



Youth Link

Safeguarding Policy

2024/25

Contents

1.	Youth Link Safeguarding Statement	3
2.	Introduction	4
3.	Principles of Good Practice	7
4.	Youth Link Safeguarding Procedure in Northern Ireland	8
5.	Youth Link Safeguarding Guidelines	14
6.	Youth Link Safeguarding Procedures in Republic of Ireland	24
	Appendix 1 –Mandated Persons & legislation – Republic of Ireland	45
	Appendix 2 - Useful Contacts	48
	Appendix 3 - Reporting Procedure Northern Ireland	51
	Appendix 4 - Safeguarding Report Form	52
	Appendix 5 - Youth Link Consent Form for the Use of Photographs or Video	54
	Appendix 6 - Ethical Conduct in Youth Work, National Youth Agency Statement of Principles	55

1. Youth Link Safeguarding Statement

Staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers in Youth Link are committed to best practice which promotes the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk of harm (please refer to Adults at Risk of Harm and in Need of Protection Policy) and protects them from harm.

We wish to ensure that all who use Youth Link services engage in an enjoyable and safe environment, in which they feel respected and valued. Staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers in Youth Link accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause harm to vulnerable groups and recognise their pastoral responsibility to undertake whatever is necessary to safeguard and promote service users' welfare and safety. In addition, Youth Link is committed to reviewing the policy, procedures and practices at regular intervals.

Youth Link has zero tolerance against all forms of bullying, harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse and is committed to acting ethically and with integrity to safeguard children, young people and adults at risk of harm (please refer to Adults at Risk of Harm and in Need of Protection Policy) by:

- Following carefully the procedures laid down for recruitment and selection of staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers.
- Adopting safeguarding guidelines including a code of behaviour for staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers.
- Providing effective management for staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers through supervision, support and training.
- Reporting concerns, allegations or disclosures to statutory agencies who need to know and involving parents / guardians appropriately.
- Ensuring safety procedures are adhered to.

Definitions of young people and children by age:

- a young person is anyone under 18; and
- a child is anyone who has not yet reached the official minimum school leaving age (MSLA) - pupils will reach the MSLA in the school year in which they turn 16.

The definition of a child in safeguarding guidance – a child is anyone who is under the age of 18.

An adult at risk of harm is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

- personal characteristics (may include, but are not limited to age, disability, political opinion, religious belief, racial group, marital status or sexual orientation, illness, physical or mental infirmity and impairment of, or disturbance in, the functioning of the mind or brain); and / or
- life circumstances (may include, but are not limited to, isolation, socio-economic factors and environmental living conditions).

Whilst Youth Link recognises that the primary responsibility for the care of children and young people rests with parents and guardians, the community as a whole has responsibility for their well-being and protecting them.

Youth Link is committed to taking every appropriate step to ensure the safety and wellbeing of those with whom it works, regardless of class, gender, race or creed. This policy applies to all children and young people with whom Youth Link is involved with regardless of age.

All Youth Link staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers must be aware of this policy and it is their duty to guarantee its implementation in accordance with their roles and responsibilities.

2. Introduction

This policy seeks to lay out the value base, procedures and guidelines required for Youth Link staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers to ensure effective safeguarding. It can and should be added to where circumstances and programmes require it, such as when on residential.

For the purposes of this document: -

- 'Youth Link Staff' - refers to any staff member who is paid on a part time or full time basis
- 'Casual Worker / Volunteer' - refers to a person (18 years or over) who is involved in a leadership role in the organisation regardless of being paid or unpaid
- 'DO' - refers to the Designated Officer

Legislation

The key legislation upon which this policy is based is as follows:

Northern Ireland

- Children (NI) Order 1995
- Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order 2003
- Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults 2007

The policy also follows the Guidelines as set out in:

- Choosing to Protect
- Getting It Right
- Our Duty to Care
- Department of Education Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools
- Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People

Core aspects of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) Procedures Manual, 2017, will be used to guide the awareness and understanding of staff. Refer to web link <http://www.proceduresonline.com/sbni/>.

Roles and Responsibilities:

It is not Youth Link's responsibility to identify and investigate possible instances of abuse – this is the role of the statutory agencies: Social Services and the PSNI. However, Youth Link does have a statutory responsibility to report any safeguarding concerns, allegations or disclosures.

The Appropriate Statutory Agencies involved in investigating safeguarding issues are:

1. Gateway Teams - <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect>
Contact - http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/gateway_teams_contact_details.pdf?rev=1
2. Police Service Northern Ireland –P.P.U. (Public Protection Unit)
3. Adult Safeguarding Teams in Trusts

Contact numbers for these agencies can also be found in **Appendix 1**

Designated Officers 2024/2025 and Areas of Responsibility:

Name	Job Title	Contact Number	Area of Responsibility
Joe McKeown	<u>Chief Executive Officer</u>	<u>07485339448</u>	Senior Designated Officer – all areas
Debbie Byrne	<u>Training & Development Officer</u>	<u>07485339440</u>	All areas
Dermot Kelly	Chairperson / Trustee	028 9032 3217	All areas

Safeguarding Vetting and Advice Panel:

This panel is responsible for advising on the suitability of workers should an Access NI certificate be returned with sensitive information. If this is the case, the panel will complete an agreed risk assessment in order that they make an informed decision about recruitment.

The current panel members are:

- Dermot Kelly - Youth Link Executive Council Representative
- Joe McKeown - Youth Link Chief Executive Officer and Senior Designated Officer
- Debbie Byrne – Youth Link Training & Development Officer

Youth Link recognises that programme participants attend Youth Link programmes for enjoyment, social contact and personal development. They should not suffer from abuse wherever or however it occurs.

Staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers who are selected or appointed to work with the organisation should enjoy their involvement, confident in the knowledge of the existence of clear guidelines and if required, access to good support and advice.

Review of Policy and Procedures

Youth Link will review this policy on an annual basis with all staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers. The date of each review and the staff involved will be recorded for Good Practice and Information purposes. The Executive Council will endorse any amendments to the Safeguarding Policy on an annual basis.

Date of Next Policy Review with Executive Council – March 2025

3. Principles of Good Practice

The following is a summary of the principles of good practice for the protection of children and young people.

Any staff, volunteers or casual workers working with children and young people should:

- Promote the general welfare, health and personal development of children and young people and protect them from harm of all kinds.
- Recognise that children and young people have rights as individuals and treat them with dignity and respect.
- Raise awareness about what children and young people are entitled to be protected from.
- Adopt and consistently apply a thorough and clearly defined method of recruiting and selecting staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers.
- Plan an appropriate response procedure in relation to accidents and complaints and to alleged or suspected incidents of abuse.
- Establish links with parents and other relevant organisations, as appropriate.

Youth Link also supports the Ethical Conduct for Youth Workers as highlighted in the Appendix 6 - Ethical Code in Youthwork.

Youth Link fully accepts children and young people's rights to self protection and:

- To be safe
- To protect their own bodies
- To say NO
- To get help against bullies
- To tell
- To be believed
- Not to keep secrets

4. Youth Link Safeguarding Procedures:

4.1 Recruitment, Selection and Management of Staff, Volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers

For the wellbeing and protection of programme participants all potential staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers must be vetted prior to their appointment or involvement in activities, in accordance with Access NI Vetting requirements.

In order to secure the suitability of staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers the following process will be adhered to:

1. The role required of the person will be clearly defined and what is expected of the person established. Each potential worker (whether paid or unpaid) will be made fully aware of all duties pertaining to the appointment and their responsibilities as outlined in the Youth Link Safeguarding Statement.
2. Full appointment procedures, with regard to staff, will be carried out as recommended in the Youth Link Employee Handbook.
3. Application / Registration – references will be sought with regard to those seeking to work with Youth Link, staff, volunteer or casual worker, from two non-family referees, one of which should normally be a previous employer.
4. Declaration – Staff, volunteers or casual workers who will have substantive access to children or who will act as a line manager / or have a supervisory role to other staff, volunteers and casual staff who have substantive access to children or those in a ‘regulated’ position must be vetted through the Access NI registers.
5. All appointments should be sanctioned by the Chairperson of Youth Link Executive Council.
6. Notes should be taken and filed appropriately at all meetings with regard to appointments, probation and work review.

Vetting Procedures

In Northern Ireland, for the purposes of recruitment within Youth Link, a person deemed to hold a ‘Regulated Position’ will be vetted under the Access NI registers and online vetting procedures. Because of the nature of Youth Link’s work, staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers, where applicable, are vetted under enhanced disclosure procedures. Best practice guidelines for vetting as expected by Access NI. In the case of an Access NI Certificate being returned with sensitive information with regard to criminal convictions, then a risk assessment will be carried out by the Safeguarding Vetting and Advice Panel.

The Executive Council also require that Access NI certificates are re-issued every 3 years or if a

person's role significantly changes or if they are absent for more than 2 years. The same applies for Garda checks for those working in the Republic of Ireland.

What positions are considered to be working in regulated activity?

In 2012, the scope of regulated activity was re-defined through the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 to focus on those working most closely with children and adults. The definitions of regulated activity in respect of children and adults can be found at the links below:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/regulated-activity-relation-children>

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/regulated-activity-relation-adults>

An enhanced check, together with a barred list check can only be obtained where the person is engaged in regulated activity.

DISCLOSURE and BARRING SERVICE (NI)

Youth Link will follow any future guidelines issued by Access NI and the Disclosure and Barring Service with regarding to future registration of any staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers who have access to children and young people.

4.2 Effective Management of Staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers

Induction

Safeguarding Policy – Each member of staff, volunteer/Trustee and casual worker will receive a copy of the Safeguarding Policy and will be asked to confirm that they have read and understood the document, with safeguarding training being provided as part of the induction process.

Probationary / Trial Period

Probation period – A probation period of no less than 6 months will apply to all new staff members to ensure their suitability for the post, following which the line manager should review their suitability for the post. During the probation period, line managers will observe delivery of sessions (as appropriate) to ensure staff members are abiding by Youth Link's Safeguarding Code of Conduct.

Training

As part of its personnel policies Youth Link is committed to ensuring that each staff member, volunteer/Trustee and casual worker receives adequate training around safeguarding issues.

This shall take place in three ways.

- Firstly, each new member of staff, volunteer and casual worker, as part of their induction, will receive a copy of the Safeguarding Policy, and will be informed as to their own responsibility to this. Within Youth Link this will be carried out by the relevant Designated Officer.
- Secondly, Youth Link will facilitate on an annual basis, recognised Safeguarding Training (including CSE Awareness). Refresher training will be mandatory for all staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers every three years.
- Thirdly, bespoke training will be provided around specific safeguarding needs as they arise, either as a result of incidents or identified needs.

Support, Supervision and Annual Review

All staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers will have appropriate support structures in place. This will include regular supervision either as an individual or as part of a team, as well as an annual review of duties known as a work review or job appraisal. (Staff should refer to the Youth Link Staff Handbook). As part of this process an opportunity will be given to voice any concerns about child safeguarding issues.

4.3 Reporting concerns, disclosures and allegations

It is imperative that all staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers implement the following procedures to report a concern, disclosure or an allegation of child abuse.

What is Child Abuse?

The following are considered forms of Child Abuse:

Physical - the deliberate physical injury to a child.

Neglect - the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs.

Emotional - persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

Sexual - involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual behaviours.

Within the youth work setting, staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers also need to be aware of the potential of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) as a form of Sexual Abuse. CSE is when a person(s) exploits, coerces and/or manipulates a child or young person into engaging in some type of sexual activity in return for something the child needs. This takes into consideration

online grooming, peer exploitation and child sex trafficking. Abuse involving CSE should also be reported using the following guidelines.

