



Youth Work Ireland

Be Part of It

Child Protection Policy

23 March 2013

Child Protection Policy - Contents

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Introduction

In 1999, the Department of Health and Children published **Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children**. These guidelines are intended to assist people in identifying and reporting Child Abuse to ensure best practice in Child Protection in statutory and voluntary agencies.

Youth Work Ireland's Child Protection policy and procedures have been developed for the National Organisation. All Member Youth Services and their clubs/groups/projects will have their own local policy that will be in line with the principles outlined in Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children and that should be based on this policy. As much of National Office work with young people is through its Member Youth Services there is to be a compatibility of procedures. National Office staff must be particularly clear about events where National Office has primary responsibility for young people and is acting in Loco Parentis. National Office staff is supported and guided through their responsibilities and procedures, particularly regarding reporting and confidentiality and the necessity to have a copy of the policy statement prominently displayed. All staff and volunteers are required to complete a "Statement of commitment" to the policy once they have been informed of and familiarised with its contents and procedures (**Appendix 1**). A user friendly copy of the key relevant sections of the policy will be distributed to all staff / volunteers, along with Child Protection information leaflet (**Appendix 2**)

Child Protection is about promoting the welfare of children who avail of our services. It is about creating a safe environment for both staff/volunteers and young people, where trust and willingness to listen to the young person is foremost.

The developing of the policy and procedures is an enabling process, drawing on our current good practice with children. Such a policy is an invaluable tool in helping our staff/volunteers involved in working with young people to safeguard both the young person and themselves.

It is a requirement for all staff / volunteers to read, sign and comply with the procedures outlined in this policy. The parents / guardians of young people will also be informed of the contents of the policy. A user friendly handbook on Child Protection, based on this policy will be presented and discussed with all young people and they will be made aware of the steps they can take should they have a Child Protection concern and the person they can contact for advice and support.

Overview of Youth Work Ireland

The Services of Youth Work Ireland

Youth Work Ireland promotes and supports Local Youth Services delivered by local communities

Youth work Ireland is a federation of local youth services throughout the country who work in the interest of young people through the provision of a range of services and activities all sharing a common ethos and approach.

As a co-ordinating and development agency for youth services throughout the country, **Youth Work Ireland** has, since 1962 sought to give voice to the needs and aspirations of young people, to support and encourage trained volunteers and staff and ultimately, to improve the quality of life for young people in the context of community based youth services.

Ireland is rapidly changing and young people are faced with many new challenges and opportunities. We believe that youth work has much to offer them as they meet the future. Supporting their development as active and critical citizens is core to our task.

Youth Work Ireland is ready to enthusiastically embrace the challenges which present themselves in the hope of seeing the establishment of a national youth service in every conceivable location where young people gather throughout the island. For whatever part you have played or will play in that future your commitment and support in making this dream a living reality is and will be hugely appreciated.



Our Vision

Youth Work Ireland has a clear and unambiguous view of the kind of society we want to contribute to developing.

Our vision states this clearly as:

‘Young People create and define a proud new Ireland’

We will achieve this by deploying the resources of the Federation, both nationally and at a regional level through the engagement of Boards, staff and countless volunteers in order to:

- Promote quality youth work
- Build our capacity
- Work to realise the rights of young people
- Influence decision making and policy

Our Beliefs

- We have a positive view of young people, their dignity and worth
- All young people have rights and should be supported to realise these
- Young People have the potential to effect change

All Member Youth Services and National Office must have a Child Protection Policy and Procedures in place that are understood and applied by staff and volunteers. Many of our events are based on working together (e.g. programmes, consensus events), because of this there needs to be compatibility between our policies and practice and the understanding of these by workers and volunteers. It is important that briefing and information is made available to staff, volunteers and young people on such events. All staff and volunteers at joint events carry the duties, responsibilities and obligations of child protection.

Youth Work Ireland's Child Protection Policy

It is the policy of Youth Work Ireland to safeguard the welfare of all children by protecting them from all forms of abuse. Youth Work Ireland is committed to safeguarding young people and to provide a safe space for children and young people to grow, develop, learn and have fun.

We will endeavour to safeguard children by:

- Through our Membership Charter to ensure that all Member Youth Services have a formal Child Protection Policy in place that is regularly reviewed and updated.
- Delivering training to all staff and volunteer engaged in National Office Activities that is appropriate to their role, work and contact with young people.
- Evidence of all Child Protection training will be provided and kept on file.
- The welfare of the child is paramount in all decisions, activities and programmes involving children and young people.
- Adhering to the procedures set out for the recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers.
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.
- Adopting Child Protection guidelines and reflecting these through our code of behaviour for staff and volunteers.
- Sharing information about Child Protection and good practice with children, parents / guardians, staff and volunteers.
- Sharing information and working with relevant agencies as appropriate.
- Taking part in multi-disciplinary teams as appropriate.
- Manage the Garda Vetting process for all staff and volunteers on behalf of Member Youth Services and National Office Staff.
- Track and monitor the delivery of Child Protection Training by designated Child Protection trainers in Member Youth Services.
- Carry out an annual audit of child protection compliance across all services.

In conjunction with the NYCI Child Protection Unit the Designated Person and the staff team review the Child Protection policy, procedures and practices on an annual basis and also in accordance with any changes in relevant legislation and national guidelines in relation to Child Protection and young people.

The policy applies to staff of Youth Work Ireland, to volunteers, to programme participants, to visitors, to guests and to National Office users and facilitators. Youth Work Ireland requires all other users of the facilities of National Office to abide by the working practices contained within this policy.

Principles for Best Practice in Child Protection

Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, National Guidelines are complemented by the publication of **Our Duty to Care: the Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People** (Department of Health and Children, 2002). The 2002 publication is a practical guide for staff and volunteers who work with children, outlining fundamental principles of good practice.

Youth Work Ireland adopts the following principles outlined in **Our Duty to Care**, ensuring the creation of an environment in which young people are listened to, given a sense of belonging and kept safe. Creating an environment where parents are supported and encouraged and staff and volunteers who work with young people are supported and protected.

