

# AGI Child Protection Guidelines V2.0

*For use in the Republic of Ireland*



ASSEMBLIES  
OF GOD  
IRELAND

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Revision History

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V2.0	May 2013	Patricia Linehan	Removed refs to RCPO. Re-formatted and re-organised sections. Added TOC and revision history.
	2011	Daragh Kennedy	Original Version

# AGI Child Protection Guidelines

*For use in the Republic of Ireland only.*

## Introduction

In tandem with the majority of Irish society, the AGI considers our children to be precious. We take our responsibility to them and their safety very seriously. We know that our dear Lord considers it a grave situation when anybody causes harm to any one of them. Out of our love of them and our godly responsibilities as a network of churches we have spent considerable time and effort in compiling this set of guidelines for their protection and safety.

This set of guidelines in our ministry to children is in line with statutory guidelines and policy. Each Assemblies of God church and ministry operates as an autonomous member of the AGI. As such, under statutory guidelines, each church and ministry is entirely responsible for developing and implementing its own Child Protection Policy. Because each church and ministry is unique, each Child Protection Policy will also be unique in order to reflect best practice in that context.

This document is intended primarily as a support and resource in the development and implementation of Child Protection. In addition to this being a resource and guideline it also contains some standards. These standards are issues the National Council of the Assemblies of God in Ireland believes are non-negotiable and must be reflected in our dealing with children. We are confident that the Christian biblical mandate to protect and care for children, which we all share, will mean that these standards will be the minimum starting place for us as a movement. There are resources available to assist all AGI ministries to implement a Child Protection Policy.

Finally, this document is a living document. It will change over time to reflect best practice. To that end we value your input and feedback as we take this journey together.

Joe Kelly

Chairman of the National Council of the Assemblies of God Ireland

# **1.Guidelines framework**

## **1.1. Introduction**

The Assemblies of God Ireland Child Protection Guidelines were drafted in 2010. These guidelines are for use in the Republic of Ireland only.

### **Assemblies of God (Irl) Child Protection Statement**

*AGI is committed to setting standards for the welfare of children participating in its ministries with a view to protecting them from all forms of abuse such as neglect, physical, sexual and emotional harm.*

### **The purpose of these Child Protection Guidelines**

Many children visit AGI ministries for ministry, worship and other social, educational and recreational purposes each week. Ministry to children is a priority for AGI and it is only possible because of the commitment of adults who are prepared to work with children. *AGI Child Protection Guidelines* are designed to protect and to enhance that ministry.

*AGI Child Protection Guidelines* are designed to enable all parties within the AGI to fulfill their proper responsibilities within their ministry:

- To create a safe environment which will promote healthy and fulfilling participation of children and young people in ministry, worship, educational and recreational activities and minimise the possibility of harm, either deliberate or accidental.
- To encourage safe practices for those who work with children.
- To provide guidance for the appropriate responses and procedures in the event of abuse taking place.
- To safeguard those who work with children from the consequences of unfounded accusations.

*Any ministry, organisation or other body serving children within AGI must be committed to the child protection statement above. An example for promoting this statement is outlined in Appendix C.*

## **1.2. Definitions used in this document**

A number of terms are used quite frequently in this document. In order to make sure there is no ambiguity about these, the following are some definitions:

- “Child” means a person under 18 years excluding a person who is or has been married (Child Care Act 1991). The term young person is used where the context is appropriate but still with reference to an individual under 18 years.
- “*Children First*” refers to The National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children issued by the Department of Health and Children, 1999.

- “The Guidelines” is used as a synonym for *Assemblies of God (Irl) Child Protection Guidelines*.
- “Leader(s)” refers to the person(s) who are recognized to be in a senior position of responsibility in a local or national ministry.
- “Worker(s)” means ministers, teachers, children’s and youth group leaders, music group leaders, Sunday school teachers/leaders, home group leaders, toddler group leaders, organisation leaders, play scheme/holiday club leaders, including all volunteers, temporary workers and paid employees - in fact all who, at times, share in the AGI’s ministry with children.
- The “Designated Person(s)” means the ministry representative(s) appointed to oversee the implementation and use of *AGI Child Protection Guidelines* in the ministry or those appointed to discharge the same function at national events.
- “Ministry” means a sole church, ministry or union of ministries.
- “The 1998 Act” refers to the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998.
- “Statutory Authorities” refers to the Health Service Executive (HSE), which is the statutory body responsible for the safety and welfare of children (formerly the Health Boards) and to the Garda Síochána who are empowered under legislation to investigate these matters.

### **1.3. Principles of good practice**

In its ministry with children AGI ministries will endeavour to safeguard children by:

- Following carefully the guidelines for recruitment and selection of workers
- Providing effective management of workers through supervision, support and training
- Adopting child protection guidelines through a code of behaviour for workers
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents and workers
- Ensuring adherence to safety procedures
- Reporting concerns to the appropriate statutory authority

## **2. Areas of responsibility**

### **2.1. National Council**

1. National Council (NC) with reference to the National Leadership Team shall ensure that all AGI ministries are supported in the development and implementation of their child protection policies.

2. The NC shall liaise with the Credentialing Committee (CC) to exchange information and ensures that local child protection policies are being developed and implemented.

### **2.2. Regional Leader**

The Regional Leader shall oversee all issues relating to pastoral care in a ministry pending, during and consequent to a report or enquiry in relation to an allegation/concern of abuse.

### **2.3. Credentialing Committee**

1. Credentialing Committee (CC) shall ensure that each credentialed ministry has a child protection policy that is in line with the AGI Guidelines.

2. The CC will liaise with the NC to exchange information to ensure that *AGI Child Protection Guidelines* are being implemented.
3. The CC shall ensure that a current satisfactory Garda vetting is in place for a probationary minister candidate prior to ordination and is renewed every 5 years thereafter.
4. The CC shall ensure that a current satisfactory Garda vetting is in place for all existing AGI ordained ministers and is renewed every 5 years.

## **2.4. AGI Garda Vetting Contact**

### **Role of the AGI Vetting Contact is to:**

- Be a contact person between AGI and the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) Garda Vetting Consortium
- Establish a secure internal system for processing Garda Vetting Forms
- Check each form to ensure that it is filled out correctly
- Return incomplete forms to Ministry Leader(s)
- Forward completed forms to NYCI Consortium
- Keep a log of all transactions on a database and to report the statistics to the NC on request (No vetting results will be recorded or reported, just the process)
- Receive returned forms from NYCI Consortium
- Retain a photocopy of results and any attachments in a secure setting until the original has been received by the relevant church leader
- Return original results document and any attachments to the appropriate or relevant church leader
- Make contact with the NYCI, not the Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU), in the case of an appeal

## **2.5. The Local Leadership Team**

Each local Leadership Team:

1. Should ensure that a child protection policy is drafted for and implemented in their ministry. The *AGI Child Protection Guidelines* provide the foundation for the local ministry's policy and full implementation of these must be the ultimate goal.
2. Should ensure that all members of that team are trained to implement their child protection policy.
3. Should implement and maintain good practice in the recruitment, assessment, training, management and support of workers.
4. Should require each worker in respect of any position involving potential contact with children to understand, accept and sign up to the ministry's policy (see Appendix C).

5. Should plan and supervise the work of the ministries so as to minimise situations where the abuse of children may occur.
6. Must follow the procedures set out in their policy regarding how to respond to the disclosure, concern or allegation of any form of child abuse.
7. Should ensure that suitable notices are displayed on ministry premises giving relevant information to children and adults regarding the statutory authorities to which they can report their concerns.
8. Must return annually to the Credentialing Committee the AGI Child Protection Evaluation Form see Appendix D.
9. Should exercise reasonable care when letting a ministry premises for activities that will involve work with children. All external bodies or tenants should sign an annual agreement accepting the terms of the Child Protection and Independent Organisations section - see Appendix C.
10. Should ensure that the appropriate insurances are put in place by the ministry's insurer.

## **2.6. Designated Person**

In a local or national ministry the Designated Person shall:

1. Refer suspicions/allegations/concerns of child abuse to the statutory authorities
2. Co-ordinate locally on particular cases that arise
3. Ensure appropriate information is available at the time of referral and that the referral is confirmed in writing under confidential cover
4. Be a resource on child protection matters to the leaders and workers
5. Ensure that an individual case record is maintained of the action taken by the ministry, the liaison with other agencies and/or involvement of any ministry worker and record the outcome
6. Store all related files in a safe and secure place
7. Maintain a working knowledge of child protection issues
8. Liaise with and support parents/guardians, children and ministry workers ensuring safety for the children accessing the ministry
9. Establish contact with the senior member of community services responsible for child protection in relevant catchment area on behalf of the ministry, i.e. Duty Social Work Team
10. Ensure that the ministry's child protection policy is followed at all times
11. Report any child protection training needs or issues that come to their attention to the leaders

### **Suitability for Designated Person role**

The people best suited to the role of Designated Person are those whose occupations, or lengthy voluntary experience, have brought them into contact with children. Those who have already participated in foundation training in child protection, e.g. nurses, teachers, social workers, probation officers and doctors may be particularly suitable. Consideration should also be given to those who could bring particular gifts and skills to the role, e.g. those with administrative experience.

Ministries need to indicate the duration of appointment as a Designated Person, perhaps a period of three or five years which might be renewable, so that the role and responsibility is shared among members.

Proposed Designated Persons must be vetted, prior to appointment.

**It is highly advised that a Designated Person ideally should not be the Senior Leader of the same ministry or ideally should not be the spouse or immediate relative of the Senior Leader. In certain circumstances it may be difficult to adhere to this so in these situations the Guidelines recommend that the Senior Leader seek advice.**

## **2.7. AGI national ministries/organisations**

AGI national ministries must develop and implement a child protection policy in line with these Guidelines.

## **3. Recruitment and selection of ministry workers**

### **The importance of good recruitment and selection procedures**

The majority of people who want to work with children are well motivated and without them the children's and young people's ministries could not operate. Unfortunately some individuals will try to use voluntary and community organisations to gain inappropriate contact with children.

- Good recruitment and selection procedures will help screen out and discourage those who are not suitable from joining your organisation.
- Good recruitment and selection procedures benefit everyone. Staff and volunteers will have a clearly defined role. This will enhance their self-confidence, which will have a positive impact on children.
- Parents will be assured that all possible measures are being taken to ensure only suitable people will be recruited to work with their children.

Any person with a history of perpetrating any form of child abuse shall not be given any role or responsibility with access to children. While we are new creations, the old has gone and the new has come, we must adhere to the Statutory Guidelines as laid out in Children First. If there is to be any exception to this there must be a professional risk assessment undertaken by a qualified person from a statutory agency.

### **New Members**

It is strongly recommended that before a person takes on a position of responsibility they ideally should be attending an AGI ministry for a minimum of six months.

The following steps are necessary to ensure good practice:

### **Defining the role**

This involves thinking through what exactly the role of a new worker is to be, and what skills will be required for him/her to perform effectively. The ministry leader or person delegated by him/her consults with others to draw up a description of the job to be done and what is involved in doing it. Sample job descriptions for paid workers or role descriptions for volunteers may be adapted to suit.

The job should be advertised appropriately and/or discreet enquiries made amongst people who may have the capability of fulfilling this role. Avoid 'press-ganging' people simply 'because there is no one else'.

### **Application form**

This should be supplied with a clear job/role description and, where appropriate, with information of what is expected of the worker. This form allows potential ministry workers to provide all relevant details that must be treated confidentially - see Appendix C.

### **Declaration**

All applicants are asked to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be considered unsuitable to work with children. All applicants are required to declare any past criminal convictions and cases pending against them. Such information will be dealt with in a confidential manner and will not be used to discriminate against applicants unfairly. Only those applicants who formally express a willingness to undergo a vetting check should be interviewed. For sample declaration form see Appendix C.

### **Interview**

All potential workers should be interviewed by the ministry leader(s) in conjunction with other relevant individuals. This is also an opportunity to explain these Guidelines and ensure that the person has the ability and commitment required to put the guidelines into practice.

### **Identity details**

You must take steps to verify the subject's identity by examining:

- An original birth certificate or marriage certificate (where appropriate)
- A photo identity document such as a passport or driving licence
- A recent utility bill/bank statement or similar document confirming the subject's address

### **References**

References should be taken up with at least two people who are not family members and, ideally, one of who should have first-hand knowledge of the applicant's previous work or contact with children. References should be taken up in writing and should be followed up orally. A pro-forma reference request form is available – see Appendix C.

You will get a more accurate and reliable reference if you ask specific questions. In particular, referees should be asked to confirm that they have no concerns about the applicant working with children. References should be taken up and referees subsequently contacted. If the referee raises issues ask that these be put in writing.

### **Garda Vetting**

Applicants deemed to be suitable at an interview should be informed they will be the subject of a Garda vetting process and that work ideally should not be commenced until this process has been completed to the satisfaction of the ministry leader.

### **Record keeping**

Details of the selection and recruitment procedure should be recorded. In particular, a note should be kept of any matters arising during the trial period and any training needs identified. All records must be kept in a confidential file.

### **Ratifying the appointment**

At the conclusion of the selection and recruitment process the ministry leader recommends the individuals to the leadership team, which is the appropriate body to ratify the appointment of the individual. A contract of employment (in the case of a member of staff) or a volunteer agreement (in the case of a volunteer) is signed by the individual and ministry leader on behalf

of the leadership team. The volunteer agreement may take the form of a letter of appointment. A contract of employment with a paid worker should be drawn up.

### **3.1. Garda vetting**

**A willingness to participate in the Garda vetting process must be a compulsory requirement for all voluntary and paid posts and a willingness to participate should be confirmed in writing as part of the application procedure.**

Applicants for Garda vetting give their written permission to An Garda Síochána to disclose their personal data regarding convictions to the ‘Authorised Signatory’ in the requesting organisation. The Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU) will only disclose this data to the Authorised Signatory and to no other person.

Only applicants deemed to be suitable at interview should complete a Garda vetting form. Vetting forms are available from the Vetting Contact at the AGI Head Office.

**NB: Please remember the vetting process can take months to complete so advance planning is essential.**

The applicant, volunteer or paid worker ideally should not commence his/her role until a response that is satisfactory to the ministry leaders has been received.

A satisfactory vetting check may be regarded as valid for a period of up to five years. This is not a substitute for ongoing support and supervision of workers.

Garda Vetting is compulsory. AGI offer the following Garda Vetting applications procedure for ministries that wish to avail of it.

- Official NYCI Garda Vetting Form is requested by Ministry Leader from AGI Vetting Contact at AGI Head Office
- The form is filled out properly by the applicant and returned by Ministry Leader to the Vetting Contact at AGI HO
- The form is checked and verified by the AGI Vetting Contact then forwarded to National Youth Council of Ireland Garda Vetting Consortium who AGI use as our ‘Authorised Signatories’ i.e. official channel to the Garda Central Vetting Unit
- All incomplete forms will be returned to the Ministry Leader for completion by the applicant
- The NYCI Consortium sends the vetting returns to AGI Vetting Contact
- A copy of the form remains in a secure file in AGI HO under sole control by the AGI Vetting Contact Person
- The AGI Vetting Contact sends original result received from the GCVU to the Church Leader
- In the event of any issue showing on the response from the GCVU the Church Leader may consult the local Designated Person for advice on how to deal with this possible difficulty.

#### **Communication with the G.C.V.U.**

Communications regarding Garda vetting applications must be made in writing to only the AGI Vetting Contact at AGI HO

Under this process the GCVU will only communicate with the NYCI Consortium. The NYCI Consortium will not entertain contact from anyone except AGI Vetting Contact.

Personnel who must be Garda Vetted include:

- All Ministry Leaders on local leadership teams including probationary ministers.
- Local Designated Persons.
- All new and existing staff and volunteers working directly with children.
- All persons who take on areas of responsibility with any access to children or young people in the course of their work.

Vetting documentation is sensitive and must be treated as very confidential. Your attention is drawn to the note on data protection – see section 9.5.

### **3.2. Workers from abroad**

Background checks may not be possible for many overseas applicants. When recruiting workers from abroad, certificates of good conduct can sometimes be obtained from the police or church leaders in their home church. However, these need to be treated with caution. As with any other criminal conviction certificate, it can only provide ‘known’ information.

Leaders must make every effort to verify the suitability of candidates by careful use of references and interview.

**NB** What constitutes an offence in this State (and would be seen as child abuse) may not in the country from which the applicant originates. References therefore need to be viewed with this in mind. Candidates must sign a sworn declaration that there is nothing in their background that would prevent them from working with children and young people - see Appendix C.

**In some countries e.g. USA, police checks are easily obtainable and must be produced before commencing work with children.**

#### **Short Term Mission Trips to Ireland**

When a Ministry is hosting a short-term missions team from another country, who will have direct or indirect contact with children, it is essential that there are adequate recruitment and selection procedures in place before the team arrives in Ireland. Ministries should liaise with the sending organisation to ensure that all police checks have been obtained for all participants from the team.

