



Child Safeguarding Policy



CONTENTS

0. An introduction to Better Days

Better Days' mission and vision

- 0.1. An introduction to our Child Safeguarding Policy
 - 0.1.1. Child Safeguarding Policy
 - 0.1.2. Safe Recruitment
 - 0.1.3. Training
 - 0.1.4. Safe Working Practices

1. Section One: Developing Effective Policies, Procedures, and practices

- 1.1. Better Days' Principles
- 1.2. Development of Best Practices
- 1.3. Monitor and Review

2. Section Two: Child Protection Policy

- 2.1. Introduction
 - 2.1.1. Statement of Commitment
 - 2.1.2. Aims and Responsibilities
 - 2.1.3. Scope
- 2.2. Definitions of Child Abuse
- 2.3. Child Protection Procedures
 - 2.3.1. Confidentiality and Information Sharing
 - 2.3.1.1. Confidentiality Agreement
 - 2.3.2. Relationships with External Agencies/Partners
- 2.4. Managing Allegations Against Staff
 - 2.4.1. Responding to Suspected Child Abuse by the Staff Form
- 2.5. Role and Responsibilities of Staff
 - 2.5.1. Safe Recruitment of Staff
 - 2.5.1.1. Safe Recruitment Policy
 - 2.5.1.2. Hiring Procedure
 - 2.5.1.3. Confidentiality Agreement
 - 2.5.2. Training of Staff
 - 2.5.2.1. Training of Staff Policy



2.5.3. Off-site Protocol

2.5.3.1 Parental Consent for Gekko Extracurricular Activities and Field Trips

3. Section Three: Safe Working Practices

3.1. An Induction to Better Days' programs

3.1.1. Gekko Kids

3.1.2. Gekko X

3.1.3. Eco Hub

3.1.4. Socrates

3.1.5. PSS+P Department

3.2. Safe Working Practices

3.3. Responsibility of Staff

3.3.1. Organisational Code of Conduct

3.3.2. Commitment Form of the Staff with the CSG Policy

3.4. Communication (including use of technology)

3.4.1. Photography Policy and Communication Consent Form

3.5. Social Interaction with Children

3.6. Physical Interaction with Children

3.7. Intimate Care of Children

4. Section Four: PSS reinforcement

4.1. Creating a Safe Environment

4.2. PSS Procedure

4.2.1. Dealing with Disclosure of Abuse

4.2.2. Responding to Child Abuse, Disorders, Suicide Attempts and Suspected Special Needs

4.2.3. PSS Referral Pathway

4.2.4. Internal Child Safeguarding Procedure Diagram

4.3. General Guidelines

4.3.1. Absconding Protocol

4.3.2. Anxiety/Panic Attack Protocol

4.3.3. Hetero and Self-aggression Protocol

5. Section Five: Additional Resources

5.1. References

5.2. Attached Documents



0. An introduction to Better Days.

Better Days' mission is to provide trauma-informed education for refugee children in transit. We believe that safe spaces, powerful connections, and healthy relationships create a natural environment that will enable the children to absorb knowledge and acquire the proper social skills they will need in life.

Better Days' pedagogical philosophy for refugee children is that learning can be achieved only in a dignified and safe space where healing is facilitated and learning becomes possible. We understand that learning competencies are irrelevant without having the capacity to learn. The transitory nature of the population we serve challenges what we know about education: how we assess progress, grade, set tangible objectives, and promote cross-cultural learning.

The practical realities of the field force us to confront certain educational orthodoxies; hence, all our projects function as an educational 'laboratory.' Our program resembles a place of careful and gentle experimentation. At the Centre, we deliver a mix of contemporary and traditional educational approaches and practises in a quest for a functional 'blueprint' to provide quality education to refugee children in transit on the island of Lesbos. We strive to make a learning laboratory of creativity, discovery, curiosity, and innovation.

0.1. An introduction to our Child Safeguarding Policy

We, as personnel working with minors, have the responsibility and duty to keep them safe, to work for their benefit, and to promote their well-being. This is our mission, and we can never, not even a single day, not even a single moment, forget it.

Our main role is to provide safe spaces where education and psychosocial support can prevail. We created spaces where children can reconnect with themselves and with life values, and be prompted to learn and establish new healthy relations. Children rely on adults, on our care, our authority and our professionalism. The adult becomes their point of reference, and everything the adult does do is an example of what should be done. This is why every member of the staff is a paramount piece in the children's education, and, if staff members work together in a multidisciplinary way, they will be able to create nurturing environments where children can reach their full potential. Whether we choose to be or not, all adults working with students are acting as a role model.



In order to promote all of the above, we must distance the children from risk. To do that, we have to be able to identify abuse in all its forms. We must take any decisive actions possible to minimize their exposure to active or potential risk of.

The key elements to creating a safe organisation are:

- Child Protection Policy
- Safe Recruitment
- Training
- Safe Working Practices

0.1.1. Child Safeguarding Policy.

Working with children has been our main goal since the beginning of our organization. Preventing social degradation and restoring human dignity in early ages means having a stronger impact in the generations of migrants to come. But to do such work, to take on such responsibility, we must set guidelines and agreements to provide structure, clarity, transparency, ethos, and overall good practices.

Defining ‘good practices’ is a challenging task inside an organization that works in education and in psychosocial support through different disciplines and media, such as recreational activities, sports and development, arts and music, yoga, language, social and emotional learning, ecological literacy, technology, with large or small groups or events with individual tutoring.

The present document justifies and defines ‘good practices’ for Better Days, and provides the pertinent guidelines for the safety and well-being of the beneficiaries and the staff, as well as optimal functioning of the organization.

0.1.2. Safe recruitment.

The core of our organization is the personnel working in each project. It is their responsibility to conduct group and individual processes that lead beneficiaries to improve their well-being and skills as well as to increase their knowledge on specific project-related subjects. The staff performs a challenging and remarkable role in working with a population that presents many complexities and poses different problems, including complex trauma. Because of that, Better Days staff need to be academically qualified to perform their tasks, as well as be professionally experienced in the area they are working in. Vetting and screening of applicants is necessary to guarantee due diligence and fair recruitment processes. Candidates to work with Better Days, both employees and volunteers, are asked to submit professional qualifications and



experience, their resume, and clean criminal records. A member of the core team prepares an exhaustive interview in which many questions are addressed to sharpen our knowledge of the candidate.

0.1.3. Training

Training is key to providing best practices for our beneficiaries, and that is why we collaborate with experienced professionals from across the world. . Better Days provides specific training to volunteers and staff. All employees work closely with the project manager, who is also responsible for inducting, supporting, and mentoring. At the same time, the PSS Manager provides formal training to the team and new members regarding Better Days pedagogical philosophy, the application of SEL (social emotional learning), and holistic approach on PSS (psychosocial support) and trauma support, so that everyone working with Better Days feels confident to intervene in situations where disruptive behavior appears when working with children in distress. Also, consultancy is provided to the team to they can design their curricula in line with Better Days' educational vision and core values.

0.1.4. Safe working practices

The compendium of safe working practices that an employee performs daily must always be focused on the beneficiaries' well-being, on decreasing their levels of anxiety and deleterious emotions by providing safe spaces, professional bonds, and adaptive lesson plans. With the right follow-up and commitment, the Better Days' staff will establish and maintain the structured environment where children can grow and learn safely.



SECTION 1:

Developing effective policies,
procedures, and practices



1.1. Better Days' principles

This policy is governed by the following principles guiding our practises:

1. Empowerment and Gender Awareness
2. Integration and Inclusion
3. Resilience and Autonomy
4. Individualism and Identity
5. Multiculturalism and Diversity
6. Utilitarianism
7. Professionalism and Self-Reflection
8. Holistic Approaches
9. Respect and Equality
10. Healthy Boundaries
11. Superior Space Design
12. Accreditation and Progress
13. Transformational Education

Every member of Better Days commits to follow these principles on a daily basis when teaching or interacting with children in any manner and for whatever reason (facilitating extracurricular activities, escorting to other services, tutoring, etc.). Staff members should approach every practice in a conscious way. The ways we choose to work and interact with the children lay the foundation for professional bonding to occur as a means to help students restore their dignity and achieve growth. By abiding to these principles, we guarantee safety for all stakeholders. Better Days expects that these values are honored by all of its staff, partners and volunteers, and holds the right to investigate and act against any claims and concerns of non-compliance.

1.2. Development of good practices.

Different documents are created in order to clarify Better Days' procedures on working with minors in the different projects:

- The Child Protection Policy
- The Safe Working Practices
- Incident Report
- Absconding Protocol



- PSS Reinforcement: contains guidelines on how to deal with certain situation and how to create safe spaces, the referral pathway including a journal, and subprotocols for anxiety attacks and self and hetero aggressiveness
- Photography Policy and Communication Consent Form
- Commitment Form for the Staff on the Child Safeguarding Policy
- Communication Consent Form
- Organisational Code of Conduct
- Confidentiality Agreement
- Off-site Protocol
- Safe Recruitment Policy
- Volunteers' Recruitment Policy
- Hiring Procedure
- Project Proposal for Volunteers
- Internal Child Safeguarding Procedure Diagram
- Responding to Suspected Child Abuse by the Staff Form

1.3. Monitor and Review

Once our Policy is being implemented, our organisation is operating in ways that protect children. However, the work is not finished. Everything mentioned in this document will remain effective as long as its practices are regularly reviewed and monitored to ensure that they are still relevant to the projects and beneficiaries. The designated person to design and redesign the Child Safeguarding Policy will have the responsibility to coordinate with the Project Directors and supervise the staff and volunteers in order to ensure that all guidelines are being implemented as agreed. The staff is welcome to contribute to the Policy as it will be reviewed and redesigned on an ongoing basis. The review and redesign should occur annually, but also at any time it is identified that a change is required. The review must consider the opinions and concerns of the team, but will be written by the same designated person.



