



Child Protection Policy 2019



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1. Introduction

LittleBigHelp works to create better opportunities for vulnerable children and women in West Bengal, India. We work to secure basic child rights such as education and protection, along with women's empowerment through skill development.

2. Aim of the Child Protection Policy

LittleBigHelp's Child Protection Policy sets out our principles and commitment to protect the children we work with.

LittleBigHelp (LBH) is committed to protecting children from physical and mental violence, injury, abuse, neglect and exploitation and to promoting children's rights as set out in the Article 19 of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child¹ (1989) and to promoting Indian Law that supports the adherence of Child Rights, within the capacity and scope of the organisation.

The Child Rights Charter 2003 of India specifically states "*All children have a right to be protected against neglect, maltreatment, injury, trafficking, sexual and physical abuse of all kinds, corporal punishment, torture, exploitation, violence and degrading treatment.*"

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (Section 17) states, "*no teacher in any primary school shall inflict physical/corporal punishment or cause mental harassment on any child under his/her control, while transacting lessons or interacting in any learning situation.*"

Here, 'physical punishment' denotes "any action of intentionally causing pain or injury to a child, including caning or hitting him with any hard object, or spanking, smacking, slapping or pinching him, or pulling his hair, or any other act which results in physical injury to him"

Further, 'mental harassment' here implies " any deliberate and motivated imposition of mental pressure on a child not meant for or detrimental to his academic and psychological well being, and for any other collateral purposes including victimizing a child deliberately and include sarcasm meant to hurt or lower the child's dignity in front of others;"

We commit to informing and promoting child protection in local communities and at local government level.

LittleBigHelp works to develop the understanding, implementation and adherence to this policy by all those associated with.

3. Who this policy applies to

Protecting children from mental and physical violence, neglect, abuse and exploitation is the responsibility of all those associated with LittleBigHelp including:

- Team members and external educators;
- Board members in Denmark and in India;
- Volunteers;
- Consultants;
- Partner organisations;
- Donors;
- All visitors to LittleBigHelp's projects;
- Schools;
- Clubs;
- Law enforcement agencies (Police, RPF, CWC);
- Doctors;
- Coaching centres;
- Guardians;
- Local community

The above individuals will be referred to as 'Representatives' throughout this policy.

All Representatives will be given a copy of the Child Protection Policy upon their engagement with LBH and LBH is responsible for introducing and implementing the CPP at all levels and to Representatives.

All Representatives are, after the induction by LBH, responsible for having a thorough understanding of LittleBigHelp's Child Protection Policy and procedures and complying with the policy to ensure the protection of all children with whom LBH is working. They should sign a copy of the CPP in agreement.

Any breach of this policy will be dealt with by LBH's Child Protection Officer and, appropriate steps will be taken by LBH Management. A breach can lead to disciplinary action and/or termination of employment and/or partnership/relation with LittleBigHelp.

4. Core principles for protecting the children we work with

We believe that all children have a set of rights as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which we therefore follow in LittleBigHelp, and which is attached at the end of this Child Protection Policy.

All children have the right to protection from abuse and exploitation. They should be consulted and asked for advice when developing and implementing our projects on a day to day basis with the aim of promoting and securing the children's basic rights.

LittleBigHelp has a responsibility to care for the children with whom we work and a duty to react/act to improve upon the well-being, protection and dignity of the child especially through the promotion of their rights.

5. Responsibility of the Representative in contact with children

5.1. When planning a project visit for any Representative, an introduction and briefing of the Policy will be given;

- Representatives working on the project sites – by the respective Project Manager
- Representatives not working on the project sites – by the LBH Management

It is the responsibility of the Representative to:

- (a) read and understand the Child Protection Policy and
- (b) clarify any concerns or gaps in knowledge with LBH prior to the project visit

5.2. A LBH Representative in direct contact with children, including on a project visit, is representing LBH and is expected to behave appropriately and uphold LBH's child protection policy, guidelines and procedures including the code of conduct.

5.3. If a child makes any allegations of abuse to a Representative, it is the responsibility of the individual to refer to LBH's child protection procedures.

5.4. If a Representative has any queries or concerns about child protection, they should consult LBH's Child Protection Officer.

6. Child Protection Officer

6.1. The aim and role of the Child Protection Officer and Project Child Protection Officer:

One Project Child Protection Officer (PCPO) will be appointed in each LittleBigHelp child related project. The PCPO will report to the Child Protection Officer who will be in charge of reporting and monitoring on child protection issues and to inform LBH Management – the Founder and the Programme Director and Program Manager, of any violations of the Child Protection Policy (CPP) on the same day as a suspected/actual incident is reported.