The following are the key principles for best practice in Child Protection:

- Acknowledge the rights of children to be protected, treated with respect, listened to and have their own views taken into consideration.
- Recognise that the welfare of children must always come first, regardless of all other considerations.
- Develop a Child Protection policy that raises awareness about the possibility of Child Abuse occurring and outlines the steps to be taken if abuse is suspected.
- Adopt the safest possible practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and protect workers from the necessity to take risks and leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or neglect.
- Adopt and consistently apply clearly defined methods of recruiting staff and volunteers.
- Remember that early intervention with children who are vulnerable or at risk may prevent serious harm from happening to them at a later stage.
- Remember that a child's age, gender and background affects the way they experience and understand what is happening to them.
- Provide Child Protection training/briefings for young people, staff and volunteers. This should clarify the responsibilities of both organisations and individuals and clearly show the procedures to be followed if Child Abuse is suspected.
- Develop a policy of openness with parents/guardians that involve consulting them about everything that concerns their children and encouraging them to get involved with the organisation whenever possible.
- Co-operate with other childcare and protection agencies and professionals by sharing information when necessary and working together towards the best possible outcome for the children concerned.
- Make links with other relevant organisations in order to promote Child Protection and welfare policies and procedures.

It is the ethos of Youth Work Ireland that by valuing both young people and staff/volunteers and creating a safe working and learning environment, will make for a more rewarding and welcoming atmosphere.

The Rights of the Child

For the purpose of this policy “a child” means a person under the age of 18 years, who is or has not been married.

Ireland ratified the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** in 1992. The Convention is in essence a “bill of rights” for all children. It contains rights relating to every aspect of children’s lives including the right to survival, development, protection and participation.

The underlying principles of the Convention may be summarised as follows:

- I. **Non-Discrimination (Art. 2):**
All rights apply to all children without exception. The state is obliged to protect children from any form of discrimination and to take action to promote their rights.
- II. **Best Interests of the Child (Art. 3):**
All actions concerning the child shall take account of his or her best interests. The state shall provide the child with adequate care when parents or others charged with that responsibility fail to do so.
- III. **Survival and Development (Art. 6):**
Every child has the inherent right to life and the state has an obligation to ensure the child’s survival and development.
- IV. **The Child’s Opinion (Art. 12):**
The child has the right to express his or her opinion freely and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting the child.

A number of articles of the Convention are of particular relevance to Child Protection:

- I. **Article 19** states that parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has care of the child.
- II. **Articles 34 and 35** refer respectively to the protection of children from sexual exploitation and from sale, trafficking and abduction.

Key Legislative Provisions

The following are the key legislative provisions governing the rights of children and young people and their protection and the protection of those reporting Child Abuse concerns:

Child Care Act, 1991

The purpose of the act is to “up-date the law in relation to the care of children who have been assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused or who are at risk”. The main provisions of the act are:

1. The placing of a statutory duty on the H.S.E to promote the welfare of children who are not receiving adequate care and protection up to the age of 18 (Sec. 3.1)
2. The strengthening of the powers of the H.S.E to provide childcare and family support services.
3. The improvement of the procedures to facilitate immediate intervention by H.S.E and An Garda Síochana where children are in danger.
4. The revision of provisions to enable the courts to place children, who have been assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused or who are at risk, in the care of or under the supervision of H.S.E.
5. The introduction of arrangements for the supervision and inspection of pre-school services.
6. The revision of provisions in relation to the registration and inspection of residential centres for children.

Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998

This act came into operation on the 23rd January 1999. The main provisions of the act are:

1. The provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports Child Abuse “**reasonably and in good faith**” to designated officers of Health Service Executive or any member of An Garda Síochana.
2. The provision of significant protections for employees who report Child Abuse. These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to, and including, dismissal.
3. The creation of a new offence of false reporting of Child Abuse where a person makes a report of Child Abuse to the appropriate authorities “**knowing that statement to be false**”. This is a new criminal offence designed to protect innocent persons from malicious reports.

Data Protection Act, 1988

The act only applies to the automatic processing of personal data. It gives a right to every individual, irrespective of nationality or residence, to establish the existence of personal data, to have access to any such data relating to him/her

and to have inaccurate data rectified or erased. It requires data controllers to make sure that the data they keep are collected fairly, are accurate and up-to-date, are kept for lawful purposes, and are not used or disclosed in any manner incompatible with those purposes. It also requires both data controllers and data processors to protect the data they keep, and imposes on them a special duty of care in relation to the individuals about whom they keep such data.

There are only three exclusions under the act:

1. Data relating to state security
2. Information that is required by law to be made available to the public
3. Personal data kept only for personal or recreational purposes

Additional legislative provisions include the following:

- Health and Safety at Work Regulations 2007
- Freedom of Information Act, 1997
- Domestic Violence Act, 1996
- Non-Fatal Offences Against The Person Act, 1997
- Data Protection Act

Additional Related Policies having a bearing on Child Protection

- Health and Safety Policy
- Garda Vetting Policy and Procedures
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Volunteer Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Freedom of Information Statement
- Alcohol Policy
- Equality Policy

Additional Other supporting documents

Staff Handbook

Volunteer Development Resource Manual

Dealing with Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco in Youth Work Settings Guidelines for Youth Workers

The Role of the Designated Person

A Child Protection Designated Person has been appointed in Youth Work Ireland. The Designated Person acts as a resource to any young person, staff member and volunteer who have Child Protection concerns. All dealings of a Child Protection nature go through the Designated Person who in turn may make a referral to the HSE or Gardaí (**Appendix 3**)

Youth Work Ireland Designated Persons:

Paul Gralton

Contact Details:

Mobile: 087 2949648

Land Line: 01 8584500

Email: pgralton@youthworkireland.ie

Address: Youth Work Ireland, 20 Lower Dominic Street, Dublin 1

In the absence of the Designated Persons, staff, volunteers and young people can contact Patrick Burke (CEO Youth Work Ireland) on 086 2225774 for advice and support on Child Protection / welfare concerns and / or disclosures.