Section Two:

Child Protection Policy



2.1. Introduction

This section sets the foundation on which the rest of the policy sits. Aims, statements, procedures, and protocols are specified in order to provide safety, order, structure, and best practices.

2.1.1. Statement of Commitment

Better Days bases the creation of all of its projects in the following statement:

STATEMENT: Better Days is committed to creating new models of education that guarantee access to quality education and aims for integration, accreditation, and continuity for children displaced in humanitarian crises as well as looking after their well-being.

Better Days' mission is paramount to the execution of all staff members' tasks. In it ultimately rests all the responsibility, authority, commitment, and professionalism of any member of the staff involved in the organisation.

2.1.2. Aims and Responsibilities

We believe that the environment we are exposed to as children has the power to define how we live our lives by influencing the issues we are forced to deal with. By altering our environment, we remove its power to control us. The antidote to the realities of Moria refugee camp is to create a positive environment, a safe place, somewhere our students can laugh with friends and explore new possibilities. Education, broadly conceived, can create this environment. It can deliver people from horrific places and put them - even just temporarily - in a place of normalcy, where the present does not contain horrors and the future is more than 'just getting through the day.' That is where we start. We invest in creating a dignified, safe, and child-inspired physical space such as Gekko Kids, Gekko X, and TAPUAT. That is Better Days' educational foundation. We begin with providing access in a space of healing, and from here we cultivate an environment that can promote positive experiences, safety, and support.

Better Days staff, partners, and volunteers are expected to work in alignment with Better Days' goals and responsibilities to provide a positive and healing educational experience to the community we serve.

2.1.3. Scope

Since Better Days was funded on Lesbos in 2015, we have worked to support the refugee community and asylum seekers residing in Moria hotspot (Reception and Identification Centre) and the adjacent olive groves. In 2015-2016, we responded to emergencies working with other NGOs and grassroots groups in Moria, Katsikas, Petra, Idomeni, and other camps in Northern Greece with two milestone projects, the Olive Grove, also known as Better Days from Moria, and Elpida Refugee Home, also known as Elpida. During that time, we attended to people from



all ages. Since August 2017, following the launch of Gekko Kids, we have focused on customizing educational programs for refugee children and unaccompanied minors, the most vulnerable segment of refugee and displaced populations. We are guided by the profound belief that access to quality education is the only way to foster hope, self-development, and opportunity for a victimized generation of millions of children around the world.

Ever since, we have developed and run different educational projects all over Lesvos. We are currently managing the following programs:

- Gekko Kids: serving accompanied and unaccompanied minors living in Mytilini living in shelters operated by Iliaktida AMKE or residing in Moria and Kara Tepe camps.
- EcoHub: serving accompanied minors living in Moria, Kara Tepe, and urban accommodations.
- Gekko X, STEAM: serving accompanied and unaccompanied minors living in Mytilini with their families, unaccompanied minors living in shelters operated by Iliaktida AMKE or residing in Moria, Safe Zone & Setion A, and Kara Tepe camps.
- Socrates Sports & Development: serving male unaccompanied minors living in shelters operated by Iliaktida AMKE.

The Better Days' Child Safeguarding Policy applies to and must be adhered to by:

- All Better Days' members of staff and volunteers.
- All those acting on behalf of Better Days, such as consultants, trainers, and visitors.
- Staff members and representatives from partner organisations involved in the delivery of Better Days' programmes.
- All adults involved in any activities organised by Better Days for children, including journalists, donors, and policy-makers.

ALL of the individuals cited above will be provided with the Better Days' Child Safeguarding Policy. They will be expected to read it in full, adhere to it, refer to it at all times, and sign the Commitment Form cited at the end of the Child Safeguarding Policy.

2.2. Definitions of Child Abuse

The following definitions attempt to clarify the meaning of all abusive practices experienced, in the present or in the past, by our target group.

2.2.1. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is a non-accidental act on a child that results in physical harm. This includes, but is not limited to, beating, hitting, shaking, burning, drowning, suffocating, biting, poisoning,



or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical abuse also involves the fabrication or inducing of illness.

2.2.2. Emotional/Psychological Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effect on the child's emotional development. This can include a pattern of rejecting, degrading, ignoring, isolating, corrupting, exploiting, or terrorising a child. It may also include age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It also includes seeing or hearing the ill treatment of others. Any humiliating or degrading treatment, such as name calling, constant criticism, belittling, persistent shaming, or solitary confinement is also considered emotional/psychological abuse.

2.2.3. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities (penetrative and non-penetrative, e.g., rape, kissing, touching, masturbation) as well as non-contact acts such as involving children in the looking at or production of sexual images, sexual activities, and sexual behaviours. Staff should be aware of their 'duty of care,' which precludes developing a sexual relationship with or grooming of a child. A sexual relationship between an adult and a child will always be wrong, unequal, and unacceptable.

2.2.4. Sexual Exploitation

Sexual exploitation is any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. This includes exchange of assistance due to children benefiting from Better Days programming. The sexual exploitation of a child who is under the age of consent is child sexual abuse and a criminal offense.

2.2.5. Commercial exploitation

Commercial exploitation is using a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others and to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, or moral or social-emotional development. It includes, but is not limited to, child labour.

2.2.6. Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, causing serious long term harm to the child's health or development. It may also include neglect of a child's basic or emotional needs. Neglect is a lack of appropriate action, emotion, or basic needs.



2.2.7. Overprotection

Overprotection can be exercised by parents, caregivers, or members of the staff of our organisation. It is considered undue or excessive protection or shielding, specifically, excessive restriction of a child's behavior allegedly in the interest of his or her health and welfare by an anxious, insecure, or domineering parent/caregiver.

2.2.8. Institutional abuse

Institutional abuse represents any form of abuse or neglect while a child is in the care of an institution. If the maltreatment is caused by employees of the institution, it is classified as institutional abuse. Institutional abuse is often difficult to identify because it is usually psychological and it implies an abuse of the default power of the staff.

It is the responsibility of everyone working in a service to be aware of those practices and to denounce and report them as soon as possible to the immediate responsible of the project/center.

2.3. Child Protection Procedures

Better Days is committed to creating new models of education that guarantee access to quality education and strives for integration, accreditation, and continuity for children displaced in humanitarian crises as well as looking after their well-being.

The safety of the child is our prime consideration at all times. We design spaces and curricula to enable healing and allow the students to develop crucial skills, to settle and integrate into their host culture, and to discover their vocation and calling. Better Days practices a model of education that identifies, enables, and invests in its students' passions and talents. Better Days challenges the concept of emergency and traditional education whilst empowering students with the opportunity to experience alternative teaching and become a part of the learning process.

2.3.1. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Personal data of the minors cannot be published or disclosed on the Internet, especially not in social media. It also cannot be handed over to other organisations, teams, professionals, or individuals outside the organisation. Students' data must be in the Drive folders where only the project members and the managers can have access to it. Compromising information about beneficiaries shouldn't be discussed in informal conversations outside the workplace. Full names and situations that happen to the children during the project schedule should never be



discussed in WhatsApp/Slack/Trello/other apps. Team meetings are the appropriate forum for those discussions.

The only way any kind of information about beneficiaries can be commented on outside the project/center's vicinity is in case further discussion is needed with the PSS Manager for the best interest of the minor and in order to design a proper PSS intervention for him/her.

Every Better Days' project owns a Team Drive. In that Drive, there is a folder titled 'PSS' that includes daily diaries and referrals. People who have access to those folders will have the responsibility of writing down on the PSS diary any observation or situation that might show a beneficiary has PSS-related issues. If they are sure the beneficiary needs psychosocial support, they will proceed to submit the referral. Only the project team and the PSS Manager will have access to that folder. All documents are stored in a digital format on the Drive. Whenever possible, no hard copies with personal data is stored anywhere, but if any are produced, they must be stored in the PSS lockable cabinets upon permission from the PSS Manager. If printed documents with beneficiaries' data is not necessary anymore, the copies should be destroyed in the paper shredder at the office, not anywhere else.

2.3.1.1. Confidentiality Agreement

Attached at the end of this policy, you will find the Confidentiality Agreement, on Section 5's 5.3. Attached Documents.

Volunteers and all members of Better Days have to sign this agreement after reading the policy and before starting to work with our beneficiaries.

2.3.2. Relationships with External Agencies/Partners

Positive relationships must be maintained with agencies that can support Better Days in child protection related matters. The Child Protection Lead Actor on the island of Lesbos is Praxis. The District Attorney must decide and designate to the Management of Moria or designated actors or individual the protection and care of unaccompanied minors.

