

NON-SUBSCRIBING PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND

Guidelines

for the Protection Of

Children and Vulnerable Adults

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Introduction

1.1 Purpose

These Guidelines are intended to provide some guidance about what policies and procedures are needed to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are protected from all harm. More detailed procedures consistent with these Guidelines need to be drawn up by the leaders of the organisations and approved by the Congregational Session and/or Committee. The Appendices are intended to provide assistance in this task.

1.2 Audience

These Guidelines are aimed primarily at the leaders of organisations that care for children, young people and vulnerable adults throughout the denomination. However they are applicable to all members of congregations who are jointly responsible for the care and protection of our children. Parents, who are not members of a congregation, should also be made aware of the content of these Guidelines.

1.3 Scope

These Guidelines are not meant to be taken as comprehensive and exhaustive. They should be read in conjunction with the other resources referred to at [page 16](#). The Appendices are provided as further advice on how the Guidelines can be put into operation.

1.4 Training

It is recommended that these Guidelines form part of a training course so that all aspects of Child Protection can be covered and questions answered.

Policies

2.1 Mission Statement

The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church in Ireland acknowledges its duty under God to care for its children and to promote their full development while protecting them from harm.

2.2 Protecting Children

There is a moral obligation on anyone accepting responsibility for children and young people to provide adequate care or pass on information concerning suspected or actual abuse of a child. Any failure to do so may leave them legally liable. In all policies and procedures the principle must be that **“the welfare of children is of paramount importance.”**

2.3 Protecting Workers

The primary aim of the following policies and procedures is to protect children and vulnerable adults. However properly constructed and implemented policies and procedures also serve to prevent anyone who works with children to be in a position to abuse them. They can also be used to avoid improper claims of abuse being issued against workers. Therefore it is vital for any organisation to develop policies and procedures to protect itself and its workers as well as the children under its care.

2.4 Adhering to the Law

The Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults is a legal requirement on everyone under the Law in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church in Ireland, following its scriptural foundations, seeks to obey the civil law in all aspects and requires its members to follow the dictates of the following Orders and Laws (as well as other relevant legislation) in spirit as well as in letter:

- The Children (NI) Order 1995;
- The Sex Offenders Act (UK) 1997;
- The Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order 2003;
- The Child Care (ROI) Act 1991;
- The Protection of Persons Reporting Child Abuse (ROI) Act 1998;
- The Children’s Act (ROI) 2001.

2.5 Insurance Requirements

In order to maintain the insurance cover needed by all our congregations it is required by most Insurance Companies that congregations fulfil both the legal requirements and also the best practice in the care and protection of children. Information and advice can be obtained from the congregation’s Insurance Company.

2.6 Best Practice

Work with children is a very specialised activity that requires knowledge and commitment. There are many good training courses and books to provide leaders with the necessary skills to work with children. The information and advice in these Guidelines and in the Appendices, are intended to give guidance on the best practice. However, there is no substitute for training and experience in implementing this advice.

Definitions

3.1 Children

The Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order 2003 (POCVA) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child define children as anyone under the age of 18.

3.2 Vulnerable Adults

In POCVA vulnerable adults are defined as anyone over the age of 18 who is in care. However for the purposes of these Guidelines a vulnerable adult is reckoned to be a person who is unable to operate normal adult responsibilities and duties. In these Guidelines, where the term “children” appears it should be taken to include, where appropriate, vulnerable adults as well.

3.3 Children and Youth Workers

Children and Youth Workers, who require vetting under the provisions of the POCVA (NI) Order, are defined as:

1. Anyone who has access to children on a regular basis for whatever purpose.
2. Anyone who fits into one of the following categories:
 - (a) paid youth workers;
 - (b) volunteer leaders of organisations, who are unpaid but carry a degree of responsibility for organising the activities of an organisation;
 - (c) volunteer helpers, who give support but carry no responsibility for the organisation.

Recruitment

4.1 Principles

In order to prevent persons with a propensity for the abuse of children from gaining access to children it is important to have a well-ordered recruitment procedure. The following practices are considered necessary to avoid giving access to children to persons with convictions, police cautions or suspicions of child abuse against them. However these practices are no replacement for good codes of behaviour for leaders and children connected with organisations.

This section is expanded into a step by step best practice process in Appendix 2.

4.2 Application Forms

The properly approved application form (See Appendix 3) should be filled in by everyone seeking to work with children, young people or vulnerable adults. An application form provided for and completed by the applicant should include declarations as to convictions, police cautions or suspicions of child abuse. It should also include a statement of willingness to undergo an criminal record check. The identity of applicants should be verified through appropriate ID as required by Access NI or National Vetting Bureau.

