.
- A section leader needs to complete the WIT more in a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 3 years. At the end of the journey, the District Commissioner will recommend her for the warrant of a Section Leader.
- Prior to award of the warrant the leader signs the Duties and Responsibilities document which refers to the Code of Ethics.

- **Unit Helpers**

Parents and / or other adults may apply voluntarily or be approached by the section leaders to help out in the unit with the running of programme, activities etc... Such unit helpers may opt to wear the formal uniform or just the scarf and the badge "Adult Volunteer" for formal occasions. A Unit Helper cannot run a meeting / activity without the assistance of a Warranted Guider.

Procedure of Recruitment of Unit Helpers

- Fill in an application form and hand it in together with a CV and an official police conduct certificate not older than 6 months to the Section Leader/s.
- An interview is carried out by the Section Leader/s and /or District Commissioner.
- Section leader/s sends the application form and police conduct to the District Commissioner for approval.
- Once approved the Unit helper can start joining in the weekly programmes and activities gradually.
- The Unit helper needs to do a compulsory basic training course including the WIT Module 9: Dealing with Children.
- Once the Unit Helpers Induction Training is completed, the candidates will be appointed officially as Unit Helpers and can wear the Unit Scarf and badge. This will be done during a formal promise ceremony during which she is given the appointment as a symbol of the official Unit Helper.

2.2 Protection of Minors Act XX111 92011) (Chapter 518 of the Laws of Malta)

Section Leaders and Unit Helpers recruited both internally and externally need the approval of the District Commissioner before starting the training and hands on practice with the unit.

After receiving the application form/guider's recommendation form of prospective section leaders and unit helpers, the District Commissioner and her assistant or secretary shall interview every individual. The District Commissioner will send a request and relevant information (name, surname, address, ID no & Mobile No) to the Island Secretary who in turn will forward to the legal adviser to make a formal request to Court in order to check whether these individuals are listed on the register of people who committed any crime related to the Protection of Minors Act. Once the Island Secretary receives a reply from court stating the person is approved, the DC will then approve the recruitment. **In the meantime, external recruits do not make any contact with children within the association.**

CHAPTER 3 - GOOD PRACTICE

3.1 Relationships – Trust, Professionalism & Confidentiality

Introduction

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the leisurely environment. Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can generate strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgment about any action to take.

Leaders may have regular contact with children/young people and be an important link in identifying cases where a child/young person needs protection. All suspicious cases of abuse or poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

When a child/young person becomes a member of MGG and has been subjected to child abuse outside this environment, activities held can play a crucial role in improving the child's/young person's self-esteem. If a leader is aware of such abuse, it is encouraged that, following the legal guardian's consent, such leader works with the appropriate agencies to ensure the young person receives the required support.

Good Practice Guidelines

All MGG adult volunteers (and staff) should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect children/young people and themselves from allegations of abuse. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and environment within the Guiding environment.

Good Practice Means:

- Adoption of MGG Child Protection Policy and Procedures;
- Promotion of the policy to units and parents to illustrate the organizations' commitment to a safe environment;
- Always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging an open environment – i.e. no secrets);
- Treating all young people equally, and with respect and dignity;
- Always putting the welfare of children/young people first.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance from participants (e.g. it is not appropriate to have an intimate relationship with a young person or to share a room/tent with them) and in some cases it may be a serious breach of the MGG Code of Ethics and Conduct and be unlawful;

- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers young people to share in the decision-making process;
- It is encouraged that, if groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, (when possible) parents/leaders work in pairs;
- Ensuring that if mixed activities are taken place, members should always be accompanied, by a male and female leader. (N.B. However same gender abuse is still an issue);
- Ensuring that during camps/ residential events, adults should not enter young people's rooms or invite young people into their rooms. If an adult is working in a supervisory capacity, they should only enter the young people's rooms when accompanied by another adult; Being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people, promoting a healthy diet and using appropriate language and clothing ;
- Avoid adding members and parents on social media network (Facebook, Twitter...) otherwise ensure that personal posts and photos are decent and adequate for a role model. Avoid chatting one on one with members or parents on social media.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism;
- Recognizing and understanding the developmental needs and capacity of young people;
- Securing parental/legal guardian consent in writing to act in loco parentis if the need arises, especially including but not limited to the giving of permission for the administration of emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment;
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given. Such documents are to be kept in a safe place. Where Leaders witness an injury this must be reported to the parents/legal guardians immediately. A medical record detailing any allergies, medication, conditions and/or special medical requirements is to be kept updated and disseminated to all relevant staff;
- Written parental/legal guardian consent is required if Leaders need to transport children/young people in their cars.