### **3.3. Young people under 18 years working with children**

It is never appropriate to require someone aged less than 18 years to be in sole charge of children on an ongoing basis, as this would mean leaving a child in charge of children. Ideally two adults should be in charge of any group of children. However as a minimum one adult and one helper (aged 16 or over) may be acceptable where the adult has the main responsibility.

There may be circumstances where a helper is asked to supervise children for short periods. It is advisable that this should be reviewed and measures put in place to avoid this occurring on an ongoing basis.

Under 18s are assisting in order to gain expertise, citizenship development, personal or professional development and are not expected to take on the full range of duties of a worker

and must not be left in sole charge of children/young people. Under 18s will **not** be Garda vetted but normal recruitment procedures must be followed.

They must be provided with an appropriate form of training to cope with basic areas, such as bullying, shouting, physical contact, emergency procedures and first-aid guidelines. Such training must also include the need to safeguard themselves in situations where their actions may be misconstrued without undergoing the full training required of core leadership.

## **4. Management of paid and volunteer workers**

### **4.1. Procedures for effective management of paid and volunteer workers**

Good management of workers will contribute to safe activities for children. Good management will also create an atmosphere where workers feel valued, are listened to, and where issues can be dealt with quickly by systems already in place.

Once workers are recruited they should be informed about that ministry's Child Protection Policy and be provided with appropriate training, support and supervision.

#### **Induction**

New workers should be provided with relevant sections of that ministry's child protection policy, (possibly based on section 5 to 8 of these guidelines) and given introductory training that includes basic awareness and understanding of child protection issues. The training to explain the procedures and guidelines should include an introduction to the activities and ethos of the group they have joined. It is the practice of some organisations to develop an induction pack that is given to workers following appointment.

Qualified trainers should provide training in that ministry's child protection policy.

Workers should be made aware of what is expected and required of them and the boundaries or limits within which they must operate. They should sign a contract of employment/volunteer agreement completely accepting a duty of care to children. Workers should be asked to acknowledge that they have been introduced to that ministry's child protection policy, that they understand the guidelines and agree to uphold them - see Appendix C.

#### **Probationary period (staff) / trial period (volunteers)**

All appointments should be conditional on a satisfactory period of work. Every new post should be reviewed within an agreed period of time - usually six months. It is good practice to set up a supervision system for workers, which means arranging to see workers at regular intervals whether on their own or in small groups. This provides support for workers and an opportunity to talk through any questions or difficulties they may have. It also gives the supervisor the opportunity to assess progress and whether any additional training should be provided.

#### **Annual appraisal**

The purpose of this is to assess the general performance and also to give the opportunity to review any relevant changes in the role of the worker. The appraisal also provides the opportunity to highlight any future support or skills training. Ministries should aim to provide

access to at least one training opportunity per year for each worker. This could be training arranged by the ministry, a group of ministries or AGI.

A suggested annual appraisal and declaration of background information form is found in Appendix C.

## 4.2. Complaints and grievances

Everyone has the right to complain or report a grievance. Children, parents and workers should be facilitated in passing on a concern or complaint. Written complaint and grievance procedures should be in place, e.g. a complaints form, an anonymous comments box or a meeting with the leader in charge.

Everyone also has the right to appeal a decision made regarding a complaint or grievance. Ministries should consider how to facilitate this, e.g. a subcommittee of the leadership team.

In certain circumstances legal advice may be necessary. It is important that a complaint or grievance, which does not relate to abuse, can be dealt with in a separate procedure.

A grievance procedure should be available to all paid staff.

## 5. Procedures for dealing with a child protection concern

The Designated Person is charged with the duty to report child protection concerns or disclosures notified by workers, leaders or any members, where there is a reasonable concern.

It is **not** the ministry's responsibility to identify and investigate possible instances of abuse of children. This is the role of the HSE and/or An Garda Síochána.

**It is however a requirement to report any child protection concerns.**

### 5.1. Concerns about a child or young person

A concern relates to the possibility of a child suffering harm. Indicators of this might include:

- sudden, unexplained or worrying changes in behaviour
- physical signs or symptoms that may be indicative of abuse (emotional, sexual, physical or neglect)
- worrying remarks made by a child
- a situation where a child is exposed to potential risk of harm

All concerns should be recorded and passed to the Designated Person, no matter how insignificant they may seem, whether they relate to situations internal or external to the ministry. For instance, concerns connected to a family or school situation should be noted as well as concerns related to your organisation.

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

It is important to reassure the person who has made the disclosure and offer appropriate support. A disclosure may also be when a person discloses that he/she has perpetrated abuse and that person will also require appropriate support.

**All disclosures must be reported to the Designated Person.**

## **5.2. Concerns or allegations about workers**

Inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour or communication, favouritism or negligence are examples of what may constitute a **concern** about the conduct of a worker. **All concerns must be reported to the Designated Person.**

An **allegation** about a worker occurs when a child, parent or other worker reports specific unacceptable behaviour where a child has been harmed or abused in some way. **Allegations against workers must be referred to the Designated Person.**

In the case of allegations against the Designated Person this should be reported in confidence to the Senior Ministry Leader. If the allegation is against the Senior Ministry Leader this should be reported to the National Leader - see section 5.8.

### **Record keeping**

All concerns, disclosures and allegations should be recorded on the Ministry's Internal Child Protection Reporting Form and passed to the Designated Person – see Appendix C.

### **Workers need to know**

- what constitutes a 'concern', 'disclosure' and 'allegation'
- to whom to report i.e. the Designated Person and their contact details
- how to access and complete the form used for recording concerns, disclosures and allegations
- contact details for the HSE and An Garda Síochána in the event that Designated Person is not available in an emergency
- that the Designated Person/Leadership Team will support them through the reporting process
- that the primary concern as the first person that suspects, or is told of, possible abuse is to report it to the Designated Person and ensure the concern is taken seriously. The worker may also report directly to the HSE.

This information should be given to all workers at induction and relevant training provided as necessary. **Under no circumstances should any worker attempt to deal with the problem of abuse alone.**

## **5.3. What to do if you are concerned that abuse is occurring?**

**Responding to incidents of alleged or suspected child abuse must be based upon clearly defined procedures.** Use the objective indicators to guide you. Knowing what to do, who to contact and who needs to know will help you in reporting any concern.

### **Dos and Don'ts**

- **If a child makes a disclosure or allegation or if you are concerned that a child or young person has been abused or is at risk of abuse there is one thing you must not do, that is NOTHING.**
- It is important that you take what the child says seriously and follow it up with action straight away.

- If you know someone who you think may be abusing a child, or a child's words or behaviour indicate to you that it is likely that he or she is being abused, report it to the Designated Person.
- In the event that the Designated Person decides not to convey a report of a disclosure, concern or allegation and you, a worker, are unhappy with the decision you could consult the HSE directly.

**If a child makes a disclosure of child abuse to you:**

**Dos:**

- Stay calm
- Listen and hear
- Give time to the child to say what he or she wants
- Reassure the child that he or she has done the right thing in telling
- Record in writing, immediately after meeting the child, what was said
- Keep a note of your report, giving the date, time, name of the individual whom you have told and course of action agreed

**Don'ts:**

- Don't panic
- Don't display shock or disgust
- Don't make a child repeat the story unnecessarily
- Don't ask leading questions (don't put words in the child's mouth)
- Don't promise to keep secrets
- Don't enquire into details of abuse
- Don't investigate
- Don't confront the person against whom accusations have been made and don't attempt to deal with it alone
- Don't delay

**Please Note the Following**

**Your primary responsibility is to report any suspected abuse and ensure that the disclosure/concern is taken seriously. Do not investigate.**

**It is important that everyone in the organisation is aware that any person who first encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred. That is a task for the statutory authorities following a referral to them regarding a concern for a child. The primary responsibility of the person who first suspects or is told of abuse is, to follow procedures and to report it to the Designated Person.**

Abuse of children often goes undetected because people who have pieces of information are reluctant to share them. This is why contact with the Designated Person or HSE duty social worker is so important as your information may represent a significant piece in a jigsaw of reports.

### **Designated Person - key role**

The role of the Designated Person is to make contact with the Senior Ministry Leader, the duty social worker in the appropriate HSE Child and Family Services area or, in an emergency, to An Garda Síochána and to report any allegations against workers, disclosures or concerns (if appropriate).

If the Designated Person has concerns about adults who are not involved in the ministry organisations but may pose a risk to children, advice should be gained from the HSE or An Garda Síochána on how this information should be shared appropriately.

## **5.4. Procedures following an allegation or suspicion of child abuse**

The Designated Person, prior to making a report to the appropriate person, (the duty social worker or child care manager in the local HSE Child and Family Services area - see Appendix F) is obliged to act reasonably and in good faith:

- in forming an opinion that abuse may have taken place
- in communicating that opinion to the appropriate person defined in the 1998 Act.

The Designated Person's role is not to investigate but he/she may need to consider if there is a reasonable concern.

The Designated Person may pose a hypothetical query to the duty social worker responsible for child protection concerns to clarify if reporting is appropriate. A hypothetical query is where a Designated Person or any person describes the scenario of concern to the duty social worker without disclosing names or location.

### **Guiding principles**

- **The safety and well-being of the child or young person must take priority.**
- **When reporting to the HSE or to An Garda Síochána these must be made without delay.**
- **While the basis for concern must be established as comprehensively as possible, children or parents should not be interviewed in detail about the suspected abuse.**

### **Reasonable grounds for concern**

**(Some objective indicators – not a definitive list)**

- (i) Specific indication from the child that he/she was abused
- (ii) An account by the person who saw the child being abused
- (iii) Evidence, such as injury or behaviour, which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused by another way
- (iv) Consistent indication over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

**N.B. A suspicion that is not supported by some objective indication of abuse or neglect, such as those highlighted in this document, may not constitute a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern.**

The primary responsibility of the person who first suspects or is told of abuse is to ensure the safety of the child. The child's welfare and safety must be the overriding and paramount concern.

Any person who is concerned about the safety or well being of a child or receives an allegation of abuse should record their concerns/information and report the matter as soon as possible to the local Designated Person.

The following procedure should be followed when dealing with any suspicion/allegation of Child Abuse:

1. All information relating to a concern or allegation of child abuse must be treated in the strictest confidence.
2. **Where a worker has reason to be concerned about the safety or welfare of any child they come in contact with in the course of their work, they must report it to their Designated Person immediately.**
3. If the child is likely to be at risk of serious or immediate harm or has just experienced significant harm, immediate contact should be made with the Gardaí and Duty Social Worker in the child's area. The Designated Person should be informed as soon as possible that this has been reported to the authorities.
4. The incident(s) which raised the concern must be documented accurately by the worker as soon as possible after it occurs by carefully completing the Internal Child Protection Reporting Form as set out in 9.2.10 of this document.
5. The worker should store the record in a private secure place until it is handed over to the Designated Person.
6. The Designated Person will discuss this report in confidence with the local Leader/Pastor and make a decision as to how the identified concern is reported to the HSE/Gardaí.
7. The worker will be informed of the decision to report or not.
8. If the worker is dissatisfied with the decision, they may contact the HSE directly themselves, but **must** notify the Designated Person of their actions.
9. At any time if anyone is unsure as to whether he/she should refer to the HSE or not, they should seek advice/consultation with the Duty Social Worker in the child's area.
10. The Parents/Guardians of the child **must** be notified; the Designated Person will provide direction on how this will be done as particular care should be taken especially if this could cause increased risk for the child.
11. Workers may be required to attend a case discussion or case conference if requested by the HSE.

Under *Children First* Guidelines any persons may consult with the local HSE Child Care Manager regarding any risk to children before making a formal report.

To repeat:

It is important to be aware that The *Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998* provide civil immunity from civil liability to persons/organisations/groups who report Child Abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to the HSE or An Garda Síochána.

The consequences of failing to report a disclosure, allegation or concern could far outweigh the risk of being wrong and might have very serious consequences for the child concerned. **It cannot be stressed enough that the welfare of the child must always be your first priority.**

If the Designated Person or ministry leader is the subject of allegations, complaints or suspicions please follow the procedure outlined in 5.1. You may also report directly to the appropriate person as defined in the 1998 Act (the Duty Social Worker or Childcare Manager in the local HSE Child and Family Services area). You may also receive support by contacting the AGI National Leader and/or the AGI Child Protection Officer through the AGI Head Office.

## **5.5. Procedures following disclosures, allegations and concerns against a senior leader.**

This procedure shall be adhered to following a disclosure, allegation or concern made against one of the following:

1. Member of National Leadership Team / Regional Leader
2. Member of National Council
3. Member of Credentialing Committee
4. AGI Vetting Contact, Garda Vetting
5. AGI National Ministry Leader
6. Local Ministry Senior Leader/Pastor
7. National/Local Designated Person

It is important to note that there is a dual responsibility in respect of the welfare of both the child and the accused person. Following a disclosure, allegation or concern made against one of the above The National Leader must be notified without delay within two working days. The National Leader must oversee the procedures as outlined in section 5.

## **5.6. Making a report**

You may contact any of the following:

- The duty social worker in the Area HSE Child and Family Services offices - phone numbers are in the "Children First" summary booklet and in your area phone book
- The duty social worker or area child care manager - for phone number and address, see Appendix F
- HSE customer care 1 800 520520, for advice on whom to contact - duty social workers etc.

### **An Garda Síochána in the case of emergency.**

When filling out the form try to have available:

- the name, address and age of any child you are concerned about
- the nature of any injury
- any need for medical attention
- your reason for suspicion of abuse
- details of what you have done already
- any practical information you may have, such as the name of the child's GP, school etc
- information as to whether or not the person against whom a suspicion, complaint or allegation exists, has any children of his/her own.

Abuse of children often goes undetected because people who have pieces of information are reluctant to share them. This is why contact with social services is so important.

Use the standard HSE report form.

The following may be of assistance where an individual who has suffered abuse is seeking help:

- **Rape Crisis Centre Helpline:** 1 800 778888 or see local phone directory.
- **CARI:** 1 890 924567(CARI is for children, families and groups affected by abuse)
- **The National Counseling Service** offers a professional service to adults who have experienced abuse in childhood. Contact the HSE local health office during office hours or 1800 235 234.

## 5.7. Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults

While this document is a set of child protection guidelines there are vulnerable adults in our communities. If an individual has a concern about an older person whom they feel may be at risk of abuse they should contact the HSE elder abuse social worker to discuss the matter. The Domestic Violence Act 1996 would apply to the protection of persons in a domestic relationship because of the conduct of another person in the domestic relationship concerned.

If an individual believes a vulnerable adult is suffering abuse then the matter should be reported to An Garda Síochána. The HSE maintains an information line for elder abuse Lo-Call 1850 24 1850 while the elderly may access the Senior Help Line for support 1850 440 444.

## 5.8. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is key to this process. It **must** be maintained in respect of all issues and people involved in concerns about child abuse. It is imperative that all information is treated in a careful and sensitive manner and should be discussed only with those who need to know (e.g. Designated Person, Ministry Leader, National Leader and the appropriate person, *i.e. the Duty Social Worker or Community Childcare Manager in the local HSE Child and Family Services area*). All written records should be filed securely.

You will find that statutory child protection procedures are child centred. This means that in all investigations the welfare of the child is the paramount consideration.

A full guarantee cannot be given that information received in relation to a suspicion or concern of child abuse will be kept absolutely confidential. However, every effort will be made to preserve the identity of persons or organisations providing the information.

**“The communication of information must be confined to those who have an obligation to receive it and third parties should not be privy to allegations unless it is necessary to involve them as matters unfold”.**

*The Kilkenny Incest Investigation p. 103*

It is usual for the HSE to keep an individual organisation advised in relation to the progress of such cases. Where such information is not forthcoming updates from them can be sought but there is no legal obligation on the HSE to provide such updates.

**In summary, information must only be conveyed on a need to know basis.**

For Guidelines for Sharing Information see section 9.

## 5.5. Supporting adults abused in childhood (historic abuse)

When an adult makes an allegation of historical abuse good practice determines that one attends and listens to them. Adults **must** be made aware that if they give information that indicates a possible risk to children, a referral to An Garda Síochána will be made.

Leaders and others working in a pastoral role in the ministry should be aware of their own limitations in terms of the help and expertise they can offer. Sometimes the most constructive support can be to encourage a referral to appropriately trained counsellors or therapists.

In the case of leaders or workers receiving information that abuse has occurred in the past, even when the alleged or suspected victims are now adults, advice should be sought from the Designated Person with regards to the alleged or suspected perpetrators as there could continue to be a risk for other children and young people.

**If a worker has a suspicion that the alleged abuser is still alive and that there could be other children who are at risk the worker must seek advice from the Designated Person. It is important to remember that this information is handled in the strictest confidentiality.**

### Self-disclosure

It may occur that an adult, young person or child within your organisation discloses information that indicates that they have perpetrated abuse. In the case of a child or young person this may be difficult to accept. However, this can happen. This information should also be reported to the Designated Person.

