

POLICY FOR THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

Approved by Resolution of the Board
of Directors no. 8 of 13/02/2023

ISTITUTO DEGLI INNOCENTI
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OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN**

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The Board of Directors of the Istituto degli Innocenti
in office since 24 January 2022 (Resolution no. 1/2022)
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Index

Aims and general principles	5
IDI mission	5
Preventing every form of violence, maltreatment and abuse	6
Principles	
People and responsibilities	
Measures and procedures	
Commitments to policy implementation in the areas of intervention	8
Management of reception services	
Research activities involving children	
Cultural activities	
Communication	
Monitoring and reporting	10
Annex 1 Definitions	11
Annex 2 Reporting procedures	13

Aims and general principles

The premise of this Policy document is to represent every child under 18 years of age of male and female gender as an individual originally bearer of the values of identity and diversity, and naturally capable of actively and constructively going through experiences that, starting from families and in connection with other environments involving children, accompany their development in terms of relationships, knowledge and learning.

Therefore, the first objective is to take measures aimed at promoting the abilities and potential of girls and boys throughout childhood and adolescence, recognising and enhancing their different individualities, preventing even potential exposure to risky and abusive circumstances.

Safeguarding, protecting and rehabilitating in any context where children's living conditions expose them to risky and abusing circumstances are all complementary to this objective.

This Policy defines and outlines guiding principles, roles, responsibilities and approaches towards its implementation that will ensure that this commitment is an integral part of every different area of work in the organisation.

IDI mission

The Istituto degli Innocenti di Firenze (IDI) is a Public Sector Company providing Care Services dedicated to the promotion and protection of the rights of children and adolescents, in accordance with the principles enshrined in the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, adopted in New York on 20 November 1989 and ratified in Italy with Law no. 176 of 27 May 1991, referred to in the Institute's Statute.

IDI is an autonomous body operating under the control of the Region of Tuscany in accordance with Regional Law no. 43/2004.

The guidelines are expressed by a Board of Directors appointed by the Region of Tuscany, the Metropolitan City and the Municipality of Florence.

The Institute carries out documentation, research, analysis and training activities on issues relating to children, adolescents and families, with particular focus on the prevention of all forms of social exclusion or risk of violence and abuse against children and young people.

In keeping with its historical mission, which has meant that it has been operating uninterruptedly since 1445, the Istituto degli Innocenti offers a diversified range of services for children, young people and families: from reception centres for children and single-mother families in fragile conditions to educational services for the 0-6 age group, to cultural services that promote and popularise a unique historical and artistic heritage.

The Istituto degli Innocenti works in cooperation with local and regional authorities, central state administrations as well as international institutions and non-governmental organisations.

Preventing every form of violence, maltreatment and abuse

As an organisation working to promote and protect rights, the Istituto degli Innocenti strives to guarantee the right of all children to live in safety, without fear of abuse or exploitation, or any other form of violence, as laid down in the *UN Convention (CRC)*. The Institute is therefore committed to keeping children safe from violence by all reasonable means.

On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) of 1989 and the 600th anniversary of the establishment of the Institute, this commitment was detailed and developed in a document entitled [Manifesto of the Rights of the Child](#). The Manifesto was adopted by the Istituto degli Innocenti in 2019 in order to address the new challenges posed by the contemporary era to the rights of children and young people, such as migration, the need to invest in parenting and education with particular focus on developing educational opportunities in the 0-6 age range, digital innovation, and environmental sustainability perceived both as an ecological dimension and in terms of well-being from an intergenerational perspective too. These challenges need to be faced while being aware of the central responsibility of institutions that also need to act as advocates and guarantors of children' and young people's participatory processes.

Principles

This Policy is based on a set of principles derived from the 1989 *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)* and is in line with the European Union's guidelines on the subject. It includes the following points:

- Any kind of violence towards children is avoidable and must therefore be the subject of specific preventive actions;
- No type of violence towards children is justifiable;
- All children have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation;
- Children's right to be heard must be systematically respected in all decision-making processes and their views must be given due consideration; their empowerment and participation must be at the centre of protection and care programmes and strategies;
- The principle of the best interests of children must be respected in all matters concerning them, particularly when they are victims of violence, as well as in preventive measures.