Monitoring Ratios (Adopted from Care Standards Act)

The national guidance states that the level of supervision should take account of:

- The age and ability of the children/young people;
- The activity being undertaken;
- Children's growing independence;
- Children's need for privacy;
- The geography of the facility being used;
- The risk assessment.

If there is an accident or an incident involving a child/young person or member of staff, one should ensure that there are enough people remaining to supervise the group safely.

Leaders working with children/young people should not work in isolation. Good practice suggests that at least one other adult in addition to the leader should be present during meetings etc.

Practices to be avoided

The following should be avoided except in cases of emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge or the child's/young person's parents/legal guardians. For example, a young person sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a young person up at the end of a session (Appendix E):

- Never spend excessive amounts of time alone with children/young people away from others;
- Never take children/young people to your home where they will be alone with you.

It may be sometimes necessary for staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for young people, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents/legal guardians and the participants involved. There is a need to be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in the dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a young person to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained for.

Relationships of Trust

If you engage in an intimate or inappropriate relationship with a young person it is a breach of the MGG Code of Ethics and Conduct and as such will result in disciplinary action.

3.2 Use of Images of Young People

The use of images of young people, for example on the web, in the media or in publications requires consent consequently one is to

- Obtain in writing the permission of the parent/legal guardian to use the child's/young person's image. This ensures that they are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the Association;
- Following parental/legal guardian's written consent, ask for the child's/young person's permission to use her image. This ensures that she is aware of the way the image is to be used;
- If a photo is used (with parents consent) in any media situations, preferably no names and details of the child are mentioned.

- Only use images of children/young people in appropriate dress, to reduce the risk of inappropriate use, and to provide positive images of the children/young people;
- Encourage the reporting of inappropriate use of images of children/young people.
- If you are concerned, report your concerns to the Chief Commissioner/District Commissioner or the Child Protection Officer.

N.B. Failure to receive parental consent will result in the breach of the data protection act. It is recommended that consent of the child is always sought.

CHAPTER 4 - RESPONDING TO ABUSE AND REPORTING PROCEDURES.

4.1 How to respond to a disclosure from a young person

Aware

- Understand all forms of violence against women and girls.
- Look out for warning signs.
- Get to know your group members and trust your instinct if you think something is wrong.

Respond

- Listen to the young person and stay calm and approachable.
- Inform them when you can't keep confidentiality. Situations of self-harm or harm to others have to be reported and dealt with.
- Thank them for talking to you. Validate their feelings but do not tell them what to feel.
- Do not judge the child or the abuser.
- Do not ask any questions and interrogate the child or young person as this might undermine any official interrogation.
- Explain that you will not keep this a secret if the child or young person is at risk of harm. Reassure them that you will only tell the necessary people to access help and support for the young person.
- Take it seriously and ensure that the child or young person feels that you are on their side, but do not make promises that you will not be able to keep.
- Be clear about the next steps for the child or young person and act immediately.
- Immediately after write down what she had told you and keep a log book of your observations related to her behaviour and / or other disclosures.

Think

- Are they suffering or being harmed?
- Are they currently at risk?
- Is anyone else at risk?
- Do they need medical attention?
- What do they think they need?

Refer

- Talk to the child protection officer in your association
- Provide the child or young person with information of relevant support services that can be contacted.
- Make a direct referral if necessary (always through the Association)
- Contact MGG – child Protection Board for support and guidance.