## 6. Guidelines and Responsibilities for workers

Anyone working with children in the AGI, whether in a temporary, paid or voluntary capacity should:

- a) undertake in writing to exercise a duty of care for children in his/her charge, this includes ensuring their safety and their protection from any form of abuse and/or exploitation (For worker agreement form see Appendix C)
- b) ensure as far as is reasonably practicable that he/she is not alone with a child
- c) not arrange to meet a child without another adult being present and parental/guardian consent
- d) not allow a personal relationship to develop with an individual member
- e) ideally try to have a minimum of two adults present with any group. However, where that is not possible the following guidelines are examples of the minimum allowed

*i. Sunday School: 1 Adult and one mature young person aged 16 or older must be present as per minimum standards in the UK.*

*ii. Youth Group: 2 adults must be present.*

*iii. Residential / Outing: 2 adults at least must be present*

Please note these numbers may increase depending on the size of the group

- f) endeavour as far as is reasonably practicable that a mixed group has leaders from both genders

- g) never permit that a group to be taken off ministry premises with fewer than two adults and without the written consent of their parents or guardian
- h) have a basic knowledge of the nature and signs of child abuse
- i) know how to respond should a child make a disclosure of abuse
- j) understand the implications and insurance requirements involved in day, weekend, or longer trips (residential or otherwise)
- k) report to the Designated Person any suspicion or misgivings he/she may have concerning inappropriate behaviour or circumstances affecting children and cooperate in reporting the details to the appropriate statutory authorities.

### **Private meetings with children and young people**

- Workers should be aware of the dangers that may arise from private interviews with individual children. It is recognised that there will be occasions when confidential interviews (not professional therapeutic interventions) must take place, but such interviews **must** be conducted in a room with the door open, ideally also with visual access, or in a public room or area, like a foyer, which is likely to be frequented by other people.
- In addition to these precautions it is wise to ensure that another adult knows that the interview is taking place. The use of ‘do not disturb’ signs is not permitted in this context.
- Where possible another member or another adult should be present or nearby or in earshot during the meeting.
- Workers **must not** arrange to have private meetings with children off the ministry premises as such meetings may be perceived as an abuse of authority or simply be misunderstood.(See also relationships and attitudes below.)

### **Physical contact with children**

- a) As a general principle workers are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with children. This is particularly the case with children of secondary school age and maturing children of primary school age.
- b) Physical contact that may be misconstrued by the child, parent or other casual observer should be avoided. (See also Intimate Care Needs)
- c) There may be occasions when a distressed child needs comfort and reassurance that may include physical comforting such as a caring parent would give. Workers should use their discretion in such cases to ensure that what is, and what is seen by others present to be, normal and natural does not become unnecessary and unjustified contact, particularly with the same child over a period of time and never when alone with a child.
- d) Some workers are likely to come into physical contact with children from time to time in the course of their activities, for example when showing a child how to use a piece of apparatus or equipment or while demonstrating a move or exercise during activities or sports or during a prayer ministry time. Workers should be aware of the limits within which such contact should properly take place and of the possibility of such contact being misinterpreted by the child.
- e) Workers who have to administer first-aid should ensure wherever possible that other children or another adult are present if they are in any doubt as to whether necessary physical contact in the circumstances could be misconstrued.
- f) Following any incident where a worker feels that his/her actions have been or may be misconstrued a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the person to whom he/she is accountable/reports. This would apply especially in a case where a worker had been obliged to restrain a child physically to prevent him/her from

inflicting injury to others or self-injury. The incident form (see Appendix C) should always be completed in such situations.

- g) Workers should be particularly careful when supervising children in a residential setting, outdoor camp or extended visit away from home, where more informal relationships tend to be usual and where workers may be in proximity to children in circumstances very different from their usual environment.

### **Choice and use of training materials**

- 1) Workers should avoid inappropriate training materials, the choice of which might be misinterpreted and reflect upon the motives for the choice.
- 2) When using training materials of a sensitive nature a worker should be aware of the danger that their application might be criticised after the event either by young people or parents. Workers and organisations should consult parents and ministry leaders when using materials such as HIV education for youth organisations and in connection with sex education programmes.

### **Relationships and attitudes**

- a) Workers should ensure that their relationships with members are appropriate to the gender of the members, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to talk or speculation. Attitudes, demeanor and language all require care, particularly when ministry workers of either gender are dealing with adolescent boys and girls.
- b) Workers should not have an association with any child or young person for whom they have responsibility that could be construed as a personal relationship.
- c) When young people seek or need advice on an individual basis, that is outside the skill set or training of the worker, the primary role of the worker is to listen to the member and refer him/her to qualified and competent sources of advice/counselling.

### **Transport**

Work with children and young people will involve transporting them at some stage, whether this is on a club night or to and from a residential programme. Workers should observe the guidelines below that will help ensure protection for them and the young people.

#### **Private Cars and Minibuses**

- 1) Drivers should be aware of the limitations of third party insurance for transporting young people. Private cars can possibly be used so long as they are not used for hire or for carrying passengers for reward.
- 2) Drivers **must** check with their insurance company regarding the adequacy of passenger liability.
- 3) Avoid transporting a child or young person on your own. Try to ensure another worker or other children/young people are with you in the vehicle. If a situation occurs when you have to transport a child alone, ensure that other workers know this is happening, you have parent/guardian consent and that the child is in the rear seat. It is advisable that other people know departure and arrival time and if you encounter any delays that you inform the parent/guardian.
- 4) Overcrowding **must** be avoided at all costs. This will invalidate any insurance cover provided.
- 5) EU Child Safety Protection Laws make it compulsory for all children to travel in the correct child seat, booster seat or booster cushion. Where safety belts have been fitted they **must** be worn.

- 6) Drivers have a legal responsibility to ensure passengers aged under 17 years use the correct seat, booster seat, booster cushion and / or seatbelt.
- 7) The law states that it is the driver's responsibility to make sure that the vehicle is in a roadworthy condition before use. **IF IN DOUBT, DO NOT DRIVE THE VEHICLE.**
- 8) Appropriate seat belts or restraints should be provided with the seats facing forward. Where seat belts are provided the ratio is one child per seat belt. **Seat belts must be worn for any journey, no matter how short,** and again it is the driver's/leader's responsibility to enforce this.
- 9) Workers who accompany children/young people in minibuses should, where possible, sit amongst them. Preferably, one worker should sit near any exit points.
- 10) An accident report book/breakdown logbook should be carried in ministry minibuses and kept up to date.
- 11) Carry a first-aid kit and fire extinguisher and familiarise yourself with their use.

### Sanctions

It is noteworthy that codes of behaviour are ineffective without carefully thought out sanctions, which are clearly communicated to:

- staff/volunteers - through a clearly written disciplinary procedure
- children - through clearly written information on sanctions such as challenging behaviour, time out from attending the organisation or participating in a specific activity (For a template for a members' code of behaviour, see Appendix C)
- parents - through clearly written information on sanctions relating to workers and children

## 6.1. Good Practice for Workers

- All young people who attend the ministry should have a registration form filled in by parent or guardian giving: name, address, date of birth, special medical details, dietary needs, emergency telephone numbers, next of kin and parental/guardian consent to attend the organisation.
- An attendance register should be kept for each occasion of meeting and subsequently retained as part of ministry records.
- An accident and incident log should be maintained.
- Authorisation / consent forms for all outings etc. should be completed and retained.
- Adequate supervision, ideally with at least 2 adults, should be ensured. **6.1.e**

### Children matter

- They should be treated with respect and dignity
- They should be valued
- They should be listened to
- They should have their rights respected

### Media

When using electronic communication workers should:

- Not be contacting individual children and young people in secret
- Ensure that when they are making contact with children and young people in the context of their role in the ministry by phone, text or email, chat rooms and social networking sites they should ensure that this is done with written parental/guardian consent\*

- Email children/young people with information relating to the ministry as part of a group email using blind copy function (BCC). A suitably trained and vetted adult administrator should be given this responsibility
- Also give individuals the opportunity to have their contact details removed from the group email list by including a statement such as: “If you wish to be removed from this email list, please contact the administrator”
- Ensure that all correspondence with children and young people is available to be supervised by an appropriate person i.e. ministry leader/parent/guardian

\*While government guidelines state that social networking sites should not be used for private communication, we recognise that ministries and youth groups may have a group site on social networking sites such as *Bebo/Facebook*. **In this scenario, the normal protections must apply and the leader/group administrator must set clear guidelines for access and content and act promptly in the event of any misuse.**

#### **Workers should NEVER**

- Engage in sexually provocative games
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- Engage in horse play
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child
- Strike a child or young person
- Use offensive, abusive or generally inappropriate language
- Leave young people unsupervised
- Force their religious beliefs on a child/young person

#### **Workers should make every effort NOT TO**

- Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves
- Spend excessive amounts of time alone with a child away from others
- Interview a child alone
- Take a child alone on car journeys - unless with the full knowledge and consent of another leader and/or the child’s parents
- Arrange to meet a young person alone or have a young person alone in their home

## **6.2. Supervision of children and young people**

Making arrangements for the proper supervision of children and young people is one of the most effective ways of minimising opportunities for children to suffer harm of any kind whilst in your care.

#### **Supervision of children - general principles**

- Anything that compromises the leader’s ability to maintain a safe environment and give his/her full attention to the supervision of children, 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
- Leaders must be satisfied that those workers and adults who accompany group parties are fully competent to do so
- Children must be supervised at all times whether indoors or outdoors
- When children are under a workers care they must know at all times where children are and what they are doing

- Any activity using potentially dangerous equipment should have constant worker supervision
- Dangerous behaviour by children should not be allowed
- Mixed groups must have both male and female leaders

### **Supervision levels**

Levels of supervision must be adequate whether at the organisation's venue or on a journey/visit.

Therefore, when deciding how many adults are required to supervise, leaders must take into consideration a range of practical matters:

- The number of participants in the group
- The nature of site/venue
- The activities to be undertaken (If the activity is one of a hazardous nature, e.g. mountain climbing, then there are specific ratios of workers to children which must be adhered to and this can be verified by contacting relevant sporting bodies.)
- The responsibilities he/she is expected to bear (No journey/visit should be undertaken without a minimum of two adults in attendance, one of whom must be a worker.)
- Bus drivers ideally should not be considered as supervisors during the journey
- It is for the leader to exercise his/her professional judgment in deciding the level of supervision taking into account the guidance as stated above.

#### **6.2.1. Adult/child supervision ratios**

Remembering that the care and wellbeing of children is our priority, proper supervision of children and youth by trained and vetted workers is essential. Ideally try to have a minimum of two adults present with any group. The following guidelines are examples of the minimum allowed. Where a group consists of children of both genders, ideally both male and female supervision should be provided.

- **Children 0-4 years: minimum of two adult workers and a ratio 1:3. There should be one additional adult worker for every 3 extra children.**
- **Children 5-12 years: minimum of two adult workers and a ratio 1:8. There should be one additional adult worker for every 8 extra children.**
- **Children 12 and above: minimum of two adult workers and a ratio 1:10. There should be one additional adult worker for every 10 extra youths.**

In a children's Sunday School setting, one adult worker and one mature young person aged 16 or older must be present as per minimum standards in the UK.

Where an activity involves swimming and the children are under eight years of age then the ratio must be one adult to one child.

The ratio of workers to children with disabilities is dependent on the needs of the individual child.

### 6.2.2. Code of behaviour

It is good practice to have a code of behaviour for children and young people who are attending the group's activities. This should be developed in consultation with children and young people themselves and can be done, for example, in a workshop situation. In this way the children and young people within your ministry will know what is expected of them and will have a degree of ownership of the agreed code (see Appendix C)

All children misbehave occasionally. Sometimes children can become upset and disruptive and be assessed as possibly dangerous to themselves or others. Talking to parents or carers about a child's behaviour before the child joins the group is crucial. Find out how such behaviour is handled at home, in school and in other environments. It may also be appropriate for the workers to receive training to help them to work effectively in dealing with challenging behaviour.

If a child displays disruptive behaviour, consider the following guidelines:

- Keep rules to a minimum. Some children may struggle if you overload them with lots of rules and regulations.
- Request, in private, that the behaviour stops.
- Speak with the child discretely to find out the cause of the upset.
- Give the child responsibility for modifying behaviour. Use reward systems if appropriate.
- Have a sanction ready should a child misbehave, for example that they have to sit away from the group for five minutes (be aware some children have difficulty with the concept of time).
- Warn the child before administering the sanction.
- If a child is harming himself or herself or another person or property, other children should ideally be escorted out of the area where the disruption is occurring.
- Talk with the child (you should have another worker present). Stay with the child until he/she has calmed down. Praise him/her when they have.
- Record all incidents in an activity logbook, including what might have caused the disruptive behaviour, what the child was doing, what you said and how you responded and the names of others present who might have witnessed the event. If appropriate, record any accidents in the accident book.
- Inform the parents or carers.
- Inform the ministry leader(s).

### 6.3. Anti-bullying Guidelines

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

Bullying is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and occurs mainly in social environments such as schools, clubs, other organisations working with children and online social networking sites. It includes teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting and extortion, by one or more children or an adult, against a victim.

The effects of bullying are extremely serious for children and young people. Bullying can cause considerable distress to the extent that it affects health and development or, at the extreme, causes significant harm. It is therefore important that organisations do all in their power to tackle bullying. Developing an anti-bullying guidelines, which has an agreed definition of bullying and guidelines on how to respond, is important (see Appendix C).

## 6.4. Sign In / Sign Out Procedures

It is highly recommended that all ministries implement sign in and sign out procedures for children's activities. When a parent/guardian drops off a child to a ministry activity they should sign the child in. Ideally the same person should collect the child at the end of the activity and sign them out. This register should be stored and kept in line with good record keeping guidelines. (See Appendix B)

## 6.5. Working with a child with a disability

Children with disability are children first and are as vulnerable to abuse as other children. They have the same right to protection as other children. In accessing services and activities children have the right to be treated with dignity and respect and to develop good appropriate working relationships with the leadership in the ministry.

Parenting a child with a disability can be overwhelming at times. Parents may sometimes feel anger, fear, grief and fatigue while struggling to create opportunities with their child. Sadly, the church can be a place of frustration instead of sanctuary for some parents because of a lack of understanding by church members of the difficulties faced by families.

### **Talk with the parents, who will know what the child's needs are.**

Not only will this demonstrate to the child's family that the ministry is welcoming to children with disability, but you may also be able to offer the family support if required.

Some children may require one-to-one assistance in church or a children's group. In these circumstances you should plan how you will provide the assistance so that all children are supported. Where appropriate you should include the child in planning these supports so that they are not left out.

Involve your staff in the planning stages to ensure they have all the information they need to work with the child and involve them equally with all other children.

### **Action points**

**Dos and Don'ts** - general advice for all working with children with disability. It is best to read these in conjunction with specific advice about different types of disability.

#### **Do**

- Treat a child with a disability as you would any other child
- Speak directly to the child
- Ask the child if you can help him/her in any way
- Integrate the child into the group
- Be aware that inclusion in your group may be a child's first experience of being in a mixed group - make it a positive experience
- Be aware of a child's hidden disability or condition, such as epilepsy, which may require assistance
- Use biblical teaching to show that we are all different and loved by God
- Ask advice from children with disability and their parents or carers when planning events
- Advertise accessibility if your venue/programme is accessible
- Examine your use of derogatory language such as 'blind as a bat' etc.

- Assume nothing - always ask! Talk to the parents or carers, and communicate with the child

### **Don't**

- Exclude any child
- Use negative terms such as 'crippled' or 'victim'
- Use language that promotes pity or charity
- Use emotionally loaded language such as 'suffers from', 'afflicted with', 'bound' or 'confined'
- Consider a parent or carer to be a conversational go-between
- Segregate
- Pretend that you know what children are saying when you cannot understand them - ask them to repeat themselves or try another method of communication
- Be embarrassed about using common expressions, for example saying 'see you later' when speaking to a child who is blind

### **6.5.1. Child protection issues for children with disabilities**

Children with disabilities can be subjected to abuse. Indeed studies have shown that children with disabilities are at the greatest risk of sexual abuse. There is therefore a need to be extra vigilant in order to protect these children, but there are difficulties:

- It can be hard to know if a child with a disability has been abused if they have communication problems.
- Some children may have difficulty in understanding what is said to them, or in expressing themselves in ways that others understand.
- Possible indicators of abuse or significant harm may prove difficult to disentangle from the effects of a child's impairment. Similarly, a child's behaviour might be put down to his/her disability when, in other children, such behaviour would cause concern as a sign of abuse.
- People communicating with a child may not have the appropriate personal communication skills themselves (such as using appropriate spoken and non-verbal communication, or using particular forms of communication such as Makaton signs and symbols, sign language, etc.).

There are a number of reasons why children with disabilities are abused:

- Children with disability tend to have more physical contact than those without disabilities (with therapists, care workers and so on) and may be dependent on other people for personal care.
- Physical abuse can be more common because parents or carers may find it hard to cope with the child's disabilities.
- Attitudes can play a part - for example, the belief that children with disabilities cannot be sexually abused because they are seen as asexual. Children can have very low self-esteem and feel negative about themselves. Children with special needs may be more vulnerable to abuse because of their lack of communication skills, which may make them 'soft targets'.

