



## **Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy**

Prepared by:

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on behalf of

**Professional Edge Consultants**

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## Policy Statement

Professional Edge Consultants is committed to creating and maintaining a safe and protective environment for all children and young people we engage with, directly or indirectly, through our work. We have a zero-tolerance approach to any form of harm, abuse, exploitation, or neglect of a child.

This policy applies to all Managing Partners, Lead and Senior Consultants, Technical Consultants, Internal Auditors, Associate Consultants, data collectors, sub-contractors, and any other representatives acting on behalf of Professional Edge Consultants (hereafter referred to as "PEC Personnel").

The welfare of the child is paramount. We are committed to ensuring our safeguarding practices reflect our responsibilities under national laws and international standards, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

## Definitions

- **A Child:** For the purpose of this policy, a child is defined as any person under the age of 18, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- **Safeguarding:** The proactive measures and responsibilities we take to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm.
- **Child Protection:** The reactive component of safeguarding, specifically focused on responding to and reporting concerns about a child's safety or well-being.
- **Abuse:** Can be physical, sexual, or emotional. It also includes neglect, exploitation, and harmful cultural practices. Abuse can occur in person or through digital channels.
- **PEC Personnel:** All individuals working for or on behalf of Professional Edge Consultants, as defined above.

## Guiding Principles

- **The Best Interests of the Child:** The child's welfare is the top priority in all decisions and actions.
- **Zero Tolerance:** No form of child abuse is acceptable.
- **Right to Protection:** Every child has the right to be protected from harm and exploitation.
- **Empowerment:** Children who are vulnerable or have special needs are entitled to special care and support.

- **Vigilance:** All PEC Personnel have a responsibility to be vigilant, identify risks, and report concerns.
- **Partnership:** We will work collaboratively with clients, communities, and local authorities to safeguard children.

## Code of Conduct for All PEC Personnel

All personnel must adhere to this code of conduct to minimise risk and ensure professional boundaries are maintained.

- **Respect and Dignity:** Always treat children with respect and dignity. Language and behaviour must be appropriate and non-threatening.
- **Physical Contact:** Avoid unnecessary physical contact. Any contact (e.g., for comfort) must be appropriate, non-intrusive, and occur in an open and public setting.
- **One-to-One Situations:** Avoid being alone with a child. Where one-to-one interaction is necessary for professional reasons (e.g., a mentoring session), ensure it is in a public space or a room with an open door and within sight of others.
- **Communication:** All communication with children (including digital, e.g., email, social media) must be professional, transparent, and related to work activities.
- **Imagery:** Do not take photographs or videos of children without informed, verifiable consent from a parent/guardian and the child (where appropriate). Ensure images are stored and used securely and respectfully.
- **Gifts and Favours:** Do not give or receive gifts, money, or special favours to/from children or their families.
- **Confidentiality:** Maintain the confidentiality of a child's personal information, except where it is necessary to share for their protection (see reporting procedures).
- **Substance Use:** Never be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs when working with or in proximity to children.

## Positive Behaviour Protocols

These protocols outline the expected professional standards when interacting with all clients, including children.

- **Listen and Empower:** Actively listen to children and young people, value their opinions, and involve them in decisions that affect them where appropriate.
- **Use Positive Language:** Use encouraging, supportive, and non-discriminatory language. Avoid shouting, humiliation, or negative labelling.
- **Set Clear Boundaries:** Establish and maintain clear professional boundaries in all interactions.
- **Be a Positive Role Model:** Demonstrate integrity, fairness, and respect in all your conduct.

- **Promote Inclusion:** Ensure all activities are inclusive and do not discriminate against any child based on gender, disability, ethnicity, or background.
- **Respond Calmly:** Manage challenging behaviour calmly and professionally, focusing on de-escalation and understanding the root cause.

## Reporting Procedures

The safety of the child overrides all commitments to confidentiality.

1. **In an Emergency:** If a child is in immediate danger, take action to secure their safety and contact the local police or emergency services immediately.
2. **Reporting a Concern:** Any concern, suspicion, or disclosure of abuse must be reported immediately to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**.
  - **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Oganive Chingakule
  - **Deputy DSL:** Rejoice Mambo
3. **How to Report:** Report verbally to the DSL as soon as possible, followed by a completed **Confidential Incident Report Form** (see Appendix A for template) within 24 hours.
4. **Confidentiality:** The concern will be handled with the strictest confidentiality, shared only with those who need to know to ensure the child's protection and to manage the incident.
5. **External Reporting:** The DSL is responsible for making a report to the relevant local statutory authorities (e.g., Social Welfare Services, Police) in accordance with Malawian law.

**No PEC Personnel will face retaliation or penalty for reporting a concern in good faith.**

## Recruitment and Induction

Professional Edge Consultants will:

- Include specific questions about safeguarding in interviews.
- Conduct rigorous reference checks for all personnel who will have contact with children.
- Require all new personnel to read, understand, and sign this policy as part of their induction.
- Provide basic safeguarding training upon induction.

## Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Managing Partners and the DSL to ensure it remains fit for purpose and reflects current best practices.

## Appendix A: Confidential Incident Report Form

*(This is a template to be completed and submitted to the DSL)*

|                                              |  |
|----------------------------------------------|--|
| Date of Report                               |  |
| Reporter Name & Role                         |  |
| Contact Details                              |  |
| Child Details (name, age, gender, contact)   |  |
| Date/Time & Location of Incident/Disclosure  |  |
| Nature of Concern (use factual details only) |  |
| Immediate Actions Taken                      |  |
| Alleged Perpetrator (if known)               |  |
| Witnesses (if any)                           |  |
| Signature & Date                             |  |

### **For DSL Use Only:**

Assessment/Decision, Referrals Made, Case Number, Follow-up Actions, Outcome, Review Date.

## Appendix B – Activity Risk Assessment Checklist

- Activity name, date, and location
- List of participants (children and adults)
- Supervision plan and ratios
- Toilet and changing arrangements
- Transport arrangements
- Remote/online elements
- Photography/imagery consent and management
- Emergency contacts and medical needs
- Identified risks and mitigations
- Approvals and sign-off

## Appendix C – Photography/Imagery Consent Form

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose of images: \_\_\_\_\_

Storage and access details: \_\_\_\_\_

Retention period: \_\_\_\_\_

Consent valid until: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Child Signature (if appropriate): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D – Whistleblowing Procedure

PEC encourages reporting of any malpractice or safeguarding concern. Reports made in good faith will be confidential and protected from retaliation. Independent reporting channel:

**[whistleblowing@professionaledgemw.com](mailto:whistleblowing@professionaledgemw.com)**