What is a concern?

Inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour or communication, favouritism or negligence are all examples of what may constitute a concern.

What is a disclosure?

A disclosure is when a child/young person tells someone that they have been or are being harmed or abused in some way. This may be physical, sexual emotional abuse, neglect or bullying.

What is an allegation?

An allegation occurs when a child, parent or other person reports specific unacceptable behaviour where a child/young person has been harmed or abused in some way. Allegations must be reported to one of Youth Link's Designated Officers.

Reporting Procedures - (see Appendix 3)

Any disclosure, allegation or suspicion of abuse must be taken seriously, recorded, and reported as outlined below.

The Safeguarding Reporting Form that should be used for internal purposes is found in Appendix 4 but when a formal referral is being made by the DO then the appropriate UNOCINI (Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland) referral form must be used.

Where staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers in Youth Link have cause for concern regarding possible abuse or neglect, or if a child or young person has made a disclosure to them, the following action should be taken:

- Maintain detailed and dated written records of all available information relating to the cause for concern or the disclosure and any subsequent action – this will be retained by the appropriate organisation(s).
- Where a written agreement has been made with the commissioning organisation to operate within their safeguarding procedures first and foremost, then the Youth Link staff member, volunteer or casual worker will in the first instance inform the Designated Officer in the commissioning organisation and subsequently inform Youth Link's Designated Officer. This protocol is to be followed during all aspects of the programme delivery e.g. onsite delivery, residential etc. The commissioning organisation's DO should then decide whether or not to report the incident to the Health and Social Services Gateway teams. In the case of a disclosure a UNOCINI Standard Reporting Form report should always be made to the appropriate Gateway Team. The commissioning organisation's DO should update Youth Link's DO on progress.
- Where a written agreement has not been made with the commissioning organisation, or where course participants are recruited directly by Youth Link, then the Youth Link staff

member, volunteer or casual worker will follow Youth Link recording and reporting procedures and will contact Youth Link's Designated Officer, who will subsequently decide in each instance, what information is appropriate to pass on to the commissioning organisation and will also then decide whether or not to report the incident to the Health and Social Services Gateway teams. In the case of a disclosure a UNOCINI Standard Reporting Form report should always be made to the appropriate Gateway Team.

- Following a safeguarding report submission by a staff member to a Youth Link DO and any subsequent decisions made, the DO should only share what is appropriate with the staff member in terms of update.

Responding to incidents whilst on placement (Moorlands NI Degree students until 30.06.24)

Prior to Moorlands students taking up placement with an organisation, safeguarding protocols and reporting procedures must be agreed using learning agreement proformas. Whilst on placement students should always follow the placement organisation safeguarding reporting procedures (copies of placement organisations safeguarding policies are submitted to Youth Link in advance of commencement of placements and reviewed to ensure suitability). If a placement organisation has a safeguarding concern with regard to a student's practice then this should be reported to the Designated Officer who will follow Moorlands College/University Fitness to Practice Procedures to investigate the matter.

Role of Designated Officers

Key responsibilities of the Designated Officers:

- Be responsible to Youth Link's Executive Council.
- Be responsible for updating information on relevant issues and monitoring the effectiveness of the Safeguarding Policy.
- Maintain a network of contacts with outside authorities such as local Gateway teams / police / fire authorities / health services, ascertaining contact names and phone numbers and seeking appropriate advice when necessary from the appropriate Gateway team.
- Be responsible for ensuring that all new staff members, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers receive a copy of and understand Youth Link's Safeguarding Policy.
- Ensure that appropriate training and support is provided.
- Receive and deal with all concerns of a safeguarding nature.
- Make formal reports if necessary.
- Keep appropriate records and store them in a safe and confidential manner.
- Be responsible for carrying out an Annual Audit of procedures.

Legal Obligations

Youth Link has a legal obligation to report to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS):

- Any person who has applied for a regulated position when they are disqualified from doing so.

- Any person whom they have removed from a regulated position following knowledge of their disqualification.

Under their Duty of Care, Youth Link also has an obligation to report any concerns, disclosures or allegations about any individual, child or young person which have been brought to their attention. This reporting may in the first instance be an informal enquiry to the appropriate Gateway Team asking for advice on a situation, before a decision is made with regard to a formal UNOCINI report being submitted.

The organisation has a legal obligation to report any individual who leaves Youth Link or is asked to leave Youth Link as a result of concerns based on safeguarding issues.

5. Youth Link Safeguarding Guidelines

5.1 Code of Behaviour/Conduct

This Code of Conduct has been drawn up in order to support Youth Link staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers to inform their youth work and protect them, both inside and outside the workplace, especially when working in isolation and vulnerable situations. This code of behaviour is a general guideline and may vary in accordance with programme / delivery needs.

Staff, Volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers are expected to demonstrate a consistent commitment to Equal Opportunities and to young people

- By being honest with, and showing respect for, young people.
- By respecting the confidentiality of the young person and by being clear and open when confidentiality cannot be maintained.
- By offering challenging and exciting experiences undertaken responsibly in a safe environment.
- By recognising unacceptable behaviour and taking action, enabling change to take place.

Staff, Volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers are expected to demonstrate a consistent commitment to themselves and colleagues

- By being honest with and showing respect for colleagues.
- By respecting and keeping appropriate levels of confidentiality.
- By working and planning to the best of their ability within the constraints of their association, or allocated responsibilities.
- By only working alone when immediate support is available and / or the Health & Safety of the Young People is at Risk.
- By offering support to colleagues and seeking it when necessary.

Staff, Volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers are expected to demonstrate a consistent commitment to educate programme participants

- By leading by example and setting good, positive role models.
- By not using language which is racist, sectarian, sexist or abusive.
- By dressing appropriately to the occasion, task, and / or company present.
- By not smoking, drinking alcohol, or using other illegal substances whilst on duty and working with young people.
- By creating an environment within which programme participants can feel safe and learn.
- By enthusiastically seizing all learning opportunities either programmed or otherwise.

Abuse of Trust

Staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers are in a relationship of trust with the children, young people and families with whom they work. A relationship of trust can broadly be

described as one in which one party is in a position of power or influence over the other by virtue of their work or the nature of their activity. This might mean that they have influence over decisions affecting the other person and that the relationship could potentially be distorted by fear or favour. It is vital for all those in positions of trust to understand the power this gives them over those for whom they care and the responsibility they must exercise as a consequence.

An abuse of trust can arise when a staff member, volunteer or casual worker starts an inappropriate relationship with a young person, service user or client (whether sexual or non-sexual) by text, messaging app, phone, email or socialising with them. Such a relationship will be intrinsically unequal and is therefore unacceptable. It is also inappropriate since the 'professional' relationship of trust is altered. Such abuses of trust will be considered a breach of professional behaviour.

Recommendations

In recognising the issues highlighted in the Code of Conduct, it is expected that all staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers, both inside and outside the work place will:

- Respect everyone as an individual
- Provide a good example of acceptable behaviour
- Respect young people's rights to privacy
- Be available to listen and if necessary, refer to more appropriate help
- Try to ensure that their actions cannot be misunderstood or cause offence and are acceptable within a relationship of trust
- Show understanding when dealing with sensitive issues
- Plan not to put themselves in a situation where they are alone with a child or young person
- Adhere to Youth Link policies
- Be aware that they are accountable for their actions to the young people, their parents/guardians and Youth Link

Staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers should **never**:

- Spend excessive time alone with children and/or young people away from others
- Take children and/or young people alone on car journeys no matter how short (unless in an emergency situation and agreed by line manager)
- Take children and/or young people to their home (unless in an emergency situation and agreed by line manager)
- Engage in inappropriate physical contact
- Engage in rough physical games including horseplay – apart from structured sports activities
- Engage in sexually provocative games
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- Allow children and/or young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child and/or young person even in fun
- Let allegations a child and/or young person makes go unchallenged or unrecorded
- Do things of a personal nature for children and/or young people that they can do themselves

- On residentials, sleep in a room with children and/or young people, enter young persons' bedrooms (unless for valid reasons i.e. first aid/emergency), or allow young people to enter staff bedrooms
- Establish relationships with participants that may have sexual overtones
- Deliberately place yourself or others in a compromising situation

Sanctions:

Should a staff member, volunteer or casual worker be in breach of this Code of Conduct, Youth Link procedures will be activated and followed.

Moorlands College Students – The Code of Conduct for Moorlands College students is located in the relevant placement learning agreement.

5.2 Communication with young people, parents and others.

Additional Support Needs

Youth Link welcome all young people to participate in programmes and aim to support all young people who present with additional support needs.

Youth Link aim is to support young people to achieve their full potential; we recognise that some young people may need additional support to assist them to do so.

Youth Link has well developed procedures to identify, assess and respond to the additional support needs of young people. We encourage a person-centred approach and work in close partnership with a range of other agencies to support young people with additional needs.

Facilitating Training Sessions and Residentials with young people

Prior to the delivery of a session or programme that involves participants who are young people or adults at risk of harm (please refer to Adults at Risk of Harm and in Need of Protection Policy), Youth Link staff will agree safeguarding protocols with the commissioning organisation, this should be confirmed in writing.

The commissioning organisation will take responsibility for safeguarding matters during the session / programme including:

- They ensure that parental / guardian consent has been secured for the participants' engagement in the session / programme.
- They ensure that there is a nominated person(s) present who will take responsibility for the supervision of the young people at all times.

In the event of neither of these conditions being agreed, Youth Link staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers should consult a member of the Youth Link Management Team to agree an alternative strategy, which is to be documented.

Use of Mobile Phones/Email/Social Media

Anything which compromises a staff member or volunteer's ability to maintain a safe environment and give their full attention to programme participants, such as using a mobile phone, should be actively discouraged. A blanket ban is not necessary as mobiles may obviously be useful in emergency situations or specific programme delivery.

It is not appropriate for staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers to hold the personal mobile phone numbers of young people, unless they have been provided through parental/guardian consent forms. Staff, volunteers or casual workers may need to contact young people for specific programmes, however consent must be sought from a parent/guardian before contact is made via text message, apps, phone or email.

Staff, volunteers or casual workers should only contact young people for whom they have parental consent, and this should always be in a group context and be relating to dissemination of information and/or the organising or planning of work-related activities.

If staff, volunteers or casual workers have reason to contact a young person on an individual basis i.e. one to one support, organising a special event etc. then this should only be done with the knowledge and approval of their line manager.

Staff, volunteers or casual workers should not contact young people through social media platforms or networks with the following exceptions where deemed appropriate:

- Through an established work authorised social media page, profile, account or group.
- From an organisation owned phone which has been authorised for such use.

In all instances where communication takes place with young people either directly or in a group context, to allow for transparency all devices and/or accounts used must be accessible by the line manager or DO upon request. If a work-related social media site were to be set up, approval must be sought first by a Line Manager and it must be used professionally and follow Youth Link's policies and procedures, such communications would only occur during staff working hours.

Sharing photos and/or videos

Parental permission must be sought before sharing photos or videos of young people on websites, social media networking sites or PR Materials.

Staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers are advised to pay particular attention to the use of cameras and picture mobile phones and in some cases their use will not be permitted. Under no circumstances must photographs be taken without the consent of the group or on personal media/mobile devices (unless approved by line manager with a valid reason). Youth Link devices should be used for taking photographs, such as iPad, work phones or Camera. Photographs should be uploaded onto intranet at earliest time possible then deleted from device. Youth Link staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers will take responsibility for securing consent for photographing or videoing participants by using the form in Appendix 5.