### **6.5.2. Training helpers**

Those who want to work with children with disabilities may have valuable experience either as parents or carers or professionally, for example, as teachers. However, all workers will still require assistance and training.

*Adapted from Special Children Special Needs, author Simon Bass, used with the permission of the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service*

It is important to provide an ongoing training programme for all your workers that help them care for the children they work with. Sometimes if you have with varied abilities children in your ministry that training may be outsourced to experts, and sometimes it will be appropriate for the training to be run in house by your senior children's ministry leaders.

On an ongoing basis that training should include opportunities for all your workers to discuss any issues or concerns they have, such as difficulties with members disruptive behaviour.

## **6.6. Intimate care needs**

Children and young people who are unable to meet their own intimate care needs (perhaps because of age or disability) may need help from an adult worker. Intimate care most commonly involves meeting toileting and medication needs. The intimate care needs of a child should always be discussed with his/her parents/carers where these needs require to be met during church activities. Most parents/carers prefer to look after the needs of their own child although some may be more than happy to nominate another responsible adult to do this. **Training must be provided to any workers prior to delivering intimate care support to children.**

In cases where a child with a disability may need specialised medical attention it is important that parents understand that responsibility rests with them and that children's workers do not, except in an emergency, administer medication during regular ministry based activities. Regrettably, therefore, there may be cases where responsibility cannot be taken for certain children. That said it is important that the ministry is seen to take all reasonable steps to accommodate a child or young person with intimate care needs. Medical needs should be recorded using the activity consent form – see Appendix C.

### **6.6.1. Toileting children**

**Children's workers must respect a young person's right to personal privacy.** Children who are able to toilet themselves should be left to do so. Children who are able to toilet themselves at home and school are left to look after themselves and care for their own bodies. This is an essential part of growing up. In loving homes children are shown that their bodies belong to them and that they deserve privacy and respect.

Where a child does require help with toileting (perhaps because of age, disability or health reasons) this should be agreed with the parents and, whenever possible, the child or young person. It is important that workers know what they are being asked to do and that this is documented clearly and training provided in advance. It is not recommended that male workers assist female children/young people.

Where toilet facilities are used by a number of groups, an agreed procedure should be developed and applied to ensure everyone's safety. Agreed standards of hygiene should also be included.

## **7. Guidelines for General Safety and Management**

### **7.1. Responsibilities of the Leader/Pastor**

To ensure that the organisation responds in a correct and prompt manner to accidents, or suspected child abuse, the leader/pastor should ensure that:

- there is an accident/incident book/forms on the premises, or with the leader

- he/she has immediate access to names, addresses and telephone numbers of the children/young people attending the ministry
- there is access to a telephone in the event of an emergency
- all workers are aware of the reporting procedure in the event of an accident
- all workers are aware of the reporting procedure in the event of an allegation of abuse
- he/she has a stock of Internal Child Protection Reporting Forms - see Appendix C
- he/she has access to the name and telephone number of the local Designated Person for child protection
- he/she is satisfied that all workers have a thorough understanding of the issues relating to confidentiality
- he/she follows the procedure for recruitment and training of all workers

## 7.2. General safety

Pastors/Leadership Teams will be aware of their legal responsibilities in relation to the Occupier's Liability and/or the Safety, Health and Welfare Acts and should have taken steps to ensure that premises are safe and any possible hazard has been identified and guarded.

Safety is of prime importance during any activity. This is not only the responsibility of the ministry and of the leader in charge but of every worker. There should be available a health and safety statement for the premises which sets out the safety procedures and identifies any hazards.

All workers are obliged to comply with the health and safety statement. You should be aware of the following guidelines each time you use the premises.

- a) Always have an initial look around the premises you are about to use to identify any possible dangers, e.g. a stack of chairs which could topple, an electric cable which could trip etc.
- b) Be aware of the location of fire exits and ensure that they are not obstructed. Regular fire drills should be conducted to ensure that all young people know what evacuation procedure to follow in the event of a real fire. Know where the nearest fire extinguishers are located. In the event of a fire, evacuating the building and saving life is much more important than fighting a fire. The assembly point should be clearly identified.
- c) Know where the nearest accessible telephone is. A telephone should, where possible, be made available on the premises for safety purposes. Plan for possible network coverage difficulties.
- d) It is important to have someone with a first-aid qualification. Where possible, workers should be aware of what medication children are currently taking and this should not be given without written consent from parents or doctors. Workers should also seek to obtain information concerning allergies and reaction to foods, e.g. peanuts. Medication should be clearly marked, out of reach of children and securely locked away.
- e) Children should be supervised by a worker while in the kitchen area.
- f) There should be adequate supervision by a worker of all activities involving children and young people with particular attention given to activities of a physical nature that may cause injury, e.g. for 'one off' activities such as trampolining, bouncy castle etc. Ensure there is adequate supervision by either a mature adult or trained workers. If in doubt check with your insurance for guidelines as to what they recommend. You may also require special insurance to cover these higher risk activities. Be aware of the physical environment and remove/avoid items that may cause injury.

- g) If the organisation is undertaking what is deemed to be high risk activities the Leaders/Pastors **must** seek written permission from parents/guardians in advance.
- h) Areas where maintenance work is taking place should never be used.
- i) Know where the first-aid provision is located.
- j) Know where the accident /incident report book is kept in which you should record details of accidents/injuries/witnesses/date. Records of accidents/incidents should be kept in the ministry records system.
- k) All workers should be aware of the issues relating to working with a child with a disability and to plan ahead in terms of their safety and welfare e.g. accessibility of venues, transport, activities etc.

### 7.3. Taking children and young people on outings

It is good practice when organising journeys/visits/trips to adhere to, or remember, the following:

- The organisers of journeys/visits should plan and prepare a detailed programme of activities for the children who are involved in the project
- Workers are responsible for the welfare and safety of the children for the entire time they are away from home
- Young people should not be left to their own devices, e.g. in a town for the evening or on shopping expeditions
- All children should be adequately supervised and engaged in suitable activities at all times
- Each worker should have access to a list of the children he/she will have charge of
- Organisers should obtain, in writing, parental consent to children joining an organised trip - see Appendix C
- Parents/legal guardians should be given full information about a trip, including details of the programme of events, the activities in which the children will be engaged and the supervision ratios
- Adequate transport arrangements **must** be well organised in advance

#### **Outings - important issues to consider:**

- Do any have special needs to be taken into account?
- Is there adequate and appropriate supervision?
- Do any of the activities (e.g. outdoor activities, swimming) require leaders to have particular qualifications?
- How near will you be to other adult help?
- Will anyone else be in the building?
- What is the layout of your building?
- Do you mainly use one room or are the activities held in several at the same time?
- What is the experience and training of adults who will be in charge especially in first-aid?
- Do any of the adults have special conditions that need to be taken into account? Adults who suffer from travel sickness are not the best leaders for coach parties!

### 7.4. Taking children and young people on residentials

More comprehensive training must be undertaken by the workers well in advance of an outing or residential. If you are planning a trip you must consult your Leader/Pastor to arrange this

training. Overnight stays and residential activities can be good fun for everybody, even the workers, but they require careful resourcing and planning.

- It is helpful to make sure that at least one adult is in charge of each specific aspect of the residential, e.g. catering and accommodation routines. These jobs will vary, taking into consideration building, type of programme etc.
- Check the insurance cover of any building you will be sleeping in. There is usually a limit on the number it accommodates. If you exceed these limits insurances can be invalidated.
- Check the building and know where water, electricity etc. can be turned off. Know the fire drill for the building and make sure you have a fire drill as soon as possible after entering the premises.
- Know where the fire extinguishers are.
- Church halls and rooms used for sleeping larger numbers of people **MUST** have TWO means of exit which are clearly identified.
- Know where the nearest Hospital, Doctor, Garda Station and Fire Station are. This applies if you are sleeping in any building, even if only for one night, and even if it is your own church.
- Written permission of the parents/legal guardians of participating children is essential.
- Ensure that parents/legal guardians have returned a health form stating any special dietary requirements and current medication, e.g. asthma, diabetes, allergies. Forms should also give the name and telephone number of the child's doctor.
- Residential activities **must** have safety rules and boundaries, such as children letting workers know where they are and children not entering the kitchen without permission.
- It is not permissible for a member of staff/leader/worker to sleep in the same room as children or young people.
- Make sure the children have correct clothing for whatever activity they are taking part in. It is useful to issue a 'kit' list for residential activities.

### **Sleeping on church premises**

This section is concerned with the safety of people who sleep on church premises, for example during a weekend celebration or short break.

- Ground floor accommodation is considered most suitable for sleeping accommodation.
- There should be at least two separate routes leading from the sleeping accommodation and out of the building.
- External doors should be left unlocked. If for security purposes this is impracticable, the fastening should be a simple bolt type rather than key.
- Exit routes and doors should be clearly indicated. Check exit doors for ease of opening.
- In order to minimise the spread of smoke and fire should an outbreak occur, all internal doors should be kept closed, particularly during the night hours.
- The use of portable heating appliances should, if possible, be avoided.
- An outbreak of fire often causes a power failure. It is therefore necessary for supervisory workers to have hand lamps (torches).
- Smoking **must** be forbidden in the sleeping accommodation.
- A list of occupants should be prepared and hung just within the main exit door. Occupants should be instructed to meet at a pre-determined assembly point in the event of an outbreak of fire and a roll call should be taken.
- Anyone discovering a fire should raise the alarm.
- Do not park cars where they would obstruct exit routes or access for fire appliances.

- Supervisory workers should know the exact location of the fire fighting equipment and how to operate it. Only carry out fire fighting when it is obvious that it is safe to do so.
- Participants should be informed of the assembly points to use in the event of fire.

## 7.5. Transport

Work with children and young people will involve transporting them at some stage, whether this is on a club night or to and from an outing or a residential programme. Workers should observe the guidelines in section 6, which will help ensure protection for them and the young people.

## 8. Guidelines for Electronic Media and Photography

### 8.1. Child protection and ministry websites

This section is intended to inform ministries about the issues surrounding developing ministry websites, particularly (though not exclusively) those related to child protection.

#### Child protection and the Internet

The main dangers posed to children by the Internet are:

- 1) Children accessing pornographic or other unsuitable websites while online
- 2) Children being contacted by predators by email or through blogs and being harassed or 'groomed' online
- 3) Children receiving spam or other junk mail which either contains or provides links to pornographic or other unsuitable material
- 4) Predators making contact with children or learning information about children through websites that they can then use to harass or groom the child.
- 5) Predators or pedophiles making use of photos available online to digitally alter them to create pornographic images

Dealing with each point in turn, the following recommendations to minimise risk are put forward. Point one is of most concern to ministries that allow or plan to allow Internet access to children. One assumes a ministry website will have neither pornographic nor offensive material on it nor any link to any site that might! Nevertheless, a disclaimer should be put on any external links.

***Recommendation 1: A disclaimer should be put with any links to any external website saying that the ministry accepts no responsibility for the content of external websites. Ministries that allow or plan to allow Internet access to children (or anyone else for that matter) should examine the issue of how to prevent further access to inappropriate sites. Ministry websites should also be regularly monitored for signs of hacking (unauthorised addition of material - often inappropriate material).***

*Any sites showing signs of hacking should be taken down immediately.*

Point two is of concern and relevance to us when it comes to encouraging the development of ministry websites.

***Recommendation 2: Ministry websites should not have public/open blogs or 'guestbook' facilities which might enable use of the website by predators.***

***Recommendation 3: Email addresses used for SPAM email are normally obtained through their appearance on websites. Specially programmed ‘search robots’ collect these email addresses for addition to SPAM emailing lists. Accordingly, care should be taken with placing any email address on a website as it becomes vulnerable to being harvested by the robots for SPAM, much of which is of a pornographic or otherwise inappropriate content.***

***Under no circumstances should a ministry website have the email addresses of any children on it. Indeed while a ministry website address (e.g. greystones@agi.org) is appropriate, clergy should be careful not to put their own (or anyone else’s) personal email addresses on the website.***

*Aliases can be put in (pastor@greystonesministry.ie) instead.*

These recommendations also reduce the likelihood (although they do not eliminate it) that a child’s email address will be ‘picked up’ by search robots, which is the concern related to point 3.

Generally, groups advising on child protection issues make the following suggestions:

1. Children’s names should not be captioned on photos online.
2. No other identifying details (place, address, personal details of child/children) should appear on any photos of a child or children on the website.
3. Group photos of children, e.g. ‘the basketball team’, would be better.

However, these recommendations are normally put forward on the basis of a large international corporate website where the chances of finding a child based on an uncaptioned photo is almost nil. A local ministry website, by contrast, covers a small geographical area and an AGI community tends to be a small pool of people and therefore a more stringent recommendation is required.

***Recommendation 4: Accordingly, unless a ministry has the written permission of a parent or guardian, no pictures of any child whatsoever should be allowed on a ministry website. The website editor, acting as an agent for the leadership team, is responsible for ensuring that he/she has the necessary written permission from a parent or guardian before putting any picture of a child online (see Appendix C).***

***Under no circumstances (even if a parent or guardian is agreeable) should a child’s name be captioned on any photos that are put on a website with parental permission.***

Even with such permission photos of children on websites should be restricted to groups of children, not individuals.

#### **Text on websites:**

It is possible that a Leader’s letter, as used in a ministry magazine/newsletter, would also be published on the ministry website firstly, to minimise the workload for workers and secondly, to afford an opportunity for them to regularly update their websites. However, it should be borne in mind that what appears on a website is potentially being exposed to millions. Accordingly there may be subjects that a leader might feel entirely appropriate to acknowledge in a ministry newsletter or even a magazine that should be re-examined in the context of a website.

1. First among these concerns again should be child safety. Names of children are probably reasonably safe to use as long as these are not accompanied by identifying details. Accordingly, if a child's name appears in the newsletter and the intention is also to put the details on the website (for example, he or she has won an award) the report should be edited so no details are given as to their class, teacher, club or school, e.g. *"Fred Jones who won an award for football. Congratulations also to his teacher and coach."* Care should be taken that if such a line is used in the text, an accompanying photo does not enable someone to match the name with the person.
2. Along the same lines, care should be taken when flagging events in advance on the ministry website involving large numbers of children.
3. Workers should be aware of copyright issues in relation to text published on websites.

## **8.2. Electronic communication / photography**

### **Electronic communication**

1. Mobile phone numbers for under 18 year olds in ministry programmes, ought to be held only as part of a wider data collection system that includes contact details and permission forms showing parents what information is stored and why. Best practice would include parents giving permission that mobile phone numbers may be stored. Contacting children and young people by phone, text or email should never be undertaken without parental knowledge or consent.
2. In turn, the ministry could do well in establishing data protection protocols for the storage and use of such material. Often, group block texting is done via the Internet. Therefore it is assumed that normal data protection protocols are in place covering this information's usage, as it is stored on a computer somewhere.
3. Ministry workers themselves need to exercise discretion and caution in what texts they receive and respond to. As young people communicate these days via texting, a ministry worker needs to avoid inappropriate comments /innuendos etc. that a child/young person might misinterpret. Jokes, also, via text etc. might be misconstrued.

*Our Duty to Care* - extract based on Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU)

### **Photographing / Filming children**

Traditionally, people reading newsletters, ministry magazines, church DVD presentations have been delighted to see pictures or footage of children, especially those known to them, taking part in sports or drama or receiving a prize. Indeed such publication or use of footage has been a matter of pride not only for parents but grandparents and the family circle.

Regrettably in recent years it has become clear that the identification of children in such pictures or footage has a negative and indeed dangerous aspect. It has become increasingly clear that the publication of named children may be a child protection issue leading to their endangerment by creating opportunities for recognition. Individuals may use the identifying of the child and the link to a particular location as an opportunity to identify and meet the child for inappropriate purposes.

A child may be easily misled by an adult who knows his or her name and something about him or her and claims an acquaintance.

To reiterate:

The following points are strongly advised particularly in relation to children of primary school age or younger and those in junior classes in second-level schools.

- Do not identify children by name in photographs or footage particularly when these are provided for publication
- In all cases when using the photograph or footage of an individual child for any publication you **must** obtain written parental/guardian permission
- Photographs or footage of group activities should ideally be taken in such a way as to prevent identification of individuals
- Adults/leaders would be advised not to take, store or display photographs or footage of children without the permission of parents
- The use of video and of cameras by parents at ministry/church events needs to be carefully monitored and parents sensitively advised about the subsequent use of recordings if this is permitted
- If you hold a ministry event and have invited the press please ensure the photographer complies with what the ministry determines is appropriate

These points are of even greater significance for those ministries that maintain websites as images of children might be accessed, altered and put into circulation.

These concerns also raise issues for the larger youth clubs that request a passport type photo with registration applications.

These issues emphasise the unsuitability of camera phone usage at particular events.

### **8.3. Guidelines for photographing children**

#### **First steps and things to think about**

Establish the type of images that appropriately represent the ministry for the web and other media.

Think about the level of consideration you give to the use of images of young people in other publications, for example, the processes involved in choosing appropriate images for the newsletter or magazine. Apply an increased level of consideration to the images of children and young people used on the website.