People and responsibilities

Whilst it is not possible to eliminate all risks of abuse, violence or maltreatment, the Istituto degli Innocenti is committed to ensuring that such risks to children are identified, monitored and reasonably mitigated as part of the evaluation of all its activities.

The issues raised within this Policy will be dealt with confidentially, fairly and promptly, ensuring the safety and welfare of all those involved.

Promoting children's rights and protecting them imply a shared responsibility,

in the sense that the success of prevention and protection initiatives depends on the commitment to and respect for the principles of this Policy by everybody working on behalf of the Istituto degli Innocenti (employees, companies and collaborators).

Therefore, all the staff and collaborators of the Institute undertake to comply with the Code of Conduct for employees of the Istituto degli Innocenti of Florence approved by resolution of the Board of Directors no. 1 of 16 January 202. On the basis of the principles set out herein, this resolution aims at avoiding actions or behaviour that may be inappropriate or potentially negative even towards children.

The following commitments must be ensured:

- Being alert to even potential risk situations for children, and promptly reporting them to the competent person in charge;
- Reporting any suspicious or certain potential abuse or maltreatment of a child, as set out in this Policy;
- Developing and disseminating a culture of openness that enables staff, volunteers, children and carers to raise and discuss all kinds of issues and concerns with ease;
- Developing children's skills and abilities, helping them to understand their rights, acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and what to do if a problem arises;
- Fostering children's participation in all those activities aimed at supporting the development of self-protection skills.

The Istituto degli Innocenti is committed to verifying that people working in its services as employees, collaborators and volunteers, for functions that include direct and constant contact with children, have not been convicted of sexual exploitation offences. It also requires a similar guarantee from private operators who manage the Institute's educational and social services involving direct and constant contact with children.

The Istituto degli Innocenti provides newly recruited staff with specific training on this policy and its procedures on the protection and safeguarding of children. The Istituto degli Innocenti also organises periodic refresher training for all staff.

Measures and procedures

The Istituto degli Innocenti is committed to creating a safe environment for children by adopting safety, prevention and protection measures that must be observed in organising its activities.

The Istituto degli Innocenti undertakes to protect children from conditions of risk of violence, maltreatment or abuse by committing to adopting the following measures:

- Ensuring that all staff and volunteers are **aware** of the problem of child abuse and the conditions that may be a risk or prelude to it (**information and awareness-raising**);
- Developing **prevention** measures through training and dissemination of good practices and procedures, so that staff and volunteers minimise the likelihood of risky conditions for children (**training**);
- **Analysing** potential risks for children and identifying mitigation measures

(**risk assessment and mitigation**) in the different areas of intervention of the Institute.

- Ensuring that **reporting** risky or violent circumstances, ill-treatment or abuse is timely, as are the responses that must promptly follow (**reporting**) through clear and widespread knowledge of the procedures to be followed.

Commitments to policy implementation in the areas of intervention

Management of reception services

The policy of the Istituto degli Innocenti on managing reception services for children is generally inspired by recognising, respecting and fostering the identity and diversity of every child.

Care of the space must be achieved by promoting the feeling of welcome and well-being, having in mind the group as a social reference in which the relationship with adults is balanced with the relationship between children as well.

Recognition of the identity of each child entails a listening function that must precede and accompany each phase of the relationship and inspire the various opportunities offered to the group of children.

The balance between care and ideas for different activities made immediately available to children must be combined with adults' attention to ensuring that each child is part of suitable and unhurried individualised relationships over time.

Commitment to documentation, with particular regard to documents showing children's central role in the process that accompanies the development of their experiences, eschewing evaluative approaches of a traditional kind or oriented towards discriminating children on the basis of their level of competence, is - in addition to the proper focus on ensuring that children value their experiences - an indispensable aid for reflecting on the work of educators, as well as an important basis for supporting interactions with families.