Sharing Information:

- Where safeguarding concerns arise, information must be shared on a 'need to know' basis in the best interest of the child / young person.
- Sharing information re a safeguarding concern is not a breach of confidentiality.
- Parents / guardians, children and young people have a right to know if personal information is being shared and or a report is being made unless doing so could put the child / young person at further risk.

Written Information sought from parents

Youth Link gains information relating to young people in relation to consent for activities, day trips, residential, emergency situations, photographs and if contact can be made directly with young person. Any 'consent' that is provided must be from someone with parental responsibility and all Youth Link staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers if working with under 18's must inform those giving consent that it must be obtained from those with parental responsibility, prior to programme delivery.

Parent/Guardian should always be informed of the limits of confidentiality around their contact details and any information they provide to Youth Link. A copy of Youth Link Safeguarding Policy is available on its website.

Confidentiality

On the premise that the welfare of the child / young person is paramount, considerations of confidentiality must not be allowed to override the right of children and young people to be protected from harm. Staff, volunteers, casual workers and participants must be aware that there are circumstances in which confidentiality must be broken, specifically if it is suspected that abuse has occurred and an offence committed.

On receipt of both a verbal and a written report on suspected abuse the Designated Officer will refer to the appropriate authorities.

All staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers must be familiar with the referral procedure.

Record Keeping

All staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers need to be aware of and follow the written procedures for keeping records such as:

- Attendance register – to be retained by Staff member responsible for session
- Accident Book – held in Reception
- Incident Book – held by Senior Designated Officer
- Consent forms – held by Programme Staff and/or Line Manager
- Safeguarding Report Forms – blank forms will be held in Reception and completed forms

will be held by the Senior Designated Officer. (Blank forms should also be brought to any sessions/residentials/trips etc outside of Youth Link for use by staff if required, this will be the responsibility of the staff member in charge to ensure these are available at all times).

All records will be kept in compliance with Youth Link's Data Protection Policy – a copy of which is available on Youth Link website.

Complaints and grievances

All staff, volunteers, casual workers and participants must be aware of Youth Link's complaints procedures. Everyone has a right to complain or report a grievance, regardless of whether they are children, parents or staff / volunteers. A copy of the complaints procedure is available to view on Youth Link website.

5.3 Health & Safety

This Safeguarding Policy should be read in conjunction with Youth Link Health and Safety Policy, copy available on Youth Link website, which will outline in greater detail the processes and responsibilities with regard to Health and Safety matters in the organisation.

General Safety

When an accident occurs, the danger must be removed immediately, the injured person treated, and the accident recorded on the agreed form.

- A telephone should be accessible wherever a group meets.
- Emergency telephone numbers should be displayed prominently.
- It is desirable that a trained First Aider be available within the staff team.
- Professional help should be sought if and when the trained First Aider cannot help or if further assistance is required when the First Aider can do no more. If a staff member is required to take the young person to a hospital (in an emergency situation i.e. parent/guardian is not contactable or distance is an issue), permission should be sought from a Manager and a decision made regarding the supervision of the remainder of the group.
- A first aid box should be available on and offsite (during programme delivery).
- The staff member, volunteer or casual worker in charge of the group must inform the appropriate Manager of any accidents at the earliest possible opportunity.
- The staff member, volunteer or casual worker in charge of the group must ensure that the young person's parent / guardian is immediately informed of the accident.
- The staff member, volunteer or casual worker in charge of the group must record all details of accidents in the Accident Book and obtain witness statements within 24 hours.
- Identify cause of the incident and prevent re-occurrence.
- If an accident is serious, the staff member, volunteer or casual worker should inform the Executive Officer who will inform Youth Link's insurance broker.

Facilitating Training Sessions, Trips and Residential with young people

Prior to the delivery of a session or programme that involves participants who are young people or adults at risk of harm (please refer to Adults at Risk of Harm and in Need of Protection Policy), Youth Link staff, volunteer or casual worker will undertake a risk assessment to agree safeguarding protocols with the commissioning organisation.

Insurance

All Youth Link programmes and services have professionally advised and adequate insurance cover to include key areas of:

- Personal Accident
- Public Liability
- Property and Contents Insurance

It is the responsibility of Youth Link Chief Executive Officer to ensure that all relevant insurance policies are valid.

Premises

Staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers can help ensure that activities and the environment that is being used for activities and programmes are safe, by identifying potential hazards and concerns through completion of a risk assessment.

The premises used for all Youth Link activities should be suitable and safe. This includes:

- Adequate provision of toileting facilities.
- Appropriate and adequate lighting.
- Appropriate and adequate heating systems.
- Adequate provision of security and safety appliances.
- All fire exits and entrance and exit routes should be kept clear and marked for any situation.
- All keys to entrance / exit doorways should be easily accessed for emergency situations.
- All fire alarms and appliances should be installed following professional advice and maintained as advised. Workers should be trained in their use.
- All work / meeting areas should be marked with an 'Assembly Point' in the case of an emergency.
- No heating / cooking items, electrical appliances, or naked flames other than those tested and fitted to the venue by a professional should be used.

It is the responsibility of Youth Link Executive Council to maintain the upkeep of the premises to a safe and suitable standard. However, the staff member, volunteer or casual worker in charge has a responsibility to ensure that the procedures outlined in the Youth Link Health and Safety policy are fulfilled.

Competency of Staff, Volunteers & Casual Workers

It is vital that all staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers involved in activities and programmes have adequate training. All staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and casual workers will be expected to provide written documentation as proof of their required or necessary

qualifications.

Supervision ratios

Guidance on appropriate levels of supervision for children and young people

When working with groups of children or young people it's important that there are enough adults to provide the appropriate level of supervision. Staffing and supervision ratios can sometimes be difficult to judge. It's important that as an organisation Youth Link make sure there are sufficient staff and volunteers to ensure children are safe – and that these adults are suitable to undertake various tasks as needed. It may not always be possible to stick to recommended ratios. However, every effort should be made to achieve the best level of supervision of children and young people at all times.

Supervision

Supervision levels will vary depending on the children and young people's age, gender, behaviour and the abilities within the group.

They will also vary depending on:

- Nature and duration of activities
- Competence and experience of staff involved
- Requirements of location, accommodation or organisation
- Any special medical needs
- Specialist equipment needed
- Taking these into consideration you can then make decisions about the competence and experience of staff and how many adults you need

Adult to children/young people ratios

Youth Link recommend having at least two adults present when working with or supervising children and young people. Youth Link recommend the following adult to children/young people ratios as the minimum numbers to help keep children and young people safe:

- 9 - 12 years - 1 adult to 8 children/young people
- 13 - 17 years - 1 adult to 10 children/young people

Youth Link recommend having at least two adults present, even with smaller groups.

When young people are helping to supervise younger children, then generally, only people aged 18 or over should be included as adults when calculating adult to children/young people ratios.

Based on NSPCC Guidelines – Research and Resources – NSPCC Website (Accessed, October 2018)

5.4 Mentoring & Guidance

Introduction

Youth Link will ensure that all young people are offered the guidance and support necessary to maintain and extend their personal development and academic progress.

What is Mentoring

Mentoring in Youth Link is defined as a one-to-one relationship between a young person and an adult that occurs over a prolonged period of time. The mentor provides support, guidance, and concrete help to a young person to provide them with a positive role model. The goal of 1-1 mentoring is to help all young people involved in mentoring sessions to gain the skills and confidence to be responsible for their own futures and develop to their full academic and personal potential.

Mentoring Process

The Mentoring Process will support learners in their transition to further/higher education, work or training. We will aim to provide all young people with practical information, advice and guidance to ensure they have an individual progression pathway tailored to their skills, attributes and aspirations. The process will be offered to young people on specific programmes.

Partnership with Parents/Guardians

It is essential that parents/guardians understand how we support and mentor their young people and are able to contribute to progress.

Safeguarding within Mentoring

A buddy system should take place when mentoring 1-1, this reduces risk for both the worker and the young person. A 'buddy system' can be defined as a system where a lone worker has regular contact with another worker, where they would be able to look out for each other's safety. A buddy system during 1-1 mentoring would involve the staff member being in contact with another member of staff or their line manager, to inform them of when 1-1 session will begin and once it has ended. This also will mirror that of their outlook calendar which will show date/time/location of 1-1 mentoring sessions. This would help in establishing when the staff worker has returned safely to their base or home on completion of mentoring session.

When meeting with young people on a 1-1 basis:

- Always arrange to meet young people in a public or community venue rather than visiting them on their own.
- Make sure that you use the buddy system that is in operation.
- Take a mobile phone with you if you have one – make sure your 'buddy' knows your

mobile phone number.

- If you have any serious concerns about your safety on any particular spell of lone working, then discuss these with your line manager.
- In the event that a staff member suspects they are in danger, they should if possible, use a phone to summon assistance (e.g. 999/112 for the police).

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Executive Council. Trustees will use an Annual Review Checklist of Safeguarding as well as an action plan for the year ahead.

Signed: Simon U

Chairperson: Simon Henry

Date: 12/03/24

6. Reporting and Responding to Child Protection and Welfare Concerns Republic of Ireland

Youth Link will engage in various youth projects across the Republic of Ireland as part of the PEACEPLUS Empower to Transform Project (April 2024 – December 2027) and also more generally in support of the member churches who work on an All-Island Basis and in line with our Strategic Plan. Youth Link will provide weekly activities for young people aged under 18 years old and young adults & volunteers in a variety of settings. T

6.1 Status of this document

This chapter is based on the legal framework provide by the Children First Act (2015). Information given is based on the child protection guidelines as set out in Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 and Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice (2nd Edition).

Guiding Principles

Youth Link recognises that:

- The welfare and safety of every child and young person who attends our activities is paramount;
- Our guiding principles and procedures to safeguard children and young people reflect national policy and legislation and we will review our guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures every two years;
- All children and young people have an equal right to attend our activities that respects them as individuals and encourages them to reach their potential, regardless of their background;
- We are committed to upholding the rights of every child and young person who attends our activities, including the rights to be kept safe and protected from harm, listened to and heard;
- Our guiding principles apply to everyone who works or volunteers for Youth Link;
- Workers/volunteers must conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of Youth Link and Good Practice from our member churches.

6.2 GLOSSARY

Child means a person under 18 years excluding a person who is or has been married.

Staff means anyone with a formal contract of employment who is employed and paid by Youth Link. This also includes sessional workers.

Volunteer means anyone engaged by Youth Link in a position of responsibility towards children or assisting with a group or organisation providing activities involving children, or care or supervision of children, and who is not paid for this involvement.

Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) for Youth Link.

Statutory Authorities refers to Tusla (The Child and Family Agency) which is the statutory body responsible for child protection matters, who is responsible for keeping children safe and protected from harm. An Garda Síochána are empowered under legislation to investigate possible criminal offences.

Mandated Person means those defined in the Children First Act 2015 that have by law an obligation to report concerns which reach a particular threshold to Tusla and to cooperate with Tusla in the assessment of mandated reports.

6.3 RECOGNISING ABUSE

The legal and moral responsibility to report child protection or welfare concerns applies to everyone who has contact with children whether paid, voluntary, lay or ordained.

Knowing and recognising what the signs and symptoms of abuse are, is an important step to being alert to the possibility that children may be experiencing abuse and neglect.

- It is important to remember that a child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time.
- Abuse and neglect can occur within the family, in the community or in an institutional setting.
- The abuser may be someone known to the child or a stranger, and can be an adult or another child. In a situation where abuse is alleged to have been carried out by another child, it should be considered a child welfare and protection issue for both children and child protection procedures should be followed for both the victim and the alleged abuser.
- Abuse is not always committed through personal contact with a child or young person, sometimes it is perpetrated through social media or the use of information and communication technology.
- A child needs to have someone they can trust in order to feel able to disclose abuse they may be experiencing. They need to know that they will be believed and will get the help they need. Without these things, they may be vulnerable to continuing abuse.
- Other indicators may be related to the child's behaviour such as being aggressive, impulsive, or withdrawn. A cluster or pattern of signs is more likely to be indicative of neglect or abuse.