4.3 References

When considered appropriate, two references should be obtained from people who are not family members. These references should be taken up before the applicant is permitted substantial contact with children or vulnerable adults.

4.4 Interviews

It is recommended that all applicants for any post, paid or volunteer, be interviewed by at least two people. Interviews should be conducted according to a set of criteria drawn up before the interviews.

4.5 Vetting Procedures

All successful applicants will be required to complete a criminal record check.

Applications for such checks in Northern Ireland must be processed through the NSPCI Safeguarding Officer (safeguarding.nspci@gmail.com). An enhanced check will be required for all posts which require someone to teach, train, instruct, care for or supervise children on a regular basis.

The Safeguarding Officer will provide the successful with details on the AccessNI procedure. They will be required to provide proof of identity as part of this process.

Once the check is complete the disclosure certificate will be sent directly to the applicant. This certificate should be shown to those who are carrying out the recruitment in the organisation and a copy of the certificate number should be sent to the Safeguarding Officer.

Copies of any documents used in the AccessNI procedure, including any copies of ID documents, will be retained until your disclosure certificate is produced and the application procedure has been completed. These copies will be stored in an appropriate manner and

will not be made available to anyone or distributed. Within 2 months of the completion of the application process they will be destroyed.

Criminal Record Checks in Ireland should be done through the National Vetting Bureau. For more information on this process you should speak to the Congregational Safeguarding Officer.

4.6 Training in Child Protection and Youth Work

Congregations should make use of training programmes which help leaders/helpers to become aware of what constitutes abuse, how to avoid it, and the referral procedure in suspected cases of abuse. Where appropriate, all leaders/helpers should also undertake suitable training in children or youth work.

4.7 Smaller Congregations

Smaller congregations or those dealing with volunteers or helpers may find a streamlined recruitment process to be more suitable. While a formal recruitment process is not necessary it is imperative that all new applicants must be vetted. Further information on Recruitment is contained within Appendix 2.

4.8 Employment of ex-offenders

All applicants must be provided with a copy of the policy set out in Appendix 4. A criminal conviction record will not in itself prevent an applicant from taking up a post, this will depend on the post, and the nature and type of offence.

Declarations

5.1 Initial statements

Applicants who have been appointed after April 2005 in Northern Ireland **must** be vetted by the relevant body. Once this is done Annual Declaration is not necessary but the background check should be renewed every 3 years.

5.2 Annual declarations

Annual declarations will no longer be accepted and relevant volunteer and employees will be required to complete a criminal record check. Applications for such checks must be processed through the NSPCI Safeguarding Officer in Northern Ireland. An enhanced check will be required for all posts which require someone to teach, train, instruct, care for or supervise children on a regular basis.

Contact the Safeguarding Officer safeguarding.nspci@gmail.com for details on the AccessNI procedure.

Codes of Practice for Organisations

6.1 Principles

In order to support and help children and their families, the organisation and its leaders/helpers need a set of practices which protects both children and the organisation.

A good team procedure and a code of behaviour for both leaders/helpers and members provides a means of preventing misuse of discipline, avoids corporal punishment, counteracts bullying or scapegoating and lessens potential for abuse by adults or young people.

6.2 Guidelines and Codes of Practice

It is essential that the Session and/or Committee of each congregation and its organisations should formally accept these Child Protection Guidelines and ensure they have appropriate Codes of Practice in operation.

6.3 Leader-in Charge

Every organisation that works with children should have a properly appointed and trained leader-in-charge. This person is responsible for the smooth running of the organisation according to set Codes of Practice. He/she must be in control of all the planning, preparation, management and administration of the organisation. The Leader-in-charge must be fully aware of the Child Protection procedures in operation within the congregation. Further information on Leadership is contained in [Appendix 5](#).

6.4 Membership Lists

Each organisation in a congregation that works with children or vulnerable adults is required to maintain a complete and up-to-date list of the leaders and members of the organisation. This should contain name, address, parent or guardian and contact number in case of emergency. Because these details are kept on file, either on computer or hard copy, the congregation should be registered with the Data Protection Agency.

6.5 Ratios of leaders to children

Recognising the legal requirements for the ratio of children/young people to leaders during youth activities, all leaders are required to abide, where possible, by the stated supervision ratios quoted in [Appendix 5](#).

6.6 Appropriate Programmes

To ensure the safety of children it is vital that activities be chosen that are suitable to the age and ability of the children or vulnerable adults.