The role of the Designated Person is as follows:

- To report suspicions and allegations of Child Abuse to the HSE or the Gardaí.
- To provide information and advice on Child Protection within the organisation.
- To build up networks of support for the victim and for the staff/volunteer making a referral.
- To ensure that the Child Protection policy and procedures are adhered to, and to inform the HSE of relevant concerns about individual children.
- To give advice on individual cases, where appropriate.
- To advise on good practice and guidelines on Child Protection.
- To liaise with HSE, Gardaí and other agencies as appropriate.
- To keep the CEO of the Youth Work Ireland informed about any referrals.
- To maintain proper records on all referred cases in a secure and confidential manner.
- To ensure that all staff and volunteers are familiar with the Designated Person and also that they each receive appropriate Child Protection awareness training, briefing and or information as appropriate.
- To ensure that all young people are familiar with the child protection policy by informing, briefing and providing accessible written information.
- To ensure that other persons interacting with young people at Youth Work Ireland events activities and programmes are informed of, are aware of and understand the Youth Work Ireland Child Protection Policy (Contractors, Trainers, and Other Third Parties).
- To keep informed about current developments regarding the provision, practice, support services, legal obligations etc.

- To ensure that the issue of Child Protection is considered and the policy implemented as an integral part of the delivery of all National events, programmes and processed organised by the National Office of Youth Work Ireland.

The Designated Person is accessible to everyone in the organisation and is supported by on-going training and supervision. When she/he receives a report about suspected or actual abuse, she/he will consider whether there are reasonable grounds for reporting it to the HSE.

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern and should be reported:

- A disclosure from the child that he/she was abused.
- An account by a person who saw the child being abused.
- Evidence, such as injury or behaviour, which is consistent with abuse and unlikely, to be caused another way.
- An injury or behaviour, which is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation, but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse. An example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, and other indicators of abuse or dysfunctional behaviour.
- Consistent indication, over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

A suspicion, which is not supported by any objective signs of abuse, would not constitute a reasonable suspicion, or reasonable grounds for concern. However, these suspicions should be reported to the Designated Person who will record them internally as future suspicions may lead to the decision to make a report. A Child Protection tracking sheet may also be started at this point by the staff person/volunteer, in conjunction with the Designated Person. In such a case further reports and observation may lead to reasonable ground and referral to the HSE.

Confidentiality

This section outlines and provides guidance on Youth Work Ireland's code on confidentiality. Youth work involves the development of trusting relationships where it may be common for children and young people to divulge personal information. Therefore, all staff and volunteers need to be aware that a young person or a colleague may disclose that they are being abused or know of someone who is being abused.

Confidentiality is about managing sensitive information in a manner that is respectful, professional and purposeful. All information provided to Youth Work Ireland by a child or young person, volunteer or staff member must be treated in a confidential manner. All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to handle all sensitive information in line with Youth Work Ireland's code on confidentiality.

Code of Confidentiality

1. All information regarding a Child Protection concern or suspected case of Child Abuse must be only shared on a 'need to know basis' and always in the best interests of the child's general welfare and safety. The subject should never be discussed with other persons in the organisation, including staff, volunteers or young people if they are not directly involved.
2. In the case of a Child Protection concern, no member of staff or volunteer should promise to tell a person they can keep a secret to any person disclosing the information. The person receiving the information should also never state that they would keep a secret if the organisation did not have a policy on this. This could give the person who made the disclosure the impression that the information is not that serious or infer a range of mixed messages. It must be made clear to the person(s) making the disclosure that secrets cannot be kept but that the information will only be shared with the appropriate person who will handle the information sensitively.
3. Sharing information with an appropriate / designated person for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality. Codes of confidentiality do not intend to prevent the exchange of information between individuals who have a responsibility to protect children.
4. Personal information, which is gathered for a specific purpose, should never be used for any other purpose without consulting the person who provided that information.
5. All staff and volunteers working with children must have some training on understanding of the importance of confidentiality and the limitations of confidentiality in relation to Child Protection issues.

Dealing with Disclosures / Reporting Procedures

Should a young person disclose abuse to you the following important points should be taken into consideration:

- Take what the young person says seriously.
- Be as calm and as natural as possible. Remember that you have been approached because you are trusted and possibly liked. Do not panic.
- Be aware that disclosures can be very difficult for the young person.
- Reassure the young person that it was right to tell somebody what happened and that they have done nothing wrong.
- Remember that the young person may initially be testing your reactions and may only fully open up over a period of time.
- Listen to what the young person has to say. Give them the time and opportunity to tell as much as they are able and wish to. Do not pressure the young person. Allow him/her to disclose at their own pace and in their own language.
- Be careful when asking questions. Your job is not to investigate but to support the young person. Avoid leading questions such as whether a specific person carried out the abuse, or whether specific acts mentioned by the young person occurred. Such questions may complicate an official investigation.
- Do not express any opinion about the alleged abuser to the young person.
- It may be necessary to reassure the young person that your feelings towards him/her have not been affected in a negative way as a result of what he / she has disclosed.
- Do not promise to keep secrets. At the earliest opportunity tell the young person that you acknowledge that they have come to you because they trust you. Tell him / her that there are secrets which are not helpful and should not be kept because they make matters worse. Such secrets hide things that need to be known if people are to be helped and protected from further on-going hurt. By refusing to make a commitment to secrecy to the young person, you do run the risk that they may not tell you everything or indeed anything, there and then. However, it is better to do this than to tell a lie and ruin the young person's confidence in yet another adult. By being honest, it is more likely that he/she will return to you at another time.

- At the earliest possible opportunity record in writing what the young person has said, including as far as possible, the exact words uttered by him / her. Record facts only, no opinions or hearsay.
- Pass on all information to the Designated Person and not to any other third party, as disclosures are on a need to know basis only.
- The Designated Person will carry out the necessary steps in making a referral to the Health Service Executive.

Ongoing Support

Following a disclosure by a child, it is important that the Youth Work Ireland staff and volunteers continue in a supportive relationship with the child. Once the Designated Person makes the referral to the H.S.E, our duty to care on the disclosure is passed on. Disclosure is a huge step for many children and support should be continued through:

- Maintaining a positive relationship with the child.
- Keeping lines of communication open by listening to the child.
- Continuing to include the child in the usual activities.

Any further disclosures should be treated as a first disclosure and responded to accordingly.

Dealing With a Suspicion of Child Abuse

In situations where a suspicion / concern may be deemed vague i.e. where there is no specific allegation but there is some concern based on the emotional behaviour and/or physical presentation or behaviour of the child, then staff/volunteers should consult the Designated Person for advice. The Designated Person will assess whether or not a report is warranted and will seek the advice of the H.S.E if required. Details of the consultation will be recorded and filed. A formal report to the H.S.E may follow as advised.