#### **Rules to remember are:**

- If the young person is named, avoid using his/her photograph
- If a photograph is used, avoid naming the young person
- Ask for the young person's permission to use his/her image, through, for example, a consent form
- Ask for parental consent to use an image of a young person, through, for example, a parental consent form
- Only use images of young people in suitable dress to reduce the risk of inappropriate use.

There are clearly some sports activities - swimming, gymnastics and athletics, for example - when the risk of potential misuse is much greater than with others. With these, the content of the photograph should focus on the activity and not on a particular child and should avoid full face and body shots. So, for example, shots of children in a pool would be appropriate or, if poolside, waist or shoulder up.

Create a recognised procedure for reporting the use of inappropriate images to reduce the risks to young people. Follow your child protection procedures; ensuring the Designated Person, An Garda Síochána and/or the duty social worker are informed.

### **Guidelines for use of photographic filming equipment**

- Provide a clear brief about what is considered appropriate in terms of content and behaviour
- Issue the photographer with identification which **must** be worn at all times
- Inform young people and parents that a photographer will be in attendance at an event and ensure they consent to both the taking and publication of films or photographs
- Do not allow unsupervised access to young people or one to one photo sessions at events
- Do not approve/allow photo sessions outside the events or at a young person's home
- If parents or other spectators are intending to photograph or video at an event they should also be made aware of your expectations
- Adults should be asked to register at an event if they wish to use photographic equipment
- Young people and parents should be informed that if they have concerns they can report these to the leader
- Concerns regarding inappropriate or intrusive photography should be reported to the event organiser or leader and recorded in the same manner as any other child protection concern

## **9. Information sharing**

Good communication makes for good practice. If each ministry puts in place good systems and provides opportunities for sharing information with children, parents, workers etc. everyone will feel that their input is valued and that their ideas and concerns will be listened to.

A sense of partnership between parents, workers and children will engender mutual trust.

It is important that general written information on guidelines and procedures is circulated to everyone connected with the ministry in a way that is understandable for all, for instance through an information session or by sending out information leaflets etc.

### **9.1. Information pack for new members**

Consideration might be given to providing an information pack for all new members. The contents of such a pack might include:

- Letter of welcome to parents, programme of activities
- details regarding the meeting times and arrangements for dropping off and picking up children
- contact details for leaders
- The Ministry's Child Protection Policy statement/designated person contact details
- form for submitting child's personal details/medical information/emergency contact numbers/consent authorisation
- Photographic guidelines/consent authorisation
- How to share concerns/report a complaint

## 9.2. Written information sought from parents

### It is essential:

- to obtain consent and all relevant details about the child as soon as possible and to obtain consents for special activities, day trips, residentials and emergency situations
- that consent is provided by those with parental responsibility\*
- that each ministry informs those giving consent that they may only do so if in a position of parental responsibility e.g. by stating this on activity consent forms and health forms etc.

It is good practice to inform parents of the limits of confidentiality around their contact details and any information they provide to the ministry.

*\* The natural father who is not the husband of the mother is not considered to be a guardian unless:*

- *he subsequently marries the aforementioned mother;*
- *he applies to the court under s.6A of The Guardianship of Infants Act 1964 for an order conferring on him the status of guardianship;*
- *both parties, by agreement, make a statutory declaration in the prescribed form (Guardianship of Children (Statutory Declaration) Regulations 1998) which is signed in the presence of a Peace Commissioner or a Commissioner for Oaths.*

*Any other individual or body claiming guardianship of a child should have an appropriate court order.*

*If a leader is not clear as to the status of the person giving permission for a child's activities he/she should ask the leader in charge for clarification.*

## 9.3. Confidentiality

Some information should only be shared on a need to know basis. It is important to have a clear written statement on confidentiality, when information must be passed on, why and to whom.

A confidentiality guidelines should be written and include reference to:

- what information is required from parents
- storage of information
- access to information
- length of time information is kept
- procedure/guidelines for appropriate sharing of information.

## 9.4. Record keeping

The following categories of records should be kept:

### Workers

- All details provided at the time of recruitment
- Any record of complaints or incidents involving workers

### Children

- Ministry registration form including all relevant details (see Appendix C)
- Authorisation / consent forms

### Ministry

- Attendance register - including attendances by each worker
- Accident / incident book

It is important that all workers are aware of and follow a written procedure for record keeping. There should also be an agreed procedure for lodging records for permanent filing in the *Ministry's Child Protection Policy* filing cabinet. Any record should be retained indefinitely.

## 9.5. Data Protection

The Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 create obligations for those keeping personal information and gives individuals rights regarding information that concerns themselves.

Automated data means information that (a) is being processed by means of equipment operating automatically in response to instructions given for that purpose, or (b) is recorded with the intention that it should be processed by means of such equipment.

Manual data means information that is recorded as part of a relevant filing system or with the intention that it should form part of a relevant filing system.

Relevant filing system means any set of information relating to individuals to the extent that, although the information is not processed by means of equipment operating automatically in response to instructions given for that purpose, the set is structured, either by reference to individuals or by reference to criteria relating to individuals, in such a way that specific information relating to a particular individual is readily accessible.

Note that 'personal data' means any information about or relating to the individual.

Anyone such as a designated person or ministry should, in regard to records:

- ensure that the basic principles of data protection are in place
- follow document procedures, for example with regard to accuracy, and have regular security reviews
- adhere to the 'need to know principle' - only personal data necessary for the purpose should be collected and staff should only be able to access the personal data that they

- need to carry out their functions
- have adequate access controls, firewalls and virus protection if material is stored in electronic form
- keep manual files in locked cabinets with restricted and recorded access

Any ministry should provide:

- periodic audit checks and reviews
- a procedure for complaints regarding handling of personal data
- privacy /data protection statements on forms and, if relevant, on websites
- internet use guidelines if access is provided
- guidelines for the appropriate handling of prayer requests

**NB** The careful handling of information should not inhibit the availability of necessary information about children.

### **Data protection clarification**

The Data Protection Act 2003 extends the remit of data protection to manual searchable files, that is, information stored on paper, with effect from October 2007. Details are to be found on [www.dataprotection.ie](http://www.dataprotection.ie) the site of the Data Commissioner.

The information provided in relation to Garda Vetting requests should be treated as sensitive information and kept under secure conditions.

## **10. Child Protection and Independent Organisations**

An independent organisation is a group that, while not operated by the ministry, nonetheless uses ministry premises. Such organisations may be specifically youth organisations, or organisations which occasionally work with children, e.g. St John Ambulance. The organisation may have an outside headquarters and a separate method for the appointment of leaders e.g. Scouts, Guides, dance lessons etc. Although some of the leaders may attend the local host ministry they are not appointed by the ministry and are not directly responsible to the ministry.

### **10.1. General guiding principles**

- In all our practice the host premises and independent organisations agree that the welfare and safety of children is the paramount consideration.
- It is recognised that ministries and organisations are interdependent and it is therefore vital that constructive working relationships are developed and maintained.
- If an organisation using ministry premises is operated independently of the ministry, while the ministry will not be responsible for the appointment of leaders or general running of the organisation, it is recognised that the ministry still has some interest in the organisation being run to an acceptable standard. The ministry has a responsibility for what happens on ministry property and the ministry will give formal permission for the organisation to use the premises. It is recognised that even if an organisation is independent of the ministry, the public's perception may be that it is still a ministry organisation.

- If a ministry has concerns that certain practices breach child protection guidelines, such concerns should be raised with the organisation leader and/or the headquarters of the organisation. If the concerns are not satisfactorily dealt with the host ministry should withdraw permission for use of the premises by that organisation.
- While the ministry is not to be responsible for the appointment of leaders to an independent organisation it is good practice for the Designated Person to be informed annually (September) of the names of the leaders in writing.

## 10.2. Agreed criteria

The AGI suggest that the following criteria be agreed with independent organisations using ministry premises, e.g. Scouts, Guides, music lessons and other groups. It is the duty of the organisation to ensure that the premises are suitable and appropriate for planned activities. The organisation shall also seek to ensure that activities shall be carried out safely. Any safety concerns regarding the premises shall be notified by the organisation leader to the appropriate person within the ministry as soon as possible.

- The organisation shall confirm to the ministry that it has adopted and consistently implements a child protection policy that accords with the standard of *Children First and Child Protection for the Youth Work Sector* (RI). A copy of the organisation's policy shall be supplied to the Designated Person.
- The ministry shall supply to the organisation leader the names and contact details of the ministry officials responsible for the premises. The organisation shall supply to the Designated Person the names and contact details of all the leaders immediately following appointment. The organisation shall confirm that new appointees have been vetted where possible; that no information was received which debarred their appointment; and, that they have been found suitable to work with children and young people.
- The organisation shall ensure that leaders and helpers in the organisation receive appropriate child protection training and are aware of the organisation's reporting procedures.
- If a report has been made by the organisation of a child protection concern, suspicion or allegation through its procedures, the ministry Designated Person should be informed in confidence that a report has been made.
- The organisation shall supply written confirmation from the insurer that adequate insurance cover is in place for the organisation's activities or written verification that the insurance guidelines of the organisation is accepted by the ministry at senior level.
- A form of approval (sample below) shall be signed by the leader of the organisation and a ministry representative confirming that the conditions have been met. It is appropriate for this to be completed annually or at least every three years depending upon ministry requirements.

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## **Acknowledgements**

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- "Child Protection for the Youth Work Sector" published by the Department of Education and Science
- Safeguarding Trust: The Church of Ireland Code of Good Practice for Ministry with Children, 2008
- Irish Wheelchair Association Child Protection Guidelines and Procedure 2009

## Appendix A. An introduction to child protection

### A.1. Preventing abuse

AGI Child Protection Guidelines are in place to enable ministries, leaders (local and national) and other ministry workers to safeguard the welfare of children with whom they work. It is possible to be lulled into a false sense of security believing that those who work with children in the AGI will never be guilty of abuse because they are part of the Christian community.

**AGI ministries must take all reasonable steps to:**

- **Exclude known abusers**
- **Report to the statutory authorities any suspicious person or known offender attempting to make contact with children**
- **Report to the appropriate HSE child and family services area when there is disclosure, concern or allegation of abuse arising from activities within the ministry**

It is an error to assume that anyone is automatically safe to be with children. **For this reason any procedures set in place to protect children must apply to all workers in contact with them.** This is not to treat each person who interacts with children as being under suspicion. These procedures are to ensure that sensible measures to protect children and those caring for them are recognised by everyone. This will involve thought and planning within each ministry so that any risk is minimised.

In the event of the occurrence of child abuse in the course of ministry activities, it is reasonable to assume that litigation may follow and that the leaders or leadership team, or others, may be sued for damages. It is crucial that the leaders or leadership team and others are able to show that they took ‘reasonable care in all the circumstances’ to ensure that the work of the ministry in this area was managed and supervised in accordance with the principles set out in that ministry’s child protection policy.

Where any occurrence of alleged child abuse is brought to the attention of the leaders or leadership team, legal advice may be sought to facilitate the correct and speedy implementation of that ministry’s child protection policy by the leadership team.

**All allegations, concerns or disclosures of abuse must be taken seriously and responded to according to the procedures outlined in that ministry’s child protection policy having regard to the need to protect children and to safeguard those who work with children from the consequences of unfounded accusations.**

**It is important to be aware that *The Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998* provide civil immunity from civil liability to persons/organisations/groups who report Child Abuse ‘reasonably and in good faith’ to the HSE or An Garda Síochána.**

## A.2. The nature of child abuse

Abuse and serious neglect occur in all sectors of our society: affluent and poor; urban and rural; Christian and non-Christian. No matter how much we would wish it to be the case, there is no such thing as an 'abuse-free' community. In our churches and communities there are children who are being abused, adults who have been deeply scarred by childhood abuse and people who are currently abusing, or have abused, children. In our ministries we are called to do all we can to ensure the protection of children and young people from abuse and neglect and to continue to develop a safe, loving environment for all people.

## A.3. Recognising, responding to and reporting abuse

Those working with children should be aware of the range of abuse - sexual, emotional, physical and neglect - to which some children may be subject. These workers should be assisted to recognise how such abuse may show itself in the actions and reactions of children. Most abuse is committed by close relatives, friends or those in positions of authority or trust. It often takes place in the home of the child or young person concerned.

The workers should know what steps to take in response to a situation where they have reason to suspect that abuse may be occurring or where a child alleges that abuse is occurring.

The one option that is not available is to do nothing.

## A.4. What is child abuse?

There are four main kinds of child abuse. The following list includes a definition for each and some of the signs and symptoms. Additional information may be found in Appendix 1 of *Children First*.

**PHYSICAL ABUSE** is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from willful or neglectful failure to protect a child. Examples of physical injury include the following:

- (i) shaking
- (ii) use of excessive force in handling
- (iii) deliberate poisoning
- (iv) suffocation
- (v) Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy\*
- (vi) allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child

\* *This is a condition where parents, usually mothers, fabricate stories of illness about their children or cause physical signs of illness.*

Symptoms may include:

- unexplained recurrent injuries or burns
- improbable excuses or refusal to explain injuries
- self-destructive tendencies
- fear of physical contact, a shrinking back when touched

**NEGLECT** can be defined in terms of an omission, where a child suffers significant harm or impairment of health or development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults or medical care.

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point. For instance, a child who suffers a series of minor injuries is not having his or her needs met for supervision and safety. A child who consistently misses school may be being deprived of intellectual stimulation.

Symptoms may include:

- i. constant hunger
- ii. inadequate clothing
- iii. constant tiredness
- iv. poor personal hygiene

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

- i. The imposition of negative attributes on children, expressed by persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming
- ii. Conditional parenting in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his or her behaviour or actions
- iii. Emotional unavailability by the child's parent/carer
- iv. Unresponsiveness, inconsistency of care or having inappropriate expectations of the child
- v. Premature imposition of responsibility on a child
- vi. Unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of the child's capacity to understand something or to behave and control himself/herself in a certain way
- vii. Under- or over-protection of the child
- viii. Failure to show interest in, or provide age-appropriate opportunities for, the child's cognitive and emotional development
- ix. Use of unreasonable or over-harsh disciplinary measures
- x. Exposure to domestic violence.

Symptoms may include:

- i. delays in physical, mental and emotional development
- ii. continual belittling of oneself
- iii. over-reaction to mistakes
- iv. extreme fear of any new situation
- v. inappropriate response to pain
- vi. neurotic behaviour

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

- i. Exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child
- ii. Intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification
- iii. Sexual intercourse with a child
- iv. Sexual exploitation of a child

- v. Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person. In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that, for the purposes of the criminal law, that the age of consent is 17 years. This means, for example, that sexual intercourse between a 16 year-old girl and her 17 year-old boyfriend is illegal, although it might not be regarded as constituting child sexual abuse.
- vi. In the case of a vulnerable adult where they do not have the capacity to give consent this can be deemed as sexual abuse.

Symptoms may include:

- detailed or age-inappropriate understanding of sexual behaviour, including drawing sexually explicit pictures, sexual play with peers or toys or use of sexually explicit language
- being overly affectionate in a sexual way towards peers, older children or adults
- excessive fear of adults or displaying apprehension or withdrawn behaviour or conversely very aggressive behaviour
- regression to younger behaviour patterns, e.g. thumb sucking, or displaying disturbed patterns of behaviour, e.g. onset of nightmares, bedwetting, loss of appetite or compulsive eating
- unusual reluctance to join in normal activities involving the removal of clothing, e.g. swimming
- self-mutilation, eating disorders, suicide attempts, running away

(A similar list is enclosed below)

Additional information on sexual abuse:

It has been a commonly held view that strangers, people unknown to children, perpetrate sexual abuse. Sadly, most sexual abuse is perpetrated by people who have built trusting relationships with a child, often over a period of time (a family member or relative). Sexual abuse therefore commonly occurs in the home or in a place well known to a child.

There is no such thing as a stereotypical abuser. We cannot spot abusers by their manner of dress, looks, accent or social status. An abuser may appear needy and disadvantaged or successful and well off. In the past many organisations have dismissed too lightly the allegations made by children who have implicated ‘well respected’ members of the church or community. Today, we are getting better at listening to children. If a child alleges abuse, our task is to take seriously what we are told and to take action to protect from further harm.

Abusers often seek out children to befriend and ‘groom’ for sexual activity. Grooming of children occurs over a period of time and normally involves the abuser working hard to be accepted and trusted by the child and his or her family. Eventually the offender will breach this trust by abusing the child, leaving the child feeling confused, fearful and deeply devastated by the betrayal of trust.

Families too suffer deeply when this kind of abuse happens with parents and carers often feeling they have failed to protect their child.

#### INDIRECT ABUSE

On occasion, a worker may become aware of ‘indirect’ abuse to children.

This could occur if children have been photographed, videotaped or filmed for pornographic purposes. This is sexual exploitation of children. This information **must** be reported promptly to

An Garda Síochána through the appropriate channels. Please see **Section 8** for more information on the use of photography and the internet.