Positive relationships must be maintained with agencies that can support Better Days in child protection related matters. There is an external referral pathway designed and presented at the Child Protection Workshop group located at UNHCR offices at Navmachias Ellis, Mitilini 811 00, hosted bi-weekly and chaired by Rehma Kauma. In that forum the following actors are usually present:

- Metadrasi
- Praxis
- UNHCR



- MSF
- BRF
- Oxfam
- Iliaktida
- Fenix
- DRC
- Refugees4Refugees
- IsraAid
- Drop in the Ocean

To consider:

1. Who is responsible for maintaining the relationships with other organisations and government agencies? The PSS Manager or/and a designated Social Workers, Protection Officer or psychologist represents Better Days in Child Protection & other Coordination working groups and forums. The referral protocol must be required, read, understood and followed by the Child Protection team. Internal protection pathways are customized and designed for each project/program in collaboration with the PSS Manager and the Managing Director. When ineffective the Management team must be immediately informed for support.
2. How will staff be kept informed of the services of other agencies? Better Days has access to UNHCR 4W Matrix. The UNHCR in collaboration with the Ministry holds bi-weekly information meeting.
3. What will be the process for networking with other agencies? No CP staff, other employees or volunteer can represent or present child protection matters to third parties and agencies either formally or informally without the prior consent of the PSS Manager or that of a Director. Submitting a written report is mandatory following the conclusion of such meeting to ensure proper documentation and follow up.
4. Will your organisation or staff members meet representatives of the local care and protection system? No CP staff, other employees or volunteer can represent or present child protection matters to third parties and agencies either formally or informally without the prior consent of the PSS Manager or that of a Director. Submitting a written report is mandatory following the conclusion of such meeting to ensure proper documentation and follow up.



2.4. Managing Allegations Against Staff

Any allegation that a member of staff has behaved in an inappropriate or unsafe way must be taken seriously and handled in an appropriate and timely manner.

Better Days will respond to suspicions and allegations of child abuse by a member of staff in a manner that best ensures children's or young persons' immediate and long-term safety and will treat suspicions or allegations against a staff member with the same commitment as suspicions or allegations made against any other person.

Better Days will not act alone and will refer all suspected situations of child abuse to Police and/or the guardians. The safety of the child will be paramount, and no person in this organisation will collude to protect an adult or an organisation. This is agreed by signing the Commitment Form of the Staff with the CDG Policy.

Allegations will be treated in such a way that the rights of adults and the stress upon the staff member are also taken into consideration. When abuse is suspected or an allegation made against a staff member, the first consideration will be to ensure the safety of the child. When abuse is suspected, staff will follow the process for Responding to Suspected Child Abuse by the Staff Form included in this policy. When there are suspicions of abuse by a staff member, both staff and children's rights are to be attended to. This means that the safety of the child is of first concern, and that the staff member must have access to legal and professional advice.

The person managing the child abuse concern will not be the same person who is managing the employee's consequences.

The suspected staff member or volunteer will be prevented from having further unsupervised access to children during any investigation and will be informed fully of their rights.

If there is insufficient evidence to pursue a criminal prosecution, then a disciplinary investigation may still be undertaken if there is "reasonable cause to suspect" that abuse may have occurred. Members of the staff are asked to collaborate in this process for the best interest of the minor and for obvious ethical reasons. The allegation may represent inappropriate behaviour or poor practice by a member of staff that needs to be considered under internal disciplinary procedures.

2.4.1. Responding to Suspected Child Abuse by the Staff Form

Attached at the end of this policy is the Responding to Suspected Child Abuse by the Staff Form, on Section 5's 5.3. Attached Documents.



All members of the Better Days' staff are obligated to complete the form, and volunteers are obligated to ask for access to the form to complete it and hand it or send it directly to the Better Days' Director and the PSS Manager. It is important that everyone takes responsibility and cares about what happens in the projects they work in.

If an incident, disclosure, or suspicion of child abuse takes place, the intervention and follow up will be closely coordinated by the affected team, the Better Days' director, and the PSS coordinator/director. Both the children and the affected team will have access to PSS support and actions will be taken in order to deal with and close the process in a healthy way.

2.5. Roles and Responsibilities of Staff

Better Days' goal is to provide educational programs in which psychosocial support is integrated in order to restore human dignity and decrease trauma through access to a safe space and the implementation of alternative methodologies and holistic pedagogies. Achieving a goal such as this requires personnel who are ready to perform at their best.

Here is the list of responsibilities a member of the staff must accomplish throughout the work schedule:

- Commit to Better Days' philosophy and principles and perform according to it.
- Be able to report appropriately anything required: weekly/monthly/daily reports, incident reports, PSS referrals.
- Generate a sense of belonging within the group.
- Provide a safe environment: boundaries, order, structure, understanding, a conscious curriculum, and a strong lesson plan.
- Promote positive behavior, life values, and social skills.
- Increase the participation levels of the beneficiaries in the activities to ensure their educational evolution.
- Help to decrease levels of anxiety and depression through the same structure of the program and prompt individual intervention.
- Lead in a positive way by acknowledging he/she becomes an example for the children.
- Facilitate the lessons with energy and enthusiasm.
- Identify cases in which the child could be experiencing further difficulties that could require specific help.
- Refer the identified cases to the PSS staff in order to intervene as soon as possible for the benefit of the beneficiary's well-being.
- Report any incident that happens in the center or during the project work schedule.
- Demonstrate a proactive and hard-working attitude.



- Collaborate in team spirit with colleagues, managers, and other members of the Better Days' staff in order to accomplish multidisciplinary tasks.
- Work as part of a team on a daily basis, being aware that the decisions are made together, not individually.
- Communicate openly with the project members, the PSS Manager, and the directors.
- Engage in the project with loyalty.
- Commit to the beneficiaries and their individual processes with professional emotional distance.
- Avoid savior-complex-based words and actions. Before giving life advice, first ask yourself how effective can that advice be at the state of the individual.
- Avoid patronizing behavior; being overprotective is another form of abuse.
- Be proportional in what you ask for and what you give.
- Ensure that the beneficiaries learn at least something new every day.

All these practices combined are what will generate the specific way of bonding and protection.

2.5.1. Safe Recruitment of Staff

The core of our organization lies within the project team. They are responsible for conducting group and individual processes that lead beneficiaries to improve their well-being and skills as well as to increase their knowledge on specific project-related areas. Better Days is committed to ensure that determined guidelines are followed when assessing future members of the staff, including volunteers.

- Better Days' volunteers and staff have to be academically qualified to perform the task they are going to implement.
- Applicants must submit a clean criminal record certificate.
- Applicants must have a substantial amount of experience in the area in which they work.
- Qualifications or experience in social work, social education, pedagogy, and psychology enhance an applicant's prospects.
- Applicants' CVs will be reviewed and discussed during the first interview.
- Applicants social media will be examined.
- Applicants must attach a cover letter with the CV.
- Applicants for employment with Better Days must provide 2 x references from recent employers.
- Two interviews will be conducted. The first will be conducted by the Project Manager and the second will be conducted by the Project Manager and a Better Days' core team member, or a core team member alone. Interviews will be thorough with many questions addressed to sharpen our knowledge of the applicant.



2.5.1.1. Safe Recruitment Policy

You will find our hiring procedure, volunteer recruitment procedure and safe recruitment policy at the end of this Child Safeguarding Policy, on Section 5's 5.3. Attached Documents.

2.5.2. Training of Staff

When a person is hired by Better Days, it means that person has experience and academic qualifications for the job. However, working in the humanitarian sector has idiosyncratic characteristics. Characteristics that make this environment unique have to do with the extremely delicate situation that the target population are living in at the moment, their present life conditions, and the past traumatic experiences they might carry with them.

These unique challenges lead us to provide further training to both volunteers and employees. The training is not limited to one specific procedure, because the quantity, intensity, and duration of the training are subject to the needs of the teams/individuals.

In the case of volunteers:

- Volunteers receive the volunteer manual prior to arrival.
- They are inducted once on the ground. They are supervised and trained on project-specific objectives and methodologies by working closely with the team and under the Project Manager, who can provide consultation and guidance.
- They shadow more experienced volunteers and staff for one week and only assist in tasks while observing.
- Short-term volunteers are given an induction on trauma identification and protection guidelines. They are introduced to our pedagogy to ensure they follow our policies and promote safe practices during their stay with clear guidelines on student interaction and forming any relational bonding with the beneficiaries. The PSS Manager will present the PSS induction in coordination with the volunteer coordinator.
- Long-term volunteers and employees are trained by the PSS Manager or other CP actors on specific areas related to PSS (case identification, abuse identification, intervention for disruptive children, proper bonding, referral pathway, coordination between the team and the PSS Manager) and the introduction of new pedagogies, such as SEL. If a Project Director identifies a long-term volunteer has room for improvement on tasks regarding education, bonding or PSS, the Project Director will refer the volunteer to the PSS Manager for consultation (private training), as many times as needed from his/her professional point of view.
- PSS counselling is offered to both short- and long-term volunteers in case they struggle with their contact with beneficiaries or their tasks.



In the case of employees:

- General training takes place every time a project is launched or renewed. Training is based on educational purposes, new pedagogies, ways of bonding, and PSS. We consider the skills the staff already has with the intent to boost those skills and help employees develop new ones. Training can happen more times during the year, as many times as it is decided by the Project Director and the PSS coordinator/director for the best interest of the beneficiaries, the team, and the organisation. If a Project Director identifies that a member of his/her team has room for improvement on tasks development regarding education or PSS, the Director will refer the member of the staff to the PSS Manager for consultation (private training), as many times as needed from both the PSS Manager and the Project Director's professional point of view.
- Consultancy with the PSS Manager can happen every time the team faces a challenge in terms of pedagogy or PSS. The PSS Manager can meet the whole team for advice, but also can meet them individually if one of them struggles with something in particular.
- The PSS Manager can provide counselling for members of the staff who are struggling with the stress and sensibilities implied in working with traumatized people.
- The PSS Manager and the team members will have periodic coordination to follow up with the PSS cases, from both PSS and educational perspectives, in order for the PSS Manager to know how they are proceeding in the lessons, and for the team to implement SEL properly and deal better with everyday situations, as well as designing together specific individual interventions.

