

# 1 **CODE OF CONDUCT** to protect children and young people from abuse and sexual exploitation

## **Preamble**

Caritas commits itself to creating and maintaining an environment which promotes its core values and prevents abuse and sexual exploitation. Caritas employees and volunteers are expected to contribute to building a harmonious workplace based on team spirit, mutual respect and understanding. All staff members are expected to uphold the dignity of beneficiaries served by Caritas organisations by ensuring that their personal and professional conduct is of the highest standard at all times.

Caritas Internationalis strongly condemns all kinds of abuse and sexual exploitation, especially towards its beneficiaries.

Abuse occurs when adults or other children hurt children or young people under the age of 18, either physically or in some other way. Sexual abuse occurs if a child or young person is pressured or forced to take part in any kind of sexual activity, whether or not the child is aware of, or consents to, what is happening. Sexual abuse includes incest, rape and fondling. It may also include non-contact activities such as showing pornography or internet-based activity. Sexual abuse may involve siblings or other family members, or persons outside the family.

1. Abuse and sexual exploitation constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment. All relevant legal steps should be taken corresponding to the legal and social conditions of the local situation.
2. Exchange of money, employment, goods, assistance or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour is prohibited.
3. Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not an excuse.
4. Where a Caritas employee or volunteer develops serious concerns regarding abuse or sexual exploitation she/he must report such concerns to the appropriate body within the Caritas concerned and local legal authorities where appropriate.
5. Caritas employees or volunteers may not engage in any form of harassment, discrimination, physical or verbal abuse, intimidation, favouritism or exploitative sexual relations.
6. Caritas employees and volunteers are expected to behave in accordance with Caritas values.

Signed by...../Date.....

I have carefully read the Caritas Code of Conduct and discussed its contents with my supervisor and/or colleagues in order to understand it clearly. I must comply with the Core Values of Caritas and I am aware that Caritas expects me to uphold at all times the standards of behaviour described in the Code of Conduct above. I also understand that disciplinary measures and legal steps will be taken in case of non-compliance.



**Part One: About You**

Name: .....

Your role in Caritas: .....

Details of any other organisation involved: .....

Your relationship to the child or young persons concerned: .....

**Part Two: About the Child/Young Person(s)**

Name(s): .....

Sex: .....

Age: .....

Address: .....

Who does the child or young person live with? .....

**Part Three: About Your Concern**

How did you come to have a concern: was abuse observed or suspected?  
.....

Was an allegation made? Did a child disclose abuse?  
.....

Date, time and place of any incident(s):  
.....

Nature of concern/allegation:  
.....

Observations made by you (e.g., child's emotional state, any physical evidence):  
.....

Write down exactly what the child said, and what you said:  
.....

Any other relevant information? (e.g., disability, language)  
.....

Were other children involved or aware?  
.....

Have you reported this to parents or caregivers or any other child protection personnel or agencies?  
.....

Time and date of reporting:  
.....

Person(s) to whom report was made:  
.....

Advice given:  
.....

Action taken:  
.....

## CORE STATEMENT

Caritas recognises the personal dignity and rights of children towards whom it has a special responsibility and duty of care and respect. Caritas, and all its staff and volunteers, undertake to create a safe environment for children and young people and to prevent their physical, sexual or emotional abuse.

For the purposes of this policy, Caritas regards children and young people as those who are under the age of 18.

### Commitment to Caritas Core Values

Caritas expects all staff and volunteers to be committed to and guided by the following fundamental values and principles of the Caritas Confederation:

Caritas derives its being and inspiration from the witness of Christian Scripture and a living tradition of Catholic social teaching.

Caritas strives to uphold the dignity of the human person at all times.

The vision of Caritas Internationalis is a civilisation of love.  
It is a world:

- which reflects the Reign of God, where justice, peace, truth, freedom and solidarity prevail
- in which the dignity of the human person, made in the image of God, is paramount
- in which exclusion, discrimination, violence, intolerance and dehumanising poverty are no more
- where the goods of the earth are shared by all
- where all creation is cherished and held in trust for the common good of future generations
- where all people, especially the poorest, the marginalised and the oppressed, find hope and are empowered to come to the fullness of their humanity as part of a global community.

*(Caritas Internationalis Strategic Plan, 1999)*

## Simple Dos and Don'ts

THERE ARE SOME SIMPLE RULES AND PROCEDURES THAT WILL MINIMISE THE RISK OF AN INCIDENT OCCURRING OR BEING ALLEGED. MOST OF THESE ARE COMMON SENSE AND WILL ALREADY BE FOLLOWED, BUT IT IS IMPORTANT THAT STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS SPECIFICALLY CHECK THAT THEY ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED IN ANY EVENT WHICH INVOLVES CHILDREN OR YOUNG PEOPLE.

### Dos

- Treat everyone with respect, recognising their right to personal privacy
- Be aware of situations that may present risks and manage these
- Plan and organise any events involving children so that risks are minimised
- Recognise that caution is required in all one-on-one situations
- Provide access for children and young people to talk to others about any concerns they have
- Encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable enough to point out attitudes and behaviour they do not like
- Remember that someone else may misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned

- Do not spend time alone with children – plan activities so that more than one person is present or, at least, other people are within sight and hearing
- Do not take children alone in a car, even for short journeys, unless this is unavoidable for safety reasons. If this is unavoidable, make sure an adult caretaker or another member of staff is aware it is happening
- Avoid inappropriate physical or verbal contact with others
- Avoid being drawn into inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour, such as tantrums or crushes
- Avoid showing favouritism to any individual
- Never make suggestive remarks or gestures, even in fun
- Do not trivialise or exaggerate child abuse issues
- Do not rely on just your good name to protect you
- Do not believe “It could never happen to me”

### Don'ts