6.4 CATEGORIES AND INDICATORS OF ABUSE

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. The definitions of neglect and abuse outlined below are taken from Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017.

Neglect

Child neglect is the most frequently reported category of abuse, both in Ireland and internationally. Ongoing chronic neglect is recognised as being extremely harmful to the development and well-being of the child and may have serious long-term negative consequences.

Neglect occurs when a child does not receive adequate care or supervision to the extent that the child is harmed physically or developmentally. It is generally defined in terms of an omission of care, where a child's health, development or welfare is impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, medical care, intellectual stimulation or supervision and safety.

Emotional neglect may also lead to the child having attachment difficulties. The extent of the damage to the child's health, development or welfare is influenced by a range of factors. These factors include the extent, if any, of positive influence in the child's life as well as the age of the child and the frequency and consistency of neglect.

Neglect is associated with poverty but not necessarily caused by it. It is strongly linked to parental substance misuse, domestic violence, and parental mental illness and disability.

A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when neglect becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer. This may become apparent where you see the child over a period of time, or the effects of neglect may be obvious based on having seen the child once.

The following are features of child neglect:

- Children being left alone without adequate care and supervision;
- Malnourishment, lacking food, unsuitable food or erratic feeding;
- Non-organic failure to thrive, i.e., a child not gaining weight due not only to malnutrition but also emotional deprivation;
- Failure to provide adequate care for the child's medical and developmental needs, including intellectual stimulation
- Inadequate living conditions – unhygienic conditions, environmental issues, including lack of adequate heating and furniture;
- Lack of adequate clothing;
- Inattention to basic hygiene;
- Lack of protection and exposure to danger, including moral danger, or lack of supervision appropriate to the child's age; • Persistent failure to attend school; • Abandonment or desertion.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment of a child as part of the overall relationship between a caregiver and a child. Once-off and occasional difficulties between a parent/carer and child are not considered emotional abuse. Abuse occurs when a child's basic need for attention, affection, approval, consistency and security are not met, due to incapacity or indifference from their parent or caregiver. Emotional abuse can also occur when adults responsible for taking care of children are unaware of and unable (for a range of reasons) to meet their children's emotional and developmental needs.

Emotional abuse is not easy to recognise because the effects are not easily seen. A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when the behaviour becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer.

Emotional abuse may be seen in some of the following ways:

- rejection
- lack of comfort and love;
- lack of attachment;
- lack of proper stimulation (e.g., fun and play);
- lack of continuity of care (e.g., frequent moves, particularly unplanned);
- continuous lack of praise and encouragement;
- persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming of the child;
- bullying;
- conditional parenting in which care or affection of a child depends on his or her behaviours or actions;
- extreme over-protectiveness;
- inappropriate non-physical punishment (e.g. locking child in bedroom);
- on-going family conflicts and family violence;
- seriously inappropriate expectations of a child relative to his/her age and stage of development.

There may be no physical signs of emotional abuse unless it occurs with another type of abuse. A child may show signs of emotional abuse through their actions or emotions in several ways. These include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, risk taking and aggressive behaviour.

It should be noted that no one indicator is conclusive evidence of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is more likely to impact negatively on a child where it is persistent over time and where there is a lack of other protective factors.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse is when someone deliberately hurts a child physically or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents. A reasonable concern exists where the child's health and/ or development is, may be, or has been damaged as a result of suspected physical abuse.

Physical abuse can include the following:

- physical punishment;
- beating, slapping, hitting or kicking;
- pushing, shaking or throwing;
 - pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling; use of excessive force in handling;
- deliberate poisoning;
- suffocation;
- fabricated/induced illness; • female genital mutilation.

The Children First Act 2015 includes a provision that abolishes the common law defence of reasonable chastisement in court proceedings. This defence could previously be invoked by a parent or other person in authority who physically disciplined a child. The change in the legislation now means that in prosecutions relating to assault or physical cruelty, a person who administers such punishment to a child cannot rely on the defence of reasonable chastisement in the legal proceedings. The result of this is that the protections in law relating to assault now apply to a child in the same way as they do to an adult.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or arousal, or for that of others. It includes the child being involved in sexual acts (masturbation, fondling, oral or penetrative sex) or exposing the child to sexual activity directly or through pornography.

Child sexual abuse may cover a wide spectrum of abusive activities. It rarely involves just a single incident and, in some instances, occurs over a number of years. Child sexual abuse most commonly happens within the family, including older siblings and extended family members.

Cases of sexual abuse mainly come to light through disclosure by the child or his or her siblings/friends, from the suspicions of an adult, and/or by physical symptoms.

It should be remembered that sexual activity involving a young person may be sexual abuse even if the young person concerned does not themselves recognise it as abusive.

Examples of child sexual abuse include the following:

- any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child;
- an invitation to sexual touching or intentional touching or molesting of a child's body whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification;
- masturbation in the presence of a child or the involvement of a child in an act of masturbation;
- sexual intercourse with a child, whether oral, vaginal or anal;

- sexual exploitation of a child, which includes:
- inviting, inducing or coercing a child to engage in prostitution or the production of child pornography [for example, exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, videotape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of an image by computer or other means];
- inviting, coercing or inducing a child to participate in, or to observe, any sexual, indecent or obscene act;
showing sexually explicit material to children, which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse;
- exposing a child to inappropriate or abusive material through information and communication technology;
- consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person.

An Garda Síochána will deal with any criminal aspects of a sexual abuse case under the relevant criminal justice legislation. The prosecution of a sexual offence against a child will be considered within the wider objective of child welfare and protection. The safety of the child is paramount and at no stage should a child's safety be compromised because of concern for the integrity of a criminal investigation. In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that in criminal law the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years for both boys and girls. Any sexual relationship where one or both parties are under the age of 17 is illegal. However, it may not necessarily be regarded as child sexual abuse.

Child Welfare Concern

The Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook defines a child welfare concern as "a problem experienced directly by a child, or the family of a child, that is seen to impact negatively on the child's health, development and welfare, and that warrants assessment and support, but may not require a (statutory) child protection response".

Bullying

It is recognised that bullying affects the lives of an increasing number of children and can be the cause of genuine concerns about a child's welfare. Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression – whether it is verbal, psychological or physical – that is conducted by an individual or group against others.

In cases of serious instances of bullying where the behaviour is regarded as possibly abusive, you may need to make a referral to Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána. For more information, please see Youth Link Bullying and Harassment policy.

6.5 CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH MAY MAKE CHILDREN MORE VULNERABLE TO HARM

Some children may be more vulnerable to abuse than others. There may be particular times or circumstances when a child may be more vulnerable to abuse in their lives. In particular, children with disabilities, children with communication difficulties, children in care or living away from home, or children with a parent or parents with problems in their own lives may be more susceptible to harm.

The following list is intended to help you identify the range of issues in a child's life that may place them at greater risk of abuse or neglect. It is important to remember that the presence of any of these factors does not necessarily mean that a child in those circumstances or settings is being abused.

Parent or carer factors:

- Drug and alcohol misuse
- Mental health issues
- Conflictual relationships
- Parental disability issues including intellectual disability
- Addiction, including gambling
- Domestic violence
- Adolescent parents

Child Factors:

- Age
- Communication difficulties
- Gender
- Sexuality
- Trafficked/Exploited
- Previous abuse
- Disability
- Young carer
- Mental health issues, including self-harm and suicide

Community factors:

- Cultural, ethnic, religious or faith-based norms in the family or community which may not meet the standards of child welfare or protection required in this jurisdiction
- Culture-specific practices, including:
 - Female genital mutilation
 - Forced marriage
 - Honour-based violence
 - Radicalisation

Environmental factors:

- Housing issues
- Children who are out of home and not living with their parents, whether temporarily or permanently.
- Poverty/Begging
- Bullying
- Internet and social media-related concerns

Poor motivation or willingness of parents/guardians to engage:

- non-attendance at appointments;
- lack of insight or understanding of how the child is being affected;
- lack of understanding about what needs to happen to bring about change; • avoidance of contact and reluctance to work with services;
- inability or unwillingness to comply with agreed plans.

These factors should be considered as part of being alert to the possibility that a child may be at risk of suffering abuse and in bringing reasonable concerns to the attention of Tusla.

6.6 IDENTIFYING REASONABLE GROUNDS FOR CONCERN

There are many reasons why staff/volunteers may be concerned about the welfare and protection of a child or young person.

Tusla should always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected. If symptoms are ignored, there is the potential the abuse may continue or worsen.

It is not necessary to prove that abuse has occurred to report a concern to Tusla. All that is required is that reasonable grounds for concern exist. It is Tusla's role to assess concerns that are reported to them.

Reasonable Grounds for a child protection or welfare concern include:

- Evidence, for example an injury or behaviour, that is consistent with abuse and is unlikely to have been caused in any other way;
- Any concern about possible sexual abuse;
- Consistent signs that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect;
- A child saying or indicating by other means that he or she has been abused;
- Admission or indication by an adult or a child of an alleged abuse they committed;
- An account from a person who saw a child being abused.

6.7 PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING CHILD PROTECTION OR WELFARE CONCERNS (NON-MANDATED PERSONS)

Within Youth Link, concerns regarding the welfare and safety of all must be paramount. Advice from the Youth Link Designated Safeguarding Officer can also be sought at any time. (+44 2890 323217)

The guiding principles on reporting child abuse or neglect may be summarised as follows:

- The safety and well-being of the child must take priority over concerns about adults against whom an allegation may be made;
- Reports of concerns should be made without delay;
- The rule is *if in doubt, pass it on*.

If any Youth Link Staff or Volunteer thinks a child is in immediate danger and cannot make contact with Tusla, that leader should contact the Gardaí without delay.

These are the standard reporting procedures for all staff and volunteers regardless of how a concern comes to their attention. This may arise from a disclosure/allegation being made or from a staff/volunteer's own observations.

Step 1

- Contact the Safeguarding Team (Joe McKeown, Debbie Byrne or Dermot Kelly Youth Link DSO's) on the day the concern arises to discuss concern. The concern should be recording in writing what as much detail as possible.

Step 2 (A)

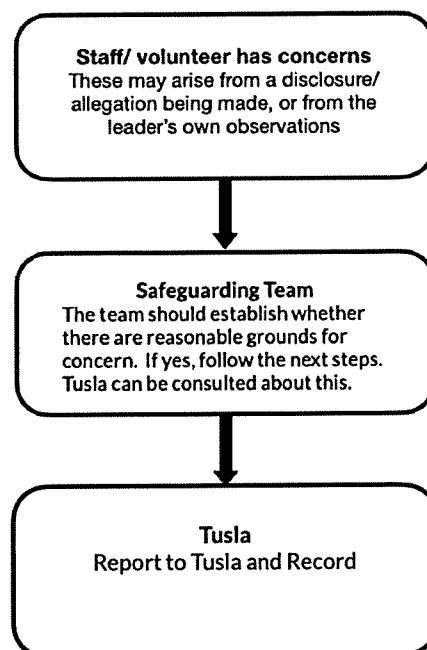
- If the Safeguarding Team, in consultation with the person who raised the concern, decides that reasonable grounds for concern exist, then contact should be made with the Duty Social Worker in the local Tusla office to seek advice about the concern and whether a report needs to be made.
- Record and follow the advice given and actions to be taken including whether the parents should be informed of the report being made.
- Tusla can be contacted for informal advice. This provides an opportunity to discuss the query in general and to decide whether a formal report of the concern to Tusla is appropriate at this stage. If the concern is below the threshold for reporting, Tusla may be able to provide advice in terms of keeping an eye on the child and other services that may be more suitable to meeting the needs of the child and/or family.

