

## CODE OF CONDUCT AND VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

This Volunteer Agreement describes the arrangement between Spark! and volunteers.

Spark! makes a positive contribution to a strong and safe community and recognises the right of every individual to stay safe. We work with partners such as schools and employers to facilitate high quality, meaningful and safe work experience placements and take our responsibilities for safeguarding seriously.

This document seeks to ensure that Spark! undertakes its responsibilities regarding the protection of children and will respond to concerns appropriately and clarifies the organisation's expectations for staff and partners with whom we work.

As a charity we also comply with the Charity Commission's requirements in respect of safeguarding.

### **What is safeguarding?**

Safeguarding is about embedding practices throughout the organisation / programmes to ensure the protection of children wherever possible and dealing sensitively and appropriately with the situation should any incident arise which places a child at risk or in which a child has suffered abuse.

Abuse is a selfish act of oppression and injustice, exploitation and manipulation of power by those in a position of authority. This can be caused by those inflicting harm or those who fail to act to prevent harm. Abuse is not restricted to any socio-economic group, gender or culture.

It can take several forms, including the following:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect

### **Legislation and Guidance**

The key legislative framework for safeguarding matters relevant to those with who Spark! work is contained in; the Children Act 2004, the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 as amended, the Education Acts and the Education (Independent School) Regulations 2014.

### **Safeguarding concerns and reporting procedures**

Where any safeguarding concern arises, whether as a result of an occurrence during an activity or arising from a complaint or otherwise, the concern will be treated seriously and dealt with in accordance with this policy and procedures.

When dealing with a complaint, accusation or whistleblowing, whether it is from a child or a concerned adult, the approach is the same:

- Stay calm and listen carefully to what is said.
- Reassure the person that to tell is the right thing to do.
- Find an appropriate and early opportunity to explain that it is very likely that the information will be shared with others. Do not promise to keep secrets even if the person threatens “only to tell” if it is a secret.
- Allow the person to dictate the pace.
- Ask questions only to seek clarification and make sure they are not leading questions. Explain what will happen next, who will be told.
- As soon as possible record in writing what was said using the person’s own words whenever possible. Include any dates, times, names, name of person making record and make sure it is dated and signed.
- Also record the name of the person or persons with whom the information will be shared.
- Report to the Safeguarding Office (ie Spark!) as soon as possible.

It is not the responsibility of anyone in Spark! to decide whether or not a child has been abused. It is however everyone's responsibility to report concerns and comply with this policy.

Children have the right to have their information dealt with sensitively and confidentially. However, confidentiality will never be a barrier to good safeguarding practice.

If a child tells a professional that they or another person is being hurt physically, sexually or emotionally, or likely to be hurt in the future, or in danger of hurting someone else, then the professional will have to tell other people. Professionals will not promise to ‘keep secrets’ and will always make it clear that if they are told something that means someone is at risk of harm or is being harmed, this will have to be passed to the Safeguarding Officer.

Wherever possible, confidential information will not be passed to statutory agencies without the consent of the owner. There may be times, however, when disclosing confidential information without consent is necessary to safeguard a child or because the information suggests that there is a risk to others. If this is the case, information will be passed to the appropriate statutory agency by the Safeguarding Officer, making it clear that consent has not been sought and why, or that consent has been refused. The reasons for the disclosure without consent must be recorded and stored securely by the Safeguarding Officer.

You can expect Spark! to provide the below support, as appropriate:

- To provide a thorough induction on the work of Spark!, and the induction and/or training you need to meet the responsibilities of this role, including safeguarding responsibilities.
- To explain the standards we expect for our services and to encourage and support you to achieve and maintain them.
- To provide a named person with whom you can email or call to discuss your mentoring and any successes and problems.
- To provide a training session around safeguarding of students to include information and protocol around disclosure and confidentiality.

Spark! expects you:

- To support Spark’s aims and objectives;

- To strictly adhere to the Spark! code of conduct and safeguarding policy
- To be open and honest in your dealings with us
- To follow the organisation's procedures and standards, including health and safety and safeguarding as outlined in the training - including absences
- To let us know if we can improve the service and support that you receive.
- To inform your mentee about the disclosure of information and confidentiality protocol.
- To report any distressing information regarding your mentee to the appropriate contact at Spark!
- To follow the necessary process of raising concerns and feedback to Spark! and schools.

### **Online safeguarding**

Whilst interacting with young people online, volunteers must agree to the following code of conduct.

- Dress appropriately, as you would in an office environment
- Ensure that the room in the background of the call is appropriate:
  - Neutral where possible
  - No age inappropriate objects (such as alcohol)
  - No family photos should be displayed in your background
  - Not in a bedroom
  - Not where others may interrupt the call
- Do not share weblinks in the chat unless approved by a member of Spark! team
- Do not share personal information, such as where you live, location, DOB, last name
- Use language that is age appropriate (*14/15 year old students*)
- Do not record or take screen shots of the workshops in line with GDPR regulations
- Do not attempt to contact students outside of the video call. Do not respond to students if they approach you. If they do, please report it to Spark! Immediately, including requests to connect on LinkedIn/other social platforms.

**Failure to follow this may result in them being removed from the call and further action taken where necessary.**

Spark will also ensure:

- There are two adults on every video call, one being a member of staff at Spark! & a school link worker to help manage behavior/supervise throughout the workshop.
- Reputable online platforms are used, with additional security in place such as 'locking' the room and enabling 'waiting room' functions
- Provide training to volunteers to reinforce this guidance
- Seek consent from young people and parents and provide clear information about the programme
- Provide clear rules and guidance for students for online interactions and sharing of information

### **At Spark!, we believe that:**

Young people should never experience abuse of any kind. Children should be able to use the internet for education and personal development, but safeguards need to be in place to ensure they are always kept

safe online. The online world provides everyone with many opportunities; however, it can also present risks and challenges.

- We have a duty to ensure that all young people and adults involved in our organisation are protected from potential harm online
- We have a responsibility to help keep young people safe online, whether or not they are using Spark’s network and devices
- All young people, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse

Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people’s welfare and in helping young people to be responsible in their approach to online safety.

**Spark! Contact Details:**

Georgia Ford - Head of Programmes (Designated Safeguarding Officer)  
[georgiaford@sparkcharity.org.uk](mailto:georgiaford@sparkcharity.org.uk)

Matt Lent - Chief Executive Officer of Spark!  
[mattlent@sparkcharity.org.uk](mailto:mattlent@sparkcharity.org.uk)

NSPCC Helpline: 0808 800 5000

**I confirm that I have read and agree to abide by the Volunteer Agreement terms.**

**Signed:** .....

**Organisation:**.....

**Name:**.....

**Date:**.....