As the services managed by the Istituto degli Innocenti are primarily aimed at children from 0 to 6 years of age, the importance of the relationship with families is not just complementary, but also fundamental in guaranteeing every appropriate connection between the different environments and relationships that involve all children throughout their lives.

All data will be treated in accordance with international and national regulations and in particular with the *Regulations on the treatment of personal data adopted by the Istituto degli Innocenti* (approved by Resolution of the Board of Directors no. 8 of 12/02/2020).

Research activities involving children

Researchers at the Istituto degli Innocenti are responsible for ensuring that the highest ethical standards are met in all research activity involving children, regardless of approach, topic or content.

Research based on ethical standards is carried out with integrity and respect for children, their views and cultures. Involving children in a respectful manner implies recognising and valuing their identities and competences.

Children involved in research activities are entitled to fair treatment. This implies that all children receive equal treatment, that benefits and burdens are evenly distributed, that children are not unfairly excluded and that barriers to involvement based on discrimination are overcome.

Researchers should strive to prevent any potential risk of harm and assess whether a child's need for participation is justified.

Children's consent must always be obtained along with that of parents; any other requirements necessary for the research to proceed ethically must be met. Consent should be based on a balanced and fair understanding of what is involved in and after the research.

Expressions of disagreement or withdrawal by the child should always be respected.

Undertaking research involving children requires awareness, care and responsibility. Research based on ethical standards implies that researchers constantly reflect on their work to ensure continuous attention to assumptions, values, and practices that might influence the research process and impact children.

All data will be treated in accordance with international and national regulations and in particular with the *Regulations on the treatment of personal data adopted by the Istituto degli Innocenti* (approved by Resolution of the Board of Directors no. 8 of 12/02/2020).

Cultural activities

Cultural enjoyment is an important factor for the well-being of the new generations and for combating educational poverty.

The Istituto degli Innocenti holds a monumental, historical and artistic heritage of primary importance also because it is strongly connected to the history of the children it has welcomed.

In addition to conservation, the Institute ensures the popularisation of its heritage with activities and initiatives specifically aimed at children and young people.

The policy of the Istituto degli Innocenti on managing its museum and educational services as well as its workshops that welcome children, even for short periods, is generally inspired by the recognition, respect and promotion of the identity and diversity of each child.

Cultural and educational opportunities must ensure safe and engaging experiences of growth and knowledge expansion. They must be offered by promoting a feeling of welcome and well-being, conscious enjoyment on a child's or young person's scale, and stimulation of interest also through age-appropriate language and modalities.

All data will be treated in accordance with international and national regulations and in particular with the *Regulations on the treatment of personal data adopted by the Istituto degli Innocenti* (approved by Resolution of the Board of Directors no. 8 of 12/02/2020).

Communication

The Institute promotes communication on childhood and adolescence based on the certainty, truthfulness, verifiability and scientific nature of the topics dealt with and the content being disseminated.

The life and privacy of the people involved in the communication are also respected, without the communication in any way harming the rights of those concerned, with particular attention to communication activities concerning children and young people. In this case, the Institute adopts - and respects - the principles contained in the *Treviso Charter*, approved in 1990, which lays down the ethical rules that information practitioners must abide by when dealing with issues concerning minors. The Charter draws its inspiration from the principles and values of the Italian Constitution, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and international and European regulations. It guarantees that the best interests of children and adolescents are paramount and has, as its primary and binding purpose, the protection of the harmonious development of the identity of children and adolescents without distinction of gender, social status, ethnic origin, nationality, language, religion and political belief.

Monitoring and reporting

Monitoring the implementation of this Policy is the responsibility of both the policy-making bodies and all staff working in the organisation.

In order to ensure that the implementation of this Policy is monitored, a Monitoring Committee has been appointed to verify its implementation periodically.