- If advised to make a formal report, the staff or volunteer who raised the concern and the DSO should jointly fill in the Child Protection Report Form which is available on the Tusla website www.tusla.ie
- If advised by Tusla not to make a formal report, the reason should be recorded including the name of the Social Worker spoken to. Continue to monitor the child and report any further concerns as above.
- The Safeguarding Team should record the advice given by Tusla
- In cases where a criminal offence has been committed and, on the recommendation, of Tusla, An Garda Síochána may also need to be informed.
- The Designated Safeguarding Officer should be informed of all reports made to Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána.

Step 2 (B)

- If the Safeguarding Team in consultation with the person who raised the concern decide not to make a report to Tusla then the following steps should be taken:
 - The reasons for not reporting are to be recorded;
 - If any actions are taken as a result of the concern, these should be recorded;
 - The staff or volunteer who raised the concern should be given a clear written explanation of the reasons why the concern is not being reported to Tusla;
 - The staff or volunteer should be advised that if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free to make a report to Tusla or An Garda Síochána.
 - The staff or volunteer who raised the concern should also be reassured that if they do choose to further pursue the matter, they are covered by the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998.

Reporting procedure in summary - (non mandated persons)



6.8 RESPONDING TO A CHILD WHO DISCLOSES ABUSE

A child may disclose to a staff member or a volunteer that they have been or are being harmed or abused. Children will often have different ways of communicating that they are being abused. If a child or young person hints at or tells a worker or volunteer that he or she is being harmed by someone, be it a parent/carer, another adult or by another child/young person (peer abuse), it should be treated in a sensitive way.

A child may disclose abuse to a trusted adult at any time during their work with them. It is important that leaders are aware and prepared for this. Leaders should observe the following:

- Be as calm and natural as possible;
- Remember that leaders are approached because they are trusted and possibly liked;
- The leader should not panic;
- The leader must not promise to keep secrets;
- The leader should be aware that disclosures can be very difficult for the child/young person.
- The child or young person may initially be testing the reaction of the leader and may only fully open up over a period of time;
- Listen to what the child/young person has to say. The child/ young person should be given the time and opportunity to tell as much as they are able and wish to;
- Do not pressurise the child/young person. Allow him or her to disclose at their own pace and in their own language;
- Conceal any signs of disgust, anger or disbelief;
- Accept what the child or young person has to say – false disclosures are very rare;
- It is important to differentiate between the person who carried out the abuse and the act of abuse itself. The child/young person quite possibly may love or strongly like the alleged abuser while also disliking what was done to them. It is important therefore to avoid expressing any judgement on, or anger towards the alleged perpetrator while talking with the child.
- It may be necessary for the leader to reassure the child/young person that the leader's feelings towards him or her have not been affected in a negative way as a result of what they have disclosed;
- Reassure the child/young person that they have taken the right action in talking about this issue;
- Do not ask leading questions;
- Explain to the child that this information will only be shared with the people who can help.

TIP BOX

Some useful phrases when responding to a disclosure

Things to say:

- I want to listen to what you have to say
- I am going to do my best to help you
- You did the right thing by telling me, this is what I am going to do next...
- You are not to blame
- Is there anything else you want to share?

Things not to say:

- Wait until I get the main leader so you can tell them too.
- I can't do anything.
- I can't believe it, I'm shocked.
- This is your fault.
- Don't tell me anymore.

6.9 (& 6.13) CONFIDENTIALITY (please note this is also referred to later)

The leader should not promise to keep secrets. At the earliest opportunity, the leader should:

- acknowledge that the child/ young person has made this disclosure because of the trust in the leader;
- tell the child/young person that this information will be shared only with people who understand this area and who can help;
- tell the young person 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 ongoing hurt.

It should be noted that by refusing to make a commitment to secrecy to the child/young person, there is a risk that the individual may not disclose everything (or, indeed, anything) there and then. However, it is better to do this than to tell a lie and ruin the child/young person's confidence in yet another adult. By being honest, it is more likely that the child/young person will return to the leader at another time.

The leader should always think before making a promise. The leader should not make a promise that cannot be kept.

Recording

As soon as possible, the leader should:

- Record in writing, in a factual manner, what the child/young person has said, including, as far as possible, the exact words used by the child/young person.
- Inform the Safeguarding Team immediately who will agree measures to protect the child/young person, e.g., report the matter directly to Tusla.
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality.

On-going support

Following a disclosure by a child, it is important that staff/volunteers continue in a supportive relationship with the child. Disclosure is a huge step for a child.

Staff/volunteers should continue to offer support, particularly by:

- Maintaining a positive relationship with the child/young person;
- Keeping lines of communication open by listening carefully to the child/young person;
- Continuing to include the child/young person in the usual activities.
- Any further disclosure should be treated as a first disclosure and responded to as indicated above. Where necessary, immediate action should be taken to ensure the child/young person's safety.

6.10 MANDATED PERSONS

Mandated persons are people who have ongoing contact with children and/or families and who because of their qualifications, training and/or employment role, are in a key position to help protect children from harm.

Within Youth Link, any paid employee who works with children and young people are mandated persons. Within Youth Link, this includes Professional Youth Workers/sessional workers and the Designated Safeguarding Officer.

Under the Children First Act 2015 mandated persons are required to report any knowledge, belief or reasonable suspicion that a child:

- has been harmed;
- is being harmed;
- or is at risk of being harmed; and to assist Tusla, if requested, in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report known as 'mandated assisting'.

'Harm' as defined by the Children First Act 2015: 'harm' means in relation to a child: (a) assault, ill-treatment or neglect of the child in a manner that seriously affects, or is likely to seriously affect the child's health, development or welfare, or, (b) sexual abuse of the child whether caused by a single act, omission or circumstances or a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances, or otherwise.

Section 14(1) of the Children First Act 2015 states:

'...where a mandated person knows, believes or has reasonable grounds to suspect, on the basis of information that he or she has received, acquired or becomes aware of in the course of his or her

employment or profession as such a mandated person, that a child– (a) has been harmed; (b) is being harmed;

(c) or is at risk of being harmed; he or she shall, as soon as practicable, report that knowledge, belief or suspicion, as the case may be, to the Agency.'

Section 14(2) of the Children First Act 2015 also places obligations on mandated persons to report any disclosures made by a child:

'Where a child believes that he or she– (a) has been harmed;

(b) is being harmed; (c) or is at risk of being harmed, and discloses this belief to a mandated person in the course of a mandated person's employment or profession as such a person, the mandated person shall, as soon as is practicable, report that disclosure to the Agency.'

The threshold of harm for each category of abuse at which mandated persons have a legal obligation to report concerns is outlined in Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 or in Appendix 2.

If mandated persons are in doubt about whether a concern reaches the legal definition of harm for making a mandated report, Tusla can provide advice in this regard. Details of how to contact Tusla's Dedicated Contact Point and Duty Social Worker to discuss a concern can be found on the Tusla website www.tusla.ie

The DSO can also provide advice in this regard.

Out of Hours Social Work Service

Mandated persons can access Tusla's emergency out-of-hours social work service on 0818 776 315 between 6pm and 6am every week night and between 9am and 5pm on Saturdays, Sundays and bank holidays. In an emergency, An Garda Síochána should be contacted outside of these hours.

6.11 MANDATED PERSONS REPORTING PROCEDURES

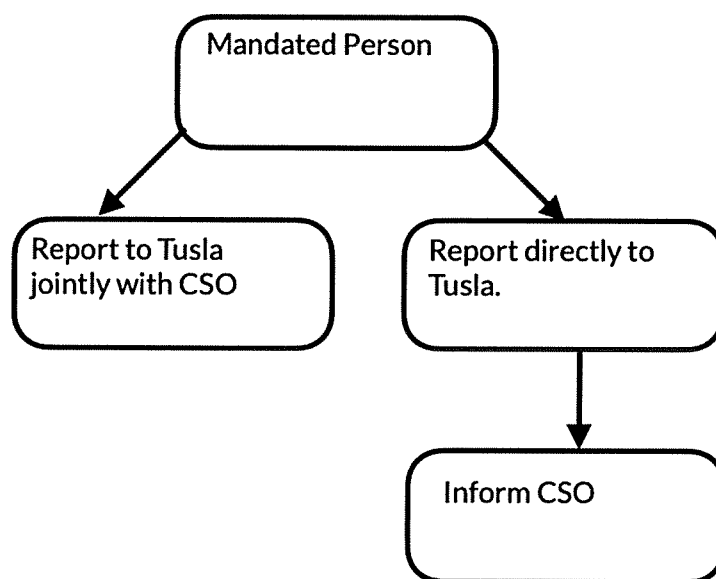
Where a mandated person has a concern that they believe reaches the threshold for a mandated report they should contact Tusla to make a mandated report using the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form which is available on the Tusla website www.tusla.ie The report can be made independently or jointly with the Designated Safeguarding Officer.

Subsequent to any report being made to Tusla, the DSO should always be informed, and provided with a copy of the report.

The Mandated Person must discharge their duty to report under the Children First Act 2015 and cannot be discharged by the DSO on their behalf. The DSO can provide support in this process and a report can be submitted jointly. Importantly the DSO cannot make a report on behalf of a Mandated Person.

Mandated Reports must be made using the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form which is available on the Tusla website www.tusla.ie

Mandated Reporting Procedures in summary -



The legal obligation to report as a mandated person under the Children First Act 2015 applies only to information that mandated persons acquire in the course of their professional work or employment. It does not apply to information they acquire outside of work, during a voluntary role, or information given to them on the basis of a personal rather than a professional relationship.

If a concern does not reach the threshold of harm for mandating reporting, but the mandated person feels there are reasonable grounds for concern about the welfare or protection of a child, Tusla should be consulted about the appropriateness of whether a non-mandated report should be submitted.

Reporting suspected crimes to An Garda Síochána

The Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 requires that any person who has information about a serious offence against a child, which may result in charges or prosecution, must report this to An Garda Síochána as soon as is practicable. Failure to report under the Act is a criminal offence under that legislation. This obligation is in addition to any obligations under the Children First Act 2015.

(In general terms, they are more serious offences, including murder, manslaughter, rape and a large number of sexual offences).

Informing family members of a mandated report

It may be prejudicial to the outcomes of the individual for the family to be informed that a Mandated Report has been made. Therefore, before a family is informed of a mandated report, advice should always be sought from Tusla on the suitability of such an action.

Mandating Assisting

Mandated persons can be asked by Tusla to provide any necessary and proportionate assistance to aid Tusla in assessing the risk to a child arising from a mandated report. Legally, Mandated Persons must comply with this request, regardless of who made the report. The policy of Youth Link is provide any and all help that is requested or required by Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána in regard to any matter pertaining to welfare of an individual.

Exemptions from the Requirement to Report

Underage Consensual Sexual Activity

Under the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006, the legal age of consent is 17 years. While a sexual relationship where one or both parties are under 17 years of age is illegal, when making a report to Tusla, it might not be regarded as child sexual abuse. There are certain exemptions from reporting underage consensual sexual activity. If a mandated person or Safeguarding Team is satisfied that **all** of the following criteria are met, they are not required to make a report to Tusla:

- The young persons concerned are between 15 and 17 years old.
- The age difference between them is not more than 24 months.
- There is no material difference in their maturity or capacity to consent.
- The relationship between the people engaged in the sexual activity does not involve intimidation or exploitation of either person.
- The young person states clearly that they do not want any information about the activity to be disclosed to Tusla.