Care should be taken to ensure that, as far as possible, no member is excluded from activities because of disability or other factors. When using special equipment leaders must ensure there is adequate supervision by trained helpers. If technology is used or permitted in an organisation then the cautions suggested in Appendix 6 should be observed.

6.7 Health and Safety Practices

It is vital for the protection of children from physical harm that congregational committees and leaders of organisations should ensure that premises and practices conform to standard Health and Safety criteria. A Review of Premises, Fire Precautions and First Aid Equipment should be carried out on a regular basis to meet Insurance standards. More information on

Health and Safety is contained in [Appendix 7](#).

6.8 Relationships with Children

Prevention of abuse depends largely on good observation and knowledge of the child as an individual. Leaders and volunteers should know their children well enough to be able to tell if the child's attitudes or behaviour changes or s/he shows any of the symptoms of abuse described in [Appendix 1](#).

6.9 Criteria for Contact with Children

All workers with children must be aware of the dangers of inappropriate physical or verbal contact with children. As far as possible no physical contact should be initiated with children or vulnerable adults. For further advice see [Appendix 8](#).

6.10 Code of Behaviour for Children

All organisations must make it clear to the children, who form its membership, and to their parents what is expected of the children in terms of behaviour. Where such behaviour falls short of the standards it must be corrected using an agreed set of sanctions. Physical punishment should never be used as a sanction. [Appendix 10](#) sets out an example of a Code of Behaviour for children.

6.11 Anti-Bullying Measures

It is important to recognise that bullying is a very common form of abuse, both physical and emotional and causes great distress. Bullying can leave children with feelings of worthlessness and self-hatred; they can feel lonely and isolated. At its worst bullying can result in a child attempting suicide. All organisations should develop an anti-bullying policy and ensure that staff and volunteers are aware of it and that it is included in training. More advice is included in [Appendix 10](#).

Disclosure of Abuse

7.1 Responsibility for Disclosure

While the NSPCI recognises that the primary responsibility for the care of children rests with the parents or guardians, the denomination as a whole has a responsibility for the well-being of children and for protecting them. This means that everyone should remain alert to circumstances in which children may be harmed and, when they have knowledge or a suspicion that a child is being abused, they should report their concern.

7.2 Procedures for Handling Disclosures

Responding to incidents of alleged or suspected abuse must be based upon clearly defined procedures. Knowing what to do, whom to contact, and who needs to know, will ensure that people are prepared to share their knowledge of suspected abuse. [Appendix 12](#) deals in more detail about how an adult should deal with disclosure of alleged abuse from a child.

7.3 Keeping Records

As explained in [Appendix 12](#), it is vital that accurate records must be kept of any disclosures of alleged or suspected abuse. For this purpose a sample Report of Concern Form has been included as [Appendix 13](#). A Form such as this or a written report is needed to form the basis of any agreed action to be taken over the incident(s). If referral to a statutory agency is made these records may be used as evidence so they must be retained in a secure place.

7.4 Data Registration

Where records of leaders, members or reports are kept, either on computer or on hard copy, the congregation needs to be registered with the Data Protection Registrar.

Referral Procedures

8.1 The System of Referral within organisations

The leader in charge of each organisation must be fully conversant with the referral procedure in a suspected case of abuse. Leaders/helpers in organisations should be clear about how to seek help if they are concerned that a child has come to their organisation having experienced some form of abuse. They should also know how to have their concerns dealt with.

8.2 The Designated Person and Deputy

A Designated Person in the congregation should be appointed by the Session. The purpose of this post is to provide consultation and advice to the Session and organisations on Child Protection and contacting Statutory Agencies when necessary. This person should receive appropriate training in child protection and in their duties as Designated Person. Where possible, e.g. in larger congregations, a Deputy Designated person should be appointed to cover for the Designated Person when he or she is not available.

It is recommended that the Designated Person should not be the Minister or involved directly in the Sunday School or similar groups.

In order to facilitate referrals the name and contact details of the Designated Officer should be displayed either in the Church or Hall.

Smaller congregations who share a Minister may find it practical to have an individual Designated Person for each congregation but a shared Child Protection Group. This should only be done on the understanding that this Group must be ready to meet as soon as there is a referral made regarding any of the Churches under its watch.