2.5.3. Off-site Protocol

When excursions and visits off-site might be scheduled, the beneficiaries must be informed in advance and ask for parent/guardian consent. Only the children who bring the parental consent signed before the off-site activity attend the off site activity. It is prohibited to accept children who haven't presented the document, regardless of the reason. The educators are responsible for the children's safety. They supervise and take care of the children from when they start the activities until they finish them. Educators won't accept excuses of any kind and will take only the children who bring the consent form. During the off-site activity and transportation, the educators and project director will take care of the children, and will avoid/prevent potential dangerous situations, and keep the group quiet and well-behaved. Staff must be attentive and avoid distractions (e.g., cellphones). The right of equal and non-discriminatory access must be always implemented to avoid preferential treatment.



2.5.3.1 Parental Consent for Gekko Extracurricular Activities and Field Trips

You will find the Parental Consent for Gekko Extracurricular Activities and Field Trips at the end of this Child Safeguarding Policy, on Section 5's 5.3. Attached Documents.



Section Three:

Safe Working Practices



3.1. An Introduction to Better Days' programs

Since mid-2017, Better Days has offered educational and social support programs in Lesvos, helping refugees integrate into Greek culture, build up academic and professional skills through social emotional learning methodologies and alternative pedagogical approaches, and access the psycho-social support they need to recover from trauma.

3.1.1. Gekko Kids

Gekko Kids is an educational centre in Lesvos offering alternative education to populations in transit with particular focus on providing education to unaccompanied minors. The centre was launched in August 2017 and is located in Mytilene. Both the space and the curriculum are designed to enable healing and allow the students to develop crucial skills, to settle and integrate into their host culture, and to discover their vocation and calling. Gekko Kids practices a model of education that identifies, enables and invests in its students' passions and talents. Better Days challenges the concept of emergency and traditional education, whilst empowering Gekko students with the opportunity to experience alternative and personalized teaching and become a part of the learning process.

3.1.2. Gekko X

Gekko X is a newly claimed premise enabling further expansion and additional capacity for Gekko Kids and Better Days programming. It is an alternative pedagogical lab, aiming to promote STEAM specific curriculum and promote trauma-informed education based on social emotional learning methodologies. Gekko X is an open space that hosts technology-based classes such as coding, computers, mathematics, biology, and physics (STEAM curriculum). Furthermore it offers workshops based on video, photography, crafting, and theatre. It is located in Mytilene, and its scope is to serve unaccompanied and accompanied minors aged 10-18.

3.1.3. Eco Hub

EcoHub activities are designed to address four self-identified primary concerns of local displaced populations: a lack of healthy food, a lack of mental health resources, a lack of educational access, and a lack of employment opportunities. It addresses these needs with a holistic, multifaceted approach built around virtuous cycles: between the health of the planet and those who call it home, between displaced and host communities, and between the actions of today and the future. EcoHub embodies Better Days' belief that humanitarian aid and environmental awareness are not just compatible, but mutually reinforcing, and that responders should focus on creating spaces and opportunities that nurture, inspire, and raise environmental consciousness.



Eco Hub is a center for cross-cultural learning, food production, environmental remediation, and therapeutic practice. We aim to create a ripple effect: to demonstrate what green humanitarian aid can and should become, to challenge our peer organizations to see the broader impact of their operations, and to assist them in making positive environmental changes. Our vision is to create a broad community of informed and inspired individuals and organizations that actively engage in virtuous cycles of sustainability and regenerative practices.

3.1.4. Socrates - Sports & Development

Better Days believes in a world where all young people are given the opportunity to grow, develop, and succeed so their past does not dictate their prospects for the future. Socrates sports and development provides one such opportunity through the universal language of football to promote good physical and mental health, teach core life skills, and build bridges among young people affected by displacement. Our goals are to provide a safe space for unaccompanied minors that encourages them to grow, and develop and build resilience. Implementing practical and theoretical sport sessions to promote positive behavior, increase motivation to tackle idleness and improve physical well-being are needed to create a culture of respect, responsibility, and inclusion through a fun and joyful environment so young people can learn and play.

3.1.5. PSS Department

Psychosocial support has been provided in different ways in our projects: trauma-informed social emotional learning, Mindfulness, behavioral skills PSS group sessions, emotional group sessions, Circle of Girls sessions, self-help group sessions, one-on-one counselling, attention to functional diversity... all for the best interest of our beneficiaries, based on the population's needs. Better Days' PSS department is housed at BD's Headquarters at Pittakou on the 2nd floor of Gekko Kids. We started by designing and drafting a Child Safeguarding Policy and setting the very basis of Better Days' child-friendly and trauma-aware principles and practices within project implementation. We believe in the customization of individual PSS components for all projects implemented by Better Days as well as training and consulting on pedagogical direction (in order to develop specific curriculums, lesson plans, and realistic objectives) and CP internal referral pathways and protocols.

3.2. Safe Working Practices

When working with a traumatized population, we are exposing ourselves to some risks. First of all, there is the secondary trauma stress, which is the emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the first-hand trauma experiences of another. The symptoms are similar to PTSD. We would especially note the importance of hyperarousal, which is one of the most common symptoms related to staff working with vulnerable populations, traumatized or not. In



our case, working in this field, we become more quick to hyperarousal. Hyperarousal make us more sensitive and reactive to anything related to our work. It makes us vulnerable, especially in situations when we have to make decisions, be under pressure, or face the emotions of others. Hyperarousal can lead to devastating results, such as working without engagement and positive attitude, crystalized sadness, stress, anxiety episodes, feeling overwhelmed throughout the working schedule. These symptoms will infiltrate the sufferers' personal life and won't allow them to perform properly both in the personal and professional areas.

To prevent hyperarousal, burnout, emotional stress, or secondary trauma stress, we can use certain professional practices to provide a healthy treatment to our beneficiaries and a healthy treatment to ourselves.

- Better Days believes that as far as possible, staff working with children and families should keep their personal and professional lives separate and not encourage close personal relationships or care-taking activities outside the work environment.
- All members of staff (volunteers and employees) are expected to follow guidelines that clarify appropriate behaviour, such as professional distance. We are not the children's friends.
- All staff are to have a clear understanding of and to agree to Better Days' Code of Conduct and the Child Safeguarding Policy.
- Staff is to inform their project director or coordinator of any existing relationships with children or their families that could constitute a conflict of interest or place the staff member in a position of compromise.
- Staff are to inform their project director or coordinator of any potential situations of compromise or conflict of interest that arise as part of their work.
- No staff member is to enter into any relationship with a child, young person, or family that could result in any other section of this policy being compromised.

These are all safe working practices for the benefit of the population we work with. In the social and the humanitarian sector, professional risks are often taken, since the people joining in these kinds of job present a personality profile that is likely to provide to others instead of providing to oneself. Our jobs might look very exciting to us because we meet unique situations and challenges, but we must never forget that our jobs are a part of our multidimensional lives and that if we don't take care of ourselves and nurture all spheres in our



lives, we will start performing our professional tasks weakly. To prevent us from that, we suggest:

- Sleep at least seven hours a day.
- Maintain the code of conduct specified above at the workplace.
- For male staff members, avoid one-on-one interventions in private with girls/women to prevent awkward situations or false allegations.
- Ask your colleagues for help to conduct an intervention if you don't feel comfortable with it.
- Create a safe, structured environment in your classes in order to decrease the levels of nervousness and disruptiveness from the children, and so that all of you can experience a calm mood, as much as it is possible. Check-in and check-out techniques, SEL, and formatting will provide ways to accomplish this.
- Avoid extra work. Spontaneous extra work can be a good thing if it is occasional and with inspirational purposes, but extra working on a daily basis can in time trigger stress, anxiety, burnout, depression, nervous breakdowns, and more.
- Challenge yourself at work and try to reinvent yourself by learning and experimenting. A bored worker is a negative element to the project and generates a negative impact on the children, who are emotional and behavioral catalyzers.
- Ask your colleagues or your project director for help if something overwhelms you. We are here to face challenges as a pack; isolation is not an easy road.
- Contact the PSS Manager for counselling if you are struggling with a case in particular, with your tasks, or with anything else related to the work you are doing, or with a personal issue that is affecting the work you do.
- Engage in open communication to sustain a healthy co-working environment.
- Don't over-talk about work outside your working schedule. Separate personal life from professional life.
- Enjoy your free time.



3.3. Responsibility of Staff

Every member of the staff has different responsibilities depending on their different roles, but all have the responsibilities of performing trauma-informed education, working toward the embodiment of the Better Days pedagogical philosophy, and successfully implementing project curricula. The different tasks that Better Days are called to do are delineated in Section 2's 2.5. Role and Responsibilities of Staff. However, we would like to highlight the following guidelines:

The staff should:

- Always act, and be seen to act, in the child's best interests.
- Avoid any conduct that could lead any reasonable person to question the staff member's motivation and intentions.
- Take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour.

The organisation should:

- Foster a culture of openness and support.
- Ensure that systems are in place for concerns to be raised.
- Ensure that there is in place effective recording systems that confirm discussions, decisions, and outcomes of any actions taken.
- Ensure that staff are not placed in situations that render them particularly vulnerable.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of expectations, policies, and procedures.

To regulate and ensure that these tasks are applied with the ethical code that the organisation provides, we have two documents: the Organisational Code of Conduct and the Commitment Form of the Staff with the CSG Policy.