Allegations Against a Staff Member or Volunteer

If an allegation is made against a staff member or volunteer within a Member Youth Service that issue will be dealt with in accordance with the Child Protection Policy of that Member Youth Service. The Member Youth Service may request support from the Designated Person in National Office.

If an allegation is made against a staff member or volunteer within the National Office of the Youth Work Ireland then two separate procedures will be followed:

- The reporting procedure in respect of the child
- The procedure for dealing with the staff member or volunteer

These procedures, according to **Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children** should be followed in the event of suspicion or disclosure of abuse against an employee or volunteer. In this situation, Youth Work Ireland must have due regard for the rights and interest of the child on one hand, and those of the person against whom the allegation is made on the other hand.

The CEO of the Youth Work Ireland will deal with the staff member / volunteer in question, while the Designated Person will have the responsibility of dealing with the reporting issue and supporting the child. Staff / volunteers may be subjected to erroneous or malicious allegations, therefore any allegation of abuse should be dealt with sensitively and support provided for staff as well as the child, including counselling where necessary. However, the primary goal is to protect the child while taking care to treat the staff member/volunteer fairly.

When the CEO of the Youth Work Ireland becomes aware of an allegation of abuse of a child or children by a staff member / volunteer, if appropriate, she will inform that person of the following:

- The fact that an allegation has been made against him / her.
- The nature of the allegation.

The staff member / volunteer will be afforded an opportunity to respond. The CEO will note the response and pass on the information if and when a formal report is made to the H.S.E.

It is important to note that “**The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998**” applies equally to organisations provided they report the matter “**reasonably and in good faith**”.

Youth Work Ireland accepts the possibility that a number of factors may have a bearing on the organisation and will need to be considered:

- Possible reactions of other members of staff / volunteers including anger, disbelief, doubt, fear, guilt, shock, anxiety and confusion.

- The effects on the alleged abuser of the internal disciplinary proceedings, the Child Protection investigation and the criminal investigation.
- The reactions of other staff / volunteers and the other children towards the young person who has been abused or whose allegation is being investigated.
- The reaction of parents / carers and other family members of the young person.

Through a series of basic Child Protection awareness training programmes, all persons involved in the Youth Work Ireland will be given the opportunity to discuss such issues in an open and non-threatening environment.

NOTE: Should an allegation be made against the CEO of Youth Work Ireland, the Chairperson of the Board will step in to deal with the situation.

Procedures for Dealing with Employees and Employers Duty of Care to Children or Child Abuse.

- The first priority will be to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk and as such any necessary protective measures will be taken e.g. suspension of the staff member / volunteer. These measures will be proportionate to the level of risk and will not unreasonably penalise the worker financially, or otherwise, unless necessary to protect children.
- It may be necessary for the CEO to seek legal advice for any action following an allegation against a staff member / volunteer. A meeting may need to be arranged with the Health Service Executive / Gardaí to discuss the allegation.
- The CEO will inform the person accused on the outcome of the above consultation.

Pending the outcome of the investigation by the Health Service Executive and/or Gardaí the staff member / volunteer may:

- Be re-assigned to duties that do not involve contact or access to children / young people, depending on the nature of the allegation.
- Be suspended with pay.

The staff member / volunteer will be offered counselling, should the need arise.

Exchange of Information

All staff and volunteers should be aware that ensuring Child Protection is only possible in the organisation if all staff and volunteers share relevant information. Also to ensure Child Protection, the organisation must work in partnership with the HSE and the Gardaí.

Any person who receives information from colleagues about possible or actual Child Abuse must treat it as having been given in confidence and follow the organisation's reporting procedures.

It is also necessary that any records of incidents, disclosures, or concerns of a Child Protection nature are only accessible to those who should have access to the records because of a need to know.

Reports that are made to the Designated Person can still be followed up on after being shared with the statutory agencies. However, it should be noted that not giving the name of the person making the report can make it more difficult to assess a situation.

Recruitment and Selection Procedures

Youth Work Ireland recruitment and selection procedures are contained in the document Recruitment Pack (recruitment and induction policy and procedures) Youth Work Ireland adopts the safe recruitment and selection practices outlined in both **Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children** and **Our Duty to Care**, endeavouring to protect its members from harm. The procedures are designed to be clear, unambiguous and equitable and in the best interest of young people and adults alike.

Safe practice starts with safe recruitment procedures and involves:

- Always applying thorough selection procedures
- Judging the suitability of applicants in relation to a broad range of matters
- Taking all reasonable steps to eliminate people who are not suitable for working with children
- Providing training

Implementation of Procedures

a. Role Clarification

Identify the role of the new employee or volunteer and the skills that will be required for them to carry out their duties.

b. Application Form

All applicants wishing to apply for staff positions should apply on the standard Youth Work Ireland application form. Volunteers complete the volunteer application form. A clear job/role description along with a profile of the Youth Work Ireland will be provided at this stage.

c. Declaration of Suitability

All applicants will be required to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be unsuitable to work with young people. The Declaration of Suitability is included in both the Staff and Volunteer application forms. Garda Vetting is sought for all staff and volunteers.

d. Interview

Applicants will be interviewed by at least two representatives of the Youth Work Ireland. Their previous experience, with particular reference to their working and contact with children will be focused on. Reference to the Child Protection policy and procedures will be emphasised.

e. References

The applicant will be obliged to supply the name of two referees (non-relatives) who are willing to supply Youth Work Ireland with references on their behalf. All references will be received in writing and confirmed by telephone and all details will be recorded. Any additional information will be attached to the application form.

f. **Identification**

All applicants will be asked to present some identification e.g. passport, driving licence, ID card, which gives his/her full name, address, signature and photo, to confirm their identity.

g. **Probationary Period**

Confirmation of all appointments will be subject to satisfactory completion of a period of probation, which will be specified in the contract. During the probationary period, Youth Work Ireland will ensure that each employee is fully assisted in understanding and becoming familiar with the demands of their post and that there is full discussion with the employee about their progress and any concerns or issues which may have arisen. During the probationary period, the employee will be advised on their progress in accordance with the individual contract of employment.

The period of probation may be extended for a special period if the organisation is not fully satisfied that the employee is suitable for the post. The employee will be informed through supervision and in writing about the reason(s) for this decision.

Youth Work Ireland will apply the above procedures consistently with paid and unpaid staff, part-time and full-time workers.