8.3 Child Protection Group

All reports of suspicions of abuse should be considered by a Child Protection Group within each congregation. This group may consist of the minister (or minister in charge), the Clerk of Session (or Chairperson of the Committee), the Designated Person (and/or Deputy D.P.) and another appropriate person. The leader in charge of the organisation involved in the complaint should also be involved in the Group discussion, unless he or she is the subject of the complaint. This Group should meet within one week of receiving a Report of Concern to decide on appropriate action to be taken. Such action may involve one or more of the following:

- Simply retaining the Report of Concern on file;
- Referring the matter back to the Leader-in-charge of the relevant organisation for appropriate action;
- Referring the matter to the Minister of the congregation for action;
- Referring the matter to an outside agency.

8.4 Referral to Outside Agencies

A good system for handling complaints of child abuse should be instituted in each congregation. [Appendix 14](#) sets out the procedure in more detail and with a supporting flowchart. When it is thought appropriate the Designated Person should approach a statutory agency for advice on how to proceed. If the Child Protection Group think it is necessary the Designated Person should refer a case to a statutory agency for further action.

Monitoring Responsibilities

9.1 Leader-in-Charge

The Leader in charge of an organisation is responsible for the training and supervision of leaders and helpers so that they are not put into a vulnerable position in relation to children under their care.

He/she is also responsible for ensuring an appropriate programme is constructed for the children in the organisation.

The behaviour of children during organisational activities is the overall responsibility of the leader in charge.

The leader in charge is the primary contact person for any complaint of abuse made against a leader or child in the organisation.

He/she should also be willing to receive reports of suspected abuse of a child in the organisation by persons outside the organisation.

9.2 Designated Person

The Designated Person (or her/his Deputy) is responsible for advising organisations on the implementing of appropriate policies and procedures.

He/she is responsible for reviewing policies and procedures with the leader in charge of the organisation and presenting these to the Session/Committee for approval.

All complaints of child abuse should be referred to the Designated Person by leaders in charge of organisations or by leaders or helpers within the organisation or by parents or other adults.

The Designated Person is responsible for investigating reports of suspected breaches of policies or procedures in the first instance. He/she should then convene the Child Protection Group to consider the complaint and decide on appropriate action.

The Designated Person should consult with the relevant outside agency on appropriate action on complaints. He/she should follow up any referrals made to outside agencies by keeping in contact with the appropriate person to whom a referral was made.

9.3 Session/Committee

The Session or Committee has the duty to recruit and appoint everyone involved in work with children within the congregation using best practice in the recruitment process.

Policies and practices in operation in all organisations working with children should be approved and reviewed by the Session and Committee with the advice of the Designated Person.

The Session or Committee is responsible for appointing suitable people to serve as the Designated Person for Child Protection and the Deputy D.P. within the congregation.

Session/Committee should be informed in general terms about any complaints dealt with by the congregation's Child Protection Group.

Session/Committee is responsible for reporting to Presbytery about the implementation of Child Protection Guidelines in the congregation using the following proforma:

"The congregation of wishes to report that it has implemented the denominational Child Protection Guidelines as recommended through the Implementation Strategy. The necessary documentation is available for the inspection of Presbytery and will be updated regularly and can be viewed by the appropriate commissioners at Presbytery Visitations."

9.4 Presbytery

Presbytery is responsible for ensuring that Sessions/Committees fulfil the requirements of these Child Protection Guidelines and that all congregations within its jurisdiction conform to legal and insurance requirements with respect to Child Protection.

In cases where it is inappropriate for a complaint of suspected child abuse to be dealt with by the congregational Child Protection Group (e.g. where the abuse is against a minister or member of Session or Committee) the Moderator and Clerk of Presbytery should make the initial investigation and decide whatever action or referral to be taken.

As part of Congregational Visitations Presbytery appointed commissioners should report on the development and implementation of Child Protection policies and procedures.

In its annual report to Synod each Presbytery should make a general report on the state of Child Protection within its jurisdiction. ***The following proforma may be used:***

"Presbytery is pleased to inform Synod that (all) Congregations under its care have reported that they have implemented the denominational Child Protection Guidelines as recommended through the Implementation Strategy."

9.5 General Purposes Committee

Through its Child Protection Advisory Group, the General Purposes Committee is responsible for advising on Child Protection issues.

The G.P.C. is responsible for the provision of training on Child Protection to Presbyteries and congregations. GPC may make minor revisions to the wording of the policies and procedures as appropriate but substantial changes will be referred to Synod.

The Child Protection Advisory Group should make regular reports to the G.P.C. on the implementation and development of Child Protection policies and procedures throughout the denomination.