- Refer yourself to a relevant support person, it can be distressing and you need to look after yourself.

Report

- Always make a written record of any disclosures from children and young people.
- Record the date and the time. Record any injuries or observations as this may be used as evidence.
- Report to the designated person in your association

No member or staff should investigate reports of abuse by themselves.

Alleged victims, perpetrators, those reporting abuse and others involved should not be interviewed beyond the point at which it is clear that there is an allegation.

Medical attention should be sought immediately for the child if required. Any individual to whom an allegation of child abuse is made should then:

Step 1- limit any questioning to the minimum necessary to seek clarifications only, strictly avoiding leading the child by making suggestions or asking questions that introduce their own ideas about what may have happened.

Step 2 – stop asking any more questions as soon as the child has disclosed that she believes that something abusive has happened to her or to someone else.

Step 3- tell the child that relevant designated child protection or Board will now be made aware of the issue.

Step 4- depending on the age of the child, ask the child what steps she would like taken to protect her now that an allegation has been made and assure her that the Board will try to follow those wishes.

Step 5- report the information immediately to the designated child protection representative /Board. (See appendix for report sheet)

The Child Protection Representative will ensure that all staff, volunteers and others are clear about what steps to take where concerns arise regarding the safety of children.

It is the role of Board /designated child protection representative/s to manage the process of referring child protection concerns to Social Services or relevant child protection statutory body in a timely manner.

The Board (and/or) one of its members will be a contact point for external agencies for child protection matters.

They will also identify the need for support that any staff or volunteer may have when involved in an abuse case and to liaise with the necessary parties to establish how this support can be offered.

All concerns and allegations, whatever their origin, must be taken seriously and considered with an open mind which does not pre-judge the situation.

In circumstances where a child has an injury but no explanation is volunteered, it is acceptable to enquire as to how the injury was sustained. If there are concerns about the explanation given, these must be referred to the designated Board who will take responsibility for any further action.

All information shared must be documented as soon as possible. The written record needs to include the name of the author, the date, and time it was written, the setting, the personnel present as well as what was said. Any subsequent events should continue to be recorded up to the time of Social Services or Statutory body intervention.

The staff / volunteer should make it clear to whoever disclosed that this is what they are doing and they should be kept informed of any action taken

Do not promise confidentiality and where possible seek their agreement for referral. If a child does not want to disclose to their parents, always consult with the Board regarding the way forward. The leader / unit helper should never promise to a child/young person that she will not tell anyone about what the young person has told her.

Allegations of Previous Abuse

If the disclosure refers to past abuse, with no assessed risk of that abuse recurring to the child, discussions should be held with the main carer as to whether further action needs to be taken.

The Board together with the leader involved will fill in a referral form and forward to the designated agency (Appogg).

MGG Code of Ethics & Guidelines of Good Practice

Leaders have an individual duty and responsibility to comply with the policy and to abide by the Code of Ethics & Guidelines of Good Practice.

Staff and Volunteers must never:

- hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children.
- Develop physical or sexual relationships with children.
- Develop relationships with children that could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive.

- Act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse.
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive.
- Behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually proactive.
- Have a child/children with whom they are working to stay alone overnight at their home unsupervised.
- Sleep alone in the same room, bed or tent of a child with whom they are working.
- Do things for children of a personal nature that they can do for themselves.
- Condone or participate in behaviours with children that are illegal, unsafe or abusive.
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.
- Discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favour particular children to the exclusion of others.

This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list. The principle is that staff should avoid actions or behaviours which constitute poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour.

It is important for all staff and volunteers in contact with children to:

- Be aware of situations which may prevent risks and manage accordingly.
- Plan and organise the work and the workplace so as to minimize risks.
- As far as possible, leaders should be with children in places accessible to third parties.
- Ensure that culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed.
- Ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged.
- Talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns.
- Empower children – discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem.

4.2 Dealing with Bullying

Prevention

To Prevent Bullying . . .