Support and Supervision

Volunteering and working with children is both worthwhile and fulfilling, but also challenging. Once recruited, all staff and volunteers of the Youth Work Ireland will be well informed, trained, supervised and supported, so that they are less likely to become involved in actions which can lead to harm, or can be misunderstood.

The following processes will apply:

Induction

All applicants will go through an initial induction period, which will enable them to get to know the organisation, the staff/volunteers, their role and responsibilities. Contracts of employment, where applicable, will be discussed and signed. The induction period will also cover expectations, conditions and procedures for dealing with discipline, grievances and allegations and the Child Protection policy and procedures.

Supervision and Support

Staff and volunteers participate in support and supervision sessions with their youth worker /line manager on a monthly basis. Interim sessions can be arranged should the need arise and there is access to email/telephone support as needed. Team/area support meetings are also held on a monthly basis throughout the organisation. The support and supervision sessions ensure that Youth Work Ireland personnel are supported in their work and given the appropriate guidance and assistance to develop professionally within best practice guidelines.

Sessions include regular reviews of performance/activity with personnel in order to:

- Ensure that the requirements of the role are fulfilled
- Give / receive feedback on person / work performance
- Identify any additional training and development needs
- Plan objectives for the weeks / months / years ahead

Support and supervision provides personnel with the opportunity to discuss their work in a structured and supportive environment. It is a process for encouraging and enabling personal development through dialogue. Support and supervision also involves monitoring and directing work undertaken to ensure accountability to the organisation.

At least one hour will be set aside for each supervisory session. After the first session, progress achieved against the objectives agreed at the last meeting is evaluated and key objectives set for the period to come (see **Support and Supervision Document**).

Training Policy

It is the responsibility all personnel, together with the management of the Youth Work Ireland to identify both individual and common training needs of staff and volunteers. The Service strives to meet the training needs of all staff/volunteers, where possible. Staff and volunteers are also encouraged to identify any gaps in training and to discuss them with the appropriate manager.

The Child Protection training standard of Youth Work Ireland is the NYCI Child Protection Awareness Programme. Youth Work Ireland has committed to having all personnel trained and kept up to date at this level. Further training is available for Designated Persons and for experienced trainers wishing to offer the CPAP course. Training also consists of staff meetings and briefings and cascade of information. It is hoped that further training will be developed to support the different demands on staff and to support the different roles and responsibilities within the organisation.

Code of Behaviour for Staff and Volunteers

The child-centred ethos of the Youth Work Ireland creates an environment in which children are valued, encouraged and listened to. We respect the rights of young people as individuals in society. Through training and education we ensure that young people know their rights and responsibilities.

The following code of behaviour is established to provide a clear understanding of the standards of behaviour of all staff / volunteers / students who work with Youth Work Ireland for the purpose of the safe care of children and young people. It will help foster an environment where young people feel secure and are treated with dignity and respect.

- Staff/volunteers are not permitted to give lifts in their cars to individual young people.
- Staff/volunteers must be sensitive to the possibility of becoming over involved or spending a great deal of time with any one young person. We need to be clear about the purpose and nature of the relationship with any young person e.g. is the relationship constructive in building up the independence and autonomy of the person or is it being used to satisfy our own agenda.
- Staff/volunteers should ensure, in so far as possible, that buildings or facilities, which they use, for activities with young people are safe and secure for the people in it. All occupied parts of the building should be monitored and parts not in use should be isolated or secured.
- For experienced workers, the member/worker ratio should be no more than 10:1. For new workers, the ratio should be less i.e. no more than 5:1.
- When dealing with young people with challenging behaviour, it is recommended, where possible, that more than one worker is present.
- When dealing with group members of mixed sexes it is important that workers have sufficient leaders of both sexes to properly manage all activities and areas of any premises in use.
- Staff members and volunteers should always be respectful of the privacy of young people in dormitories, changing rooms, showers and toilets. When present in such areas workers are advised not to spend time alone with a young person.
- Staff members and volunteers should be sensitive to the risks in participating in some contact sports with young people and ensure that the young people are treated with dignity and respect.
- Young people should be encouraged to report cases of bullying to a staff member/volunteer of their choice.

- Staff and volunteers should never physically punish or be in any way verbally abusive to a child, nor should jokes of a sexual nature be told to or in the presence of a young person.
- Under no circumstances give alcohol, tobacco or drugs to children or young people.
- Do not use alcohol, tobacco or drugs in the company of children or young people.
- Use only age appropriate language media products and activities in working with children and young people.
- Do not take pictures of children or young people unless you have prior parental consent to do so.
- All staff /volunteers are required to maintain a positive attitude towards young people that respects the personal space, safety and privacy of individuals.
- If taking a group of young people away on a day trip, or sporting activity, you must ensure you have proper transport, adequate insurance cover, enough supervision and written parental consent. Facts must also be obtained of any specific medical conditions a young person suffer from and plans in place to deal with such, should the need arise. (See guidelines for Residential Trips)
- Never do anything of a personal nature for children and young people which they can do for themselves.
- Personal contact outside of youth work business should not be made with children and young people.

All staff and volunteers are required to follow the above code of behaviour, thus providing a safe, comfortable and positive environment for staff / volunteers and young people.

The Safe Management of Activities

In addition to the Code of behaviour all staff / volunteers are required to follow the guidelines below when conducting any activity with young people:

- Each child / young person must be registered on the Member Youth Service' standard registration form
- Parental consent forms and contact details for parents / guardians for each child / young person taking part in any activity.
- Ensure that all primary carers and young people are aware of our Child Protection policy and procedures
- Ensure all staff / volunteers and young people are aware of emergency procedures for fire and other accidents
- All staff / volunteers must follow the procedures for dealing with challenging behaviour.
- All activities carried out must be done so by qualified and experienced personnel.
- Any accidents must be recorded in either the Member Youth Services' Accident Report Form or the Youth Work Ireland Accident Report Form and the parents / guardians must be informed.
- Activities and/or outings undertaken must be covered by suitable insurance.
- Children and young people must not be left unattended during activities and sufficient supervision must be ensured at all times.
- A safety check will be carried out on all facilities and equipment utilised.
- Attendance records must be kept of all activities, outings etc. stating details of all participants, leaders, programmes etc.

