

**Choose Love
Staff and Volunteer Code of
Conduct**

**CHOOSE
LOVE**

**Choose Love
(a collective fund under Prism the Gift Fund)**

20 Gloucester Place, London, W1U 8HA

Document	Date of Approval by Board	Date of Review
Code of Conduct	January 2021	January 2022

Introduction

Choose Love works towards a world wherein refugees and displaced people are treated with dignity and respect and protected from harm. Our capacity to ensure the protection and support of the communities we support depends on the ability and commitment of everyone in the organisation to uphold the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct. In addition, for our work to succeed, we strive to ensure that our core values of justice, integrity, courage, learning, and love sit at the heart of all of our work. Our Directors, Executive and Senior Leadership Team have a particular responsibility to uphold high standards, to set a good example, and to create a safeguarding culture that supports and empowers staff.

Choose Love has in place a Safeguarding Framework comprising four standards: Safeguarding, People and Partnerships, Risk Management and Accountability. Each of the four standards have policies within them, which, together, create a comprehensive safeguarding framework. Choose Love's policies are publicly available. The Code of Conduct forms part of the Safeguarding standard.



Choose Love's Code of Conduct applies to all our staff and all visitors and associated personnel. For the purposes of Choose Love's Safeguarding Framework, staff means: Choose Love's employees and directors, freelance workers (self-employed or agency staff), and volunteers, interns and secondees.

Choose Love's Field Offices' Codes of Conduct may differ in wording, for example where they refer to national law, but are consistent in their commitment to standards and ethics. Partners¹ are required to ensure the safeguarding measures in their organisations meet Choose Love's standards, and that these standards are expressed in their own Codes of Conduct.

Implementation and Review

This Code of Conduct is approved by the Directors of Choose Love, and endorsed by the Trustees of our affiliated charity, Prism the Gift Fund. It will be translated into the mother tongue or main working language of each office. Every attempt will be made to ensure that the beneficiaries that Choose Love works with and the communities that it operates in have access to the Code of Conduct and that it is presented in the appropriate language(s). The Code of Conduct will be reviewed annually by the Designated Safeguarding Officer and presented to the Directors for their consideration and approval via the Chief Executive Officer.

¹ For the purposes of the Safeguarding Framework, 'partners' means an organisation which receives funding from Choose Loves or with which Choose Loves collaborates to deliver its programmes or which is otherwise associated with the Choose Loves name and brand.

Background

The Code of Conduct lays out our expectations and guiding principles for appropriate behaviour in the office and field. By agreeing to work for or with Choose Love, its Directors, staff, and associated personnel agree to comply with our policies and procedures and to uphold the highest standards of personal and professional conduct. Primarily, this is to ensure the safety and protection of those we seek to support, whilst also ensuring that our integrity and reputation shall not be jeopardized by inappropriate conduct.

As an organisation working globally, we recognise that local laws and cultures differ considerably from one country to another. Choose Love's staff and associated personnel are expected to uphold both local law and the Code of Conduct wherever they operate, and for the avoidance of any doubt where the Code of Conduct is more stringent than the law the Code will continue to apply.

For staff of Choose Love, this Code is an integral part of their conditions of employment/engagement. It is referenced in all individual employment contracts/contracts of engagement. The Code of Conduct is also an integral part of the induction process for all staff and a copy of this will be held in the individual's personnel file. All visitors to Choose Love's projects, and associated personnel will be asked to read and sign the Code of Conduct. All those visiting the field will also be briefed on the Code of Conduct prior to departure to ensure that its principles are understood.

All Choose Love's staff are responsible for encouraging, advocating, and promoting the dissemination of the Code of Conduct and have a role in implementing, monitoring, and enforcing the standards set out therein.

Core Values and Guiding Principles

Choose Love's staff are committed to the following fundamental values and principles:

- Choose Love's primary commitment is to ensure the protection of and provision of assistance to refugees, displaced persons, asylum seekers and other individuals in vulnerable and disadvantaged situations. We are committed to supporting the fullest possible participation of these groups – as individuals, families, and communities – in decisions that affect their lives.
- Choose Love will actively promote adherence to the principles of international refugee law, international human rights law, and international humanitarian law.
- As an organisation campaigning for social justice, we will ensure that whilst campaigning for change we are intersectional in our approach, and continually acknowledge how privilege reflects the conscious and unconscious bias in our decision-making. As an independent organisation, we work within a global system that is structurally racist, capitalist, and unjust. We are a humanitarian organisation, but those who need humanitarian assistance only do so because of colonialism, racism, foreign policy, and borders. Our privilege as an organisation is a result of these very same things. The nature of humanitarian work does not place those supporting and those being supported in equal standing – it is not equitable. Those who are forcibly displaced rely on aid and handouts that we facilitate, working within a system that often does not provide a way out for those affected. Equally, our work creates a dependency that continues this cycle and perpetuates our power. We commit to work to challenge conventional aid structures, prioritise advocacy and partner with lived

experience organisations or organisations that work in a collaborative way with communities to develop new strategies of working.

