

Youth Academy: Child Protection Policy

Youth Academy: Introduction

Our mission is to promote youth participation and inclusion. We achieve this by supporting adults who work with young people or influence their lives and living conditions. Additionally, we create opportunities for young people to engage in matters that are important to them and have a voice in society.

Interactivity is at the core of our approach. Through our services, we aim to strengthen young people's interaction skills and foster meaningful participation. For us, participation means feeling valued, having the ability to influence one's own life and well-being, and experiencing a sense of belonging within a community. It also includes having the opportunity to express one's opinions freely.

It is essential that young people can participate on their own terms, regardless of their circumstances. Adults play a crucial role in enabling these opportunities—without dictating which forms of participation should be considered more valuable than others.

Our direct work with children and young people

We engage directly with children and young people through various activities, including:

- Facilitating workshops
- Leading school visits
- Testing educational materials
- Consulting young people to gather their insights
- Mentoring young people through school work experience placements or summer jobs

We reach children and young people through their educators, who are typically present to fulfil their supervisory duties when working with them.

The purpose of this document

This Child Protection Policy outlines shared values, principles, and beliefs and details the actions that will be taken to uphold our commitment to protecting children.

The purpose of this document is to:

- Promote children's rights in all aspects of Youth Academy's work and services.
- Provide clear guidance to Youth Academy's staff, board, and stakeholders on the principles and values that shape the organization's work with children.

Legal framework

This policy has been developed based on the following legislation and guidelines concerning child protection:

- European Convention on Human Rights (1950)
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- Constitution of Finland (1999)
- Child Welfare Act (2007)
- Youth Act (2016)
- General Data Protection Regulation, GDPR (2016)

Our commitment to protect children

Our values and principles

- We aim to promote children's and young people's well-being in all our activities.
- In all our activities, we strive to strengthen children's rights.
- Any form of child abuse is a violation of children's rights.
- Every child, regardless of age, disability, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or identity, has an equal right to protection from all forms of abuse and exploitation.

- Some children are especially vulnerable due to their background, past experiences, level of dependency, or other factors.
- Promoting children's well-being requires collaboration with children, young people, educators, youth workers, and other adults.

We are committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of children in all our activities. To achieve this, we adhere to the following norms and actions:

1. **Recognizing and addressing concerns**

- We take all concerns regarding child safety seriously and act accordingly.
- We ensure that all staff members understand the risks of child abuse and the importance of safeguarding children.

2. **Minimizing risks and creating safer spaces**

- Through awareness and best practices, we strive to minimize risks to children.
- All our events follow the principles of creating safer spaces, with children, young people, and adults committing to these principles at the outset of each event.
- All individuals involved in our activities, including school visitors, trainers, and project partners, receive training on the principles of safer spaces.

3. **Listening to and empowering children**

- We actively listen to children and young people, gathering their feedback to continuously improve our activities.
- We provide clear guidance to children on how to report inappropriate behaviour and ensure they are aware of the support available to them.

4. **Safe recruitment and partnership**

- We recruit individuals and collaborate with partners who share our values and commit to our child protection plan.
- Safe recruitment processes, including background checks when needed, are implemented to ensure the suitability of individuals working directly with children.

5. **Risk assessment and mitigation**

- We conduct regular risk assessments to identify and mitigate potential threats to child safety.

6. Establishing and upholding clear behavioural standards

- We enforce behaviour protocols and a strict code of conduct for all staff.
- We intervene in inappropriate behaviour and foster a culture of accountability.

7. Respectful communication and media use

- We use respectful language and avoid stereotypes in all communications.
- If our activities involve photographing directly children, we obtain consent from both the child and their guardian.
- We ensure that children are portrayed positively and that both the child and guardian are informed about the purpose and use of the images.

8. Education and training

- We train all staff, including new employees and school visitors, on our child protection policies and procedures.
- We provide ongoing education to ensure that all individuals remain informed about best practices in child protection.

9. Management responsibilities and continuous improvement

- Our harassment liaison officers serve as contact points for reporting concerns and providing guidance.
- We regularly review and update this document to reflect the latest standards and best practices in child protection.

How to ensure our commitments are met?

- All staff are involved in planning and updating the Child protection plan.
- All staff and partner organizations will have access to a copy of the child protection policy.
- Recruitment procedures will include checks on suitability for working with young people when needed.

- Induction of a new employee will include briefing on child protection issues.
- Every member of staff will have contact details for reporting.

The Child protection policy has been approved on April 14 by the Board and CEO of Youth Academy.

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