Intervene when children are young. Children who bully are not born bullies and children who are victimized are not born victims. But many young children engage in aggressive behaviors that may lead to bullying, while others react by submitting or fighting back. Adults can stop these patterns *before* they are established by encouraging cooperative behaviors such as sharing, helping, and problem-solving, and by preventing aggressive responses such as hostility, hurting, and rejection.

Teach bullying prevention strategies to *all* children. Don't assume that only "challenging" children become bullies or those only "weak" children become victims. Most children are likely to be victimized by a bully at some point in their lives, and *all* children can benefit from learning to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviors; how to stand up for themselves, and others; and when to turn to an adult for help.

Take bullying seriously. Pay careful attention to the warning signs and to children most at risk. Make sure children know that bullying will not be tolerated and that you will work with them to make bullying stop.

Encourage empathy. Children who can empathize understand that bullying hurts. They are less likely to bully and more likely to help children who are bullied.

Teach by example. Be an effective role model. Children learn how to behave by watching and emulating the adults in their lives. Consider how you solve problems, discipline, control your own anger and disappointment, and stand up for yourself and others without fighting. If children observe you acting aggressively, they are more likely to show aggression toward others.

Help children critically evaluate media violence. Children may learn aggressive behaviors by watching television and movies that glorify violence and by playing violent video games that reward violent behavior. Help children understand that media portrayals of violence are unrealistic and inappropriate. Intervene when you see children imitating media violence in their play or in their social interactions.

Provide opportunities for children to learn and practice the qualities and skills that can protect them from bullying. Children who are *confident* are less likely to tolerate bullying and more likely to have the courage and inner-strength to respond effectively. Children who are *assertive* know how to react to a bully in effective, non-aggressive ways, and they are less likely to be targeted by bullies in the first place. Children who know how to make and keep *friends* can rely on them for protection from bullying. Children, who know how to *solve problems, constructively* avoid responding aggressively to conflict.

Encourage children to talk about and report bullying. When they do, listen carefully, and be patient: Talking about bullying can be difficult, and children may feel embarrassed or afraid to share their concerns.

Develop strong connections with the children in your care. Children are less likely to bully if they know it will displease an adult whom they respect and trust. Similarly, children are more likely to confide in an adult with whom they have a caring and trusting relationship.

Reexamine your own beliefs about bullying. Misconceptions may prevent you from “seeing” a potential bullying incident or intervening as quickly as you should.

Intervention

When YOU see or hear bullying . . .

Intervene immediately. When you do nothing, you send the message that bullying is acceptable. If you ignore or minimize the problem, victims will not believe that adults understand or care, or that they can help. If *you* don’t intervene, children won’t either.

Intervene even if you’re not sure it’s bullying. Observing children’s actions, words, body language, and facial expressions will help you determine if bullying is occurring. Even if it’s not, aggressive behaviors need to be stopped.

Stand between or near the victim and the bully, separating them if necessary, so as to stop the bullying behaviors. For young children, consider removing them from the situation to a “time-out” area or room.

Respond firmly but appropriately. Remain calm, but convey the seriousness of the situation. Announce that the bullying must stop. Describe the behavior you observed and why it is unacceptable.

Get help if needed. If the bully is using physical force, or there is more than one bully, you may need to find another adult to help keep children safe and protect yourself.

Do not respond aggressively. Using aggressive behavior sends the wrong message that this is a good way to solve problems. It may also prompt a bully or a bystander to increase his or her bullying behavior or become aggressive toward you.

Avoid lecturing the bully in front of his or her peers. Your goal is to end the behavior, not humiliate or shame the bully. Rather than serving as a deterrent, lecturing and scolding often provide the bully with attention that he or she finds rewarding.

Don’t impose immediate consequences. Allow yourself time to consider the incident and obtain any clarifying information—then decide the best course of action.

Don’t ask children to “work things out” for themselves. Bullying is different from an argument or conflict; it involves a power imbalance that requires adult intervention.

Give praise and show appreciation to helpful bystanders. Children who try to help the victim or stop the bully can be the *key* to bullying prevention.