Dealing with Challenging Behaviour

Challenging behaviour can be defined as “behaviour which threatens staff / volunteers, other people or the child / young person themselves, in a verbal and / or physical manner. When confronted with such behaviour staff / volunteers must adhere to the following guidelines:

- Challenge the behaviour of the child / young person and not the person themselves.
- Try to remain as calm as possible and avoid becoming emotionally charged in dealing with the situation.
- Behaviour management must always emphasise positive approaches and prohibit any harsh or degrading actions.
- Consideration needs to be given to the developmental as well as the chronological age of the child / young person.

- Be aware of signals that may trigger further outbursts in the child / young person, such as change of tone of voice, body language etc.
- If the challenging behaviour presents itself with others around, either remove yourself and the child / young person away from others so you can talk in a calmer environment, or, ask another staff member / volunteer to take the others to an alternative location.
- It is always advisable to seek the support of another staff member / volunteer when confronting challenging behaviour.
- Outline to the child / young person the sanctions for their behaviour and discuss with them possible techniques they may adopt to avoid such situations in the future.
- Ensure you place yourself in an area with a clear escape route, should violence erupt.
- Given the nature of the situation and the extent of the challenging behaviour, the parents / guardians of the child / young person may need to be contacted and asked to collect the individual to take them home.
- Adequate time should be allowed for the child / young person to calm down and only then should their behaviour be discussed any supports and / or sanctions be imposed. Sanctions imposed must be fair and consistent at all times and understood by the child/ young person.
- Should your safety feel compromised and / or in danger, seek support from management and/ or Gardaí.
- All incidents will be recorded in the Incident report book statement form (Appendix).

DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE

Child Abuse is generally described under the following five headings:

Neglect

Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults and medical care. The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that his or her wellbeing and/or development are severely affected.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between the care-giver and a child rather than a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms. Examples of emotional abuse include:

- The imposition of negative attitudes on children, expressed by persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming.
- Conditional parenting.
- Emotional unavailability by the child's parent/carer.
- Unrealistic, inappropriate expectations of the child.
- Failure to show interest in, or provide age appropriate opportunities for the child's cognitive and emotional development.
- Unreasonable or over harsh disciplinary measures.
- Exposure to domestic violence.

The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/carer.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from the wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child. Examples of physical abuse include:

- Shaking a child
- Use of excessive force in handling a child
- Deliberate poisoning
- Suffocation
- Munchausen's syndrome by proxy

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others. Examples of sexual abuse include:

- Exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child.
- Intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification.
- Sexual intercourse with a child be it oral, anal or vaginal.
- Sexual exploitation of a child.

Bullying

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical which is conducted by an individual or group against others. Examples of bullying include:

- Teasing
- Taunting
- Threatening
- Hitting
- Extortion

Bullying may take place in any setting whether it be in schools, the home or in a youth service setting. The more extreme forms of bullying would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse.

While Child Abuse has been defined under the above five headings of neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse and bullying, due consideration should also be given to instances of organised abuse and peer abuse.

Organised Abuse

This occurs when one person enters into an area or institution and systematically entraps children for abusive purposes (mainly sexual) or when two or more adults conspire to abuse children using inducements or threats.

Peer Abuse

In some cases of abuse the alleged perpetrator will also be a child. In these situations the Child Protection procedures should be adhered to for both the victim and the alleged abuser (**Appendix 3**). If there is any conflict of interest between the welfare of the alleged abuser and the victim, the victim's welfare is of paramount importance.

Recognising Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse

The following are some of the possible indicators of Child Abuse:

Physical Indicators

- Frequent bruising, fractures, cuts, burns and other injuries.
- Signs of neglect e.g. dirty appearance, undernourished looking.
- Failure to thrive.
- Genital injuries or soreness.
- Haemorrhages (retinal, subdural).
- Sexually transmitted infections.
- Pregnancy.

Emotional Indicators

- Unreasonable mood and/or behavioural changes.
- Aggressive or withdrawn.
- Lack of attachment.
- Depression or suicide attempts.
- Persistent nightmares, disturbed sleep, bedwetting, reluctance to go to bed.
- Fear of adults.
- Lack of peer relationships.
- Fear of the dark.
- Panic attacks.

Behavioural / sexual indicators

- Over affectionate or inappropriate sexual behaviour or knowledge given the child's age - often demonstrated in language, playing or drawings.
- Fondling or exposure of genital areas - open masturbation.
- Sexually aggressive behaviour with others.
- Hints about sexual activity.
- Unusual reluctance to join in normal activities, which involve undressing, e.g. games, swimming.
- Overtly compliant and submissive.
- Strong dislike of physical contact.
- Prostitution - giving sexual favours in return for gifts or money.

Changes in normal behaviour for the person in question

- Unwillingness to participate in certain activities or to go to certain places that once may have been liked.
- Running away from school or avoiding school.
- Separation activity.
- Isolation.
- Tiredness and poor concentration.

- Unexplained display of wealth or gifts (bribes) or a constant shortage of money and loss of good equipment, clothes etc. (taken by bullies).

Illness

- Eating disorders such as overeating or anorexia.
- Alcoholism and/or drug addiction.
- Psychosomatic disorders.

Some signs are more indicative of abuse than others. These include:

- Disclosure of abuse by a child or a young person.
- Age inappropriate or abnormal sexual play or knowledge.
- Specific injuries or patterns of injuries.
- Under-age pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections.

Particular behavioural signs and emotional problems suggestive of Child Abuse in young children (0 - 10 years):-

- Mood change e.g. child becomes withdrawn, fearful, acting out.
- Lack of concentration (change in social performance).
- Bed wetting, soiling.
- Psychosomatic complaints, pains, headaches.
- Skin disorders.
- Nightmares, change in sleep patterns.
- School refusal.
- Separation anxiety.
- Loss of appetite.
- Isolation

Particular behavioural signs and symptoms suggestive of abuse in older children (10+ years)

- Mood change e.g. depression, failure to communicate.
- Running away.
- Drug, alcohol, solvent abuse.
- Self-mutilation.
- Suicide attempts.
- Delinquency.
- Truancy.
- Eating disorders.
- Isolation.

All signs/indicators need careful assessment relative to the child's circumstances.

NOTE: In the area of Child Protection the current legal age of consent for sexual intercourse is 17.

