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## World Safe from Harm Policy

World Scout Committee



**SCOUTS**  
Creating a Better World



# World Safe from Harm Policy

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## Languages

*The official languages of the World Organization are English and French. The World Scout Bureau will make all Conference Documents available in both languages. When possible, it endeavours to make them available also in Arabic, Russian and Spanish - the three additional working languages of WOSM. In the event of a conflict arising out of the interpretation of this Conference Document or any other official document of the World Organization, the English text shall prevail.*

## Background

Since the adoption of the Keeping Scouts Safe from Harm resolution by the World Scout Conference in 2002, there have been several developments in National Scout Organizations (NSOs) and Regions as well as at the World level that have contributed to the progress made in the area of child and youth protection.

At the World level, the World Scout Youth Programme Policy and the World Adults in Scouting Policy include specific elements that aim to eliminate or reduce the potential for harm to children and young people. These elements are an integral part of the implementation of National Youth Programmes, and in the areas of adult recruitment, appointment, support, training and retention.

A Child and Youth Protection Position Paper<sup>1</sup> was written to establish the standpoint of the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM) on the subject. The principles outlined in the position paper have been used to guide the work in this area and support the development of this policy.

## Introduction

The Scout Movement is a voluntary, non-political educational movement for children and young people, which is open to all without distinction of gender, origin, race or creed. Scouting offers children and young people the opportunity to develop their full emotional, intellectual, physical, social and spiritual potentials as individuals, as responsible global citizens and as members of local, national and international communities.

WOSM is committed to maintain a safe environment for the development of children and young people around the world.

This commitment emphasises on the shift of perceptions and cultural practices when working with children and young people from minority, immigrant or refugee groups. Our societies are multicultural (i.e. a mix of people with different ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds) and therefore, NSOs have been entrusted with the responsibility of promoting that children and young people from different societies have equal rights and access to basic services including health, education, social protection and justice. NSOs need to be prepared to address challenges that result from different socio-economic status, discrimination and social stigma.

A commitment to protect children and young people is a responsibility shared by every individual involved in the Scout Movement. This responsibility is not limited to Scouting-related activities; it applies to any environment where children and young people are exposed to potentially harmful situations. Everyone at all levels of World Scouting need to work together to provide children and young people with a safe environment in which they are empowered to develop their full potential. The implementation of a Safe from Harm framework will create positive change and enhance Scouting's profile, particularly by:

- aligning with and working towards achieving the Mission and Vision of Scouting,
- helping to strengthen the core mission of Scouting and therefore, provide better Scouting experiences and non-formal education,
- ensuring that Scouting takes an active role in promoting child and youth protection within local, national and international communities,
- encouraging active citizenship through the development of values, competences and behaviours of individuals.

## Definitions

**Safe from Harm:** In the context of Scouting, keeping children and young people safe from harm encompasses all areas of child and youth protection work, and includes a full range of strategies, systems and procedures that aim to promote that the wellbeing, development and safety of children and young people is a priority in all Scouting-related activities.

Within the context of an NSO, the implementation of the policy requires putting in place a systemic approach to prevent and react to situations that may affect the wellbeing, development and safety of children and young people.

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<sup>1</sup> [Keeping Scouts Safe from Harm, WOSM's Position Paper on Child and Youth Protection](#)

**Child and Youth Protection:** This term is used to define the safeguarding and promotion of the welfare of children and young people, which includes but is not limited to:

- protecting children and young people from abuse,
- preventing the impairment of a young person's health or development,
- ensuring that Scouting is providing children and young people with a healthy environment in which they can grow and develop,
- taking action to promote the safety of children and young people in all possible situations.

**Safe environment:** A safe environment is an environment that promotes and supports children and young people's wellbeing, while simultaneously working to address and prevent harmful practices. There are some fundamental norms in Scouting that are non-negotiable. These include:

- The Scout Promise and Law,
- The principles of Scouting which includes the Scout Method (Duty to God, Duty to Self, Duty to Others),
- Respect for oneself and others (empowering children and young people to protect themselves and others),
- An environment that promotes openness and a diversity of views, without a fear of adverse repercussions for expressing different opinions,
- Providing equal opportunities for everyone.

Ultimately, a safe environment enables the self-development of children and young people as well as the development of positive and healthy interpersonal relationships (children and young people - children and young people; children and young people - adults; adults - adults).

**Harm:** This term refers to any detrimental effect on a persons' physical, emotional or psychological wellbeing and integrity.