9.6 Synod

Synod is responsible for appointing the Child Protection Advisory Group to consist of the Moderator and Clerk of Synod and a suitable Child Protection Officer and any other appropriate person.

Synod should receive reports from Presbyteries as to the implementation of Child Protection within their bounds.

Conclusion

These Guidelines provide an insight into the issues involved in working with children and vulnerable adults. The Guidelines are based on good practice in Christian duty, legal observance and insurance requirements. But above all they aim to give a structure to the positive care and protection of children so that they can develop fully and without hindrance. If they succeed in protecting both children and child workers and give them both a positive experience then they will have been worthwhile in their development and approval.

References

“Taking Care” The Child Protection Guidelines of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, published by the Board of Social Witness, website: www.presbyterianireland.org

“Our Duty to Care” Child Care (NI) published by the Northern Ireland Volunteer Development Agency (NIVDA) or on their website: www.volunteering-ni.org

“Choosing to Protect” POCVA Team, Child Care Policy Directorate, DHSSPS. Or on their website: www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

The Churches Child Protection Advisory Service website: www.ccpas.co.uk

Appendix 1

Child Abuse

There are four main kinds of child abuse. The following list includes some of the signs and symptoms:

Physical Abuse occurs when an adult or other young person physically hurts a child. Symptoms may include:

- unexplained recurrent injuries;
- improbable excuses or refusal to explain such injuries;
- self-destructive tendencies;
- fear of physical contact.

Neglect occurs when an adult leaves a child alone, does not give them enough to eat or does not take them to the doctor when they are ill. Symptoms may include:

- constant hunger;
- inadequate clothing;
- constant tiredness;
- poor personal hygiene.

Emotional Abuse occurs when the adult with responsibility for caring for the child says nasty things to them and makes them feel unloved. Symptoms may include:

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

Sexual Abuse occurs when an adult or other young person touches a child's private parts in a way which makes the child feel worried or unhappy. Some adults or other young people who sexually abuse children also ask the child to touch parts of their body or try to show them pornographic pictures or videos. Symptoms may include:

- sexual knowledge or actions inappropriate for the child's age;
- regression to younger behaviour patterns;
- self-mutilation, suicide attempts, running away, overdoses;
- anorexia, sudden loss of appetite or compulsive eating.

Causes of Child Abuse

Children are abused by people who have greater power, authority or knowledge than them and often by people who are in a position of trust. Since children do not expect adults to harm them, especially those who take care of them, and are generally taught to be obedient and to believe adults, it is only too easy for abusers to persuade children that there is nothing wrong and that they should not tell.

There is a whole range of reasons why children do not tell anyone they are being abused:

- they may have been bribed not to tell;
- they may be afraid of being blamed or punished for what has happened;
- they may have experienced actual or threatened violence from the abuser;
and
- they may be afraid of what will happen to the abuser, who is most often someone they know and care about.

Appendix 2

A Recommended Recruitment Process

This Appendix is a step by step outline of the best practice Recruitment Procedures recommended to congregations. This process should apply to part-time volunteers as well as full-time paid workers. Once the process is in operation it soon becomes an accepted part of recruitment and will deter only people who cannot stand the scrutiny contained the process.

- Before recruiting new leaders/helpers an organisation should do a Skills Audit to set out what the organisation needs in terms of personality, skills, gender balance and general abilities in its leadership team.
- On the basis of the Skills Audit a short Job Description should be drawn up so that potential applicants can understand what is required of them.
- A further useful document for the benefit of the recruiters is a Person Specification, which outlines the type of person it is believed best suits the post. This can quite often be done orally in a meeting of the recruiters.
- All potential recruits to church organisations that deal with children or vulnerable adults must complete the approved Application Form included as Appendix 3,.
- Where appropriate an Application Form must be accompanied by two written references from non-relatives.
- Where appropriate candidates should be short-listed according to a set list of criteria based on the Job Description and Person Specification. Where there is only one or a small number of candidates this process can be by-passed.
- Where appropriate the identity of all candidates to be interviewed should be checked using official photographic ID such as a Passport or Driving Licence.
- All short-listed or sole candidates should be interviewed by at least two people as to their suitability for the post. The interview should be based on the same criteria as any short-listing process.
- Before being allowed access to children, a successful candidate should be vetted using the AccessNI Scheme operated by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety or the National Vetting Bureau in Ireland.
- Every new worker in an organisation should be provided with an Induction that outlines the operation of the organisation and included an awareness programme on Child Protection.