Children can report any suspected/actual abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation of him/herself or any other child at the project to the PCPO or to the CPO directly. In the

case that the child reports to any other team member, that team member has the responsibility of immediately informing the PCPO regarding the incidence.

Likewise any team member, volunteer, consultant, donor, partner, or visitor, is required to report any suspected/actual child abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation of any child at the project to the CPO. He/she is also required to report himself/herself to the CPO in case of any violation of the CPP committed by himself/herself. This may for example have been necessary in self-defence.

It is mandatory for any allegation, belief or suspicion of child abuse (past or present) as defined in this CPP to be reported immediately. If a person knowingly chooses not to report an incident (including an incident as a result of self-defence), then they will be subject to disciplinary action, including possible termination of employment.

6.2. Responsibilities and tasks

The CPO will visit all the LittleBigHelp child related projects: Boys' Home, Girls' Home, Community Centres, Shalimar Pre and Primary School every month. When visiting the projects the CPO will discuss with both the children and the PCPO whether any incidences are to be reported. The CPO should be impartial, and respond with common sense when hearing complaints and accusations by understanding the larger picture before making any judgements or reaching any conclusions. Prior to the visits, there should be a clear communication between the Project Manager, the Counsellor, and the CPO regarding a convenient time for the visits and meetings with the children and PCPO.

A child or person reporting an incident must be taken seriously and listened to carefully. Once an allegation is made there should be an immediate response that protects the child from further potential abuse or victimization.

A standard formula has been developed for reporting any violations of the CPP committed by any signatory of the CPP and is attached below. Once a suspected/actual incident has been reported, the CPO is responsible for immediately forwarding the report to LBH management (the Founder, Programme Director and Program Manager) and ensuring that the complainant receives a receipt of submission signed by the LBH Management within 24 hours.

A separate standard formula has been developed for Representatives of the CPP who are reporting themselves after a violation of the CPP. Once an incident has been reported, the CPO is responsible for immediately forwarding the report to LBH management (the Founder and Programme Director and Program Manager).

6.3. How the Child Protection Officer and Project Child Protection Officer is chosen

LBH Management will appoint the LBH CPO who must have a sound knowledge and understanding of the LBH CPP including what LBH considers to be acceptable

disciplinary action. Corporal punishment is unacceptable in LBH while positive discipline is promoted.

The PCPO will be chosen by the Project Manager and Program Director.

7. Handling of and investigation of reported suspected/actual incidents:

All Representatives have an obligation to immediately report suspected/actual child abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation to LBH's PCPO/CPO. Any case reported to the PCPO will be forwarded to the CPO. LBH management will respond immediately if/when any suspected/actual report/incident of child abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation occurs.

At all times LBH Management will act in the best interests of the child. This may involve the temporary suspension of the alleged perpetrator while an investigation takes place. Any team member who has been temporarily suspended will receive full pay and is entitled to a fair and just process including appropriate information about the investigation process. No assumptions are to be made regarding guilt or innocence, with the investigation process remaining confidential until a decision has been reached by LBH Management. Regardless of the decision made, the process must be documented and filed, with all printed and electronic matter being kept in a secure and confidential place at all times.

Internal investigations as outlined above will undertake a confidential, thorough, impartial and prompt process. The investigation team may include an external expert investigator/s if deemed appropriate. The investigation may consist of interviews with witnesses and others as appropriate, collection of information about the alleged conduct, gathering of documentation, or other procedures as appropriate. The individual alleged to have violated LBH's CPP would have the opportunity to present his or her view of the events in question. LBH will hold its determination until the investigation is completed.

7.1. Standard Formula for Reporting Violations committed by CPP signatories

Project:	
Name of Complainant:	
Age and sex:	
Name of alleged victim (if different from complainant):	
Age and sex of victim:	
Has the alleged victim given consent to the completion of this form?	YES_____ NO_____
Date of incident(s):	
Time of incident(s):	
Location of incident(s):	
Physical & emotional state of victim (Describe any cuts, bruises, lacerations, behaviour, and mood): Include pictures if there are any physical signs of abuse.	
Witnesses' names (if any):	
Brief description of incident(s) (attach extra pages if necessary):	
Name of accused person(s):	
Age and sex of accused person(s):	

Job title of accused person(s):	
Organisation accused person(s) works for:	
What immediate security measures have been undertaken for the victim?	
Has the complainant been informed about the organisation's procedures for dealing with complaints?	YES _____ NO _____
Date report forwarded to LBH management:	

THE COMPLAINANT WILL WITHIN 24 HOURS OF SUBMITTING THIS REPORT RECEIVE A RECEIPT SIGNED BY THE LBH MANAGEMENT. IF YOU DO NOT, PLEASE CONTACT LBH MANAGEMENT DIRECTLY.