In effect, this means that if all of the above criteria are met, a mandated person or Safeguarding Team do not have to report consensual sexual activity between older teenagers as sexual abuse to Tusla. However, all persons must uphold the key principle that the welfare of the child is paramount and if a mandated person or Safeguarding Team have any concerns, even where all the above criteria are met, a report should be made to Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána.

6.12 RESPONDING TO ADULTS WHO DISCLOSE CHILDHOOD ABUSE

There are an increasing number of adults disclosing abuse that took place during their childhood. Such disclosures may come to light during the provision of pastoral support.

Where such a disclosure is made it is essential to establish whether there may be current risk to any child or young person who may be in contact with the alleged abuser revealed in the disclosure. This is important even where the children/young people about whom there may be a concern are still to be identified.

When a retrospective disclosure is made by an adult to a staff member or volunteer it should be reported to the Safeguarding Team in the same way as if a child made a disclosure. The Safeguarding Team must consult with Tusla and seek advice as to whether a report should be made. If making a report to Tusla the Retrospective Abuse Report Form should be used which is available on the Tusla website www.tusla.ie. The DSO can be consulted in regard to the disclosure of retrospective child abuse. If a Retrospective Abuse Report Form is submitted to Tusla, the DSO must be informed.

It is recommended when working with adults, to let them know that if a child protection issue

arises and if the alleged abuser is identifiable staff/volunteers are obliged to pass the information on to Tusla, as the alleged abuser may still pose a risk to children.

6.13 (& 3.9) CONFIDENTIALITY (please note this is also referred to earlier)

While reporting mechanisms dictate that the correct people are informed, it is imperative that the dignity of the individual is respected. All information should be handled in a confidential and sensitive manner.

It is the policy of Youth Link that any relevant information will be shared with Tusla and/ or An Garda Síochána where required or requested for the protection or welfare of a child. Therefore, only those who 'need to know' are informed about allegations/disclosures/ concerns. Confidentiality should never be promised to an individual who is making an allegation/ disclosure, as they must always be reported. Those who are considered as 'need to know' are the DSO and Safeguarding team unless there is a conflict of interest that would negate their being informed.

No undertakings regarding secrecy can be given. Those working with children and families should make this clear to parents/guardians and to the child. The proportionate provision of information to the statutory agencies necessary for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality or data protection. Parents/guardians and children/young people have a right to know if personal information is being shared, unless doing so could put the child/young person at further risk or may put the reporter at risk.

6.14 RECORD KEEPING

It is important that information about concerns for the welfare or protection of a child/young person is gathered early and shared as soon as possible with the appropriate person.

The ability of Tusla to assess and investigate suspicions or allegations of child abuse or neglect will be influenced by the amount and quality of information conveyed to it by the individual or organisation reporting the concerns.

Child Protection Records

Records should be factual and include details of contacts, consultations and any actions taken. All agencies dealing with children must cooperate in the sharing of records with Tusla where a child protection or welfare issue arises.

Ensure that records on child protection concerns, allegations and disclosures are kept securely and safely within the organisation.

Records should only be used for the purpose for which they are intended. Records should only be shared on a need-to-know basis in the best interests of the child/young person.

Within Youth Link, it is incumbent to have high record-keeping standards, as poor record-keeping can lead to inaction, avoidable delay and can potentially inhibit recognition of abuse. Any records should only be accessible by the relevant DSO and Safeguarding team. The hard copy of any child protection reports or concerns and any notes relating to the case should be stored in a secure folder within the Youth Link secured office. Digital copies should be sent to the DSO, who will

store them as a 'master file.' This file will reference any other documentation and state clearly how any such documentation can be accessed. If digital copies are held at the local level, they should be stored securely in line with GDPR guidelines. Under no circumstances should personal email addresses or storage be used in relation to sensitive documentation.

Any information relating to the welfare of children, including reports, concerns and notes, will be kept indefinitely. Incident/ Accident Forms and attendance records at all church organisations, including children and leaders, will also be kept indefinitely as a historical record.

6.15 RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE MADE AGAINST STAFF/VOLUNTEERS

An allegation of abuse may relate to a person who works with children who has:

- Behaved in a way that has or may have harmed a child/young person;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence in relation to a child/young person;
- Behaved towards a child/young person or children/young people in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to a child/young person;
- Behaved in a way that is contrary to Youth Link's code of behaviour for workers and volunteers;
- Behaved in a way that is contrary to professional practice guidelines.

If an allegation is made against a staff member or volunteer, there is dual responsibility in respect of both the child and the staff member/volunteer. There are two separate procedures to be followed:

- The reporting procedure to Tusla in respect of the child and the alleged abuser;
- The internal personnel procedure for dealing with the staff member/volunteer.

Reporting Procedures to Tusla in respect of the child

As with any child protection or welfare concerns, the appropriate reporting procedure must be followed including reporting to Tusla. Allegations of abuse are very serious for both the child involved and the worker/volunteer concerned. The priority is to protect the child/young person while taking account of the worker/volunteer's right to due process.

When the Safeguarding Team or DSO become aware of an allegation made against a staff member/volunteer and if an opinion is reasonably formed that abuse may have taken place the child protection reporting procedures should be followed as laid out previously (please refer to section on procedures for reporting child protection concerns in Taking Care).

It is the policy of Youth Link to seek advice from Tusla when a question arises about reasonable grounds for concern. A report should be made to Tusla or, in an emergency where a child is believed to be at immediate risk, An Garda Síochána.

If making a formal report to Tusla advise them that the report is being made in relation to a staff member/volunteer within Youth Link. This will allow Tusla to apply the necessary policies and procedures in relation to allegations against staff or volunteers in organisations.

Parents/guardians should be informed of any action planned while having regard to the confidentiality and rights of others, such as the person against whom the allegation has been made. The Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) should be made aware of any allegation without delay by the Mandated Person.

Internal personnel procedures

Procedures for dealing with the staff member/volunteer who is the subject of an allegation of abuse:

The risk of harm to a child will be at the forefront of any decisions made or actions taken;

- The first priority is to ensure that no child/young person is exposed to unnecessary risk. As a matter of urgency, protective measures will be agreed while taking into account the staff members/volunteers right to due process. 'Protective measures' do not presume guilt;
- Youth Link's disciplinary procedures will ensure that fair procedure is followed and will take account of any applicable employment contract or volunteer arrangement as well as the rules of natural justice and employment law;
- Youth Link will privately inform the staff member/volunteer that an allegation has been made against him or her and the nature of the allegation. The worker/volunteer should be afforded an opportunity to respond;
- Youth Link will note the response and pass on this information if making a formal report to Tusla;
- The worker/volunteer should be offered the option to have representation at this stage and should be informed that any response may be shared with Tusla;
- Youth Link will should ensure that actions taken do not frustrate or undermine any investigations or assessments undertaken by Tusla or An Garda Síochána. Youth Link will liaise closely with the investigating bodies to ensure this;
- The requirements of fair procedure and natural justice mean that Tusla usually will not share the detail of any assessment regarding allegations of abuse against a worker/volunteer until the worker/volunteer has had an opportunity to fully respond to the allegation and any findings and decisions of Tusla;

Within Youth Link, each situation will be treated on its own merits, therefore there is no such thing as precedence. It is not possible in these guidelines to deal with every scenario as conditions of employment can vary greatly from individual to individual. In a situation where the statutory investigation does not lead to prosecution or conviction, Youth Link will reserve the right to conduct an internal review of the issue. It may be that this review is held subsequent to the conclusion of, or concurrent with, any statutory review.

The Youth Link Safeguarding Team and Chairperson/Trustees will appoint a panel to investigate the situation. This panel will prepare a report with any necessary actions or recommendations in relation to the subject's suitability to return to their position. The subject will have the right to be accompanied to the meeting by a nominated companion, and will have the right to appeal. In the

event of an appeal, a panel will be convened.

When an allegation is made against a staff member/volunteer a quick solution should be sought for the benefit of all concerned.

In a situation where a staff member is the subject of an allegation the following should be remembered:

- Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) should be made aware of this allegation without delay;
- The Chairperson of Youth Link will be made aware of these allegations;
- It is a requirement that advice be sought by the Safeguarding Team from Youth Link HR department as quickly as possible to ensure that employment law procedures and natural justice principles are correctly followed;
- Youth Link will advise Insurance Provider of any issue of alleged abuse.

If the person is a paid employee, in some cases Youth Link may decide to suspend the employee or cease to use the services of a volunteer. Suspension does not indicate guilt and will not happen automatically where an allegation has been made. Any suspension is considered to be without prejudice, pending further investigation by the statutory authorities/ Safeguarding Team, may be appropriate. It may be appropriate to re-assign the staff member to work that does not involve contact with children.

Any person who has been suspended should be advised to seek his/her own independent legal advice. Both the person alleged victim and the subject of the allegation, together with family, should be offered pastoral care. This pastoral support should come from different sources.

All stages of the process must be recorded

6.16 ERRONEOUS ALLEGATIONS

Staff members or volunteers working with children/young people may feel vulnerable to accusations of child abuse. There may have been occasions when erroneous or untrue allegations have been made against staff members/volunteers. This might have been because of a misunderstanding of what has happened or a genuine mistake. Any allegation of abuse against a staff members/volunteer will be dealt with sensitively and support provided, for both the staff member or volunteer who allegedly abused a child/young person and the staff member or volunteer who reported the alleged abuse. Appropriate levels of confidentiality will be ensured. Deliberately making a false claim of abuse against an individual is a criminal offence.

6.17 WHISTLEBLOWING – A RESPONSIBILITY TO SPEAK OUT

Whistle blowing as part of the safeguarding procedures, is intended to encourage and enable staff members/volunteers with a serious concern, to raise that concern to the appropriate authorities outside the organisation if they are inhibited, for any reason, in reporting an incident internally or where they are dissatisfied with the internal response.

It is very important that everyone knows that if they raise a concern, which through Tusla's investigation is not validated, they have not in any way been wrong in their initial action.

For further information on this, please see Youth Link's Whistleblowing Policy.

Review of Policy relating to Legislation, Policies & Reporting in the Republic of Ireland

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Executive Council. Trustees will use an Annual Review Checklist of Safeguarding as well as an action plan for the year ahead.

Signed: Simon Henry

Chairperson: Simon Henry

Date: 12/03/24

Appendix 1 Mandated Persons & Current legislation – Republic of Ireland

Who are considered to be Mandated Persons?

Schedule 2 of the Children First Act 2015 specifies the following classes of persons as Mandated Persons for the purposes of the Act:

1. Registered medical practitioner within the meaning of section 2 of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007.
2. Registered nurse or registered midwife within the meaning of section 2(1) of the Nurses and Midwives Act 2011.
3. Physiotherapist registered in the register of members of that profession.
4. Speech and language therapist registered in the register of members of that profession.
5. Occupational therapist registered in the register of members of that profession.
6. Registered dentist within the meaning of section 2 of the Dentists Act 1985. 7. Psychologist who practises as such and who is eligible for registration in the register (if any) of members of that profession.
8. Social care worker who practises as such and who is eligible for registration in accordance with Part 4 of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 in the register of that profession.
9. Social worker who practises as such and who is eligible for registration in accordance with Part 4 of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 in the register (if any) of that profession.
10. Emergency medical technician, paramedic and advanced paramedic registered with the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council under the PreHospital Emergency Care Council (Establishment) Order 2000 (S.I. No. 109 of 2000).
11. Probation officer within the meaning of section 1 of the Criminal Justice (Community Service) Act 1983.
12. Teacher registered with the Teaching Council.
13. Member of An Garda Síochána.
14. Guardian ad litem appointed in accordance with section 26 of the Child Care Act 1991.
15. Person employed in any of the following capacities:
 - (a) manager of domestic violence shelter;
 - (b) manager of homeless provision or emergency accommodation facility;
 - (c) manager of asylum seeker accommodation (direct provision) centre; (d) addiction counsellor employed by a body funded, wholly or partly, out of moneys provided by the Oireachtas;
 - (e) psychotherapist or a person providing counselling who is registered with one of the voluntary professional bodies;
 - (f) manager of a language school or other recreational school where children reside away from home;
 - (g) member of the clergy (howsoever described) or pastoral care worker (howsoever described) of a church or other religious community; (h) director of any institution where a child is detained by an order of a court;
 - (i) safeguarding officer, child protection officer or other person (howsoever described) who is employed for the purpose of performing the child welfare and protection

function of religious, sporting, recreational, cultural, educational and other bodies and organisations offering services to children;

(j) child care staff member employed in a pre-school service within the meaning of Part VIIA of the Child Care Act 1991;

(k) person responsible for the care or management of a youth work service within the meaning of section 2 of the Youth Work Act 2001.