- It is considered best practice that after appointment a new worker should be made aware of the Terms and Conditions of their employment that explain the regulations under which the worker will be operating.
- Every new worker should have a period of probation in which his or her work within the organisation is assessed. If that work or the behaviour of the worker is unacceptable the worker can be dismissed immediately.
- It is a good practice generally, but especially important for Child Protection, that every worker should be supervised during their interaction with children.
- At the end of each year the performance of each worker should be evaluated by a senior worker in consultation with the worker and improvement targets or further training agreed.
- Smaller congregations may wish to adopt a less formal procedure for volunteers or helpers. Rather than a formal interview it is suggested that the applicant should speak with their Minister or the Leader in Charge depending on the post. This does not need to be a prescribed conversation but it should include information on the duties they will be expected to carry out, what is expected from them and any questions they may have. If this is successful then they will need to complete the AccessNI procedure set out above.

Appendix 3

Application Form for Leaders/Helpers in Youth and Children's Work (N. Ireland)

Name of Congregation: _____

Name of Organisation/Group: _____

Name: _____

Any previous surname: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Nat. Ins. No. _____

Address: _____

How long have you lived at this address: _____

If less than two years, then give previous address:

Telephone Number: _____

Name of previous Church you attended: _____

Name and address of previous minister: _____

Please give details of previous experience of working with children and/or young people:

Please describe your reasons for working with children:

Are you prepared to undertake appropriate training?

Yes No

Have you had treatment for any illness during the past 5 years which may have a bearing on your ability to work with children and young people?

Yes No

If yes, please state: _____

Have you ever been charged with or convicted of a criminal offence or are you at present the subject of a criminal investigation?

Because of the nature of the work for which you are applying you should declare all convictions, including spent convictions.

Yes No

If yes, please supply details in a sealed envelope.

Are you a person known to any Social Services Department as being an actual or potential risk to children or vulnerable adults?

Yes No

If yes, please supply details :

Have you ever had any disciplinary sanction relating to child or vulnerable adult abuse?

Yes No

If yes, please supply details:

Have the Social Services or the Police investigated any allegation made against you relating to the abuse of Children or Vulnerable Adults

Yes No

If yes, please supply details:

Please give the name, address, telephone number and position of two people who are willing to act as referees.

First Referee:	Second Referee:

An ACCESSNI check will be required for this post.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Interview

Date of Interview _____

Conducted by _____

Comments

Appointment

Date of appointment _____

Date of Induction _____

Conducted by _____

Assessment

Date of Assessment _____

Conducted by _____

Comments

Appendix 4

AccessNI Code of Practice

1. The NSPCI complies fully with the Code of Practice, issued by the Department of Justice, in connection with the use of information provided to registered persons, their nominees and other recipients of information by AccessNI under Part V of the Police Act 1997, for the purposes of assessing Applicant's suitability for employment purposes, voluntary positions, licensing and other relevant purposes. We undertake to treat all applicants for positions fairly and not to discriminate unfairly or unlawfully against the subject of a Disclosure on the basis of conviction or other information revealed.
2. This policy is made available to all Disclosure applicants at the outset of the recruitment process.
3. The NSPCI are committed to equality of opportunity and will ensure that no applicant or member of staff is subject to less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, marital status, race colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, age, sexual orientation, responsibilities for dependants, physical or mental disability political opinion or offending background, or is disadvantaged by any condition which cannot be shown to be relevant to performance.
4. The NSPCI actively promotes equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skills and potential, and welcomes applications from a wide range of candidates, including those with criminal records. The selection of candidates for interview will be based on those who meet the required standard of skills, qualifications and experience as outlined in the essential and desirable criteria.
5. We will request an AccessNI Disclosure only where this is considered proportionate and relevant to the particular position. This will be based on a thorough risk assessment of that position and having considered the relevant legislation which determines whether or not a Standard or Enhanced Disclosure is available to the position in question. Where an AccessNI Disclosure is deemed necessary for a post or position, all applicants will be made aware at the initial recruitment stage that the position will be subject to a Disclosure and that the individual being offered the position will be required to undergo an appropriate AccessNI Disclosure check
6. In line with the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exceptions)(Northern Ireland) Order 1979 (as amended in 2014), the NSPCI will only ask about convictions which are defined as "not protected" for the purposes of obtaining a Standard or Enhanced disclosure.
7. We undertake to ensure an open and measured and recorded discussion on the subject of any offences or other matters that might be considered relevant for the position concerned eg the individual is applying for a driving job but has a criminal history of driving offences. Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of the conditional offer of employment.