3.3.1. Organisational Code of Conduct

The Organisational Code of Conduct is a document whose objective is to show, by the written word, the way Better Days needs the staff members to behave, according to the organisation mission and vision, while in their work schedule. This Code of Conduct is to be read and signed by every person joining the project, whether as a volunteer, an employee, or a participant in a collaboration.

Attached at the end of this policy, you will find the Organisational Code of Conduct, on Section 5's 5.3. Attached Documents.

3.3.2. Commitment Form with the CSG Policy



The Commitment Form of the Staff with the CSG Policy sets by the written word that all employees (not only those working in contact with children on a daily basis but also the ones working in the office handling data and images) and volunteers have read and agreed to all the sections of this policy and acknowledged they have understood it.

Attached at the end of this policy, you will find the Confidentiality Agreement, on Section 5's 5.3. Attached Documents.

3.5. Communication, including the use of technology

Communication is key to educators. We, as reference points for our beneficiaries, become examples of what they are supposed to do now and, even more, when they are older. Therefore, education starts with our acts of communication, verbal and nonverbal.

Given this, our organisation requires from staff and volunteers to:

- Ensure that their communication with children takes place within the boundaries of a professional relationship and are open to scrutiny from other adults.
- Have no secret social contact with children or their parents.
- Take care that their language or conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation.
- Be vigilant in maintaining their privacy and mindful of the need to avoid placing themselves in vulnerable situations.
- Consider the appropriateness of the social contact according to their role and nature of their work and always have any contact approved by senior colleagues.
- Report and record any situation that may place a child at risk or compromise the service or their own professional standing.
- Be aware that the sending of personal communications such as birthday or faith cards should always be recorded and/or discussed with manager.
- Understand that some communications may be called into question and need to be justified.
- Ensure that personal social networking sites are set at private and children are never listed as approved contacts.



- Never use or access social networking sites of children.
- Never give their personal contact details to children, including their mobile telephone number.
- Never use Internet or web-based communication channels to send personal messages to a child/young person.

3.4.1. Photography Policy and Communication Consent Form

When working with children, it is easy to find ourselves thinking that many moments are worth a picture. However, we must stick to safe working practices that lead us to avoid legal problems for our staff and the infringement on the rights of our beneficiaries.

Better Days requires staff to NOT:

- Use images that may cause distress.
- Use mobile telephones or any other similar devices to take images of children.
- Take images in secret or take images in situations that may be construed as being secretive.
- Display or distribute images of children unless they have consent to do so from parents/carergivers (Communication Consent Form)

Better Days requires staff to:

- Protect the identity of ALL minors.
- Ensure that children are not exposed to unsuitable material on the Internet.
- Ensure that any films or material shown to children are age-appropriate.

These last two bullet points make special emphasis on the use we make of our own laptops and cellphones. Sometimes, the staff will use their personal electronic devices to show the children examples of things they are teaching or put music to do a workshop, for example. When we use our personal devices, even if it looks as though we are in a friendly environment, we are not. We need to be professional from the beginning until the end of our session and not share our screen devices personal material or inappropriate material with the children, even if they ask us to.

If any pictures are taken under the approval of the Project Director/Coordinator for organisation purposes, we will have to ask permission of the children's parents or guardian to be able to



distribute and publicize the photographs. This will be addressed with respect and transparency, and the Communication Consent Form will be submitted as proof of permission.

Attached at the end of this policy, you will find the Photography Policy, which includes also a Communication Consent Form, on Section 5's 5.2. Attached Documents.

3.5. Social Interaction with Children

Better Days' staff and volunteers are put in a position of power and trust: applying it in a healthy way is necessary to achieve our goals and be ethical at all costs. Confidentiality is paramount, but at the same time, concerns and incidents must be reported to the team members in the best interest of the minor. All the adults working with children become role models for them at all times, and children develop through vicarious learning (observing and imitating): this is why educators should always control their attitude, behavior, non-verbal language, words, and attire. Becoming positive role models for the children is part of our educational task and the first steps to create a safe environment.

Better Days requires staff to:

- Ensure that their relationships with children clearly take place within the boundaries of a respectful professional relationship.
- Take care that their language or conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation.
- Give care and thought to attitudes, demeanour, and language.
- Offer comfort and reassurance to a distressed child in an age-appropriate manner.
- Be circumspect in offering reassurance in one-on-one situations, and always record such actions in these circumstances.
- Follow professional guidance and code of practice.

3.6. Physical Interaction with Children

Physical interaction should be used as little as possible. Children need positive reinforcement and the feeling that adults are there for them. We sometimes show this through physical interaction, which can sometimes be a powerful tool, but it has to fulfill a purpose and should be exceptions to the common treatment. Children can get confused if they have too much physical interaction with an educator, especially because of the cultural gap, so

Better Days staff should:

- Never touch a child in a way that may be considered indecent.
- Record and report situations that may give rise to concern from any party when members of staff are dealing with adolescent boys and girls.



- Be aware of their organisation's policy on the giving and receiving of gifts.
- Give gifts to an individual young person only as part of an agreed reward/incentivized system.
- Ensure that all selection processes that concern children are fair and that wherever practicable these are undertaken and agreed to by more than one member of staff.
- Be aware that even well-intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the child.
- Always be prepared to report and explain actions and accept that all physical contact be open to scrutiny.
- Encourage children, where possible, to undertake self-care tasks independently.
- Work within health and safety regulations.
- Be aware of cultural or religious views about touching and always be sensitive to issues of gender and culture.
- Be mindful of factors that may impact upon a child or young person's behaviour, e.g., bullying or abuse, and where necessary take appropriate action.

Organisations should:

- Have in place appropriate behaviour management guidelines.
- Where appropriate, develop positive handling plans in respect of an individual child or young person.
- Provide training and have guidelines on the use of physical and other appropriate ways of intervention.
- Ensure that an effective recording system is in place that allows for incidents to be tracked and monitored.
- Ensure adults are familiar with the above.
- Ensure that staff are appropriately trained.

There could be situations in which a child or teenager becomes aggressive and represents a danger to him/herself or to others and needs to be restrained in a physical way. Only in the occasions when a child or teenager starts self-harming or tries to be physically aggressive with another we can intervene physically to contain that behavior. It is not a pleasant situation for either educator or child, but it is something that must be done to ensure the safe space we are trying to provide to everyone.

Follow these guidelines in case you find yourself in one of these situations:

- Always seek to defuse situations of aggressiveness arousal.
- Intervene in a verbal way if it is not too late, controlling your voice tone, and try to decrease the level of anxiety, nervousness, and/or aggressiveness.



- Always use minimum force for the shortest period necessary, but don't let the child go until you see signs that he/she is redirecting the behavior.
- The educator who started the physical intervention must take the child somewhere peaceful where they can be alone for a while and try to slow down the intervention by talking and redirecting all the thoughts and feelings. Finish giving the child attention when you see him/her completely calmed down (he/she should show regretment).
- It is essential that the same educator does all the steps and accompanies the child until he/she is ready to go back to the activity. This restores and empowers the bonding between the two of them after such an aggressive situation.
- Record and report as soon as possible after the event any incident where physical intervention has been used (incident report) and discuss the incident with the Project Director.

3.7. Intimate Care of Children

When working with young children, or children with functional diversity, it is sometimes required to care for children in intimate ways. This can include changing them and administering medication. It is our responsibility to meet the children's needs whilst ensuring this is done in a safe way.

Some job responsibilities, such as taking children to the toilet, administering medication or creams, and changing their clothes, necessitate intimate physical contact on a regular basis. Also, children with certain characteristics (functional diversity) get extra close to the people they appreciate or trust.

The emotional responses of any child to intimate care should be carefully and sensitively observed, and where necessary, any concerns passed to the Project Director, the PSSP, and parents/carers through the designated internal referral pathway. Everyone should be coordinated for the best interest of the minor. It is of maximum importance that all rights are preserved while interacting in a physically intimate way with a child who needs it because safety, privacy, and dignity are what we intend to highlight with these practices. Promoting autonomy and facilitating independence are among Better Days' principles, so depending on the minors' abilities, age, and maturity, we should always encourage and train them to act as independently as possible.

Falling into patronizing attitudes is common when working with functional diversity, but we must be aware of it and avoid it as much as possible. We work with our beneficiaries to restore their dignity by respecting their integrity and point of view, being empathic, and reminding ourselves of how we would like to be treated in a similar situation.



For the safety of the staff involved and to provide coordination with caregivers, parents, or other services with open communication, all physical intimate interaction should be recorded (ask the PSS Manager for template design if you have any case).

Better Days' intimate care guidelines or code of practice is based on:

- Making other staff aware of the task being undertaken.
- Explaining and informing the child of what is happening.
- Consulting with Project Directors, PSS Manager, and parents/carers where any variation from the agreed procedure and care plan is necessary.
- Consulting the PSS Manager or any PSS designated staff for any clarification or change in manners or procedures.
- Recording the justification for any variations to the agreed procedure or care plan and sharing this information with parents.
 - Ensuring that any changes to the agreed care plan are discussed, agreed upon, and recorded.
 - Avoiding any physical contact when children are in a state of undress.
 - Avoiding any visually intrusive behaviour.

Better Days requires staff to NOT:

- Change outfits in the presence of children.
- Shower or bathe with children or in the presence of children.
- Assist with any personal care task that a child or young person can undertake by themselves.
- Refrain from asking children to undertake personal jobs or errands.
- Always have another adult present in out of workplace activities, unless otherwise agreed upon with the Project Director.
- Be aware that the safety and wellbeing of the child is their responsibility until they have safely passed the child over to a parent/carer.
- Record details of the journey in accordance with agreed procedures.
- Ensure any behaviour or situation that gives rise to concern is discussed with the Project Director and, where appropriate, action is taken.
- Ensure that their behaviour remains professional at all times.
- Coordinate with the PSS Manager for clarifications, changes of procedures, or exploration of new ways to address the child's best interests.