**Abuse:** This term is used to describe a range of ways in which maltreatment can be inflicted on children and young people. Abuse can be categorized into different typologies such as physical, psychological, emotional and take various forms such as bullying, neglect, sexual abuse or exploitation. It is important to note that children and young people can suffer from one or a combination of these forms of abuse. Abuse can take place at home, in school, at Scouts or anywhere else.

Generally, "abuse" consists of anything which individuals or institutions do, or fail to do, which directly or indirectly harms children and young people or damages their prospect of safe and healthy development into adulthood.<sup>2</sup> The misuse of traditions, the disregard for co-educational practices, the lack of gender balance or the lack of support to children and young people with diverse and special needs are examples of practices that expose children and young people to situations of abuse.

It is an obligation in Scouting that we work to prevent any of these types of abuse and properly address it if it occurs.

**Youth:** The word "youth" in Scouting refers to all boys and girls involved in the educational programme within the Movement. The learning experience within Scouting focuses on the development of young persons. Therefore, the Youth Programme ends at adulthood (it includes childhood, adolescence and early adulthood).

The different stages of personal development determine the age sections within Scouting, which may vary according to the cultural differences and contexts in which NSOs operate. Nevertheless, the sections often fall between the five and 26 years' age range. As the word "youth" is more generic, we use the term "young people" when we refer to the membership or the active Scout members.

**Adults:** Are primarily volunteers responsible for the development, facilitation or delivery of the Youth Programme, supporting other adults or supporting the organisation's development.

**Youth Programme:** The totality of the learning opportunities from which children and young people can benefit (What), created to achieve the purpose of Scouting (Why) and experienced through the Scout Method (How).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from "Save the Children International – Child Safeguarding Protocol".

<sup>3</sup> [World Scout Youth Programme Policy](#)

**Adults in Scouting:** A systematic programme for managing adults in order to improve the effectiveness, commitment and motivation of the leadership so that better programmes are facilitated or delivered by and for children and young people. It also enhances the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the NSOs.<sup>4</sup>

## Purpose

This policy will facilitate the development and implementation of necessary policies and procedures at the National level to create a safe environment for all children and young people in Scouting. It strives to ensure that appropriate support mechanisms are in place within NSOs to facilitate proper promotion and development of National Safe from Harm policies and strategies.

## Policy Statement

This policy aims to keep Scouts safe from harm by supporting the development of National frameworks with local effectiveness that will promote the wellbeing, healthy development and safety of children and young people by providing them with a safe environment throughout their time in the Scout Movement.

Providing a safe environment for children and young people encompasses, among others, the following dimensions:

- Creating an awareness of the importance of child and youth protection,
- Involving all stakeholders (e.g. children and young people, adult volunteers and professional staff, parents, school authorities, faith-based organisations),
- Educational purpose of Scouting activities,
- Safety in Scouting activities,
- Development of personal skills,
- Promoting and encouraging positive behaviour.

The implementation of this policy aligns with the Mission of the Scout Movement by contributing to the overall development of children and young people and empowering them to undertake an active role in society.

## Scope

This policy is to be used as a resource by NSOs and all stakeholders who support the implementation of the Mission of the Scout Movement. The individual subjects of this policy are:

- Children and young people<sup>5</sup> between 5 and 26 years of age,
- Adult volunteers and professional staff,
- Any and all external stakeholders involved in supporting Scouting.

Accountability for the implementation of this policy falls upon all adults, particularly at the National level, who are responsible for leading and governing NSOs, whether their focus is on developing Youth Programmes, implementing adult management systems or performing any other support roles.

NSO and WOSM structures at all levels (e.g. World, Regional or National) are entrusted with the responsibility to strive to provide that pertinent resources are provided for the implementation of this policy, taking into account the respective level and scope of their role.

The principles and guidelines identified in this document constitute the World Safe from Harm Policy. This policy sets forth the respective responsibilities of NSOs and the various Regional and World level bodies of WOSM and their roles in adopting, adapting and implementing this policy, and putting in place the necessary procedures for regularly reviewing its implementation (a five to 10-year cycle is recommended).

The guidelines identified in this policy are not, however, to be interpreted as superseding the legal requirements or standards established in countries to the extent the policy establishes a substantially similar threshold.

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<sup>4</sup> [World Adults in Scouting Policy](#)

<sup>5</sup> The term "young people" will be used throughout the policy document. This term includes all stages of childhood of the person.

This policy is not to be used or construed as establishing a legal standard or threshold in any legal or regulatory actions against any and all WOSM organizations. Such standards or thresholds are not within the scope or intent of this provision.

## Policy

This policy sets a minimum level of implementation consistent with the expected performance of NSOs regarding the World Safe from Harm Policy, and should complement other National policies, guidelines and procedures.