#### CHILD PROSTITUTION or TRAFFICKING

Any concern or suspicion of child prostitution or trafficking **must** be reported promptly to An Garda Síochána.

#### Remember

It is very important to recognise that many of the symptoms listed under each type of abuse could have explanations other than that of abuse. If, however, a child or teenager exhibits a number of the symptoms listed and/or if certain patterns of behaviour emerge, then there may be good reason for suspecting abuse. Where there is a suspicion, you should follow the guidelines contained in this document. Additional information is to be found in *Children First* Appendix 1 or from the duty social worker in the appropriate HSE Child and Family Services area.

- A child may be subjected to a combination of types of abuse
- Many of the types of behaviour described earlier can indicate several kinds of abuse
- It is also possible that a child may show no outward signs and hide what is happening from everyone.

Diagnosing child abuse is not easy and should therefore be left to those with the necessary skills and training, i.e. HSE professionals. You should not attempt to investigate yourself. By doing so you could complicate an already sensitive situation and perhaps contaminate evidence, which could have negative consequences for any subsequent legal proceedings. Reporting does not mean investigating.

### A.5. Indicators of abuse

The following signs and indicators **may** mean that a child is experiencing abuse, which could include sexual, emotional, physical or neglect. They are included here simply to raise awareness of the types of behaviour that should be noted and, if they continue without valid explanation, reported.

Before being too quick to ‘seek out’ signs of abuse, remember the following:

- We know that children can look tired and/or anxious because they are ill or distressed about something that has happened at home or school which is not abusive (e.g. the arrival of a new baby; a move to a new house or new school).
- We know that children with certain medical problems can sometimes show extensive bruising to their bodies.
- We also know that children displaying bizarre, aggressive behaviour may have an underlying medical, cognitive or psychological difficulty that is not connected to abuse.

Some signs and indicators that may point to the possibility of sexual abuse

- Being overly affectionate or knowledgeable in a sexual way inappropriate to the child’s age
- Medical problems such as chronic itching, pain in the genitals
- Personality changes such as becoming insecure or clinging
- Regressing to younger behaviour patterns such as thumb sucking or bringing out discarded cuddly toys
- Sudden loss of appetite

- Inability to concentrate
- Lack of trust or fear of someone they know well
- Suddenly drawing sexually explicit pictures
- Simulating sexual acts with other children (this behaviour should raise immediate concerns if it is seen in children who are five years or under)
- Using highly sexualised language to other children and adults

Some signs and indicators that may point to the possibility of physical abuse

- Unexplained recurrent injuries or burns
- Improbable excuses for injuries
- Wearing clothes to cover injuries, even in hot weather
- Fear of touch
- Self-destructive behaviour such as physical self-harm
- Aggression towards others

Some signs and indicators that may point to the possibility of emotional abuse

- Sudden speech disorders
- Continual self-deprecation
- Extreme fear of any new situation
- Neurotic behaviour (rocking, hair twisting, self-mutilation)
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia (e.g. hiding food)

Some signs and indicators that may point to the possibility of neglect

- Constant hunger
- Poor personal hygiene
- Constant tiredness
- Poor state of clothing and being inappropriately clothed for the weather
- Emaciation
- Untreated medical problems

Important points to note

- A child may be subjected to a combination of different types of abuse
- Child abuse may be repetitive or serial or may be an isolated case
- Many of the behaviours described above can indicate several different kinds of abuse
- It is also possible that a child may show no outward signs and hide what is happening from everyone

Concerns cannot be dismissed outright - the sharing of information is one of the most important ways to prevent abuse of children. In many situations a number of individuals or agencies may each have a piece of information which in itself may seem unimportant but when put together with all of the other pieces could create quite a worrying picture. For example:



**GP:**

Recent visit – Ann complains of stomach pains, some unexplained bruising

**SCHOOL:**

Teacher notices change in behaviour - Ann has become disruptive in class

**YOUTH CLUB:**

Workers notice that Ann has become withdrawn

**POLICE:**

Ann found wandering alone in the dark - says she doesn't want to go home



**Children's Ministry**

Worker notes that John complains of constant tiredness and is inappropriately clothed

**Prayer Ministry Team**

Leader receives a prayer request for serious pressures in John's family

**Family Pastoral Care**

Leader is aware of severe financial difficulties in John's family

**Homegroup**

Leader notes that John is unsupervised whilst the parents are at the home group

It is important to note that some children are more vulnerable to abuse because of the circumstances of their life. This group would include the following:

- children with a disability
- children in the criminal justice system
- children living with domestic violence
- separated children seeking asylum
- children who are carers

Workers should be particularly vigilant for signs of abuse if they are working with children in any of these groups.

## **A.6. Why do adults abuse children?**

Adults abuse children for different reasons - stress, problems, unhappy circumstances, the feeling of having no power in adult relationships, and perhaps having been abused as a child. Some adults may convince themselves that there is nothing wrong with their behaviour, or that it is for the child's own good. But whatever the reason abuse is always wrong and *it is never the child's fault*.

We should *never* presume that because a person has been abused they will go on to abuse others.

## **A.7. Peer (child to child) abuse**

In some cases of child abuse, the alleged perpetrator will be a child. In these situations, the child protection procedures should be adhered to for both the victim and alleged abuser, i.e. **it should be considered a child protection issue for both children.**

It is important that clarity exists in respect of which behaviours constitute peer abuse, particularly child sexual abuse. Consultation with the experts should help to clarify the nature of any sexual behaviour by children which gives rise to concern.

*Children First, summary page 29*

## **A.8. 'Age of consent'**

Your attention is drawn to the extract from the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006 - see Appendix E.

### **Issues around 'age of consent'**

Sexual activity involving a child who is capable of giving informed consent on the matter, while illegal, may not necessarily constitute sexual abuse as defined for the purposes of this guide.

One example, as mentioned earlier, which would fall into this category, is a sexual relationship between a 16-year-old girl and her 18-year-old boyfriend. The decision to initiate child protection action in such cases is a matter for professional judgment by the HSE and each case should be considered individually. An Garda Síochána will of course, deal with the criminal aspects of the case.

## **A.9. Bullying**

This section is adapted from the Scout Association of Ireland's Child Protection Guidelines and may provide a useful reference to ministries considering an anti-bullying guidelines.

### **What is bullying?**

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression, be it verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others. Bullying is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and occurs mainly in social environments such as schools, clubs

and other organisations working with children. It includes teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting and extortion by one or more children or an adult, against a victim.

### **Is bullying harmful?**

Persistent bullying can have a devastating effect on a child's self-esteem. Children may feel the bullying is somehow their fault, or that there is something wrong with them. They may become withdrawn and insecure, more cautious and less willing to take any sort of risk. Being victimised in this way can cause days of mental anguish and leave lifelong emotional scars. It has driven some young people to try to murder their tormentors and others to suicide. A child who has suffered bullying often needs professional counseling to let out his/her feelings and rebuild self-confidence.

Bullying also affects any child who witnesses it.

### **What do children get bullied about?**

Some of the factors involved in bullying include:

- puberty
- peer pressure
- gender differences
- stereotypes/prejudice
- structure of the group - hierarchy of dominance
- family background of victims and bullies

Bullying can be distinguished from bossiness and boisterous play. A bossy child will boss whoever is around because of a lack of self-control or skills of negotiation or compromise. Boisterous play can be dangerous but it does not involve young people willfully setting out to hurt or victimise. Young people often grow out of this kind of behaviour as they grow older. What distinguishes bullying from bossiness or boisterousness is that the bully always picks on someone less powerful and more vulnerable. Persistent 'slagging' has the same devastating effects as bullying and should not be ignored.

### **How would you know if a child was being bullied?**

All bullies operate using furtiveness, threats and fear. Bullying can therefore only survive in an environment where the victim does not feel empowered to tell someone who can help or in which it is not safe to do so.

The following indicators are warning signs that a young person might be getting bullied:

- reluctance to come to a centre or take part in activities
- physical signs (unexplained bruises, scratches, or damage to belongings)

- stress-caused illnesses - headaches and stomach aches which seem unexplained
- fearful behaviour (fear of walking to a youth meeting, taking different routes, asking to be driven)
- frequent loss of 'subs' or shortage of money with vague explanations
- having few friends
- changes in behaviour (becoming withdrawn, moody, irritable, upset, distressed, stammering)
- not eating
- attempting suicide or hinting at suicide
- anxiety (shown by nail-biting, fearfulness, tics)

Of course, there are other possible reasons for many of the above.

### **What makes a person bully others?**

Bullies are often making a plea for help through their violent behaviour that may reflect a sense of insignificance. Bullies whose activities go unaddressed often fail socially and academically in later life. They need to be taught all important negotiation and cooperation skills, working with others rather than competing.

### **Who should deal with bullying?**

While the more extreme forms of bullying would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse and are reportable to the HSE or An Garda Síochána, dealing with bullying behaviour is normally the responsibility of the organisation where it is taking place.

### **How can bullying be prevented?**

An *anti-bullying guidelines and code* should be drawn up and enforced and procedures should be clearly established to deal with any incidents. While it is important to have rules about bullying, a whole group guidelines is the best solution. This means not 'bullying the bully' but working with bullies and the group of young people, helping them to understand the hurt they are causing, and so make the problem a 'shared concern' of the group. Modules on raising awareness and developing techniques for dealing with bullying should be included in training.

### **What practical steps can be used to counter bullying?**

- Use young people as a positive resource in preventing bullying and to change the culture of the group to a 'permission to tell' culture rather than a 'might is right' one.
- Teach young people to negotiate, cooperate and help others, particularly new or different children.
- It is a good idea to run poster campaigns and have stories and role plays on how to deal with a bully included in ordinary group activities.

- Offer a victim immediate support.
- Never tell young people to ignore bullying. They cannot ignore it - it hurts too much.
- Never encourage a young person to take the law into his/her own hands and beat the bully at their own game.

## Appendix B. Checklists

### B.1. Checklist for Leadership Team

A basic responsibility is to make sure that children and young people are safe.

The checklist below may be of help to you:

	Yes	No
a) Is first-aid available during all activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there an up-to-date first-aid kit available both on the premises and for activities away from the premises?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do workers know who the first-aider is and where he/she can be contacted?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are all accidents recorded?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How? _____		
Do workers know where the nearest available phone is?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Do regular fire drills take place?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are fire notices displayed informing people what to do in case of fire?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are fire appliances suitable and serviced regularly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has the local fire officer visited the premises?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Is there suitable access and provision made for disabled people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Is a register kept of all those in attendance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has a parental consent form and health form been completed for each child/young person (particularly for day trips and residential activities)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Have those working with children/young people been subjects of a robust recruitment and selection procedure including a Garda vetting check?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have workers been properly introduced to the work, adequately supported and offered training?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do workers in the ministry know what to do if a child/young person tells them of abuse?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Are worker/child ratios appropriate for the group and for the activity?
- Are there male and female workers for mixed groups?
- Are the places where children/young people meet safe and secure from unwelcome people?
- Is it possible for children/young people to get outside without workers noticing?
- f) Are children/young people safe? Is the premises notice in Appendix C on display?
- g) Is the Health and Safety statement available and is it up to date?
- h) Is this checklist reviewed annually?

## B.2. Checklist for Record Keeping

	Yes	No
a) Is there a register of all workers with children and youth in the ministry?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Have all workers signed relevant declaration/application form regarding any previous convictions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Have all workers received the relevant sections of <i>the ministry's Child Protection Policy</i> ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Have all workers signed the Declaration of Acceptance of <i>Ministry's Child Protection Policy</i> ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Are all personnel records systematically filed? Records must include: (i) worker declaration/application; (ii) references; (iii) acknowledgement of receipt /acceptance of <i>Ministry's Child Protection Policy</i> ; (iv) any notes made by the Leadership Team at their interviews; (v) note verifying that a Garda vetting check was completed and the person was suitable for appointment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
*Note: The date of commencement and completion of responsibility must be shown.		
f) Are these records kept in a secure filing system to which only the Leadership Team has access?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Are files of individuals who have completed service retained indefinitely?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

\*Note: Attendance registers, consent forms for activities and completed accident books must also be kept.

### B.3. Checklist for Safe Premises

*The following are not in any particular order. Tick those where you are satisfied and rank the remainder in a sequence of items to be implemented or checked.*

(In the case of those organising residential camps assume the questions apply to the venue you are using.)

	Yes	No
a) Has the hall or premises where your group meets got a health and safety statement? This is a legal requirement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Is there a fire certificate for the premises?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Have you seen it and has it been reviewed on an annual basis?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Are you satisfied that there are insurance arrangements in place for taking groups away?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you to notify the insurer when this happens?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Have you a strategy in place if a child falls ill, is injured or there is an emergency?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Have you the completed parental consent forms with details of how to contact parents or guardians?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Have you details of health problems, emergency contact numbers and addresses for members?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Does your venue have fire extinguishers and are they serviced on a regular basis?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) Have you had a fire drill recently?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j) Are you satisfied with the availability and content of the first-aid box?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k) Is there an accident and incident book on the premises to record, date and sign details of any accident, incident or damage?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l) Do precautions e.g. intercom, exist regarding access to the premises by strangers while a youth/children's group is meeting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m) Have parents/legal guardians a formal note about opening and closing times?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n) Is the ratio between workers and children and the gender balance appropriate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
o) Have you distributed the relevant parts of <i>Ministry's Child Protection Policy</i> to each of your workers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

p) Have you planned, in conjunction with your Ministry Leader, training sessions for your workers?

q) Do you have a budget for equipment and training for your role and that of your workers?

r) Have you acquired from the HSE Child Protection Information and Advice Person, copies of the summary of “Children First” and the “Our Duty To Care” pack and circulated them to your workers?

What immediate steps do you intend to take and what precautions will you request the Leadership Team to put in place within the next month?

1.

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2.

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3.

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## **B.4. Checklist of safe practices**

Use this as a regular checklist to keep your organisation and its members and workers safe.

### **Know the children**

- Have defined criteria for membership of the organisation
- Have a registration system for each child
- Keep a record on each child, including medical details, any special needs and emergency contact telephone numbers

### **Keep records of:**

- Attendance
- Accidents - keep an incident book (accident records should be reviewed regularly and any unusual patterns reported to the Leadership Team)
- Consents given for various activities
- Any complaints or grievances

### **Know the workers**

- Follow thorough recruitment and selection procedures
- Have a work schedule displayed so that everyone knows who is on duty
- Respond appropriately to any allegations or complaints made about workers
- Make sure there are always sufficient workers of either gender to supervise activities

### **Pay attention to health and safety matters making sure that:**

- Any buildings being used are safe and meet required standards
- There is sufficient heating and ventilation
- Toilets, shower areas and washing facilities are up to standard
- Fire precautions are in place
- First-aid facilities and equipment are adequate
- There is access to a phone
- Equipment is checked regularly
- Insurance cover is adequate

### **It is important to ensure that:**

- Children are not left unattended
- Workers know at all times where children are and what they are doing
- Any activity using potentially dangerous equipment has constant adult supervision
- Dangerous behaviour is not allowed

### **If the activities involve staying away from home overnight, attention should also be paid to the following:**

- Safe methods of transport
- Adequate insurance, to cover all aspects of the trip
- Written parental consent
- Any information about the children which may be relevant to staying away overnight, like allergies, medical problems or special needs
- Appropriate and well supervised sleeping arrangements
- Respect for the privacy of children and young people in dormitories, changing rooms, showers and toilets e.g. the use of cameras, mobile phones is prohibited from sleeping/changing areas

### **Ensure discipline and be prepared to cope with challenging behaviour**

Workers need to be trained and prepared for coping with disruptive behaviour.

It is recommended that:

- More than one worker is present when challenging behaviour is being dealt with

- A record is kept in the accident/incident report form, (see Appendix C), describing what happened, the circumstances, who was involved, any injury to a person or to property and how the situation was resolved

**Provide training, including:**

- Induction training
- Particular skills training, to fit in with the nature of the ministry
- Child protection training, to raise awareness and provide information about how to respond to suspicions or incidents of child abuse

**Supervise workers**

- Focus on the work to be done always acknowledging the positive tasks that have already been carried out
- Provide opportunities for discussing concerns and training needs
- Hold a review at the end of the trial period to confirm whether the workers should remain in his/her post or have his/her services terminated
- Have an annual review or 'staff appraisal' to assess general performance and review any changes that have happened or that you need to make

## B.5. Checklist of first-aid box contents

Use this as a checklist. Quantities should reflect the numbers using any premises.

The contents of a first-aid kit should be clearly marked and readily accessible. The kit must be kept in a dry atmosphere and checked and replenished regularly, so that the items you need are always ready to use. It would be wise to have a chart inside the lid of the box which states when the kit was last inspected and by whom.

Check the expiry date of items.

**Adhesive dressings or plasters:** Use for minor wounds. The waterproof types are the best choice for wounds on the hands. A box of assorted with heel and finger plasters included should suffice.

**Sterile eye pads:** Two of these are required.

**Sterile dressings:** Available in a range of sizes. Two small, two medium and two large recommended.

**Roller bandages:** Used to give support to joints, secure dressings, maintain pressure on a dressing or limit swelling. At least two should be available, one medium and one large.