Stick around. Remain in the area until you are sure the behavior has stopped.

Talking with Children

What you should tell BULLIES . . .

Stop the bullying immediately.

Bullying behaviors will *not* be tolerated.

Bullying hurts your victim *and* you.

Bullying sets a bad example for other children.

Bullying may cause you to lose friends.

Every child deserves to be treated with respect.

There are other ways to solve conflicts.

Ask adults for help if you feel angry or upset, or don't know how to stop bullying.

What you should tell VICTIMS . . .

You are not responsible for a bully's behavior. It's not your fault.

Don't respond to bullies by giving in, getting upset, or fighting back—this will encourage them. Instead, stay calm and be assertive.

Sometimes the best response is *no* response—just walks away.

Get help from a trusted adult. Adults can help you figure out new ways to respond the next time a bully bothers you.

Providing children who are bullied with specific options for responding and an action plan will help them feel less anxious and fearful, and more confident to take action to stop the bullying.

What you should tell BYSTANDERS . . .

Your involvement makes a difference. Don't just stand by and watch quietly.

Stand up for the person being bullied. If you feel safe, tell the bully to stop. Use phrases such as "Stop teasing!" "Don't fight!" "Leave him alone!" and "It's not funny!"

Don't join in. Don't laugh at the victim or participate in the teasing, harassing, or fighting. This encourages the bully to continue and can make the situation worse.

Help the victim walk away. A victim may be too afraid to leave on his or her own, but will do so with the help of a friend.

Encourage other bystanders to help the victim. Tell them not to join in the bullying.

Get help from a trusted adult. Report the bullying.

Afterward, tell the victim you feel bad about what happened. Encourage victims to talk to an adult, and offer to go with them.

Include the victim in activities. Be a good friend.

Some things adults can do to help prevent cyber bullying:

- Ask parents to keep computers in visible places so that they can monitor use and set appropriate limits.
- Organize a talk for parents on Internet Safety
- Talk with children about safe and responsible use of the Internet and cell phones, and about the dangers of cyber bullying.
- Discuss what to do when cyber bullying occurs, such as ignoring the posting or calmly, but firmly, telling the cyber bully to remove the harmful material.
- Remind children not to share any personal information online.
- Encourage children to tell parents /guider /teacher if they are being cyber bullied or know others who are. Assure them that these adults will help them deal with the problem.
- Make them aware that there is a cyber-bullying police department
- Consult with MGG Child Protection Advisor if a case of bullying or cyber bullying within your unit is getting out of hand.

4.3 The MGG Child Protection Board

The MGG Child Protection Board is appointed/approved by the National Board.

The Chief Commissioner or her deputy chairs an Investigation Board made up of the Chief Commissioner or Deputy Chief Commissioner, the MGG legal advisor, the Child Protection Advisor and any external member that the Board feels should be appointed. The external member could be appointed for ad hoc boards depending on the case.

When the MGG Child Protection Board receives a referral form, a meeting is called to discuss referral and intervention in a timely manner according to the severity of the case. If an immediate emergency meeting cannot be held in cases of extreme abuse, consultation with the board members should take place over the phone/internet on that same day to determine the way forward. A report of alleged abuse must reach Board ideally that same day or within three (3) days of learning of such alleged abuse. The board commits itself to resolving whether to refer the case to Social Services within the time frame of two (2) weeks. The board may also ask for a meeting with the person making the referral for further details to help set the way forward of the situation.

4.4 Responding to Concerns about Possible Abuse from Inside the Association

Parents, Adult Volunteers and Youths themselves who have concerns about possible abuse from MGG Members as Adult Volunteers to MGG Girl Members under 18 have the duty to fill in a referral form which is accessible to all on the website and send it to the Child Protection Advisor by email – childprotection@maltagirlguides.com or by post addressed to Child Protection Advisor at Malta Girl Guides, 49, Capuchins Street, Floriana, FRN 1042.

The person making the referral should not take any further actions such as confronting the suspected offender, reporting to the Police or/ and Appogg, or/and discussing the matter with third parties or family members of the referred person.