It is also intended to be used as evaluation criteria when assessing or reviewing the National policies and procedures on keeping children and young people safe from harm.

### 1. Youth Programme

The educational purpose of Scouting is achieved through the implementation of quality Youth Programmes at the National level. The educational elements included in Youth Programmes will provide young people with the means to empower, motivate and protect themselves and build a positive framework of dialogue and partnership with adults.

The Scout Method is the cornerstone for the implementation of a National Safe from Harm Policy, particularly the areas that apply to the Youth Programme. When properly implemented, the Scout Method enables boys and girls, young men and young women to prevent violence, educates them to have respect for oneself and others and helps in developing a safe environment for young people. Ultimately, it enables young people to live as active citizens of their local communities in a globalised world.

The principles of Scouting support the holistic development of young individuals towards self-confident and reflective personalities. However, the principles of the Scout Method can be at the same time vulnerable to abuse, misunderstanding and misuse.

Therefore, both sides of the coin need to be considered: the Scout Method is a very valuable and supportive tool for the development of young people; however, it is also vulnerable to violation. To minimise the risks, it is important to be aware of the potential threats and to develop strategies to counter them.

**1.1:** The National Youth Programme should include guidance on developing and maintaining a safe environment for young people where NSOs

- a) Develop a culture of listening to and consulting where young people feel safe,
- b) Use existing educational objectives and learning opportunities to empower and develop the potential of young people,
- c) Maintain focus on developing educational experiences that are challenging, appealing, rewarding and safe,
- d) Develop positive change in young people in terms of values and behaviour through the Youth Programme.

**1.2:** All activities and practices of an NSO (e.g. programme, youth participation and emergency response) must be assessed to identify risks and develop adequate control mechanisms in line with the NSO's Safe from Harm Policy.

**1.3:** Monitoring and evaluation frameworks for all activities and practices of an NSO should be implemented and include adherence to the corresponding Safe from Harm procedures.

**1.4:** Safety inspections of equipment and facilities used by young people and adults are regularly scheduled and performed, based on a clearly defined set of requirements.

**1.5:** Information regarding medical, dietary and developmental needs of individuals are stored confidentially but easily accessible to those responsible for the welfare of young people.

The media, particularly the internet, has become an integral part of young people's lives, providing invaluable educational, creative and social opportunities.

**1.6:** NSOs should promote online safety by ensuring that the online environments under their control are safe environments. (E.g. NSO websites, social media platforms, etc.)

**1.7:** Guidance should be provided on how to safely use information and communication technologies, particularly those that are internet-based (e.g. websites, social media networks, digital photography), by volunteers and professional staff as well as young people who use technologies in the context of Scouting.

## 2. Adults in Scouting

The development, facilitation and delivery of the Youth Programme as well as all other functions and roles in Scouting requires the active involvement of competent adults. Adults who are attracted and motivated to join Scouting will develop the competencies needed to perform different roles throughout their time in the Scout Movement.

Implementing a safe environment in Scouting also means that all adults are listened to, taken care of and supported so that they can carry out their role at their best in all situations. It is the responsibility of each organisation to create the most appropriate conditions for adults to be able to play their role, either as volunteers or professional staff.

**2.1:** National frameworks on Safe from Harm encompass procedures and tools to provide for healthy and positive collaboration and relationships between adults, adult and young person, and young person and young person.

**2.2:** Adult recruitment, selection and induction processes align with the National Safe from Harm Policy. NSOs have tools and methods to keep this approach consistent (e.g. application forms covering essential information, a transparent screening system).

**2.3:** Leader profile (specifications) and role descriptions for all key positions and any other positions that deal with young people, should include the responsibility to keep children and young people safe from harm.

**2.4:** Adults are informed on how to communicate to all stakeholders about the safeguarding standards and procedures, and are aware of what to do if concerns about any child or young person are raised.

**2.5:** Appointments of adults are made only after all appropriate checks have been conducted. They include:

- a) Suitable background check (regularly repeated, in accordance with national guidelines and legislation),
- b) References check,
- c) Interview process.

**2.6:** Training on protecting young people from harm is included as a core component of National training schemes and made available to all adults, either volunteers or professional staff. It should cover areas such as creating situational awareness, signs and symptoms of abuse, dealing with different forms of abuse, providing information about the existing mechanisms and procedures of the NSO, etc.

- a) A core training component is mandatory during the induction period,
- b) Training on the subject is made available on an ongoing basis.