8. The NSPCI may consider discussing any matter revealed in a Disclosure Certificate. We are only able to discuss what is contained on a Disclosure Certificate, and not what may have been sent under separate cover by the Police, with the subject of that Disclosure before considering withdrawing a conditional offer of employment.
9. We undertake to make every subject of an AccessNI Disclosure aware of the existence of the Code of Practice, and to make a copy available on request.
- 10. HAVING A CRIMINAL RECORD WILL NOT NECESSARILY DEBAR YOU FROM WORKING FOR THE NON SUBSCRIBING PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH. THIS WILL DEPEND ON THE NATURE OF THE POSITION, TOGETHER WITH THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND BACKGROUND OF YOUR OFFENCES OR OTHER INFORMATION CONTAINED ON A DISCLOSURE CERTIFICATE OR PROVIDED DIRECTLY TO US BY THE POLICE.**
11. We are only able to discuss what is contained on a Disclosure Certificate and not what may have been sent under separate cover by the Police.

Appendix 5

Leadership in Youth Organisations

Good Team Work

The most important aspect of good teamwork is the sharing of information. Everyone should know the aims and objectives of the organisation and the path of accountability within the organisation. While there may be one leader-in-charge each leader could have responsibility for one item of the programme while still reporting back to the leader-in-charge. There should be frequent meetings of leaders to evaluate what has happened and to plan future programmes. Leaders and helpers need to develop a good working relationship between themselves.

Training

While work with children depends greatly on the personality and commitment of the individual, adequate training is necessary to improve their skills. This should include Induction and In-Service Training to update the knowledge and techniques required for youth work.

Leader/Child Ratios

The following leader/child ratios are offered as guidance to best practice. However it may not always be possible to meet these ratios exactly. The basic principle is that there should be enough leaders/helpers to ensure that children are adequately supervised in their activities. On no occasion should there be less than **two** adults with a small group of children.

0-2 years: 1 member of staff to 3 children

2-3 years: 1 member of staff to 4 children

3-7 years: 1 member of staff to 8 children

8 years +: 1 members of staff to 10 children

(There should be one additional member of staff for every 10 children, or part thereof)

On outings the above ratios should be increased.

Relationships with Children

All leader and helpers should endeavour to become aware of the particular needs and capabilities of each child under their care. In working with children it is important to develop a caring atmosphere so that feelings, fears and experiences can be shared openly. Getting to know each child as an individual enables a leader/helper to be more responsive to a child's reactions in situations where they may be suffering abuse but unable to tell anyone.

Code of Conduct

Children often learn more from the attitudes and behaviour of adults than they do from anything they learn. In promoting Christian values leaders in church youth organisations should strive to ensure that their words and their behaviour are not at odds. Good examples in words and actions should be the main aim of every leader. They should avoid any obscene or defamatory language and should treat their colleagues and the children with

respect and courtesy. On all possible occasions the good of the child should be the main concern of a youth worker.

Discipline

On occasions it may be necessary to impose disciplinary measures on children to prevent them harming themselves, other children or property. The principles that should govern such discipline include

- Children must be told in advance what is unacceptable behaviour in the form of a Code of Behaviour;
- The Code of Behaviour with its accompanying sanctions must have the approval of Session/Committee and parents and be explained beforehand to the children;
- Children should always have an opportunity to reply to an accusation of breaking the Code of Behaviour;
- Sanctions must be imposed fairly and even-handedly;
- Sanctions must not be applied in anger but after a period of reflection;
- After sanctions have been served the child must be warned not to repeat the behaviour;
- A child who has served his/her punishment should always be welcomed back into the community of the group.

Review of Work

To encourage and support employees and volunteers is important and necessary to give regular and reasonable feedback. This can be done informally during supervision. However it is important that at the end of each year the work of each leader/helper is reviewed. This evaluation must be conducted by the leader-in-charge with each leader and preferably with another person present. At this meeting targets for improvement or advancement should be set and agreed. If a worker is perceived to have seriously underperformed it might be necessary at the Review to explain to that person that their services were no longer required.

Appendix 6

Safe Use of Technology

Those who work with children must be aware of the possibility of the abuse of children through technology such as radios and recording machines, still cameras and camcorders, television and videos, computers, internet and mobiles. The following suggestions are aimed to guide leaders in the proper use of this technology and to help them prevent their misuse.