The Committee is appointed by the Board of Directors, chaired by an official and consists of a maximum of five members chosen from the Institute's permanent employees. The secretarial functions of the Committee are performed by the youngest employee.

A special mailbox is available (childpolicy@istitutodeglinnocenti.it) to which reports of circumstances and facts that call for action within the framework of the full implementation of this Policy may be addressed, using the form in Annex 2.

ANNEX 1

DEFINITIONS

Child. In line with the *1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, for the purposes of this Policy, **a child is defined as any human being under the age of eighteen** (CRC Article 1).

Violence against children. In line with the definitions of the World Health Organisation (WHO), abuse or maltreatment of a child is defined as any form of physical and/or emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect or negligence, or any other form of commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, or to the child's survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

Physical abuse of a child is that which results in actual or potential physical harm due to an act or omission that is within the reasonable control of a parent or persons in a position of responsibility, power or trust over the child.

It may involve a single or multiple behaviour.

The physical abuse of a child is punished by the Italian Criminal Code through a series of provisions: abuse of means of correction (Art. 571), maltreatment against family members and cohabitants (Art. 572), infanticide in conditions of material and moral abandonment (Art. 578), incitement to or aiding and abetting suicide (Art. 580), beatings (Art. 581), injuries (Art. 582 and 583), practices of mutilation of female genital organs (Art. 583 *bis*), private violence (Art. 610).

Sexual abuse of a child is the involvement of the child in sexual acts, with or without physical contact, in which the child cannot freely give consent due to the exercise of an overpowering position by the abuser.

The definitions of sexual violence in the Criminal Code (PLEASE NOTE: the Code does not mention minors in the titles of articles) are as follows:

- Sexual violence (Art. 609 *bis*): coercion, with violence or threat or through abuse of authority, to perform or undergo sexual acts.
- Sexual acts with minors (Art. 609 *quater*).

The law punishes anyone who, outside the cases provided for in that Article, engages in sexual acts with a person who, at the time of the act: (1) has not attained the age of fourteen years; (2) has not attained the age of sixteen years, where the offender is an ascendant, parent, including an adoptive parent, or cohabiting parent, guardian, or other person to whom, for reasons of care, education, instruction, supervision or custody, the child is entrusted or who has a cohabiting relationship with the child. A minor who, outside the cases provided for in Article 609 *bis*, engages in sexual acts with a minor who has reached the age of thirteen shall not be punished if the difference in age between the subjects is no more than three years.

- Corruption of a minor (Art. 609 *quinquies*): performing sexual acts in the presence of a person under the age of 14 in order to make him/her watch or cause him/her to watch sexual acts or showing pornographic material to him/her in order to induce him/her to perform or conduct sexual acts.
- Solicitation of minors (Article 609 *undecies*): any act aimed at gaining the trust of a minor through artifice, flattery or threats, including the use of the Internet or other networks or means of communication.

- Child pornography (Article 600 *ter*): any depiction, by whatever means, of a child under the age of 18 engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities, or any depiction of the sexual organs of a child under the age of 18 for sexual purposes.
- Virtual images (Art. 600 *quater.1*): images created by graphic processing techniques not associated in whole or in part with real situations, whose quality of representation makes non-real situations appear real.

Psychological abuse. It includes failure by a caregiver to provide a suitable living and relationship environment for the child and includes acts that may have a negative effect on the child's development and emotional health. Such acts include, for example, restriction of the child's movement, denigration, derision, threat and intimidation, discrimination, rejection and other non-physical forms of undermining treatment.

Neglect. It refers to failure on the part of a caregiver to take care of the child's development in one or more of the following areas: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, housing and safe living conditions.

ANNEX 2

REPORTING PROCEDURES

**ISTITUTO DEGLI INNOCENTI DI FIRENZE
POLICY FOR THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION
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REPORTING FORM

Reporting party _____

Date _____

SUBJECT

(brief description of the circumstances, facts and people involved)

Contact details *telephone no.* _____

mail _____