Procedures regarding any actions that the Association takes against MGG members should a report is made of possible abuse from inside the Association, are included in the MGG Code of Ethics. Refer to chapter 12 Breaches of Discipline, Appeals & Procedures.

4.5 Responding to Concerns about Possible Abuse from Outside the Association

Any adult volunteer within MGG who has concerns about possible abuse from external parties including relatives to MGG members under 18 has the duty to fill in a referral form which is accessible from the Members' Area of the MGG official website and send it to the Child Protection Advisor by email – childprotection@maltagirlguides.com or by post addressed to Child Protection Advisor at Malta Girl Guides, 49, Capuchins Street, Floriana, FRN 1042

The person making the referral should not take any further actions such as confronting the suspected offender, reporting to the Police or/ and Appogg, or/and discussing the matter with third parties or family members of the referred person.

The person making the referral may be asked to keep a log book of any observations and disclosures made about the young MGG member. When the MGG Child Protection Board receives all the information on the case, the said Board will determine the action that the Association will take on behalf of the said minor.

CHAPTER 5 – Safety Network for Adult Volunteers

5.1 Responding to allegations made against adult volunteers

An adult volunteer (guider, unit helper) in contact with children may forward a complaint if she feels that other persons internally or externally are making unjustified allegations against her in terms of inappropriate behaviour. In this case the volunteer may fill in the “Complaints Form” which is accessible from the Members’ Area of the MGG official website and sends it by email to the Chief Commissioner – chiefcomm@maltagirlguides.com or by post - Chief Commissioner, Malta Girl Guides, 49, Capuchins Street, Floriana, FRN 1042. The complaint will be put forward to the Investigation Board.

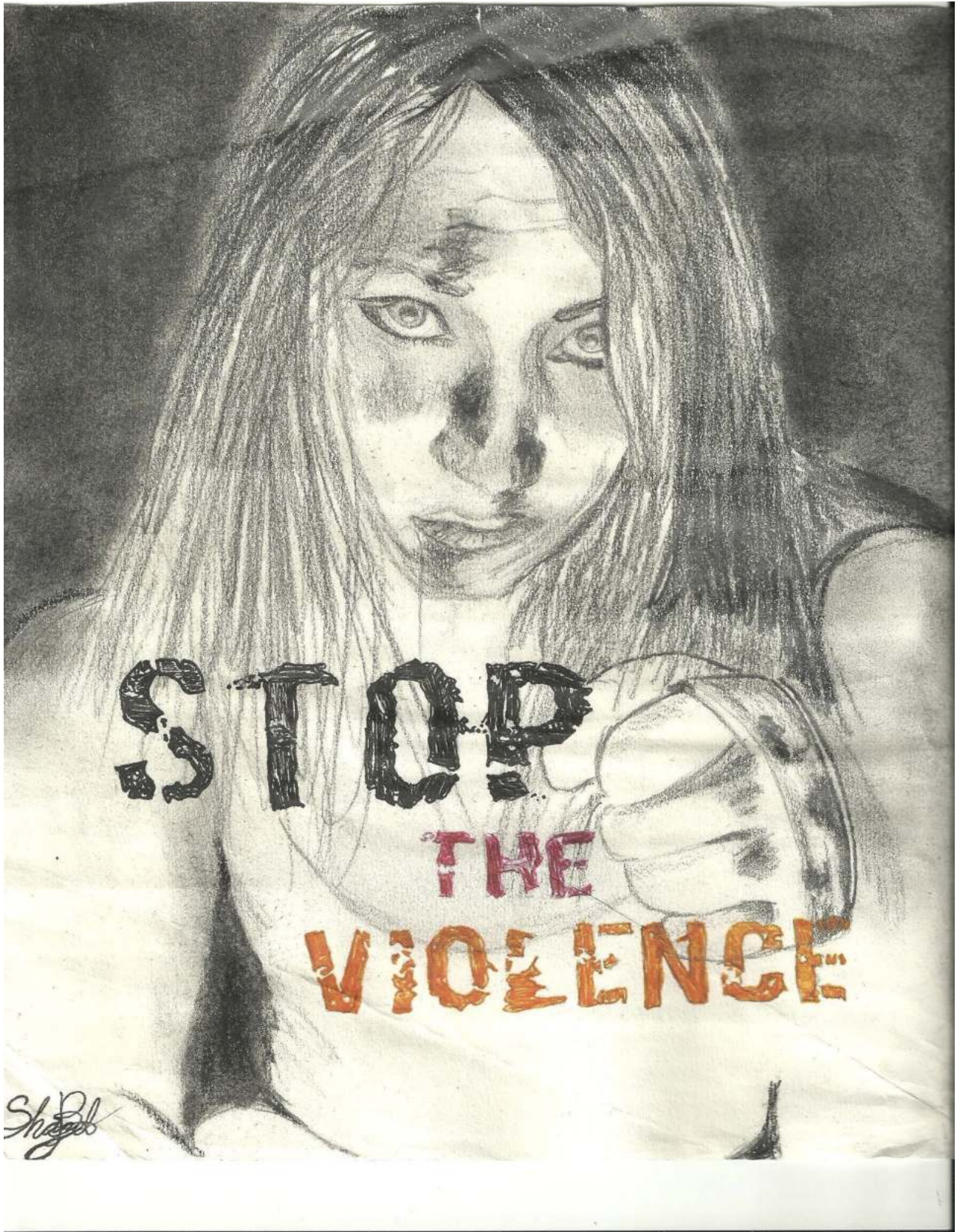
5.2 Support Network for volunteers dealing with disclosure of violence and / or bullying