16. Youth worker who –

(a) holds a professional qualification that is recognised by the National Qualifications Authority in youth work within the meaning of section 3 of the Youth Work Act 2001 or a related discipline, and

(b) is employed in a youth work service within the meaning of section 2 of the Youth Work Act 2001.

17. Foster carer registered with the Agency.

18. A person carrying on a pre-school service within the meaning of Part VIIA of the Child Care Act 1991

REPORTING MANDATED CONCERNS

Criteria for reporting: definitions and thresholds (Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017)

NEGLECT

Neglect is defined as ‘to deprive a child of adequate food, warmth, clothing, hygiene, supervision, safety or medical care’. The threshold of harm, at which you must report to Tusla under the Children First Act 2015, is reached when you know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child’s needs have been neglected, are being neglected, or are at risk of being neglected to the point where the child’s health, development or welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE/ILL-TREATMENT

ILL-treatment is defined as ‘to abandon or cruelly treat the child, or to cause or procure or allow the child to be abandoned or cruelly treated’. Emotional abuse is covered in the definition of ill-treatment used in the Children First Act 2015. The threshold of harm, at which you must report to Tusla under the Children First Act 2015, is reached when you know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being ill-treated to the point where the child’s health, development or welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse is covered in the references to assault in the Children First Act 2015. The threshold of harm, at which you must report to Tusla under the Children First Act 2015, is reached when you know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being assaulted and that as a result the child’s health, development or welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.

SEXUAL ABUSE

If, as a mandated person, you know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being sexually abused, then you must report this to Tusla under the Children First Act 2015. Sexual abuse to be reported under the Children First Act 2015 [as amended by section 55 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017] is defined as an offence against the child, as listed in Schedule 3 of the Children First Act 2015.

A full list of relevant offences against the child which are considered sexual abuse is set out in Appendix 3 of Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children.

As all sexual abuse falls within the category of seriously affecting a child's health, welfare or development, you must submit all concerns about sexual abuse as a mandated report to Tusla. There is one exception, which deals with certain consensual sexual activity between teenagers which is outlined previously.

Child Safeguarding: Relevant Legislation

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Child Care Act 1991.

Children First Act 2015.

Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998.

Criminal Justice Act, 2006.

Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012.

National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons Act), 2012 - 2016.

Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017.

Criminal Justice Act 2006, Section 176: Reckless Endangerment of Children

Reference information -

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017

Child Protection and Welfare Handbook 2011 (HSE)

Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice 2018 (Tusla)

Appendix 2: Useful Contacts Northern Ireland

Gateway Services / Child Protection

Gateway teams deal with safeguarding referrals throughout Northern Ireland. They replace the previous arrangements for making referrals to Social Services in relation to Family and Child Care matters.

Belfast Trust

Anyone can contact this service directly in one of the following ways:

By phone: During office hours (9.00am – 5:00pm) - you should contact Gateway on **028 9050 7000**. At all other times (all through the night, at weekends and over Bank Holidays) - you should contact the out-of-hours Emergency Service: **028 9504 9999**

In person: Speak to a Duty Social Worker at Gateway Services, 110 Saintfield Road, Belfast BT8 6HD

South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust

The Gateway Service can be directly contacted for help in the Lisburn, Dunmurry, Moira, Hillsborough, Ballynahinch Downpatrick, Newcastle, Bangor, Newtownards and Comber areas in one of the following ways:

Telephone: 0300 100 0300 during office hours (9.00am – 5:00pm) Monday to Friday excluding public and bank holidays. For all other times contact should be made with the Emergency Duty Service. **Telephone:** (028) 9056 5444.

Or in person by calling into any of the three Gateway Teams based at:

Greater Lisburn Gateway Team, Stewartstown Road Health Centre, 212 Stewartstown Road, Dunmurry, Belfast BT17 0FB

North Down Gateway Team, Family Resource Centre, James Street, Newtownards BT23 4EP

Down Gateway Team, Children's Services, 81 Market Street, Downpatrick BT30 6LZ

Southern Health & Social Care Trust

The Gateway Service for Children's Social Work is the first point of contact for people who wish to share a concern about a young person who is not already known to social services. The central telephone number for all new referrals or information about the service is **028 3741 5285**. In addition, there is also a freephone number **0800 783 7745** (free from landlines only).

The service ensures a quick response to the needs of children and families who are referred for a Social Work Service. A Duty Social Worker is available to take calls from Monday to Friday from 9am-5pm (excluding Public Holidays).

Contact details for the Gateway Teams

Armagh and Dungannon Team, 'E' Floor, South Tyrone Hospital, Carland Road, Dungannon BT71 4AU - Tel: 028 8771 3506

Craigavon and Banbridge Team, Brownlow H&SS Centre, Legahory, Craigavon BT65 5BE - Tel: 028 3834 3011

Newry and Mourne Team, Dromalane House, Dromalane Road, Newry BT35 8AP - Tel: 028 3082 5000, Option 1.

Northern Health & Social Care Trust

You can contact us at: 0300 1234 333

A duty Social Worker is available to take your call Monday - Friday, 9.00am - 5.00pm (Excluding public holidays)

Referral Gateway Team (Single Point of Entry to Children's Services) Oriel House 2-8 Castle Street, Antrim Tel: 028 9442 4459 email: POE.Referrals@northerntrust.hscni.net

Further contact details:

- Central Gateway Team Unit 5A Toome Business Park Hillhead Road Toomebridge BT41 3SF email: central.gateway@northerntrust.hscni.net Tel: 028 7965 1020
- South Eastern Gateway Team The Beeches 76 Avondale Drive Ballyclare BT39 9DB email: southeastern.gateway@northerntrust.hscni.net Tel: 028 9334 0165
- Northern Gateway Team Coleraine Child Care Team 7A Castlerock Road Coleraine BT51 3HP email: northern.gateway@northerntrust.hscni.net Tel: 028 7032 5462
- Regional Emergency Social Work Service After 5.00pm each evening and all day weekends and bank holidays Tel: 028 9504 9999

Adult Protection Gateway Teams:

Contact the local PSNI on their 101 number or their 999 number if there is immediate danger. If you prefer, you can also speak to your GP or any other health care professional, and they will contact the service on your behalf.

Belfast Trust

The Team operates an open referral system so anyone can contact us directly:

During normal working hours (9am – 5pm) - **Tel. 028 9504 1744**

Regional Emergency Social Work Service (5pm – 9am) – **Tel. 028 9504 9999**

South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust

Contact South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust on **028 92 501227**

Contact the **Out of Hours Regional Emergency Social Work Service** (5pm-9am Mon-Fri & 24 hrs at weekends and Bank holidays)

Contact the **Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority** on **028 90 517500** if the concern is about a residential or nursing home, a day-care facility or a hospital.

If you have a concern about a vulnerable adult who you think is being abused and they are unable to protect themselves contact: Linda Johnston, Trust Lead in Adult Safeguarding Level 5, Lisburn Health Centre, Linenhall Street, Lisburn BT28 1LU **Telephone:** (028) 9250 1227 / (028) 9504 9999 (Out of Hours, 5pm-9am) **Email:** linda.johnston@setrust.hscni.net

Southern Health & Social Care Trust

During office hours 9-5pm Monday to Friday; Adult Protection Gateway Service **028 3756 4423**

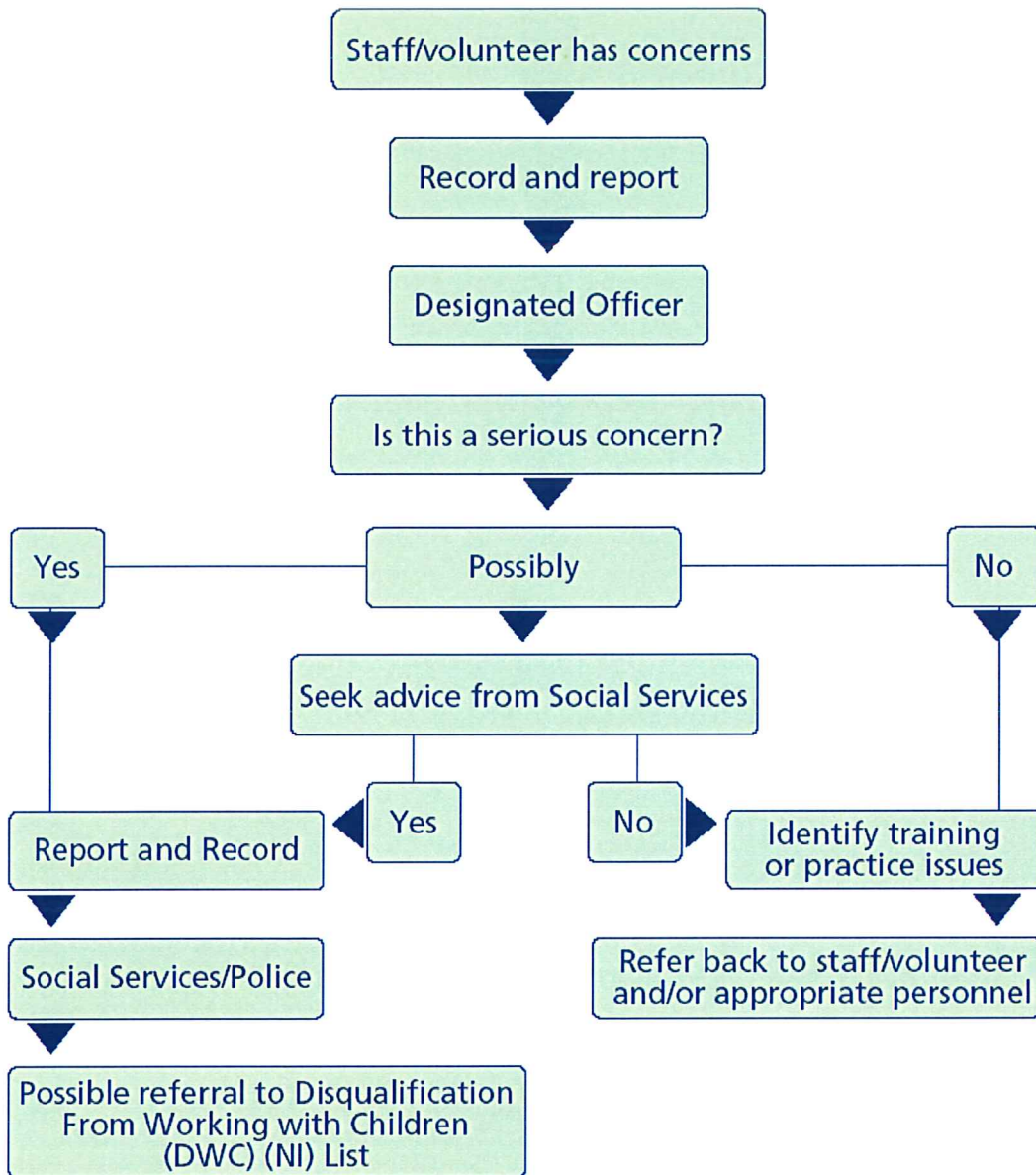
Out of hours (5pm-9am, weekends and bank holidays) - Regional Emergency Social Work service – **028 9504 9999.**

Northern Health & Social Care Trust

Contact the Northern Trust Adult Protection Safeguarding Team on **028 9441 3659** or email adultsafeguarding@northerntrust.hscni.net.