**2.7:** Safe from Harm training is kept up-to-date and relevant according to changes in legal frameworks and trends in society. The training reflects learning from the NSO's own review on safeguarding incidents.

**2.8:** The process of performance assessment for adults in Scouting includes the appraisal of elements related to Safe from Harm (e.g. risk planning and management in activities; facilitating interpersonal relationships; attitudes and behaviours).

**2.9:** Scout leaders, as important role models within the Scout Movement, are supported with expert guidance on prevention and safeguarding.

**2.10:** The NSO has a set of procedures for all adults (e.g. Code of Conduct, Whistle-blowing Policy, Bullying and Harassment Policy). These are in place to support the implementation of a national Safe from Harm Policy.

### 3. Structures

Addressing child and youth protection issues is vital for the safety of Scouts. The needs of young people must be paramount and their interests at the centre of all decision-making. It is important to ensure that everyone knows how to act and to keep the whole organisation is safe. Therefore, even recognising the different cultural and organisational backgrounds, it must be one of the key priorities in all NSOs.

**3.1:** The NSO has a written statement referring to the organisation's commitment to child and youth protection. This statement is disseminated widely to all stakeholders, and clearly explains acceptable and unacceptable behaviours.

**3.2:** All organisational policies (e.g. National Adults in Scouting Policy and National Youth Programme Policy) adopted and implemented at the National level, align with and refer to the NSO's Safe from Harm Policy. Other key organisational resources (e.g. Health policy, Equality policy and Risk Management guidelines) should also reflect the Safe from Harm Policy where applicable.

**3.3:** Young people and their families are consulted in the development of Safe from Harm policies and procedures and involved in its implementation.

**3.4:** Clearly written procedures exist for dealing with all identified issues related to the Safe from Harm Policy. These procedures are made available to everyone in the organisation and include requirements for all adults to report any suspicion of abuse immediately to the designated person or department within the NSO and ensuring that the statutory process in the country are followed.

**3.5:** A detailed plan exists that describes how to properly receive, react to and document any complaint of abuse involving young people or adults. This plan should include, but is not limited to, a procedure

- For delivering a complaint or concern,
- For ensuring immediate and continuous support to the victim,
- For dealing with any and all alleged abuser(s),
- To quickly contact the child's or young person's parents and/or other necessary persons to inform them of the situation,
- To inform relevant government or statutory authorities,
- For the proper handling of the exposure to the local press or other external media outlets
- To pre-designate a person or department within the NSO who will be responsible for facilitating these communications,
- For documenting all reported cases of abuse in detail and storing them in a permanent confidential record,
- For identifying and reporting learning arising from any incident.

The welfare of the child and young person is paramount, which means that confidentiality should not be allowed to override a child or young person's right to be protected from harm. Everyone in the organisation, including young people, must be aware that they can never keep or promise to keep secrets where the welfare of a child or young person is compromised. However, any reports of abuse are to be considered confidential.

**3.6:** The National Safe from Harm Policy and procedures should comply with existing legal frameworks such as:

- a) National constitutions,
- b) National and local laws and regulations on violence, abuse and safety and data protection,
- c) Policies and strategies on child and youth protection.

Written procedures should state clearly that the NSO will refer to government and statutory authorities to deal with any situation when appropriate.

**3.7:** The NSO should continuously learn from other organisations that have expertise in the area of Safe from Harm through partnerships and networking.

**3.8:** A body such as a committee or department at the highest level of the NSO has the responsibility to oversee all work on Safe from Harm defined through the Terms of Reference. The process of contacting this body is disseminated to all levels of the NSO.

**3.9:** The NSO has a process to ensure that it learns from past incidents and modifies the National Safe from Harm Policy and procedures accordingly. The NSO should recognise that best practices and knowledge in protecting children and young people change over time.

## 4. Scouting Events

Scouting events at all levels must reflect the principles and guidelines presented in this policy. This is achieved by covering the different aspects throughout the planning, delivery and follow-up of each event.

**4.1:** Necessary information related to Safe from Harm including a code of practise and information about how to raise concerns is provided to all attendees, both adults and young people.

**4.2:** Appropriate Safe from Harm training for the event is offered to all adults.

**4.3:** A Safe from Harm plan is developed and tailored to each event, taking into account all local legislation, and when relevant, any international dimension of the event.

**4.4:** The Safe from Harm plan is implemented and monitored throughout the event.

**4.5:** There is a system in place to identify data relevant to the Safe from Harm Policy that complies with national regulations (e.g. dietary and safety requirements, situations of abuse, etc.). This data is recorded and communicated to all stakeholders.