LBH supports those who report suspected/actual child abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation.

Date, location and signature by complainant:

Date, location and signature by Child Protection Officer:

7.2. Standard Formula for Reporting Violations committed by the complainant

Project:	
Name of Complainant:	
Age and sex of complainant:	
Name of victim:	
Age and sex of victim:	
Date of incident(s):	
Time of incident(s):	
Location of incident(s):	
Physical & emotional state of victim (Describe any cuts, bruises, lacerations (an include pictures), behaviour, and mood):	
Witnesses' names (if any):	
Brief description of incident(s) (attach extra pages if necessary):	
Date report forwarded to LBH management:	

THE COMPLAINANT WILL WITHIN 24 HOURS OF SUBMITTING THIS REPORT RECEIVE A RECEIPT SIGNED BY THE LBH MANAGEMENT. IF YOU DO NOT, PLEASE CONTACT LBH MANAGEMENT DIRECTLY. LBH supports those who report suspected/actual child abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation.

Date, location and signature by complainant:

Date, location and signature by Child Protection Officer:

8. Prevention/Information

8.1. Recruitment/engagement of new persons:

LittleBigHelp will not permit a person to work with children if that person has a proven record of child abuse or violations. Any new person working with LBH will be questioned on child protection issues and child rights during interviews to ensure suitability for working with children and young adults.

8.2. Any Representatives who will have contact with children and/or access to sensitive information on children will:

(a): Require a criminal record proving that the Representative has no records of violation of children's rights (for Danish Representatives) or a Disclosure and Barring checks (for UK Representatives).

(b): Hand over at least two written references to LBH Management (for Indian Representatives) from professional and personal referees who have known the Representative for at least two years.

(c): Introduction and briefing of the Policy to any Representative will be given;

- Representatives working on the project sites – by the respective Project Manager
- Representatives not working on the project sites – by the LBH Management

8.3. The organisation's proactive role is to ensure that it promotes the prevention of child abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation. LBH does this through raising awareness of child protection amongst all LBH Representatives via:

(a): Giving all Representatives a copy of this Child Protection Policy

(b): Giving all Representatives a copy of any updates to this policy

(c): Organising workshops and trainings for Representatives involved with, and working on, the projects

8.4. LBH Fosters a collaborative approach to child protection, working with our partner organisations and others to share best practice and support the development of theirs and our child protection policies, practices and programmes.

8.5. LBH raises awareness of child protection issues amongst the community in which we are working by organising awareness camps and by informing the guardians about their responsibilities to protect and respect their children.

8.6. LBH recognises the importance of children's participation in the design and implementation of our child protection policy, practices and programmes, helping our organisation to identify and meet children's needs.

8.7. LBH raises awareness of child protection issues amongst the children we are working with by incorporating these into the teaching, standards and interaction with the children in all our projects in a child friendly and easily understandable format.

8.8. LBH carries out on-going monitoring of the effectiveness of our Child Protection Policy, practices and program.

9. Confidentiality

Confidentiality between the child and you is crucial and anything said or done by the child on and outside of the project site should remain within LBH. If there is any suspected/actual physical or mental child abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation to a child, even if the child has asked for the information to remain confidential, it is mandatory for you to report your concern to LBH's Child Protection Officer. You should tell the child you will be reporting what they have said, to whom and why.

10. LittleBigHelp Code of Conduct

The code of conduct should be interpreted in a spirit of transparency and common sense, with the best interests of the child as the primary consideration. Acceptance, respect, and inclusion are central in the work we do.

10.1. Behaviour

Do not: perform any physical punishment of the children at any given situation. In LBH it is unacceptable to use corporal punishment or any action that inflicts physical pain on the child. Instead we encourage positive discipline.

Do: deal with all disputes and disagreements with, and between, the children and you in a calm manner ensuring a resolution of the conflict and an understanding of the child so that his/her interests are safeguarded and protected.

Do: remain impartial when interacting with the children.

Do not: discriminate or favour a child for any reason on grounds of race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, caste, sexuality or political persuasion.

Do: always work for the common good of all the children on the projects.

Do: work for the physical and mental development of the children through play, interaction, and conversations.

Do: respect and consider any cultural, religious, socio-economic or other differences of the children and yourself.

Do: conduct yourself in a responsible and respectful manner in the environments where LBH is working and please support the good relationships that we have with the local communities.

Do not: swear, insult, or perform any other disrespectful behaviour towards staff, children, and local community in the presence of the children both during and after working hours.