On the other hand, Better Days requires SENIOR staff members to:



- Ensure all staff understands the extent and limitations of their role in applying basic care and hygiene tasks for minor abrasions and understand where an injury requires more experienced intervention, which might include training from the PSS Manager, nurse, or other actors.
- Ensure there are trained and named individuals to undertake first aid responsibilities.
- Request training
- Always ensure that arrangements are in place to obtain parental consent for the administration of first aid or medication.
- Undertake risk assessments in line with the organisation's policy where applicable.
- Have parental consent to the activity.
- Ensure that adults are not exposed to unacceptable risk.
- Make sure they manage the staff and volunteers with professionalism
- Ensure that any impromptu or emergency arrangements of lifts are recorded and can be justified if questioned.
- Adhere to the organisation's policy for administering first aid or medication.
- Comply with the necessary reporting requirements.
- Make other adults aware of the task being undertaken.
- Explain to the child what is happening.
- Act and be seen to act in the child's best interests.
- Report and record any administration of first aid or medication.
- Have regard to any health plan that is in place.
- Ensure that an appropriate health/risk assessment is completed prior to undertaking certain activities.
- Be vigilant in maintaining the child's privacy and mindful of the need to avoid placing themselves in vulnerable situations.
- Be mindful of the need to maintain professional boundaries.



Section Four:

PSS Reinforcement



4.1. Creating a safe environment

There is a PSS (psychosocial support) component customized for all Better Days' projects. All curricula and lesson plans are designed by the Program Director and senior staff in cooperation with the PSS Manager, who helps the teams create PSS-informed curricula.

At Better Days, we believe that individuals contain much power within themselves, but we also embrace the idea that the group can transform the reality of an individual, because within its structure and dynamics, there will be empowerment, strength, and healing achieved. Creating a safe and dignified physical space to promote a positive environment is key to achieve our goals and perform education in the way our target population needs. Teaching from the pallet is less effective in our field as children affected by trauma and displacement bring with them characteristics and challenges different from those of children who have not. Stress is an infectious venom that corrodes the body and mind, and opening to knowledge becomes a difficult task. We can not restrict ourselves to solely traditional teaching or we can not reach the kind of intervention we seek and that transformational, reflective, and alternative teaching allows.

A safe space is not only a space where children and teenagers are sent away from physical danger, stress, or trauma reliving. It goes beyond that. A safe space is the atmosphere we, the staff, intentionally create with pedagogical and psychosocial support-informed purposes. But how do we create an environment in which hope and healing can prevail? The first steps to create a safe environment are:

1. Formatting the class with equality purposes: dividing teams with equity, using the circle format or other non-traditional layouts as much as possible to encourage teamwork, promoting social engagement, using teaching strategies such as co-teaching, centre work, and learning corners.
2. Talking to the children in a polite and soft tone. Raise your voice only when necessary to gather the group or to set exceptional boundaries. Raising voices should never be the model.
3. Using check-in and check-out techniques. In order to have the student ready for intervention after arriving from the camp or after having a bad day at the shelter, we should provide them some minutes to transition to the rhythm of the class. Check-in can last between five and ten minutes, depending on the duration of the whole session



and the check-in/out technique utilised. Check-ins/outs have the aim to decrease levels of anxiety and nervousness and provide a mindful exercise that help the children relax and focus on the present moment. They can be inspired from yoga, tapping, Mindfulness exercises, or other approved methodologies that promote relaxation.

4. Calling everyone by their name. Learning and correctly pronouncing every student's name can be a difficult task because of the cultural gap. Students' names will represent a challenge to educators in the beginning, but the staff must try hard to memorize them as soon as possible. When children are called by their names from educators, especially when the educator is still new to them, they suddenly feel recognized, which is a very relieving feeling. Name tags can be used as well as introductions with the 'ball of power' and other ice-breaker activities to introduce oneself in order to memorize students' names and to get to know your students better.
5. Building a safe bond between educators and beneficiaries. The safe bonding qualities are specified in the previous 'safe working practices' section, page 26. A safe bond is always therapeutic. We should be committed to the students we work with, in a professional way, so they understand they are valuable to us, that they matter. Stability and predictability should be provided so they feel safe and they know what they are doing and going to do all the times they are with us. Staff should be seen and respected by the children as an authority, and authority that communicates in a fair, calm, and understanding tone. Comprehension, understanding, and empathy are essential in the social educational programs in the field. Make decisions based on individuals and their particular circumstances.
6. Not stressing the children/teenagers. The means is more important than the results. Sometimes educators are more focused on how the class looks or their personal success in their roles, and they forget about the individual processes of the beneficiaries. This is normal in educational environments, but we need to learn to be aware and most importantly reflective. Educators who are constantly using a high tone of voice or trying to push the children to do things faster, constantly agitating the natural rhythm of the class, can cause stress both on themselves and the students, who might not be as interested in the class as the educators. Stress on people who experience PTSD or complex PTSD or other disorders is in no way beneficial and differs completely from what providing a safe environment should look like. Holding our frustration is part of our job.
7. Providing a thoughtful lesson plan. The lesson plans give structure and stability in a class. If they are well planned in terms of objectives, materials, and duration, our beneficiaries will be busy in a good way, concentrated and focused. All educators are expected to read Better Days NFE curriculum specifically created to reflect our pedagogical philosophy mission and objectives for each project.
8. Encouraging participatory processes. Participation is key to achieving focus and concentration as well as a fluent rhythm. Make the children and teenagers participate



as much as possible. That is the way they will get to bond with each other and with the educators. Through participation, they will also make the project theirs and feel they are in that safe space where they can be creative and brainstorm about everything they think or feel without fear.

9. Enabling sense of belonging. By providing a safe space, we give students the chance to develop a sense of belonging. They feel more engaged with the projects once they feel those projects represent home and belonging for them.
10. Setting boundaries. Boundaries are as important as freedom. If a child or teenager, as well as young adults, don't see where the limits are, they can escalate behaviorally, developing a spiral of nervousness that ends up in anxiety, confrontation, aggression, or any kind of disruptive episode that brings instability to the class and destroys the safe environment. That's why we should set boundaries through prevention and consistency. Ask students to remain silent when necessary – and then do not allow them to continue to talk. Ask them to keep their cellphones put away – and hold them to it. Ask them to pay attention as soon as you see they are distracted – and don't wait until the behaviour has escalated.
11. Giving good examples with small details. The educator is a reference for the students. They pay attention to every detail, as they are great observers and they absorb from imitation (vicarious learning). Our best way to teach is by showing them the best of our behaviours, able to perform everything we ask for from them: being compassionate, using please, saying thank you, listening actively, caring about people, giving advice, being kind.

Once we have firmly established this foundation for a safe environment and we maintain it consistently and on a daily basis, there is little room for instability or disruption. The bonding increases and so does the sense of belonging, knowledge absorption, and relational skills.

4.2. PSS Procedure

4.2.1. Dealing with Disclosure of Abuse

Creating a safe environment is a powerful pedagogical and PSS-informed technique that improves the absorption of knowledge but also creates a close, safe bond between the educators, who become a daily basis reference, and the students. Because of this strong bond, it is possible that the children disclose abuse to these educators, who may be the only adults they really trust. It can sometimes be difficult to take in what our students reveal to us, but it is our duty to handle their disclosures and their needs and provide all the protection we can, within the guidelines of the organisation policy.



During the disclosure of abuse, the educator may feel hurt, panicked, and/or insecure. However, this is a time to remain detached adequately to be able to show calm and strength. These disclosures are rare and unusual. Children normally don't tell about abuse. It is something usually perceived through staff's observations of students' behaviors. Because these disclosures are uncommon, staff tends to forget the protocol of action and reacts instinctively, something that is never safe for either party.

Better Days reminds their staff to:

- Don't panic.
- Don't bring the child from one place to another, from one professional to another. The person the child discloses the abuse to must be the one to finish the intervention. If the episode happens in a class or space full of people, the child will be taken in a private space without noise or people around except for the educator doing the intervention. But after being taken to that place, the child won't be moved anywhere else, so choose well where is best for you to do the intervention.
- Be patient and allow the child to feel desperate and cry. Don't try to shut down his/her feelings/emotions/behavior for you to feel safer or because you think they need to compose themselves. They need to let go of the pain. Let them react.
- Remember that the safety and well-being of the child come before the interests of any other person.
- Listen to the child and accept what the child says.
- Look at the child directly, but do not appear shocked.
- Don't seek help while the child is talking to you. Don't let anyone or anything interrupt you.
- Reassure them that they did the right thing by telling someone.
- Assure them that it is not their fault and you will do your best to help.
- Let them know that you need to tell someone else.
- Let them know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens.
- Be aware that the child may have been threatened, so show him/her support on a daily basis. Don't forget about the disclosure, even if the child looks better.
- Write down what the child says in their own words. Record what you have seen and heard also.
- Make certain you distinguish between what the child has actually said and the inferences you may have made. Accuracy is paramount in this stage of the procedure.
- Tell your Project Director or Coordinator as soon as possible and discuss the matter with him/her.
- Refer the child to the PSS Manager so he/she can provide a more specific and professional kind of support.