The World Scout Bureau and any other relevant World and Regional level structures will collaborate with the host organisation to ensure the implementation of this policy, particularly at all World and Regional events (e.g. Scout Conference, Scout Youth Forum, Scout Jamboree and Scout Moot).

# Annexes

## Policy Life Cycle

Promoting the World Safe from Harm Policy to all stakeholders and at all levels is a shared responsibility. This will make it possible to raise awareness on its importance and promote effective implementation.

The life span (the full period) for reviewing, implementing and evaluating and revisiting the policy is three triennia.

- The first triennium is for review and promotion (including updating the policy's support resources) by NSOs and necessary adjustments of other WOSM institutional documents and policies.
- The second triennium is for the actual implementation by NSOs.
- The third triennium is for continual implementation, full evaluation and review by WOSM structures.

The World Safe from Harm Policy will be reviewed regularly and updated where necessary. A reasonable period between complete reviews is five to 10 years, although some elements or procedures might be reviewed in a shorter span.

The World Scout Conference and NSOs will be kept informed on the implementation of the World Safe from Harm Policy through a triennial progress report.

## WOSM Structures – Roles and Responsibilities

All levels of WOSM – National, Regional and World – must undertake a coordinated approach for the implementation of the World Safe from Harm Policy. This requires the establishment of specific structures and systems covering three levels.

Level	Systems and Procedures
<b>National level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development and implementation of a national Safe from Harm Policy in harmony with the World Safe from Harm Policy.</li> <li>• Definition of systems and procedures for the implementation and monitoring of the National Safe from Harm Policy at the local level and production of supporting educational/ training materials and tools.</li> <li>• Identification of a Committee responsible for Safe from Harm reporting to the National Executive Committee, or its equivalent. The Committee responsible for Safe from Harm should also be linked to a network covering all territories where Scouting is available.</li> </ul>
<b>Regional level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion of the World Safe from Harm Policy.</li> <li>• Establishing Regional Safe from Harm networks, committees, etc. A Regional Safe from Harm network coordinator/contact person is appointed by the Regional Scout Committee.</li> <li>• Coordination with work groups tasked in different areas (Youth Programme, Adults in Scouting, communications, etc.) at Regional level.</li> <li>• Organising Regional events (courses, jamborees, projects, etc.) that help in the unity of the Youth Programme within the Region.</li> </ul>
<b>World level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of the World Safe from Harm bodies (networks, committees, etc.) and promotion of access to them.</li> <li>• Development of tools and providing training and support in Safe from Harm which is inclusive of all areas of work.</li> <li>• Articulation through communication and networking at National and Regional level to ensure the transition of experience and information regarding the Youth Programme.</li> <li>• Research, data collection and analysis of Safe from Harm policy implementation at World level.</li> <li>• Multilateral exchange of experience with other organisations.</li> <li>• Updating the World Safe from Harm Policy when necessary.</li> </ul>

## References

Other policies or organisational documents complement, supplement, or help explain the provisions contained within the current World Safe from Harm Policy.

These documents are:

1. [UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948](#)
2. [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990](#)
3. [Keeping Scouts Safe from Harm resolution, 2002](#)
4. [World Adults in Scouting Policy, 2011](#)
5. [World Scout Youth Programme Policy, 2015](#)
6. [Keeping Scouts Safe from Harm, WOSM's Position Paper on Child and Youth Protection, 2016](#)

## Approval phase at the Conference

The World Scout Committee moves the Draft Resolution below for consideration by the 2017 World Scout Conference.

### 2017-E World Safe from Harm Policy

The Conference,

- reaffirming Conference Resolutions 1990-16: Convention on the Rights of the Child and 2002-07: Keeping Scouts Safe from Harm,
  - considering the necessity to ensure that Scouting continues as a safe learning environment for children, young people, and adults, and the critical role that adults play in achieving this,
  - considering the Member Organizations' assessment on Safe from Harm developed by the World Scout Committee with the support of the World Scout Bureau,
- adopts the World Safe from Harm Policy, Conference Document 9, for ensuring the continuing wellbeing, healthy development and safety of children and young people during their time in Scouting;
  - resolves that any existing systems and procedures on Safe from Harm at the world level are now modified by the adoption of the provisions of the World Safe from Harm Policy;
  - invites Member Organizations to implement the provisions of the new World Safe from Harm Policy;
  - requests the World Scout Committee to allocate resources to support the implementation of the new World Safe from Harm Policy through the establishment of regional networks;
  - requests the World Scout Bureau to develop and distribute guidelines which support the implementation of the new World Safe from Harm Policy.

*Proposed by: The World Scout Committee*