Do not: offer your personal gadgets like Mobile phone, Headphone, Bluetooth speaker etc. to the children as this may carry a different message to other children who didn't get access to these things.

Do: promote 'self defence' for all the children

Do: be alert to make the visitors aware about the dos and don'ts regarding Child Protection Policy. Each Child Protection Policy team member should be well conversant about the CPP of the organization.

Do: promote Community based 'Child Protection Committee' as described in the Integrated Child Protection Scheme(ICPS) in each community centre/s run by LBH.

10.2. Sexual behaviour

Do not: kiss, hug, fondle, rub, or touch a child in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way; sleep in the same bed as a child; do things of a personal nature that a child could do for him/herself, including dressing, bathing, and grooming; encourage any crushes by a child.

10.3. Psychosocial behaviour

Do: be aware of the vulnerability inherent in adult-child relationships and avoid taking any advantage this may provide.

Do not: use language that may mentally or emotionally harm any child; suggest or encourage inappropriate behaviour of any kind; show discrimination on grounds of race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexuality, or political persuasion.

10.4. Alcohol and Drugs

Do not: use alcohol and drugs in any form around the children.

Do not: smoke in front of or around the children, nor should smoking be encouraged to the children at any time.

10.5. Photos and Social Networks

Taking photos at LBH projects is prohibited unless prior arrangements have been made with the Project Manager. If permission has been granted then:

Do not: take and/or publish on social media any inappropriate photos of the children, such as wearing no clothes or in any situation that may seem uncomfortable to the child.

Do not: make friends with the children on Facebook or any other social media. In regards to emails, these can be sent to LBH Management who will then share with the children. This is to avoid any preferences and prioritising of the children and to prevent any potential jealousy amongst the children.

Do not: post stories on any social media with a picture of a child/children stating his/her/their name(s).

Do not: mention or publicise personal stories and details in relation to any name of the child to protect the privacy and the rights of the children.

Do: depending on your agreement with LBH, post pictures from the projects whilst always indicating the correct name of the LittleBigHelp project. Informing about the work of LBH is of course allowed (in accordance with your agreement with LBH) but can be described in no further details in regards to the children.

10.6. Clothing

Do not: wear see-through clothing.

Do: dress appropriately and respect the culture and practices of areas that we work in. Non-Indian clothing is allowed if it respects local culture in Kolkata.

Do: wear clothes that cover your legs from the knees and above.

Do: cover your shoulders and chest – preferably wearing a long sleeved shirt.

10.7. Gifts and Donations

Do not: give the children supported by LBH any money, gifts or unhealthy food without the consent of the Project Manager. LBH does not accept any cooking offered from external persons.

10.8. Minimising risk situations

Try to: avoid placing yourself in a compromising or vulnerable position; be accompanied by a second adult at all times; report any concerns to LittleBigHelp's Child Protection Officer.

Try not to: be alone with a child. Do not arrange to meet a child outside of project hours without LBH being present; show favouritism or spend excessive amounts of time with one child.

10.9. Dismissal

LittleBigHelp will be in its right to take actions including dismissal and legal proceedings, if any of the above points are not respected or any misconduct around the children and related to the projects and the work of LBH is found.

Child Protection Policy & Procedures and Code of Conduct Undertaking

I,acknowledge that as a person affiliated with LittleBigHelp I understand, and will adhere to, the Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct, which has been given to me to read and understand thoroughly.

I agree to comply with the Policy and Code of Conduct. I understand that a breach of the LittleBigHelp Child Protection Policy and/or Code of Conduct are grounds for disciplinary action and may lead to dismissal from employment/engagement with LittleBigHelp and possibly result in legal proceedings.

.....

Name

Organisation/Role

.....

Signed

Date

This undertaking is to be signed by:

LittleBigHelp Representative

.....

Signed (Name and Role)

Date

Annexure – I

Code of Conduct for Short-Term Visitors

Welcome to LittleBigHelp (LBH). We look forward to showing you our projects and for you to get the opportunity to meet with the team and the wonderful children at the projects.

1. As a visitor to any LittleBigHelp project you have the responsibility of reading this "Code of Conduct for Short-Term Visitors"
2. A LBH visitor in direct contact with children, including on a project visit, is representing LBH and is expected to behave appropriately and uphold the following rules and guidelines to protect the children at the projects.

3. Behaviour

Do not: perform any physical punishment of the children at any given situation. In LBH it is unacceptable to use corporal punishment or any action that inflicts physical pain on the child. Instead we encourage positive discipline.

Do: conduct yourself in a responsible and respectful manner in the environments where LBH is working and please support the good relationships that we have with the local communities.