- We will respect the dignity and worth of every individual, and celebrate their individuality, diversity, and achievements. We will promote and practice understanding, respect, compassion, and tolerance, and will demonstrate discretion and maintain confidentiality as required. We will aim to build constructive, safe, and respectful working relationships with our partners and will foster a climate that encourages learning, supports positive change, and applies the lessons learned from our experience.
- We will show respect for all persons equally without distinction whatsoever of race, gender, religion, colour, national or ethnic origin, language, marital status, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, socio-economic status, disability, political conviction, or any other distinguishing feature. We will strive to remove all barriers to equality.
- We will respond without delay, and appropriately, to any allegation or cause for concern that a child or adult at risk may have been harmed, whether through one of our partners or in another context. We also commit ourselves to challenging the abuse of power by anyone in a position of trust.
- We will respect the cultures, customs, and traditions of all peoples, and will strive to avoid behaving in ways that are not acceptable in a particular cultural context. However, when the tradition or practice is considered by Choose Love to be directly contrary to an international human rights instrument or standard, we will be guided by the applicable human rights instrument or standard.
- We have a responsibility to protect displaced people and to avoid exposing them to further harm as a result of our actions.
- We also have a duty of care to all our staff (including volunteers).

Code of Conduct

I commit myself to the following:

To treat all people fairly, and with respect and dignity.

- I will always seek to understand and empathise with the communities we support and acknowledge the multiple forms of discrimination possibly experienced on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, gender, age, or disability. I will take the above into consideration in all of my actions.
- I will always seek to care for and protect the rights of children, and act in a manner that ensures that their best interests shall be the paramount consideration.
- I will keep myself informed about Choose Love's policies, objectives, and activities and about refugee concerns, and will do my utmost to support Choose Love's protection and assistance work.

To uphold the integrity of Choose Love by ensuring that my personal and professional conduct is, and is seen to be, of the highest standard.

- I will demonstrate integrity, truthfulness, dedication, and honesty in my actions.

- I will be patient, kind, respectful and courteous to all persons with whom I deal with in an official capacity, including people on the move, representatives of partners, governments, and donors.
- I will observe local laws, will meet all my private legal obligations, and will not seek to take personal advantage of any privileges that I have as a result of my work with Choose Love.

To perform my official duties and conduct my private affairs in a manner that avoids conflicts of interest, thereby preserving and enhancing public confidence in Choose Love.

- My actions will be free of any consideration of personal gain, and I will resist any undue political pressure in decision-making.
- I will neither seek nor accept instructions regarding the performance of my duties from any government, including by national authorities, or from any authority external to Choose Love.
- I will neither give nor accept any honour, decoration, favour gift, remuneration, or bribe, to / from any government; nor will I give nor accept such to / from any other source external to Choose Love without prior authorisation. It is, however, allowed to give or accept small tokens of appreciation that are exchanged in accordance with local practice provided that it cannot compromise the integrity of Choose Love.
- I will not accept supplementary payments or subsidies from a government or any other source or participate in certain political activities such as standing for or holding public office without prior authorisation.
- I will avoid assisting private persons or companies in their undertakings with Choose Love where this might lead to actual or perceived preferential treatment.
- I will never participate in activities related to procurement of goods or services, or in human resource activities, where a conflict of interests may arise.

To contribute to building a harmonious workplace based on team spirit, mutual respect and understanding – applicable to staff only.

- I will show respect to all colleagues, regardless of status or position, and will allow all colleagues the opportunity to have their views heard, and to contribute from their knowledge and experience to team efforts.
- I will communicate openly and share relevant information (subject to confidentiality requirements) with other colleagues and will endeavour to respond in a timely manner to queries.
- I will respect my colleagues' privacy and avoid misinformation.
- I will seek to resolve differences and solve problems when they arise, and will contribute to building constructive dialogue, guided by mutual respect and an open, positive approach, between management and staff representatives.
- If in a management position, I will be open to the views of all staff. I will provide timely feedback on the performance of each staff member through guidance, motivation, and full recognition of their merits.