- After making the referral of the child, look after yourself. Don't overwork; try not to overthink. And if you do, talk to your Project Director or Coordinator and get in touch with the PSS Manager so he/she can support you in the way you need.

The same action should be taken if the allegation is about abuse that has taken place in the past. If the person who committed the abuse was a member of the staff, it will be important to find out if the person is still working with or has access to the children. Dealing with an allegation that a professional staff member, foster carer, or volunteer has abused a child is difficult but must be taken seriously and dealt with carefully and fairly.

Things TO SAY when a child discloses:

- 'I believe you.'
- 'I am going to help you.'
- 'I will help you.'
- 'I am glad that you told me.'
- 'You are not to blame.'

Things NOT TO SAY when a child discloses:

- 'You should have told someone before.'
- 'I can't believe it! I am shocked!'
- 'Oh, that explains a lot.'
- 'No, not... He's a friend of mine.'
- 'I won't tell anyone else.'
- 'Why? How? When? Where? Who?'

Things TO DO:

- Reassure the child that it was right to tell you.
- Let them know what you are going to do next.
- Immediately seek help from the designated person for child protection (PSS Manager).
- Write down accurately what the child has told you. Sign and date your notes. Keep all notes in a secure place for an indefinite period.
- Seek help for yourself if you feel you need support (PSS Manager).

Things NOT TO DO:

- Do not attempt to deal with the situation yourself.
- Do NOT formally interview the child.



- Do not ask leading questions.
- Do not push for information or make assumptions.
- Obtain only necessary and relevant facts when clarification is needed.
- Do not make assumptions, offer alternative explanations, or diminish the seriousness of the behaviour or alleged incidents.
- Do not keep the information to yourself or promise confidentiality.
- Do not take any action that might undermine any future investigation or disciplinary procedure, such as interviewing the alleged victim or potential witnesses, or informing the alleged perpetrator, parents, or carers.
- Do not permit personal doubt to prevent you from reporting the allegation to the PSS Manager.

4.2.2. Responding to child abuse, disorders, suicide attempts, and suspected special needs

If any PSS-related issue is suspected, witnessed, reported, or disclosed, act immediately to secure the child's safety.

Listen, record and consult.

- LISTEN to the child and reassure them, but do NOT make promises or commitments you cannot keep. Do NOT formally interview the child. Obtain only necessary relevant facts if and when clarification is needed.
- RECORD any physical or behavioural observations, perceptions, and anything said by the child (using the child's own words as far as possible. Include, date, time, who was present, etc.).
- CONSULT immediately with the Project Director or Coordinator in charge. Discuss and agree on an appropriate course of action, including whether a report of concern is to be made.

Report your concern.

All concerns must be reported, including small observations and interpretations. It might be nothing, but it could be the beginning of a greater process of prevention; it could be the right moment to act.

Inform.

Consultation will take place between the designated person for Child Protection and the responsible of the project to decide who will inform the parents of the child and provide support for the family. There are different documents you can use to record all suspicions and facts:



- Responding to Child Abuse by the Staff Form
- PSS journal
- PSS referral form

4.2.3. PSS referral pathway

Working with children and teenagers on a daily basis will bring the staff a lot of information about them as the bond strengthens. The beneficiaries might verbalize abuse, suicide attempts, depression, lack of self-control, but sometimes they won't, and it will be a member of the staff who will identify signs of those things through observation and analysis of behavioral patterns. If so, all information should be recorded and a referral should be completed and submitted to the PSS Manager.

The PSS Manager will take charge of the vulnerable cases referred by the team but won't have a continuous presence across Better Days project locations on a daily basis. That is why the use of the following documents becomes essential for the PSS Manager to do the proper interventions and design accurate PSS strategies:

- Responding to Child Abuse by the Staff Form: Don't be frightened of possible retaliation. Be responsible and report any concern or suspicion.
- PSS journal: Keep a record on a daily basis of PSS-related issues or observations as a way to monitor the ongoing process. The record will be useful for the personnel of the center/project and will be vital for the PSS Manager to develop steps from the beginning until the end. Everyone's eyes are valuable, and the project's staff members spend time with the child every day. Coordination from different perspectives (pedagogical, educational, psychological) is key to resolution. The journal must also be sent to the PSS Manager or made available through official meetings or access to the Drive.
- PSS referral form: The referral form is a formal way to refer identified potential cases to the PSS Manager. The PSS Manager will receive the referral and the journal and will:
 - Start attending classes.
 - Analyze the child's behavior.
 - Design a PSS strategy both for herself and the team.
 - See the child/teenager in private and lead the PSS intervention as much as and for as long as the child needs it.
 - Attend the team in private for consultation on ways to deal with the case as well as to receive the journal and new information.

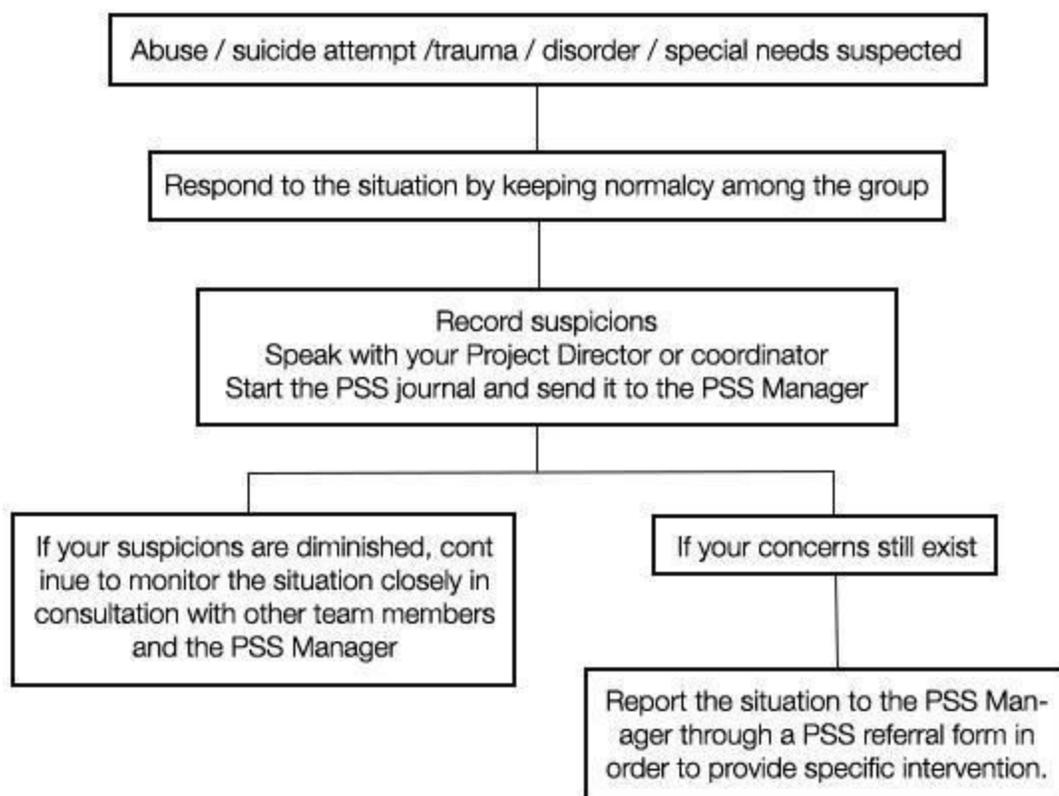


All of these documents can be found in Section 5's 5.2. Attached Documents.

4.2.4. Internal Child Safeguarding Procedure Diagram

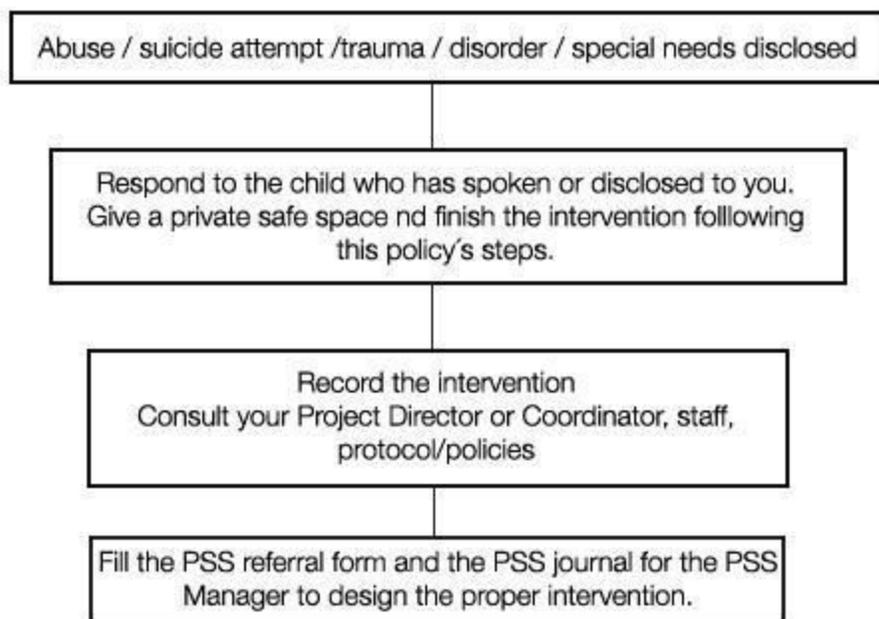
Because you work with children and teenagers on a daily basis and in a close safe way, it is probable that you find yourself identifying vulnerabilities of all kinds. In case you do, we have two different guidelines for you to follow depending on whether the issues were observed or suspected by the adult as opposed to disclosed by the child.