It is important to remember that even for the experts, Child Abuse is very difficult to prove and the above are possible indicators of abuse. The most important point

is that you know the children you are working with, are they generally quiet or generally boisterous etc. By knowing the children it will be easier for you to notice any changes in appearance or behaviour that may cause concern.

Anti-Bullying Policy

Definition of Bullying

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical which is conducted by an individual or group against others.

Types of Bullying

(Taken from “Bullying at School: Key Facts” by The Anti-Bullying Centre, Trinity College Dublin, 2001)

There are many different types of bullying that can occur.....

- **Verbal Bullying:** can leave children and young people feeling angry, frightened and powerless. If they are unable to share their feelings with someone else, verbal bullying can leave them emotionally bruised and physically exhausted. Their powers of concentration can suffer, adversely affecting their capacity for learning. Verbal attacks can be of a highly personal and sexual nature. They can be directed at the child’s or young person’s family, culture, race or religion. Malicious rumours are particularly insidious forms of verbal bullying.
- **Physical Bullying:** often written off as “horseplay”, “pretend” or “just a game” when challenged. While children can and do play roughly, in the case of bullying be aware that these “games” can be a precursor to vicious physical assaults. Both boys and girls indulge in physical bullying, boys perhaps more so as they have a greater tendency towards physical aggression.
- **Gesture Bullying:** there are many different forms of non-verbal threatening gestures which can convey intimidatory and frightening messages, for example gesturing a gun to a head or gesturing slitting a throat.
- **Exclusion Bullying:** this is particularly hurtful because it isolates the child or young person from his/her peer group and it is very hard for the child or young person to combat as it directly attacks their self-confidence and self-image.
- **Extortion Bullying:** younger children are particularly vulnerable to extortion bullying. Demands for money, possessions, equipment etc. may be made, often accompanied by threats. Children or young people may also be dared or forced to steal from others leaving them at the mercy of the bully and open to further intimidation.
- **E-Bullying:** in an ever-more technologically advanced world, a new strain of bullying has emerged amongst children and young people, which utilised web pages, e-mails and text messaging to abuse, intimidate and attack others, either directly or indirectly (for example rumour mongering).

Policy Statement

All staff and volunteers who work for Youth Work Ireland are committed to creating an environment that is safe and supportive to all children and young people. We believe that all children and young people with whom we work have

the right to be protected from bullying and abusive behaviour. Bullying in any form is unacceptable in Youth Work Ireland.

Aim of Policy

The aim of this policy is to ensure that all children and young people are protected from bullying behaviour. It is hoped that the policy will reduce the number of children and young people who experience bullying. The policy aims to ensure that incidents of bullying will be dealt with consistently and in a fair manner by setting out the procedures for dealing with such instances.

Objectives of Policy

- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with staff / volunteers, children and young people and parents / guardians.
- To develop an ethos which encourages children and young people to report incidents of bullying.
- To develop systems for recording and reporting incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To involve children and young people in promoting Youth Work Ireland anti-bullying policy, through class projects, poster making etc.
- To develop clear procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To develop support services for those affected by bullying and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
- To ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures are employed for all activities with young people and children.

Procedures For Dealing With Bullying

- In any incident of bullying, a staff member should speak separately to the children or young people involved to get both sides with due regard to the rights of each person involved.
- All reports of bullying will be recorded, investigated and dealt with by an appropriate staff member.
- The staff member will interview all involved in a calm manner and will seek answers to what, where, when, who and why.
- The child or young person should be praised for their courage in coming forward to report the bullying incident and or behaviour.
- Reassure the child or young person that being bullied is the responsibility of bullies and they are not to blame themselves.

- Reassure the child or young person of the support of staff in Youth Work Ireland in ensuring that the bullying doesn't happen again.
- If the staff member dealing with the complaint concludes that bullying has taken place, then the perpetrator will be met with to discuss the bullying behaviour. They will be informed of the disciplinary action that will be taken as a result of this bullying behaviour and will be supported in undertaking any relevant training and interventions to address their inappropriate behaviour.
- Staff members will at all times be sensitive to the needs of the young person, who may not wish it be made known that they reported an incident of bullying. Such incidents will be dealt with in group work and/or key working sessions.
- Parents will be informed of the incident of bullying and of the outcome of the investigation.
- For less serious incidents of bullying, the child or young person will be asked to apologise to the victim and asked not to engage in any further bullying behaviour. Examples may include slagging, name calling, gestures etc. Staff would then closely monitor the behaviour of the child or young person.
- For serious incidents of bullying, the perpetrator will be suspended or excluded from training / activities, depending on the nature of the incident(s). Examples may include assaults or threats of physical assaults, exclusion, racist remarks, homophobic comments etc. and may require referral to H.S.E. All serious incidents of bullying should be discussed with the Designated Person.
- The examples given above are not exhaustive and as such the Anti bullying policy, along with the other sections of this document, is under constant review. A series of anti-bullying posters are displayed throughout various sections of the organisation and the topic is built into a number of personal and social development programmes run with young people.

Complaints Procedure

It is the policy of Youth Work Ireland to encourage young people, parents and Member Youth Service to provide comment and feedback on any aspect of our work, inclusive of any complaints they may have.

Youth Work Ireland is committed to this practice, as it is acknowledged that an open, transparent environment benefits all stakeholders of the organisation and allows the service to monitor and regularly review programmes. This forms an integral part of the organisation's commitment to best practice.

All staff or volunteers need to actively involve young people in the planning and decision-making of programmes and actively seek feedback on programmes and activities. The suggestions or complaints expressed by young people should always be taken into consideration and must receive a response. A leaflet outlining the services of Youth Work Ireland incorporating the complaints system has been produced.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is any form of criticism or suggestion in respect to any aspect of a service or programme. A complaint should not be confused with a Child Protection concern for which the reporting procedure must be followed. When a complaint is received that leads to a concern about a child's safety or well-being, Youth Work Ireland must ensure that it acts appropriately and in the best interests of the child, and that Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children Guidelines are implemented as appropriate. The welfare of the child is paramount at all times.

A distinction must also be made between:

- Minor complaints that can be handled informally and internally within Member Youth Service, youth club / group / project.
- Complaints requiring a formal process within a Member Youth Service.
- Complaints requiring a formal process within Youth Work Ireland collectively.

