



Child Protection Policy for Projects Abroad volunteers

Projects Abroad is committed to a practice which protects children from harm. The best interests of the child are paramount and are the primary consideration in our decision-making. Projects Abroad accepts and recognises our responsibility to develop awareness of issues relating to child protection.

Code of behaviour for Projects Abroad volunteers

One to one contact:

- Work in open spaces where you can be seen by other adults. Avoid bedrooms, bathrooms and rooms with the door shut.
- Volunteers should not take children outside of their placement alone or without the permission of the placement and their Projects Abroad Supervisor.

Physical contact:

Children may initiate physical contact and it is important to be warm with them. However do be mindful of our guidelines of what is appropriate and inappropriate.

- It is okay to return hugs but try to give shoulder-to-shoulder or 'A frame' hugs. Encourage other forms of physical contact, for example high-fives instead.
- Be extra careful with pre-teens (10- 12 years) and teenagers as physical contact can be confusing. This includes pre-teens and teenagers who experience intellectual or physical disability.
- Developing a sexual relationship with anyone under the age of 18 is forbidden. It is also not permitted to develop a sexual relationship with anyone who attends the placement or works at the placement regardless of their age.
- Physical and sexual abuse is strictly forbidden. You must never hit or physically assault a child. Physical punishment of any form is forbidden.

- Do not act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade the child. (This is especially important for teachers who need to be careful when disciplining children).
- Do not do things of a personal nature for a child or young person that they can do for themselves.

Attachments:

- While it can feel good to have a child very attached to you, remember that it can be distressing for that child when you leave. Avoid favouring a particular child. Share your attention fairly between all children, even children who might not be easy to interact with.
- Support a child's attachments with their principal caregivers. Many of the children will already have an attachment figure. This will be either their parent or perhaps a placement staff member. Please respect and support these attachments.
- Do not make promises to the children that you may not be able to fulfil (e.g. that you will definitely come back and visit next year).

Create realistic and positive expectations:

Children need to have a realistic and a positive understanding of what volunteers are there to do. Volunteers should be seen as a kind and helpful adult. They should also be seen as a positive role model. Although it might seem like the children do not speak very good English, you would be surprised by what they can pick up.

- Due to this we expect volunteers not to discuss anything with inappropriate content whilst at the placement. It is important to regulate your language; no swearing please.
- Volunteers should avoid being seen as purely a figure of fun or someone who will dispense goods.
- Engaging in over-the-top play (for example piggy back rides and throwing the child in the air) can create an understanding that volunteers are there purely for fun. This can make it difficult for children to concentrate during learning activities when you are present.
- Providing sweets and gifts to the children is a nice gesture but creates unrealistic expectations. Children may think that volunteers have sweets and gifts with them every day and will ask for these.

- If a volunteer would like to make a contribution to the children they can speak with a Projects Abroad staff member who can help them do this in a meaningful and helpful way.

Sensitive topics:

- Be careful around the questions you ask children, as well as the content and materials used in activities. Be aware that some topics may be sensitive and inappropriate due to the children's personal situations. Examples include family life and dreams for the future. Do not ask sensitive questions, such as what happened to your parents to the children or in front of the children.

Confidentiality and information management:

- Be selective and sensitive when taking photos. Always ask permission from staff members and families before taking photos of the child.

Suspected abuse

In the case of a child coming to you to report abuse you should:

- Let the child speak and listen carefully
- Take the child seriously
- Reassure the child it is ok to talk to you about this
- Record what is said
- Tell your Projects Abroad Supervisor straight away.

You should not:

- Promise to keep it a secret
- Stop the child from speaking
- Force the child to recall what happened
- Ask leading or unnecessary questions
- Make assumptions
- Ask to see injuries requiring the removal of clothing
- Ridicule, reject or humiliate the child

If you witness or suspect abuse it is important you inform your Projects Abroad Supervisor immediately.

Infringements of the child safety protocol will be treated as a serious matter. Consequences will depend on the severity of the offence but can range from, and are not limited to, a verbal warning, a written warning, or removal from the programme.

Please contact your Projects Abroad Supervisor if you would like any additional information, or if you wish to read our Child Protection Protocol for Projects Abroad staff.