



DI-370-01

**CODE OF CONDUCT:  
Prevention of abuse and  
safeguarding**

Next review date: November 2020

L'Arche International  
Human Resources  
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2	02/20	DI-370-01- Code of Conduct-v2-EN	TGN-CBN-TKG – Febr. 2020	EN-FR
1	01/19	DI-370-01- Code of Conduct-EN	ISB – January 2019	EN
Version	Date	Policy and Procedure Document - 300	Date and place of approval	O.V.

# 1. Introduction

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## 1.1 Why do we need a code of conduct?

### **Because of who we are:** <sup>1</sup>

L’Arche brings together people who share life in communities that belong to an international federation.

Mutual relationships and trust in God are at the heart of our journey together. We celebrate the unique value of every person and recognise our need for one another.

### **Because of what we do:**

Our mission is to make known the gifts of people with intellectual disabilities, revealed through mutually transforming relationships, and to work together to build a more human society.

In order to fully live out our mission and to be accountable to our own standards and to the human rights of people with and without disability, we need to be particularly pro-active in safeguarding to protect our most vulnerable members across the Federation.

## 1.2 What is the underlying principle of this code of conduct?

Relationships are central to the identity and mission of L’Arche. Given that we often speak of “mutually transforming relationships”, we recognize the need to clarify this terminology. This code of conduct seeks to establish clear guidelines and name the boundaries of these relationships.

Mutually transforming relationships refer to relationships between all those who participate in the life of a L’Arche community and beyond– people with and without intellectual disabilities, regardless of their specific roles.

Mutuality implies certain equality between both partners in the relationship. We affirm the fundamental equality between us as human beings. We also recognize that there can be an imbalance of power and/or capacity to function that creates an inequality in relationships, particularly between assistants and persons with intellectual disability<sup>2</sup>.

The vulnerability of this inequality needs to be acknowledged, and clear boundaries regarding how we touch and assist others must be respected in all circumstances, particularly in the domain of personal care.

L’Arche therefore commits to establishing a protective environment with zero tolerance towards abuse/violence of any kind to our members.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on our Identity & Mission statement

<sup>2</sup> An ‘assistant’ is anyone who chooses L’Arche, as a way of enjoying a shared community life together with our members with and without disabilities.

### 1.3 To whom does it apply?

This code of conduct applies to those communities directly supported by L’Arche International and those countries who do not by law or practice have a policy that meets or exceeds the standard set out in the L’Arche International Code of Conduct. It will be the responsibility of each country to ensure that their policy meets or exceeds the standards set out in the L’Arche International Code of Conduct.

It therefore applies to all people, with and without intellectual disability, taking part in the life of L’Arche, whether employed or in a voluntary capacity.

This includes any person who is in direct or indirect caregiving, working and/or personal relationship with community members such as assistants and leaders of all levels, employees such as office/admin staff, board members, friends who volunteer on a regular basis, or any member who provides spiritual accompaniment or mentoring support for the community or individuals.

This list is not exhaustive, and it is up to the judgement of every level in the organization to extend the list to other individuals who are in regular contact with L’Arche members.

The code applies to all these people in all situations, during working hours and outside working hours.

## 2. Putting our values into practice

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### 2.1 How to apply this code of conduct?

This policy is part of a broader framework of policies with regard to prevention of abuse. It sets forth the expected behaviours and practices constituting the **organisation’s minimum standards** and actions to be avoided. **If necessary, this policy can be adapted into national or local HR policies to fit the legal and social environment, without diluting its principal content and aim.**

The policy is an addition to the existing documents that define what L’Arche expects of its members and employees, such as employment contract, terms and conditions, and existing HR policies including the rules that define sexual, physical and emotional abuse and complaints mechanisms.

### 2.2 What is our framework for this policy?

L’Arche International adheres to the standards of:

InterAction Step by Step Guide to Addressing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse  
[www.InterAction.org](http://www.InterAction.org)

Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse implementation handbook of the CHS Alliance  
<https://www.chsalliance.org/>

We have been inspired by Codes of Conduct from other international organizations that also work in the area of disability such as Humanity & Inclusion, CBM, and Caritas International.

### 2.3 Reporting

As stated below (Standards of behaviour 5), any individual who has been informed, suspects or has concrete evidence of the above-mentioned unacceptable behaviours is obliged to report to their superior following the complaints handling manual. All disclosure will be treated in confidence. Anyone who raises concerns about serious malpractice will be protected from victimisation or any other detrimental treatment if they come forward with serious concerns, provided concerns are raised in good faith. Deliberate false allegations are a serious disciplinary offence and will be investigated and treated accordingly.