Steps to be followed in handling complaints:

1. Any member of staff or volunteer with Youth Work Ireland may take a complaint from any young person or parent.
2. All young people and parents of young people who access the service are fully entitled to give comment or feedback, whether positive or negative, on any aspect of the service provided.

3. A complaints form must be completed by the person making the complaint. A member of staff can support a person in doing this.
4. Volunteers must submit this form to their designated club support worker who will pass the information to the youth work manager. Staff must submit this form to their line manager.
5. All complaints are monitored by a manager to make changes to programmes / events if necessary, to ensure a quality service is being provided. Any action to be taken will be recorded on the complaints form.
6. The person who made the complaint will be responded to in writing within five working days, unless otherwise requested.
7. If the manager considers it necessary, a meeting will be organised between the manager and the person who made the complaint.
8. The person will be informed if there is any follow-up action or recommendation for change as the result of the complaint. If it is deemed unnecessary to make any change, the person who made the complaint will be informed of the reason for this.

Accidents

All accidents, however minor, should be recorded on the Accident report form (**Appendix 8**). The report should be completed and forwarded to Youth Work Ireland immediately.

In the event of an accident, parents or guardians should be informed immediately. Where medical attention is required, this should be sought as a matter of urgency and recorded in the accident report form.

Statement of Commitment

I , _____, have read and understood the standards and procedures outlined in Youth Work Ireland Child Protection policy.

I agree with the principles contained therein and will abide by them throughout my association with Youth Work Ireland.

Print name

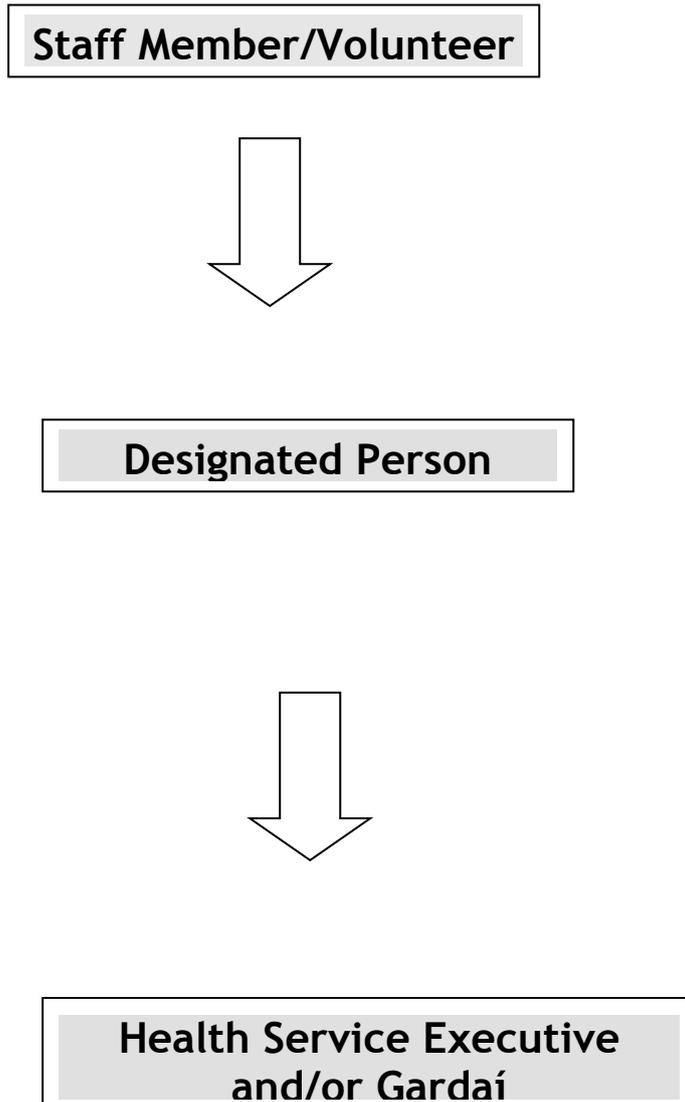
Job title / role

Signature

Date

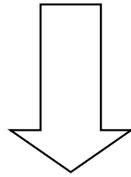
Signed off by:

Internal Referral Procedure Chart

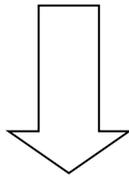


Allegations against a Staff Member / Volunteer Chart

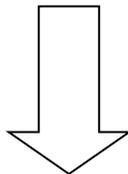
Referral



Designated Person



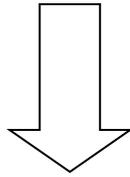
CEO



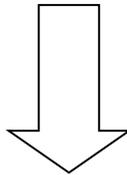
HSE and/or Gardai

Allegations against the CEO Chart

Referral



Designated Person



Chairperson of the Board

The Procedures to follow on Day Trips and Residential with Young People

When taking young people away on day trips and residential, staff and volunteers should always be attentive to such matters as:

- Safety - activities, buildings, transport etc.
- Insurance - ensure that it is adequate to cover all aspects of the trip.
- Parental consent - staff / volunteers must ensure that they have written consent from parent(s)/guardian(s) before taking young people away on trips. It must also be ensured that they have permission for the young person to receive medical treatment in the event of an emergency.
- Staff / volunteers should ensure that they are made aware of any medical information which may be relevant e.g. allergies.
- Sleeping arrangements - sleeping areas for males and females should be in separate and supervised quarters and supervised by at least two people.
- Adequate supervision should be available for the duration of the residential. Provisions should be made for any emergencies that may arise i.e. should a young person take ill, or become homesick then transport should be at hand and there should be enough staff / volunteers present to deal with the situation and also to supervise the other young people.
- Staff / volunteers should respect the privacy and never enter the bedroom or bathroom of a young person without knocking or letting the young person know you are entering. Time should never be spent alone with a young person during a residential.
- If in an emergency situation an adult considers it necessary to enter a young person's bedroom / bathroom without another adult present, they should:
 - a) Keep the door open
 - b) Immediately inform another adult in a position of responsibility
 - c) Make a written record of the circumstances
- Staff / volunteers should always be aware of avoiding compromising situations with young people.
- Maintaining standards and good youth work practice is essential for residential. Please ensure that procedures in relation to the Code of Behaviour are followed.

Child Protection Policy

Draft 3

Approved by Board

23 March 2013