Do not: swear, insult, or perform any other disrespectful behaviour towards the team, children, and local community (slum community, football club, local schools etc.) in the presence of the children both during and after working hours.

Do not: smoke in front of or around the children, nor should smoking be encouraged to the children at any time.

4. Photos and Social Networks

Taking photos at LBH projects is prohibited unless prior arrangements have been made with the Project Manager. If permission has been granted then:

Do not: take and/or publish on social media any inappropriate photos of the children, such as wearing no clothes or in any situation that may seem uncomfortable to the child.

Do not: post stories on any social media with a picture of a child/children stating his/her/their name(s).

Do not: mention or publicise personal stories and details in relation to any name of the child to protect the privacy and the rights of the children.

Do not: make friends with the children on Facebook or any other social media. In regards to emails, these can be sent to LBH Management who will then share with the children. This is to avoid any preferences and prioritising of the children and to prevent any potential jealousy amongst the children.

Do: depending on your agreement with LBH, post pictures from the projects whilst always indicating the correct name of the LittleBigHelp project. Informing about the work of LBH is of course allowed (in accordance with your agreement with LBH) but can be described in no further details in regards to the children.

5. Clothing

Do not: wear see-through clothing.

Do: dress appropriately and respect the culture and practices of the areas that we work in. Non-Indian clothing is allowed if it respects local culture in Kolkata.

Do: wear clothes that cover your legs from the knees and above.

Do: cover your shoulders and chest – preferably wearing a long sleeved shirt.

6. Gifts and Donations

Do not: give the children supported by LBH any money, gifts or unhealthy food without the consent of the Project Manager. LBH does not accept any cooking offered from external persons.

Thank you for your consideration.

Enjoy your visit.

LittleBigHelp Team

Annexure – II

Operating guidelines to deal with runaway or absconding children²

If a child is threatening to run away from the shelter home, no matter whether the child is serious, or is he/she is just testing your reactions, in this situation the following guidelines may be helpful. Runaway children are at a serious risk; dangers of a homeless life (such as drugs, alcohol, illnesses, prostitution, physical abuse and beatings, problems with police, death) and consequences children face living on their own are usually far worse than the problems they ran away from.

This suffering of runaway children can be avoided with education, counselling, patience, love and a will to overcome and resolve whatever problems they may have.

Helpful guidelines on how to deal with runaway children:

- i. **Listening:** Recognize the best time and friendly atmosphere, and encourage the child to open up. Listen to what they have to say. Don't judge them, ridicule them or try to force your opinions upon them – simply take time, show patience and listen. Focus on the child's feelings rather than on your own.
- ii. **Avoid the heat of argument:** Caregivers get scared of possible consequences from what their runaway child might do. Too much emotion can lead to losing control during the conversation and hurtful things said in the heat of argument are later hard to overcome.
- iii. **You have the power of positive influence:** Remember, no matter how it may seem to you, children are deeply connected to their peer group or team members and you can still influence them in many ways to better the problematic situation. Try to stay calm. Pause and take time to figure out constructive ways to address the issues rather than say insulting things out of anger you will regret later.
- iv. **Making the child feel loved and wanted is crucial:** It's very dangerous if the child feels that the team members have given up on them. Out of despair, runaway children might do dangerous things they otherwise never would.
- v. **Finding a middle ground:** Your child is developing and discovering her/his own identity. Caregiver should recognize that; if children never "get their way" and do things the way they want, it may leave them feeling powerless and desperate. This creates a build-up of negative emotions and dangerous overreactions.
- vi. **Take threats of running away seriously, but don't allow manipulation:** Saying things like "You wouldn't dare" or "You'll be right back" are the worst things a caregiver can do in dealing with runaway children. Take time to create

²Acknowledgement: BILJANA ADAMOVIC

<http://kidsfirstcommunity.com/family-concerns/parents-guide-what-to-do-and-how-to-deal-with-runaway-kids/>

a loving, caring and understanding atmosphere. However, sometimes a child says they will run away just as leverage to get their way. Be patient and talk to them; try to figure out what is behind the threats. Emphasize that it's ok to have different opinions and you respect theirs. Explain that running away will not solve problems and the risks of homeless life are not worth it. No matter how serious problems are, there are always solutions that to lead a better and happier life.

- vii. **Seek help from others:** Sometimes, while working to resolve problems, it may be productive to take some time apart. The child can stay few days at a family or some other responsible person you both trust. Seek counselling – professionals will support overcoming problems with constructive advice.

Try your best to remain calm. **If you are calm, you will be more able to remember important things that will help you find your child.**

Ask your child's friends for clues where he/she may be. In most cases, **at least one friend has information.**