**Triangular bandages:** Used as slings. Also used to keep limbs immobile where breakages have occurred or where it is necessary to move a casualty, e.g. two around ankles, two around knees and two at top of thighs.

**Finger bandages:** Usually available as kit with applicator and bandage together.

A basic kit should also contain:

- Disposable gloves, **these should be put on prior to treatment of any kind**
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Cotton wool
- Cleansing wipes
- Adhesive tape
- Plastic face shield (recommended where artificial respiration is required to be administered)
- Ice Packs
- Notebook and pen (probably the most important thing in the box for insurance reasons)
- Safety pins
- Specify Nitrile gloves (people can be allergic to latex)
- Specify non alcoholic wipes (same reason)
- Foil blanket
- Cotton wool and disinfectant (for a larger building)
- Burn ointments or sprays are not recommended where hospital treatment may be necessary.
- Where possible check a child's medical record, as supplied by parent, before administering first-aid.

Advise parents if a child receives first aid even for minor cuts and scrapes.

Tablets or medicines must not be issued from a first-aid box.

## Appendix C. Sample documents

### C.1. Sample Child Protection Notice for ministry premises

Ministry

---

*The Ministry Leaders are committed to uphold good practice in the ministry with children and young people.*

**Should you have a concern, suspicion or allegation regarding child welfare in the area of ministry to children in this ministry please report directly to The Designated Person, listed below, who may also report directly to an \*appropriate person if the matter is within the Designated Person's remit.**

*\*appropriate person means an appropriate person as defined in the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 - a designated officer of the HSE (normally the duty social worker) or a member of An Garda Síochána.*

*The duty social worker or the child care manager in the HSE Child and Family Services area are designated officers.*

The Designated Person is:

Tel:

---

Deputy Designated Person is:

Tel:

---

The duty social worker or child care manager may be contacted at the local HSE Child and Family Services offices (local health office).

Address

---

---

Tel

---

## C.2. Sample Worker application form

### *Confidential*

Surname

---

Forename(s)

---

Address

---

Date of birth

Tel

Mobile

---

Office

Home

---

How long have you been at this address?

---

If less than two years, previous address

---

Name of ministry/church you attend/have attended

---

Name and address of Pastor/Leader

---

---

---

Previous work experience

---

---

---

Have you previously been involved in voluntary work?

Yes

No

If yes, give details:

---

---

Do you have any hobbies, interests or activities?

---

Any other relevant information?

---

Please provide names and addresses of two people whom we could contact for reference (not relatives).

Name

---

Address

---

Tel

---

Name

---

Address

---

Tel

---

**Declaration from all paid and volunteer workers proposing to work with children and young people. (*adapted from Our Duty to Care, Northern Ireland*)**

Surname

Forename(s)

---

Date of Birth

Place of Birth

---

Any other name previously known as

---

1. I consent to a Garda vetting check if the ministry proposes to appoint me to the role for which I have applied.

2. Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of a caution or a bound-over order?

Yes  No

If yes, please state below the nature and date(s) of the offence(s)

Nature of offence

Date

---

---

---

Signed

Date

---

Date received by Leader/Pastor

---

Interviewed by leaders:

1. Name

---

2. Name

---

3. Name

---

Date of Interview

---

Main reason for recommendation

---

---

**Recommendation:** Approved / Not Approved / Deferred

### C.3. Sample Worker reference form

#### *Confidential*

\_\_\_\_\_ has expressed an interest in becoming a worker with this club/organisation and has given your name as a referee.

This post involves substantial access to children and as an organisation committed to the welfare and protection of children, we are anxious to know if you have any reason at all to be concerned about this applicant being in contact with children or young people?

Yes  No

If you have answered yes, we will contact you in confidence.

If you are happy to complete this reference, all information contained on the form will remain confidential, and will only be shared with the applicant's immediate supervisor, should they be offered a position. We would appreciate you being extremely candid in your evaluation of this person.

How long have you known this person?

\_\_\_\_\_

In what capacity?

\_\_\_\_\_

What attributes does this person have which you would consider makes him/her a suitable worker with children and young people?

\_\_\_\_\_

How would you describe his/her personality?

\_\_\_\_\_

Please rate this person on the following (Please tick)

	Poor	Average	Very Good	Excellent
Responsibility				
Maturity				
Self-Motivation				
Motivation of others				
Energy				
Trustworthiness				

## **C.4. Sample Declaration of Acceptance of Ministry's Child Protection Policy**

Ministry:

---

### **Declaration**

**I hereby declare that I have read (Ministry's Child Protection Policy), I understand the details of the policy and the duty to care that I must adhere to while working with or in contact with children.**

Name (*print*)

---

Signed

Date

---

**NB** *This declaration is to be retained by the Ministry Leader.*

## C.5. Sample Annual appraisal of paid and volunteer worker

### *Confidential*

Name of ministry

---

*(To be completed by each worker annually (Ideally September), discussed with their supervising leader and forwarded to the Ministry Leader)*

We thank you for all you do for this ministry and hope that this exercise may be helpful as you reflect on your work.

The ministry wishes to support you in your work with children. Are there any areas of your work in which we might provide training to assist your skills development?

---

---

---

Have you suggestions for additional resources or other ideas to develop your work?

---

---

---

Has there been any change in your personal circumstances that may affect your capacity to continue in this role?

Yes  No

*(If yes please give details)*

---

---

---

Have you any questions you wish to ask or further comments you wish to make?

---

---

## C.6. Sample Annual Declaration of Background Information

### *Confidential*

#### Annual declaration

*(To be completed by each worker and filed by the ministry leader)*

Have you any prosecutions pending?

Yes  No

*(If yes please give details)*

---

---

In the past year have you been convicted at a court or cautioned by the police for any offence?

Yes  No

If yes please list below details of all convictions, cautions or bound-over orders.

---

---

---

I further declare that nothing has changed in my background which would alter the circumstances in which I work with children.

Signature

Date

---

Name

---

Post / Role

---

Supervising leader

---

FOR MINISTRY LEADER USE ONLY

Date received

---

## C.7. Sample Declaration by worker from abroad

Ministry

---

1. **Whether in your present country of residence or elsewhere**, have you ever been investigated in respect of or charged with or convicted of a criminal offence or have you ever been the subject of a court order binding you over to keep the peace or have you ever been subject to criminal proceedings in which the court has found the charge or charges against you to have been proved but in respect of which the Probation Act (or any foreign equivalent thereof) has been applied, or are you at present subject to any criminal charges or criminal investigation?

Yes  No

*(If yes give details on separate sheet)*

2. Have you ever committed any criminal act or been engaged in any criminal conduct for which you have not been prosecuted, whether in your present country of residence or elsewhere?

Yes  No

*(If yes give details on separate sheet)*

3. Has any court in your present or any other jurisdiction ever found you liable for a civil offence?

Yes  No

*(If yes give details on separate sheet)*

4. Have you been placed on a sex offenders' register in your present or any other jurisdiction?

Yes  No

*(If yes give details on separate sheet)*

***I the undersigned, who have applied to work as:***

---

*\*\*write in this space the actual office/position for which you are applying*

***do hereby certify and warrant that in completing this form and in furnishing all the information contained herein or attached hereto, I am doing so in good faith and I further certify and warrant that all such information is true and accurate and constitutes a full disclosure of all material facts known to me.***

Signed

---

Full name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

---

Date

---

When completed and signed, return this form to:

---

## C.8. Sample Children’s Membership Registration form

### Membership Registration Form

Organisation

---

Meeting on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_

---

Name

---

Address

---

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_

---

Mother’s name \_\_\_\_\_ Father’s name \_\_\_\_\_

---

Addresses - if different

---

Contact numbers \_\_\_\_\_ Emergency contact number/s \_\_\_\_\_

---

I give permission to child named above to become a member of [*name of club/organisation*] \_\_\_\_\_ meeting on the day and times specified above and to participate in all the activities of the organisation, and know of no medical reason why he/she should not do so (see below). It is my understanding that my specific consent will be sought for any additional activity outside the above days and times and venue.

Please indicate below if the above child suffers from any medical condition/allergies (specifying any medication he/she may be taking) and/or has any special needs or dietary requirements about which the leaders of [*name of club/organisation*] \_\_\_\_\_ should be informed.

Parent/guardian signature

Date

---

I give permission for child named above to receive first aid if necessary.

I give permission for child named above to receive medical assistance from a medical professional in an emergency. I understand that I will be contacted as soon as possible regarding this.

Parent/guardian signature

Date

---

**Consent must be provided by the person with parental responsibility.**

## C.9. Sample Activity consent form

Please complete this form and return it to \_\_\_\_\_

(Ministry's name)

**A signed consent form is a condition of participation in this activity for those under the age of 18 years.**

Child's name

---

Age

Date of Birth

---

GP name and telephone

---

Emergency contacts (2 if possible)

---

I am willing for (*child's name*) \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in (*activity*) \_\_\_\_\_ and confirm that he/she is willing to participate as fully as possible.

Yes  No

Furthermore, I permit (*Child's name*) \_\_\_\_\_ to travel on transport that has been designated as official for the purpose of this event.  
(e.g. minibus/coach/private vehicle)

Please tick one of the following

Yes  No

(*Child's name*) \_\_\_\_\_ has the following medical condition(s) and requires the following medication and/or special diet:

---

I confirm that I have given my consent for my son/daughter to attend [*club & event title*] \_\_\_\_\_ to be held on [*date*] \_\_\_\_\_.

I give permission for child named above to receive first aid if necessary.

I give permission for child named above to receive medical assistance from a medical professional in an emergency.

I understand that I will be contacted as soon as possible regarding this.

Parent/guardian signature

Date

---

**Consent must be provided by the person with parental responsibility.**

### C.10. Sample Accident/incident report form

Name of child

---

Date of birth

---

Address

---

Telephone

---

Parent/guardian name

---

Event/meeting and location

---

Date of event/meeting

---

Details of accident/incident (please state in your own words what happened including details and status of those involved)

---

---

---

Names of witnesses

---

Action taken (details of first-aid, medical or police involvement)

---

---

Signed

Date

---

Position

---

Counter-signed Date

---

**Signature of parent (if subject of report is a child)**

---

*A copy of the completed form should be provided to the ministry leader.*

## C.11. Sample Ministry Internal Child Protection Reporting Form

To Designated Person

---

### 1. Details of Child

Name	Male	Female
------	------	--------

---

Address

---

Age	Date of birth
-----	---------------

---

(a) Name of Parents/Guardians

---

---

(b) Care and custody arrangements regarding child, if known

---

---

**Note: A separate report form must be completed in respect of each child being reported.**

**2. All known details of concern(s), allegation(s) or incident(s) dates, times, who was present, alleged abuser(s), description of any observed injuries, parent's view(s), child's view(s), if known**

---

---

---

---

---

---

### 3. Details of person reporting concerns

*(Please see guidance notes on limitations of confidentiality below)*

Name	Occupation
------	------------

---

Address

---

**4. Details of person completing form**

Name

Date

---

Occupation

Signed

---

Telephone

---

Nature of extent of contact with child/family

---

**Guidance notes:**

AGI ministries and the HSE aim to work in partnership with parents. If you are making this report in confidence, you should note that we cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality as:

- a court could order that information be disclosed
- under the *Freedom of Information Act 1997* the Freedom of Information Commissioner may order that information be disclosed.

You should also note that, in making a ‘bona fide’ report, you are protected under the *Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998*.

## **C.12. Sample Statement for Promoting Child Protection Policy**

*Any ministry or national organisation can commit to the following and use it as a notice or print it in a magazine or handbook.*

### **We will endeavour to safeguard children by**

- following carefully the procedures laid down for recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training
- implementing a child protection policy through a code of behaviour for staff and volunteers
- sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers
- ensuring adherence to safety procedures
- reporting concerns to the appropriate statutory authority

### **We will also safeguard our workers by**

- the provision of effective training
- the provision of appropriate resources
- the safeguarding of those who work with children from the consequences of unfounded allegations

**This ministry accepts and recognises its responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues that cause children harm, and to establish and maintain a safe environment for them. As a ministry we are committed to reviewing our policy, procedures and practice at regular intervals, at least every three years.**

### **C.13. Sample form of approval for independent organizations wishing to use ministry premises**

Name of ministry

---

Name of independent organisation

---

Name of person in charge of organisation

Tel

---

Time and place of organisation's meeting

---

***Conditions***

1. The organisation confirms that it has adopted and implements a child protection policy which accords with the standard of *Children First and Child Protection for the Youth Work Sector* (RI). A copy of the organisation's guidelines is now produced.
  
2. The ministry shall supply to the organisation leader the names and contact details of the ministry officials responsible for the premises and for child protection. The organisation shall supply annually (September) to the Designated Person the names and contact details of all leaders immediately following appointment. The organisation shall confirm that new appointees have been Garda Vetted where possible; that no information was received which debarred their appointment and that they have been found suitable to work with children and young people.
  
3. The organisation shall ensure that leaders/helpers in the organisation shall receive appropriate child protection training and are aware of the reporting procedures.
  
4. If a report of a child protection concern is made by the organisation through its procedures, the ministry Designated Person should be informed in confidence that a report has been made.
  
5. The organisation confirms that adequate insurance cover is in place for its activities, or written verification that the insurance policy is accepted by the ministry at senior level.

The organisation shall seek to ensure that activities shall be carried out safely. Any safety concerns regarding the premises shall be notified by the organisation leader to the appropriate person within the ministry as soon as possible.

**We confirm that the ministry and the organisation agree to the above conditions.**

Signed (*Organisation Leader*)

---

Date

*PLEASE TICK AS APPLICABLE:*

The ministry grants the above organisation use of the premises.

*OR*

The ministry grants the above organisation use of the premises in accordance with the attached agreement.

Signed

Date

---

*(Senior Leader)*

## **C.14. Sample Worker/Volunteer Interview questions**

Beware of ‘closed’ questions that make it possible to answer either ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

Ask questions like “What do you think about?/What are your views on...?”

Put the candidate at ease - ask first about his/her interests or hobbies.

Discuss the candidate’s career objectives and why he/she applied for this particular post.

Ensure the questions relate directly to the needs of the job.

If any (criminal) offences were declared by the candidate the interview should provide an opportunity for an open and measured discussion.

### **Ideas for questions to ask**

You will probably need to choose only one question from each category. The question you choose will depend on the requirements of the job.

#### ***1. Relating to experience, qualifications, training***

What have been your roles and responsibilities in working with children?

Why are you volunteering for this role?

What skills/qualities would you bring to the role?

What is your understanding of the importance of child protection for volunteers / workers?

#### ***2. Relating to children’s learning and development***

How would you plan to provide an appropriate programme?

How do you think the group can meet the needs of the children?

What type of activities do you think the group should offer the children?

#### ***3. Relating to attitudes***

How would you settle new children into the group?

What are your views on establishing and maintaining rules and codes of behaviour in the group?

What would you do if you found a child being bullied and treated unfairly by other children?

How would you deal with a disruptive child?

What are your views on disciplining children?

***4. Relating to working with parents***

How do you see the role of the parent in the group?

How do you think parents can help you in working with children?

How would you encourage parents to become involved in the group?

***5. Relating to working in a team***

What do you see as your role in the team?

What skills and qualities can you bring to the team?

How do you feel about working as part of a team?

What is your previous experience of working in a team?

How do you feel about working in a Christian environment?

***6. Relating to ongoing personal development***

How do you intend to keep up to date with any technical information needed for the job?

What are your feelings about undertaking training?

Is there any area in which you would like further training/development?

What difficulties have you had in attending training in the past?

What training would you need to undertake this role?

*Source: Church of Scotland Handbook for Child Protection*

### **C.15. Sample consent form for the use of photographs or video**

(Ministry) recognises the need to ensure the welfare and safety of all young people.

In accordance with our child protection policy we will not permit photographs, video or other images of young people to be taken without the consent of the parents/guardians and children.

(Ministry) will follow the guidance for the use of photographs, a copy of which is available from (name).

(Ministry) 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 (Ministry) immediately.

I **(parent/guardian)** consent to (Ministry) photographing or videoing **(name of child)**  
Signed

---

Date

---

I **(insert name of child)** consent to (Ministry) photographing or videoing my involvement in **(activity)**

Signed

---

Date

---

## **C.16. Sample Code of Behaviour**

In every aspect of life, organisations function best where there are clear guidelines and structures. The following suggested code of behaviour for children and young people recognises this basic fact. The code will require a structure that recognises the particular characteristics of individual groups. It is recommended that at the commencement of the ministry's year a code of behaviour is drawn up with the members' participation. While it is recognised that discipline may seem at times to be restrictive to young people it is best enforced with their agreement. Such a code of conduct will help to create a safe, secure environment and an atmosphere where children will feel that they can confide in the workers.

