

Best Safeguarding practices when engaging with individuals under 18.

Our safe practice guidelines for staff, activists, and volunteers.

Do...

- Ensure that individuals under 18 are made to feel welcome at all Amnesty International UK events and activities, and that the environment is not intimidating or scary – this is particularly important when working with children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- Before a meeting or activity, ensure that you are aware of those who may have a special educational need or disability and have spoken with them and their parents/carers to make sure you are making reasonable adjustments to include them.
- Remind everyone of the purpose of the activity and the importance of treating everyone with respect and dignity.
- Respect the cultural, religious and ethnic background of the individual.
- Encourage all involved to challenge attitudes and behaviours that are unacceptable to the group.
- Ensure that individuals under 18 know the name of at least one person present to whom they can speak if they wish and with whom they can raise any concerns.
- Before the meeting or event consider any necessary health and safety requirements which may be needed within the risk assessment
- Ensure that any bullying or harassment taken place is addressed by speaking to the individuals involved and contacting their parents or carers if needed.
- If you are concerned that an individual under 18 is at risk of abuse or harm, follow [Amnesty International UK Safeguarding Procedure](#).
- Respect their right to privacy when they share information, however if dealing with a potential disclosure of abuse or neglect never promise confidentiality.
 - In that case follow [AIUK Safeguarding Procedure](#), making sure the individual understands what you are doing and why.
- Plan your activities so that more than one person who is over 18 years of age is present or at least in sight and hearing of the activity.
- If you do need to work alone with an individual under 18, remain in general view – not ‘hidden away’ behind closed doors.
- Pick materials carefully to make sure they are suitable for a young audience. Not all Amnesty International materials are suitable. Please check guidelines/materials beforehand and check appropriateness if necessary.
 - If you consider that the content of an event or activity will not be suitable for individuals under 18 clearly state a minimum age requirement.
- If you visit a school on behalf of Amnesty International UK, ensure that a teacher or other member of the school staff is always with you - you should not be left alone with students, especially if you do not have a criminal record check.

- Seek an individual under 18s consent before taking any photographs or film them and obtain consent from them and their parent, carer or guardian for any promotional use of photographs or films of those under 18.
- Make available the telephone contact numbers which individuals under 18 can ring if they are distressed:
 - Childline 0800 1111
- Avoid physical contact wherever possible.

Do not...

- Spend time with individuals under 18 1:1, including online. On some occasions you may have a mentoring relationship or need a one-off meeting with an under 18, these should be prearranged, with parent/carers informed and consent gained.
- Have private contact with individuals under 18 through a personal social media or email account.
- Contact individuals under 18 outside the requirements of the group, project or activity.
- Allow abusive behaviour or activities such as bullying.
- Promise confidentiality of an individual under 18 makes a disclosure to you.
- Ignore any disclosure made and think it is someone else's responsibility – safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- Allow or engage in suggestive remarks, gestures or touching of any kind, even if there are no bad intentions these could be misunderstood or make an individual uncomfortable.
- Allow any physically rough or sexually provocative games, or inappropriate talking or touching, by anyone in any group for which you have responsibility.
- Allow yourself to be drawn into inappropriate attention seeking behaviours.
- Show favouritism to any individual.
- Believe "it could never happen to me", in terms of an allegation being made.

Consent...

At AIUK we want to be a progressive and inclusive place for all ages, and therefore when thinking about consent for under 18's to engage in our work, we want to balance empowering under 18s whilst respecting the parental responsibility parents and carers have and the laws around that. We have therefore decided that when an activity is low risk 16-17-year-olds are allowed to give their own consent to engage and parent/carers consent does not need to be sought. However, where there are more high-risk activities AIUK will need both the under 18 and the parent/carers consent for engagement. For more information on what this means see our consent guidance available in the AIUK Safeguarding Documents for Lead Activists pack [here](#) or for colleagues it is available in the safeguarding policy library.

What if...

You suspect an individual under 18 is being abused or neglected:

Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or AIUK Safeguarding Manager.

Record the date and facts which support your suspicions.

Refer to AIUK's Safeguarding policy and procedure for more information

If a child is in immediate danger, call the police on 999.

A child discloses to you that they have or are being abused by someone else:

Listen carefully to them. Avoid expressing your own views on the matter. A reaction of shock or disbelief could cause them to 'shut down', retract or stop talking.

Let them know they've done the right thing. Reassurance can make a big impact to them who may have been keeping the abuse secret.

Tell them it's not their fault. Abuse is never their fault, and they need to know this.

Say you will take them seriously. They could keep abuse secret in fear they won't be believed. They've told you because they want help and trust you'll be the person who will listen to and support them.

Don't talk to the alleged abuser. Confronting the alleged abuser about what the child's told you could make the situation a lot worse for them.

Explain what you'll do next. If age appropriate, explain to the child you'll need to report the abuse to someone who will be able to help

Don't delay reporting the abuse. The sooner the abuse is reported after the child discloses the better. Report as soon as possible so details are fresh in your mind and action can be taken quickly.

Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead/ AIUK Safeguarding Manager

A child discloses to you in a school:

If a child discloses to you in a school, for example as an Amnesty volunteer speaker, then you should still listen to the child, but ensure the teacher responsible for your session is informed, so that they can inform their school Designated Safeguarding Lead. You should not be alone with an individual under 18 in a school setting.

Before leaving the school premises, you should ask the class teacher or the reception staff to speak to a Designated Safeguarding Lead to report the concern. You should also inform the AIUK Safeguarding Manager who will follow up with the school to ensure the concern is being addressed through the school's safeguarding procedure.

AIUK Designated Safeguarding Leads:

Charis Belcher, Safeguarding Manager

Email: Safeguarding@amnesty.org.uk

Phone: 07879 123938 (accessible during work hours)

If it is out of hours and emergency always call the police on (999), or the relevant local authorities children services Emergency Duty Team (EDT) – these can be found through searching online – you can find these and record them in advance of an activity/event in your risk assessment.

You can also contact the NSPCC Helpline on help@nspcc.org.uk or **0808 800 5000**