To promote the safety, health, and welfare of all Choose Love staff as a necessary condition for effective and consistent performance.

- I will remain aware of and comply with all instructions designed to protect my health, welfare, and safety.
- (For staff members) - I will always consider the safety of staff in operational decisions.

- If I have doubts regarding an instruction that I consider threatening to my safety or the safety of other persons, I will bring this immediately to the attention of my manager (or in the case of a visitor, to a Choose Love member of staff).
- If in a Choose Love management position, I will endeavour to ensure that the health and well-being of staff and their families are not subjected to undue risk. I will strive to promote a healthy work-life balance for staff and will respect staff entitlements.

To safeguard and make responsible use of the information and resources that I have access to through my work with Choose Love – applicable to staff only.

- I will exercise due care in all matters of official business, and not divulge any confidential information about beneficiaries, partners, colleagues, influencers and other key stakeholders and other work-related matters in accordance with the terms of employment/engagement and current guidelines.
- I will protect, manage, and utilise Choose Love’s human, financial and material resources efficiently and effectively, bearing in mind that these resources have been placed at Choose Love’s disposal for the benefit of the communities we support.

To prevent, oppose and combat all exploitation and abuse of displaced people.

- I undertake not to abuse the power and influence that I have by virtue of my position over the lives and well-being of beneficiaries.
- I will never request any service or favour from beneficiaries in return for protection or assistance.
- I will never engage in any exploitative relationships, emotional or financial related with beneficiaries. I will act responsibly when hiring or otherwise engaging beneficiaries for private services.
- I will not engage in sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18.) I acknowledge and understand that mistaken belief in the age of the child does not constitute a defence.
- I will not engage in sexual exploitation or abuse of beneficiaries.
- I acknowledge and understand that Choose Love considers romantic or sexual relationships between staff or visitors and beneficiaries to be unethical, unprofessional and to carry a heightened risk of exploitation and that relationships of a romantic or sexual nature are therefore prohibited between staff/visitors of Choose Love and beneficiaries of the services our partners deliver. I acknowledge and understand that such relationships may undermine the credibility and the integrity of Choose Love and of the staff members/visitors involved.
- Should I find myself in a relationship with an individual connected to the work of Choose Love that I consider non-exploitative and consensual, I will report this to my manager (as applicable) for appropriate guidance in the knowledge that this matter will be treated with due discretion.

To refrain from any involvement in criminal or unethical activities, activities that contravene human rights, or activities that compromise the image and interests of Choose Love.

- I will neither support nor take part in any form of illegal, exploitative, or abusive activities, including, for example, child labour, and trafficking of human beings and commodities.
- I will not engage in any online activity that is illegal, unethical and /or exploitative to children such as downloading inappropriate images of children or sexting.

- I will never seek to meet with a child and or adult beneficiary on their own or without the knowledge of colleagues if it is required for work purposes and will follow the instructions of managers and the requirements of relevant policies if such contact is required.

To refrain from any form of harassment, discrimination, physical or verbal abuse, intimidation, or favouritism in the workplace – applicable to staff only.

- I will not engage in or tolerate any form of harassment in the workplace, including sexual harassment and abuse of power.
- I will not solicit favours or loans from staff.
- If in a management position, I recognise that there is an inherent conflict of interest and potential abuse of power in having intimate and sexual relations with staff under my supervision. I am aware that Choose Love strongly discourages such relations. Should I find myself in such a relationship, I will report this to my manager for appropriate guidance in the knowledge that this matter will be treated with due discretion.

Complaints and reports

Each person who signs this Code is obligated to bring to the attention of the relevant manager (or in the case of visitors, a Choose Love member of staff) any potential incident, abuse or concern that they witness, are made aware of, or suspect which appears to breach the standards contained in this Code. A detailed version of our reporting routes is available [here](#).

Staff members who have a complaint or concern relating to breach of the Code should report it immediately to their line manager, and if constituting a safeguarding concern making the Safeguarding Officer aware. If the staff member does not feel comfortable reporting to their line manager (for example if they feel that the report will not be taken seriously, or if that person is implicated in the concern), they may report to any other Director of Choose Love. Staff members receiving reports or concerns are obliged to action or refer the report immediately as per the Choose Love’s Complaints Policy and procedures.