If it is out of normal working hours, contact the Emergency Social Work Service on **028 9504 9999.**

Appendix 3 - Reporting Procedure NI



Appendix 4

Youth Link Safeguarding Report Form

1. Date of Incident:

2. Personnel Involved:

Staff/casual worker/volunteer/ details	
Name:	
Position:	
Child's details if applicable	
Name:	Date of birth:
Address:	
Parents / Carers names:	
Address:	

3. Nature of Incident: DISCLOSURE/CONCERN OR ALLEGATION

4. Record of what was said/reported/observed (use additional paper, as required)

If recording a disclosure, try and keep the process friendly rather than formal as you want the child to feel as comfortable as possible during this stressful process. When talking to a child do not ask leading questions but rather record what has been said. This form should be completed immediately after a disclosure/concern/allegation has taken place.

--

5. Action taken:

Reported to Designated Officer	Yes / No
Name of DO:	
Details of advice given:	
Details of Actions agreed:	

Signed by Staff Member, Volunteer or Casual Worker: _____

Date: _____

Signed by Designated Officer: _____

Date: _____

A copy of this form should be kept in a secure place by the Designated Safeguarding Officer

Appendix 5 - Youth Link Consent Form for the Use of Photographs or Video

Youth Link recognises the need to ensure the welfare and safety of all young people. In accordance with our safeguarding policy we will not permit photographs, video or other images of young people to be taken without the consent of the parents / guardians and young people.

Youth Link will follow the guidance for the use of photographs, a copy of which is available through the Director of Youth Link.

Youth Link will take all steps to ensure these images are used solely for the purposes they are intended. If you become aware that these images are being used inappropriately, you should inform Youth Link immediately.

I **(parent/guardian)**consent to Youth Link photographing or videoing
(insert name of young person)

Signed:

Date:

I **(insert name of young person)** consent to Youth Link photographing or videoing
my involvement in **(activity)**

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 6 - Ethical Conduct in Youth Work

Ethical Conduct in Youth Work – National Youth Agency Statement of Principles

1. The nature and purpose of youth work

1.1 The purpose of youth work is to facilitate and support young people's growth through dependence to interdependence, by encouraging their personal and social development and enabling them to have a voice, influence and place in their communities and society.

1.2 Youth work is informed by a set of beliefs which include a commitment to equal opportunity, to young people as partners in learning and decision-making and to helping young people to develop their own sets of values. We recognise youth work by these qualities (based on Davies 1963):

- it offers its services in places where young people can choose to participate;
- it encourages young people to be critical in their responses to their own experience and to the world around them;
- it works with young people to help them make informed choices about their personal responsibilities within their communities;
- it works alongside school and college-based education to encourage young people to achieve and fulfil their potential; and
- it works with other agencies to encourage society to be responsive to young people's needs.

2. The importance of ethics in youth work

2.1 Ethics is generally regarded as being about the norms of behaviour people follow regarding what is good or bad, right or wrong. Usually ethical issues are about matters of human (and animal) wellbeing or welfare.

2.2 Ethics in the context of professional practice is about:

- developing the ability of practitioners to see the ethical dimensions of problems, to reflect on issues, to take difficult decisions and to be able to justify these decisions;
- acting with integrity according to one's responsibilities and duties (this may entail behaving in accordance with professional principles, guidelines or agency rules).

2.3 The behaviour of everyone involved in youth work and youth services – political and managerial leaders, managers, trustees, employees, volunteers and participants – must be of a standard that makes it the basis of:

- the effective delivery of services;
- modelling appropriate behaviour to young people;
- trust between workers and young people;
- trust between organisations and services and parents and young people;
- a willingness of various parties to commit resources; and
- a belief in the capacity of youth work to help young people themselves learn to make

moral decisions and take effective action.

2.4 This requires all involved to be capable of appropriate thinking about ethics in practical situations.

3. Purpose of the statement of principles

3.1 The statement in section 5 outlines the basic principles underpinning the work with the aim of guiding the conduct of youth workers and managers and to serve as a focus for debate and discussion about ethical issues in practice. It is not a rulebook prescribing exactly what youth workers should do in every situation. This would be impossible to achieve, due to the variety of practice settings, age groups and types of work. Rather the statement is intended to be used as a starting point for outlining the broad principles of ethical conduct; raising awareness of the multiple responsibilities of youth workers (paid and voluntary) and their managers and the potential for conflict or at least tension between these responsibilities; and for encouraging and stimulating ethical reflection and debate.

3.2 The first part of the statement covers 'ethical principles' which include the way that youth workers should treat the young people they work with (for example, with respect for their rights to make choices, without discrimination) and the kinds of values that youth workers are working towards (such as a just society). The second part of the statement covers 'professional principles' which relate more particularly to how the youth worker should act in the role of a practitioner with certain types of responsibility and accountability. The practice principles listed under each general principle are more specific, suggesting how youth workers would apply the broader ethical and professional principles. They are not exhaustive.

1. Note: the term 'youth worker' in this statement is intended to include those who work in youth work directly with young people and people who manage those working directly with young people. The phrase 'professional' is to denote acceptance of a particular role within the 'profession' of youth work, not necessarily the employment status of the individual who may well, for example, be a volunteer.

4. Summary of the statement of principles of ethical conduct for youth work

Ethical principles

Youth workers have a commitment to:

- 1. Treat young people with respect, valuing each individual and avoiding negative discrimination.**

2. **Respect and promote young people's rights to make their own decisions and choices, unless** the welfare or legitimate interests of themselves or others are seriously threatened.
3. **Promote and ensure the welfare and safety of young people, while** permitting them to learn through undertaking challenging educational activities.
4. Contribute towards **the promotion of social justice for young people** and in society general~ through encouraging respect for difference and diversity and challenging discrimination.

Professional principles

Youth workers have a commitment to:

5. **Recognise the boundaries between personal and professional life** and be aware of the need to balance a caring and supportive relationship with young people with appropriate professional distance.
6. **Recognise the need to be accountable** to young people, their parents or guardians, colleagues, funders, wider society and others with a relevant interest in the work, and that these accountabilities may be in conflict.
7. **Develop and maintain the required skills and competence** to do the job.
8. Work for conditions in employing agencies where these principles are discussed, evaluated and upheld.

5. Statement of principles of ethical conduct for youth work

5.1 Ethical principles. *Youth workers have a commitment to:*

5.1.1 Treat young people with respect

Practice principles would include:

- valuing each young person and acting in a way that does not exploit or negatively discriminate against certain young people on irrelevant grounds such as 'race', religion, gender, ability or sexual orientation; and
- explaining the nature and limits of confidentiality and recognising that confidential information clearly entrusted for one purpose should not be used for another purpose without the agreement of the young person – except where there is clear evidence of danger to the young person, worker, other persons or the community.

5.1.2 Respect and promote young people's rights to make their own decisions and choices

Practice principles would include:

- raising young people's awareness of the range of decisions and

choices open to them and offering opportunities for discussion and debate on the implications of particular choices; offering learning opportunities for young people to develop their capacities and confidence in making decisions and choices through participation in decision-making bodies and working in partnership with youth workers in planning activities; and

- respecting young people's own choices and views, unless the welfare or legitimate interests of themselves or other people are seriously threatened.

5.1.3 Promote and ensure the welfare and safety of young people

Practice principles would include:

- taking responsibility for assessing risk and managing the safety of work and activities involving young people;
- ensuring their own competence, and that of employees and volunteers for whom they are responsible, to undertake areas of work and activities;
- warning the appropriate authority, and taking action, if there are thought to be risks or dangers attached to the work;
- drawing to the attention of their employer and, if this proves ineffective, bringing to the attention of those in power or, finally, the general public, ways in which activities or policies of employers may be seriously harmful to the interests and safety of young people; and
- being aware of the need to strike a balance between avoiding unnecessary risk and permitting and encouraging young people to partake in challenging educational activities.

5.1.4 Contribute towards the promotion of social justice for young people and in society generally

Practice principles would include:

- promoting just and fair behaviour, and challenging discriminatory actions and attitudes on the part of young people, colleagues and others;
- encouraging young people to respect and value difference and diversity; particularly in the context of a multi-cultural society;
- drawing attention to unjust policies and practices and actively seeking to change them;
- promoting the participation of all young people, and particularly those who have traditionally been discriminated against, in youth work, in public structures and in society generally; and
- encouraging young people and others to work together collectively on issues of common concern.

5.2 Professional principles. *Youth workers have a commitment to:*

5.2.1 Recognise the boundaries between personal and professional life

Practice principles would include:

- recognising the tensions between developing supportive and caring relationships with young people and the need to maintain an appropriate professional distance;
- taking care not to develop close personal, particularly sexual, relationships with the young people they are working with as this may be against the law, exploitative or result in preferential treatment. If such a relationship does develop, the youth worker concerned should report this to the line manager to decide on appropriate action;
- not engaging in work-related activities for personal gain, or accepting gifts or favours from young people or local people that may compromise the professional integrity of the work; and
- taking care that behaviour outside work does not undermine the confidence of young people and the public in youth work

5.2.2 Recognise the need to be accountable to young people, their parents or guardians, employers, funders, wider society and other people with a relevant interest in the work

Practice principles would include:

- recognising that accountabilities to different groups may conflict and taking responsibility for seeking appropriate advice and making decisions in cases of conflict
- being open and honest in all dealings with young people, enabling them to access information to make choices and decisions in their lives generally and in relation to participation in youth work activities;
- ensuring that actions as a youth worker are in accordance with the law
- ensuring that resources under youth workers' control are distributed fairly, according to criteria for which youth workers are accountable, and that work undertaken is as effective as possible;
- reporting to the appropriate authority any suspicions relating to a young person being at risk of serious harm or danger, particularly of sexual or physical abuse; and
- actively seeking opportunities to collaborate with colleagues and professionals from other agencies.

5.2.3 Develop and maintain the skills and competence required to do the job

Practice principles would include:

- only undertaking work or taking on responsibilities for which workers have the necessary skills, knowledge and support;
- seeking feedback from service users and colleagues on the quality of their

- work and constantly updating skills and knowledge; and
- recognising when new skills and knowledge are required and seeking relevant education and training.

5.2.4 Foster and engage in ethical debate in youth work

Practice principles would include:

- developing awareness of youth workers' own personal values and how these relate to the ethical principles of youth work as stated in section 5.1;
- re-examining these principles, engaging in reflection and discussion with colleagues and contributing to the learning of the organisation where they work;
- developing awareness of the potential for conflict between personal and professional values, as well as between the interests and rights of different individuals and between the ethical principles in this Statement; and
- recognising the importance of continuing reflection and debate and seeing this statement of ethical principles as a working document which should be constantly under discussion.

5.2.5 Work for conditions in employing agencies where these principles are discussed, evaluated and upheld

Practice principles would include:

- ensuring that colleagues, employers and young people are aware of the statement of principles;
- being prepared to discuss difficult ethical issues in the light of these principles and contributing towards interpreting and elaborating on the practice principles; and
- being prepared to challenge colleagues or employing agencies whose actions or policies are contrary to the principles in this statement.