What do we do when we suspect a child or teenager needs safeguarding?





What do we do when the issue is disclosed by the child?



4.3. General guidelines

During our working hours in direct intervention, we might be exposed to some undesirable situations that can expose our beneficiaries to danger and us to stress. Effective decision-making will make the difference in providing protection to all parties involved.

Undesirable situations we could face while working with underage people are, of course, not necessarily likely to occur, but we must be prepared for them. It is important to understand that our responsibility is to create safe spaces, a sense of belonging, group cohesion, proper



formats, safe bonding (a relationship shifting from authority to affection), and good interventions to prevent disruptive episodes. But we should also be aware that every person carries a story, and sometimes, disruption is inevitable. Not only will we not be able to prevent it, but also it may need to happen for the good of the beneficiary's psychological process. As long as we have accomplished our responsibilities as educators, we shouldn't be frustrated; we should just keep performing in the same professional way we have so far. Here are some of the situations we can face while working with underage people:

- Absconding
- Hetero aggression and self-aggression
- Anxiety and panic attacks
- Injuries

We are not the guardians of the children, but during the small span of time they are with us in our centers, they are our responsibility and we must respond in a professional manner.

4.3.1. Absconding Protocol

Older children and teenagers could present a disruptive personality due to trauma, rage, or unresolved issues. They are trying to fit into a new society, but with highly disruptive behavior, they are likely to face limits soon and often. If the disruptive behaviour of a child or teenager escalates and they can't contain the aggression, they might decide to leave the class. In that case, try to deter them with a sharp, short, and persuasive verbal intervention.

- If there is more than one educator in the team, and if you find it legitimate, one of you can follow the child/teenager and try to talk him/her out of his/her reaction. Don't chase the student for a long period of time, just for a while, so he/she knows you are still there for her/him. Then, if this doesn't work, let the student go. It is their decision.
- If you are only one educator, never follow the person who is leaving. You are still responsible for the group in the class.
- Immediately after the student is gone, inform the shelters' coordinators so they know the child or teenager is in the streets, out of control, and in need of help because the student could easily get exposed to danger while in that state. The guardians must know where the minor is. It is also for caregivers to know what happens in a social educational level in which they are not present, so they know they have information to work with alongside the social workers and the psychologist back in the houses. The episode is addressed to the shelter coordinator, who is responsible for taking any actions.
- Write the intervention in the PSS journal and refer the case to the PSS Manager.



This protocol doesn't apply to Eco Hub, which is part of a larger project and space. If the children/teenagers leave the class, they are going somewhere else in One Happy Family, where their families are and the responsibility shifts to the family.

4.3.2. Anxiety and Panic Attacks Protocol

It is possible that beneficiaries experience anxiety or panic attacks during their stay with us. If that happens, you will probably have two reactions: 1) being shocked, or 2) being a rescuer. Neither of those reactions are productive in a situation like this. They are both extreme reactions, and what we are trying to do is normalize the episode as much as possible so the person doesn't feel even more overwhelmed and can focus on recovering.

A panic attack can be very visible, creating commotion and rampage and disturbing the whole class and its dynamics. The person who is suffering from the panic attack will possibly think he/she is going to die and he/she is going to transmit all that fear in an extreme way. People around who have a lot of empathy, including the educators, will feel highly emotionally touched by the reaction. But above all, we, staff, need to keep in mind that a panic attack or anxiety are episodes that take place in the brain, not in the body, although it may not seem that way. The person is not going to die and there is no need to call an ambulance.

During a panic attack or anxiety crisis, and depending on the person, there are different symptoms that can present, such as fear of losing control to the point of death, tachycardia and palpitation, sweat, tremors or shaking, shortness of breath or tightness in the throat, hot flushes, sickness, abdominal cramps, chest pain, dizziness, fainting, headache, feeling of numbness or tingling, feelings of unreality or disconnection, feeling of imminent danger. The panic attack or anxiety crisis can last from five to thirty minutes and, in rare cases, up to an hour. If after thirty minutes the person hasn't improved, call an ambulance. The student is still not in danger but probably (because of specific chemistry in the brain) will need benzodiazepines.

Your intervention is essential to decrease the anxiety. Here are some guidelines regarding what to do when you witness anxiety or a panic attack:

- Don't panic. You are an adult and responsible for the child/teenager and the situation.
- Maintain calm externally even if you feel insecure inside.
- Only one educator will take care of this situation, without any other kind of source of support such as volunteers, siblings, or older children who want to help, the more stimuli, the less likely to succeed. The affected person becomes more overwhelmed when they see people around them moving, talking, looking worried, looking scared.



- One educator will stay with the rest of the class and continue as though nothing has happened. That is how we provide a safe space to the rest of the students. The situation can be addressed and discussed in a circle after at least one day, once the affected person feels ready to talk about it, but not before.
- The educator who directs the intervention will take the child/teenager to a safe space, a room where they are alone, away from the noise. Stimula will exacerbate the situation.
- The educator's intervention must be focused on relaxing the student through short, simple commands and a soft and safe tone of voice.
- Slowing down the way the person breathes is key to recovery. The educator should count from one to three and breathe with the student holding a hand so he/she follows.
- It is necessary to tell the student that she/he is out of ultimate danger, that the symptoms look bad but that it is a product of the mind. Reassure the student that relaxing will bring recovery.
- Don't feel bad if you feel yourself repeating yourself during this time. There are a few messages that work in these situations. The student will have a difficult time taking these messages in, so repeat them as much as needed.
- Don't get worried if you see the hands or part of the beneficiary's face get constricted and paralyzed. It is visually frightening, but it is part of the symptomatology.
- If the student doesn't get any better after thirty minutes, call an ambulance. This doesn't mean that your intervention was incorrect; it simply means that the student needs more. At this point, the student possibly needs benzodiazepines.
- If the student gets better, stay with her/him in the empty room. Hold hands, hug her/him if it seems helpful and appropriate, show support and empathy. Don't try great speeches; let the silence do its work.
- After a panic attack or anxiety crisis, there is a phase of coming down, very similar to the phase that can occur when someone is coming down from drugs.. Accompany the student through that process. Don't leave the student alone or make her/him go to class again. The student might seem better, but after the shocking experience of having an anxiety crisis, it is not appropriate for the student to be exposed to noise and people. The student should remain in a safe space until self-regulation is regained.
- Call the responsible of the shelter so someone can come to pick-up the student. The student should be provided with as much safety as possible until arriving to his/her room. If the shelter representative refuses to assist, it is not our responsibility to take the student home. She/he can stay in the center as long as needed and then go when he/she is ready.
- Write the intervention in the PSS journal and refer the case to the PSS Manager.

4.3.3. Hetero aggression and Self-aggression Protocol



In worst case scenarios, if a disruptive situation escalates or someone is going through a hard depression, it is possible the educators might witness episodes of aggression from the beneficiaries both to others and to themselves.

If we see someone self-harming, or if we see someone with recent marks:

- One of the educators will ask the person to accompany her/him to another room.
- After having a safe, silent space, begin verbal intervention. Your purpose will be to discover basic information, allow the student to speak and find decompression, and show support.
- If the student has self-harmed in front of other students, ask the student not to do that again and explain the reasons (safety, respect, etc.).
- Talk to the student as much as he/she feels like talking to you about the issue, but try not to ask too much so the student doesn't open overwhelming trauma in this setting. Protect yourself, and protect the student.
- Once the student is ready, ask him/her to go back to class.
- Communicate with the responsible of the shelter.
- Write the intervention in the PSS journal and refer the case to the PSS Manager.

In case there is a physical fight started in your presence:

- Intervene in a physical way. Try to separate the fighting students. Make sure it is the educators who perform this task, NOT the students (even if they are stronger than you).
- One of the educators will take the student who started the fight outside to a private space where they can be alone and talk.
- The other educator will keep the class calm and continue the lesson.
- The educator who is with the person who started the fight will verbally intervene to set boundaries and to show support if indicated.
- After the student feels calmer, ask the student to go back to class.
- The same educator will then take the other student out of the class to talk.
- After the intervention is over, both students will be put together in the same space with the same educator, who will now have the role of a mediator.
- If the argument is not resolved and the parties involved don't want to make peace, don't push things further. There is no point having students end the conversation saying "I am sorry" if they aren't. They might need some days to restore their relation.
- Communicate it with your seniors. The PSS Manager will contact with the shelter staff in charge and tell them what happened. The situation could continue in the center and affect the house atmosphere.
- Write your notes in the PSS journal and refer the case to the PSS Manager.



SECTION 5:

Additional Resources



5.1. References

- The Human Rights Act
- The Privacy Act 1993
- The Employment Relations Act 2000
- The Vulnerable Children Act 2015.

5.2. Attached documents

- 5.2.1. Staff Recruitment Policy
- 5.2.2. Volunteer's Recruitment
- 5.2.3. Hiring Procedure
- 5.2.4. Confidentiality Agreement
- 5.2.5. Organisational Code of Conduct
- 5.2.6. Photography Policy and Communication Consent Form
- 5.2.7. Commitment Form of the Staff with the CSG Policy
- 5.2.8. Responding to Suspected Child Abuse by the Staff Form
 - PSS Journal
 - PSS Referral
- 5.2.9. Parental Consent for Gekko Extracurricular Activities and Field Trips
- 5.2.10. Incident Report
- 5.2.11. Absconding protocol
- 5.2.12. Hetero and Self-aggression Protocol
- 5.2.13. Anxiety and Panic Attacks Protocol