When a leader experiences a disclosure of some form of violence from a girl in her unit, she may ask the Child Protection Advisor for support, advice and /or counseling. In cases when MGG cannot offer in house services to the leaders, there might be the case of directing the volunteer to a professional agency.

In case of recurring bullying or cyber bullying among the girls within the unit, the leaders must seek help from the Child Protection Advisor immediately. They will then be directed to the right support in house or externally.

Appendices

- **MGG Child Protection Referral Form**
- **MGG Complaint Form for Adults**
- **Cover Design by Shazel Borg, winner of Drawing Competition 2012**



REPORTING A CHILD PROTECTION CASE



CONFIDENTIAL

Date of report : _____
Name of Leader : _____
Unit : _____
District : _____
Tel No : _____
Address: _____

Child's Name/s:	Disability			D.O.B.
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> S	<input type="checkbox"/> P	<input type="checkbox"/> I	_____
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> S	<input type="checkbox"/> P	<input type="checkbox"/> I	_____
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> S	<input type="checkbox"/> P	<input type="checkbox"/> I	_____
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> S	<input type="checkbox"/> P	<input type="checkbox"/> I	_____

Disability: S-Sensory, P-Physical, I-Intellectual (Please specify diagnosis if available)

Address : _____

Tel No: _____

School _____

Father's /Guardian`s Name :

Mother/Guardian's Name:

Address _____

Address _____

D.O.B. _____

D.O.B. _____

Occupation _____

Occupation _____

I.D. No _____

I.D. No _____

Other siblings in the family:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date of Birth</u>	<u>School</u>

1. **Reasons For Referral:** *(Be clear about who has concerns, whether they are being reported as facts or as speculations, what the child is saying)*

2. Summary of Concerns: *(focus on the child's needs, risks to the child)*

-
-
-

3. Name and Address of alleged perpetrator *(if relevant)*

4. Is the child/family aware of the referral Yes No

5. Presenting problem : *(e.g.. neglect, sexual, physical, emotional abuse)*

6. Present situation

Other comments: (if any)

ADULT VOLUNTEERS COMPLAINT FORM



CONFIDENTIAL

Date of Report : _____
Name of Leader: _____
Unit : _____
District: _____
Tel No : _____
Postal Address : _____

Email Address: _____

Details of Person/s making allegations: (Names, Unit & Contact Details if available)

Description of Allegations

Signature

Date