### 2.4 Implementation

L'Arche International takes the following measures to ensure the effective implementation of this policy.

All L'Arche members (see above 1.3 To whom does it apply?) will be required to sign an acknowledgement and consent to the terms of this policy prior to their appointment. See appendix.

For L'Arche members with an intellectual disability a tailored program will be developed to facilitate formation and ownership of safeguarding practices. An Easy Read version of the code of conduct will be developed.

L'Arche representatives at the appropriate level ensure that L'Arche members receive regular updates and training on L'Arche safeguarding policy.

L'Arche representatives at the appropriate level ensure that relevant internal processes integrate the code of conduct, e.g. recruitment and induction process, annual review, monitoring of good practices, evaluation of communities etc.

L'Arche International will submit a yearly summary of safeguarding concerns received by L'Arche International, countries and communities to the International Leadership Team and to the International Stewardship Board to ensure transparency and accountability.

### 2.5 Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years. Subsequent versions will incorporate internal lessons learned as well as external changes to safeguarding standards that apply internationally.

# Code of Conduct

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As a participant in the life and mission of L'Arche, I commit to the following principles:

1. I will treat every person with dignity and respect.
2. I will not discriminate between people on the basis of their race, gender, religion, colour, national or ethnic origin, language, marital status, sexual orientation, age, ability, political conviction, or social status.

## Standards of behaviour

Our mission requires that our personal and professional behaviour be of the highest standard. As a person taking part in the mission of L'Arche, I commit to the following standards of behaviour:

1. I will represent and promote the values of the mission of L'Arche to the best of my ability.
2. I will facilitate open and honest communication within L'Arche, while maintaining the highest degree of confidentiality, not only in professional matters but also in my interpersonal relationships. In order to protect the integrity of our working environment and/or community life, I commit to using the proper channels of communication; and I will invite others to do the same.
3. I will carry out as conscientiously as possible the tasks, duties, and responsibilities that have been entrusted to me in L'Arche.
4. If I am formally accompanying others in L'Arche, I commit to being accompanied myself and engaged in ongoing formation and supervision.
5. If I am a witness to any kind of abuse, I commit to reporting that information to the appropriate authority. If for some reason (the superior may be implicated) this is not possible, I should speak to the next authority level.

Therefore, I understand and accept that the following behaviours contradict these standards and are unacceptable in L'Arche:

1. Violent acts, including physical abuse, emotional and psychological abuse, sexual abuse including inappropriate touching, sexual exploitation, harassment and bullying
2. Theft or fraud of the assets, funds or records of L'Arche or of any member of L'Arche
3. Unauthorised disclosure of confidential or sensitive information
4. Using illegal substances or inappropriate consumption of alcohol while carrying responsibility
5. Sexual activity or any form of abuse or coercion in any accompaniment/mentorship, leadership/supervision, or spiritual accompaniment relationship, regardless of the age of majority, or the age of consent locally. Consent cannot be given in this relationship because of the inherent unequal power dynamics.
6. Any sexual activity between an assistant/employee/volunteer and a person with a disability is unacceptable. Any abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes undermines the credibility and integrity of our mission.
7. Using positions of power conferred by their roles as L'Arche members and employees to exert pressure, or extract favours or personal gain economically, professionally, politically, psychologically or sexually.

## Appendix 1 to Code of Conduct

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This code of conduct applies to all people, with and without intellectual disability, taking part in the life of l'Arche, whether employed or in a voluntary capacity.

This includes any person who is in direct or indirect caregiving-, working- and/or personal relationship with community members such as Assistants and leaders of all levels, employees e.g. office/admin staff, board members, friends who volunteer on a regular basis, any member who provides spiritual accompaniment or mentoring support for the community or individuals. This list is not exhaustive and it is up to the judgement of people responsible at every level in the organization to extend the list to include other individuals who are in regular contact with l'Arche members.

The code applies to all these people in all situations, during working hours and outside working hours.

*I have received and carefully read this code of conduct and have discussed its contents with my supervisor.*

*I herewith sign that I have read, understood and consent to the standards of behaviour described in this code of conduct.*

*Date and place:*

*First name:*

*Name:*

*Signature:*