### **A sample group/club code of behaviour**

As members of this group/club we will:

1. respect the role (authority) of the group/club leaders/workers
2. respect the views and feelings of other members of the group/club
3. respect the right of every group/club member to express his/her view/opinion
4. respect the right of every group/club member to be heard/listened to
5. respect both workers' and other group/club members' personal privacy and property
6. show due care and responsibility for equipment and property
7. deem unacceptable the following activities/behaviour:
  - (i) consumption of alcohol and smoking within the confines of the group/club building or during group/club activities
  - (ii) physical abuse of other group/club members and/or leaders/workers
  - (iii) verbal abuse including 'put downs' of other group/club members and leaders/workers
  - (iv) willful destruction or damage to property or equipment
  - (v) the misuse of any substance or stimulant.

## **C.17.Sample Anti-Bullying Code**

### ANTI-BULLYING CODE (Personal Safety Statement)

- We provide a place where every member can feel secure
- We provide a place where it is known that bullying is not acceptable behaviour
- We provide a place where name calling is not tolerated
- We provide a place where no one suffers abuse of any nature
- We provide a place where no one is victimised
- We provide a place where each member is supported and listened to
- We provide a place where it is each member's responsibility to ensure that all are treated equal
- We provide a place where solutions to problems are the concern of all

To personalise this code for the different sections/age groups replace 'we provide' and adapt the language/terminology to suit.

## Appendix D. AGI Child Protection Evaluation Form

### A. Details

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

Church/Ministry of \_\_\_\_\_

#### *Pastor/Leader:*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Tel Home \_\_\_\_\_ Office \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile \_\_\_\_\_

Fax \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

T  
raining Attended

Approximate Date and Venue

### Designated Person Details

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Tel Home \_\_\_\_\_

Tel Office \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile \_\_\_\_\_

Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Attended Panel Training:    Yes    No

Approximate Date and Venue

## Deputy Designated Person Details

Name

---

Address

---

Tel Home

---

Tel Office

---

Mobile

---

Fax

---

Email

---

Attended Panel Training:      Yes    No

Approximate Date and Venue

---

### ***Present at evaluation*** (BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE)

<b>Ministry Leaders etc.</b>	
<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>

## **Raising awareness of AGI Child Protection Guidelines in the ministry**

See *AGI Child Protection Guidelines* – Appendix C

1. How is the ministry being informed about the implementation of *Ministry's Child Protection Policy*? (please tick)

Ministry newsletter       How often? \_\_\_\_\_

Letter to parents       How often? \_\_\_\_\_

Sermon/talks       How often? \_\_\_\_\_

Other ways - please state:

---

2. Have the Leadership Team and Designated Person received any *AGI Child Protection Guidelines* updates?

Yes       No

3. Did any action need to be taken arising from the updates?

---

4. How are young people being made aware of the role of Designated Person?

---

5. How are all stakeholders being made aware of the role of Designated Person?

---

6. Have all workers:

- (a) received a copy of the relevant sections of *Ministry's Child Protection Policy*? Yes  No
- (b) received training? Yes  No

Who carried out the training?

---

(e.g. Designated Person, person appointed by the Designated Person)

7. Have all workers received a copy of the *AGI Child*

*Protection Guidelines* summary card? Yes  No

8. What plans has the Leadership Team and Designated Person for the future to keep the ideas and requirements of *Ministry's Child Protection Policy*:

(a) in the consciousness of the ministry?

---

(b) in the ongoing training of workers?

---

## B. Record Keeping

See *AGI Child Protection Guidelines – Appendix B*

1. Is a filing system of records of workers with children/young people in place? Yes  No

2. Is a record kept of the children and workers who attend the organisations? Yes  No

3. Are attendance registers, consent forms and completed accident and incident books and documents related to recruitment kept securely? Yes  No

4. Have all workers in a post at present signed a declaration (see Appendix C) regarding receipt of a copy of *Ministry's Child Protection Policy* and acknowledging a duty of care to the children attending their group?

Yes  No

5. Are these records kept securely?

Yes  No

6. Do all relevant Ministry Leaders have ready access to relevant documentation?

Yes  No

**NB: All such records must be kept in line with Data Protection Act 1988.**

## C. New appointments

1. In any new appointments, paid and voluntary:

- |  |     |                          |    |                          |
|--|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| (a) was there a job description?                                     | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (b) were application forms used?                                     | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (c) were the applicants interviewed?                                 | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (d) were references requested for each applicant?                    | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (e) was at least one reference checked by follow-up telephone calls? | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (f) was any training offered and given to successful applicants?     | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (g) if yes, by whom?   |     |                          |    |                          |

- 
- |   |     |                          |    |                          |
|---|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| (h) was each person given copies of sections 5-8 of <i>Ministry's Child Protection Policy</i> ? | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (i) was a written acknowledgement of its receipt received and filed?                            | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (j) was a recognised probationary period agreed with the appointee?                             | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (k) was Garda Vetting of applicants undertaken?   | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2. Has the Leadership Team encountered any

difficulty in the recruitment area	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
------------------------------------	-----	--------------------------	----	--------------------------

If yes, please indicate below:

---



---

## D. General welfare/safety

1. Is there a health and safety statement in place for the premises used by the children and young people? Yes  No

2. Was it reviewed recently? Yes  No

3. Who undertook the review?

---

4. Has an evacuation procedure been introduced? Yes  No

Are there notices to make people aware of the procedure? Yes  No

Are assembly point(s) marked? Yes  No

5. Has a fire drill been held in the last year? Yes  No

6. Is there a properly stocked first-aid kit on the premises? Yes  No

If yes, who maintains it?

---

8. Is an accident report system in place? Yes  No

Where is the accident/incident book kept?

---

9. Is there a procedure for advising the Leadership Team of recommendations from the workers? Yes  No

## E. Insurance

**NB** The ministry should confirm that the ministry's insurer provides cover in the event of a civil claim and/or criminal charge against the ministry, Leadership Team or any other party covered by the ministry insurances being taken as a result of an allegation of child abuse or other misconduct against someone involved in ministry activities.

1. Has your ministry confirmed that the ministry insurance has been extended to provide cover relating to child protection issues?

Yes  No

2. Who is the ministry insurer?

---

3. If the answer to question 1 above is no, how will you be covered if a case is taken against the ministry?

---

4. Is there a formal agreement with any outside group using ministry premises and having children in attendance?  
See Section 10

Yes  No

## F. Implementing procedures

1. Have anyone been contacted by adults or young people in connection with any form of abuse linked to children in this ministry?

Yes  No

2. a) If yes, has everything been recorded in writing and filed?

Yes  No

b) Have the statutory authorities been informed?

Yes  No

c) Has the Pastor/Leader been informed?

Yes  No

## G. Training requirements

1. Does the ministry need additional leaders to be trained? Yes  No

If yes, please indicate approximate numbers

---

2. Is there an area in which present leaders feel they need further training? Yes  No

If so, please indicate

---

3. Is there an annual review of training needs for leaders? Yes  No

4. What ongoing training for leaders is being provided by the ministry?

---

## H. Specific suggestions from the ministry to AGI

---

---

---

---

Please photocopy or complete in writing a signed second copy of this evaluation form and file it with your ministry records as it may be included in a review.

Ministry Leader's signature

---

Date

---

## **Appendix E. Extracts from relevant legislation**

**The following references are not the precise or complete wording of the legislation.**

### **The Protections for persons reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 (The 1998 Act)**

The above Act advises that a person shall not be liable in damages who **in good faith and acting reasonably** reports in writing or otherwise to an appropriate person\* an opinion that:

(a) a child has been or is being assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused

or

(b) a child's health, development or welfare has been or is being avoidably impaired or neglected.

A person who reports **in bad faith**, knowing that statement to be false, shall be subject to criminal sanction being a fine or imprisonment or both.

*\*appropriate person means an appropriate person as defined in the 1998 Act - a designated officer of a health board\* (normally the social worker on duty or the child care manager) or a member of An Garda Síochána.*

\* The Health Services Executive (HSE) has now replaced the health boards

### **Sex Offenders Act 2001**

The centrepiece of the Act is the introduction of a sex offender register. It obliges convicted sex offenders to notify An Garda Síochána of their names and addresses at the time of conviction or release from custody, as appropriate, and any subsequent changes to those details. This system applies even when sex offenders travel abroad and it similarly applies to persons convicted of sex offences in other jurisdictions when they enter this country. It is an offence for a sex offender to seek or accept work or a voluntary position that would give that person unsupervised access to a child or children or to a mentally impaired person or persons, without informing the would-be employer of the fact of the conviction. Under this new procedure the parent or guardian of a child is regarded as an employer when offering someone a job to, for example, tutor or train his/her child in some sporting or other activity.

### **Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006**

The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006 keeps the age of sexual consent at 17 years, with stricter punishments for those who engage, or attempt to engage, in sexual acts with a child under the age of 15 years.

Any person who engages in a sexual act with a child who is under the age of 15 years shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for life or a lesser term of imprisonment.

Any person who engages in a sexual act with a child who is under the age of 17 years shall be guilty of an offence and shall, subject to *subsection (3)*, be liable on conviction on indictment -

(a) to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years, or

(b) if he or she is a **person in authority**, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years.

[A worker or volunteer would constitute a “person in authority”.]

Any person who attempts to engage in a sexual act with a child who is under the age of 15 years shall be guilty of an offence. A female child under the age of 17 years shall not be guilty of an offence under this Act by reason only of her engaging in an act of sexual intercourse.

### **Criminal Justice Act, 2006**

This Act has introduced a crime of reckless endangerment punishable by imprisonment for up to ten years where a person having authority or control over a child, or an abuser who fails to take reasonable steps to protect a child from the risk of serious harm or sexual abuse, may be guilty of an offence punishable by fine or imprisonment. See section 176 of the Act.

### **Garda Vetting**

The Garda Central Vetting Unit will undertake a check of convictions and current investigations in respect of an individual who is proposed for appointment as a worker or volunteer with access to children. The vetting process is accessed through the AGI Vetting Contact and details of how to arrange a vetting request are in **3.1**

No appointee should take up duty until an acceptable request has been received.

## **Appendix F.      Contacts**

### **HSE Child Protection and Welfare Services**

Carlow, St. Dymphna’s Hospital, Athy Road. Tel: 059 913 6587  
Cavan, Drumalee Cross. Tel: 049 437 7305/306

Clare, River House, Gort Road, Ennis. Tel: 065 686 3907

Cork, North Goulds Hill Hse, Mallow. Tel: 022 54100

Cork, North Lee Social Work Department, Blackpool. Tel: 021 492 7000

Cork, South Lee, St. Finbarr’s Hospital. Tel: 021 492 3001

Cork, West Cork, Coolnagarrane, Skibbereen. Tel: 028 40447

Donegal East, Links Business Centre, Buncrana. Tel: 074 932 0420

Donegal West, Killybegs Road, Donegal Town. Tel: 074 972 3540

Donegal, Pearse Road, Letterkenny. Tel: 074 912 3672/3770

Dublin North Central, 22 Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1. Tel: 01 855 6871

Dublin North West, Rathdown Road. Tel: 01 882 5000

Dublin North West, Wellmount Park, Finglas. Tel: 856 7704

Dublin North, Cromcastle Road, Coolock. Tel: 01 816 4200/44

Dublin South City, Carnegie Ctr, 21 Lord Edward St. Tel: 01 648 6555

Dublin South East, Vergemount Hall, Clonskeagh. Tel: 01 268 0320

Dublin South West, Millbrook Lawn. Tel: 01 452 0666

Dublin West, Cherry Orchard Hospital, Ballyfermot. Tel: 01 620 6387

Dun Laoghaire, 102 Patrick Street. Tel: 01 236 5120

Dun Laoghaire, Tivoli Road. Tel: 01 284 3579

Galway City, 25 Newcastle Road, Galway. Tel: 091 546366/370/325369

Galway, Brackernagh, Ballinasloe. Tel: 090 964 6200

Galway, Health Centre, Loughrea. Tel: 091 847 820

Galway, Health Centre, Oughterard. Tel: 091 552 200

Galway, Health Centre, Vicar Street, Tuam. Tel: 093 24492

Kerry, 28 Moyderwell, Tralee. Tel: 066 718 4500

Kerry, St. Margaret's Road, Killarney. Tel: 064 36030

Kildare West Wicklow, Fairgreen Street, Naas. Tel: 045 882 400

Kilkenny, 11 Patrick Street, Kilkenny. Tel: 056 778 4782

Laois, Child and Family Centre, Portlaoise. Tel: 057 869 2567

Leitrim, Leitrim Road, Carrick-on-Shannon. Tel: 071 965 0324

Limerick, Ballynanty Health Centre. Tel: 061 457 100

Limerick, Kilmallock Health Centre. Tel: 063 98192

Limerick, Newcastle West Health Centre. Tel: 069 66653

Limerick, Roxtown Health Centre. Tel: 061 48301

Limerick, South Hill Health Centre. Tel: 061 209 985

Limerick, St. Camillus Hospital. Tel: 061 483 711/996

Longford, Tivoli House, Dublin Road. Tel: 043 50584

Louth, Wilton House, Stapleton Place, Dundalk. Tel: 042 939 2200

Mayo, Aras Attracta, Swinford. Tel: 094 905 0133

Mayo, Ballina Health Centre, Mercy Road, Ballina. Tel: 096 21511

Mayo, Mountain View, Castlebar. Tel: 094 904 2283

Meath, 25 Bruce Hill, Navan. Tel: 046 903 0616

Meath, Commons Road, Navan. Tel: 046 907 3178

Meath, Dunshaughlin Health Care Unit. Tel: 01 802 4102

Meath, Enterprise Centre, Navan. Tel: 046 909 7817

Monaghan, Rooskey. Tel: 047 30426 or 30427

Offaly, O'Carroll Street, Tullamore. Tel: 057 932 2488

Roscommon, Abbey Street, Roscommon. Tel: 090 663 7014

Roscommon, Health Centre, Boyle. Tel: 071 966 2087

Roscommon, Knockroe, Castlerea. Tel: 090 663 7843

Roscommon, Lanesboro Road, Roscommon. Tel: 090 663 7528

Sligo, Markievicz House, Barrack Street, Sligo. Tel: 071 915 5133

Sligo, Teach Laighne, Humbert Street, Tubbercurry. Tel: 071 912 0062

Tipperary North, Annbrook, Nenagh. Tel: 067 41934

Tipperary North, Parnell Street, Thurles. Tel: 0504 23211

Tipperary South, Western Road, Clonmel. Tel: 052 77303

Waterford, Cork Road, Waterford. Tel: 051 842 827

Waterford, St. Joseph's Hospital, Dungarvan. Tel: 058 20918/20/21

Westmeath, Athlone Health Centre, Coosan Road. Tel: 09064 83106

Westmeath, St. Loman's, Mullingar. Tel: 044 93 84450

Wexford, Ely House, Ferrybank. Tel: 053 912 3522 Ext. 201

Wexford, Gorey Health Centre, Gorey. Tel: 053 943 0100

Wexford, Hospital Grounds, New Ross. Tel: 051 421 445

Wexford, Millpark Road, Enniscorthy. Tel: 053 923 3465

Wicklow, Delgany Health Centre, Delgany. Tel: 01 287 1482

Wicklow, Seafront, Wicklow Town. Tel: 0404 68400

Wicklow, The Civic Centre, Bray. Tel: 01 274 4100/4180

Wicklow, West Wicklow, Fairgreen Street, Naas. Tel: 045 882 400

## Helpful organizations

**HSE infoline** Provides information on all HSE services, including services for children and families. Lo-call: 1850 24 1850 [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

**Parentline** A national confidential helpline for parents, guardians and carers in need of support. Lo-call: 1890 927 277 [www.parentline.ie](http://www.parentline.ie)

**Childline** Gives support to young people through a freephone 24 hour listening service and through its website. Children can call Childline for a chat or to talk about problems, and all calls are free of charge and confidential. Freephone: 1800 666 666 [www.childline.ie](http://www.childline.ie)

**ISPCC** The Irish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children provides the Childline service, which children can call with any worries and concerns. ISPCC also provides a range of services to support parents. Tel: 01 676 7960 [www.ispcc.ie](http://www.ispcc.ie)

**Barnardos** Provides services to respond to the needs of children and families, and also works to develop guidelines and service provision. Callsave: 1850 222 300 [www.barnardos.ie](http://www.barnardos.ie)

**HSE National Counselling Service** A professional, confidential counselling and psychotherapy service available free of charge for adults who experienced abuse as children. For more information or to make an appointment contact: Tel: 1800 235 234 [www.hse-ncs.ie](http://www.hse-ncs.ie)

### Evening Telephone Counselling Service and Helpline

Wed and Thurs 6pm-10pm and Fri, Sat, Sun, 8pm-12 midnight. Freephone: 1800 235 235

**Citizens Information Service** For information about all public services in Ireland.

Lo-call: 1890 777 121 [www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie)

**Support and Services for One-Parent Families**

Treoir, Lo-call: 1890 252 084 [www.treoir.ie](http://www.treoir.ie)

**One Family.** Lo-call: 1890 66 22 12 [www.oneparent.ie](http://www.oneparent.ie)

**Samaritans** Available 24 hours a day to provide confidential emotional support for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which may lead to suicide.

Call save: 1850 60 90 90 [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)