- Many children listen regularly to music on radios or recording machines such as I-pods. What they listen to outside the organisations is the parents' responsibility. However, when children are attending a youth organisation attached to a congregation that responsibility falls on the leaders. It is recommended that children are encouraged not to listen to radios or recording machines while with the organisation or allow other children to listen to their apparatus to prevent the passing on of material that could be considered obscene. If children are allowed to listen to such apparatus the leaders must take responsibility for what they are listening to.
- The same caution should be taken where children are permitted to watch live television or video recording within the organisation. Leaders must decide what is being watched. It is inadvisable to allow the children decide what is watched as some of them would be quite happy to introduce unsuitable material to other children.
- It is not permitted by law to take still or moving pictures of children and display them without parents' agreement. It is therefore inadvisable to allow the indiscriminate taking of photographs or films by the children or by other adults. The concern is that they might fall into the hands of unscrupulous people who might use them for pornographic purposes.
- If computers are used in an organisation's activities, leaders must ensure that there is nothing unsuitable for children to see on the computer's hard drive or any floppy disk, CD or DVD drives or a memory stick.
- Connection to the Internet is a hazardous business and opens the user to virus infiltration and access to unsuitable websites. This practice should only be undertaken within an organisation's programme if proper filtering software is loaded on the computer(s) and an expert is available to prevent improper use of the Internet. If connecting to websites or chatrooms children should be warned against providing any personal information that could be misused by adults.
- Mobile phones are ubiquitous among children. They can serve a very useful purpose to keep parents and leaders apprised of a child's situation. However they can also be used extensively as forms of child abuse and their use should be carefully screened. Children should not be allowed, while under the care of an organisation, to text or phone abusive messages to other children or adults. The use of mobile movie facilities can be abusive and must be strictly controlled.

The guiding principle in the individual or group use of technology within an organisation should be that leaders know at all times what the children are doing and move to prevent any improper use of technology.

Appendix 7

Health and Safety Practices

- The location of fire exits and fire extinguishers should be clear and a clear system of fire alarm be in place. All members of an organisation should be trained and practised in evacuating the premises when a fire alarm is sounded. An assembly station should be known to all members and the senior leader should check the presence of all members there. Where appropriate, the Fire and Rescue Service should be informed and the members should not return to the premises unless they are told by an authorised person to do so.
- It is recommended that as often as possible a fully qualified first-aider should be present. Every leader/helper should be fully acquainted with the location of the first-aid box, and how to administer basic first-aid. In the event of an accident/emergency, where possible, leaders/helpers should have regularly updated contact numbers for parents/guardians.
- It is important for every organisation to have an 'Accident Book' in which details of accidents /injuries/ witnesses/ dates and times should be recorded.
- A telephone should, where possible, be available on any premises used.
- If using church premises for accommodation, where possible, ground floor accommodation should be used. If meetings are held on an upper floor adequate provision must be made for good lighting and for supervising children on stairs. The meeting room or hall should be suitable for the purpose, should be free of any obstructions and should be maintained in a safe manner.
- On no occasion should children or vulnerable adults be allowed to be out of the supervision of a leader or helper.
- Drivers of private cars should be aware of the limitations of third party insurance for transporting young people. Drivers must check with their insurance company regarding the adequacy of passenger liability. ***The regulations regarding the use of booster seats for children under 12 and under 135 cm in height must be observed.***
- Where possible, no driver should be alone with a child or vulnerable adult in a car. When children or vulnerable adults are being left home it is advisable to arrange the route so that two or more children or vulnerable adults are being dropped off last.
- All drivers for minibuses must have the appropriate category on their driving licence if driving vehicles with sixteen seats or more.
- On all outings from the normal site of an organisation's activities it is important to increase the leader: child ratios in [paragraph 5.4](#). above so that an extra leader is involved with each group of children. There must always be at least two adults and sufficient numbers to supervise children properly. Where required, extra helpers such as parents should be recruited for the event.

- Where the outing is for an extended period of hours or over a long distance care should be taken to ensure adequate refreshments for the children or vulnerable adults. Leaders must be sure to provide opportunities to visit toilets and take rest breaks. Any medicine required by any of the children or vulnerable adults must be readily available.
- Parental (or guardian's) written consent must be obtained when taking any young person away for a residential experience. A registration form should be signed by the parent/guardian and it should give any relevant medical information e.g., allergies, special diets etc. Parents/guardians should be made aware of the activities the young person will be expected to participate in, the name and phone number of the leader and any other relevant information.
- Extra care should be taken on residential to ensure the safety of children or vulnerable adults. In particular no child or vulnerable adult should be unsupervised by a leader or helper. At night, while it is important that the privacy of children or vulnerable adults should be observed, suitable action should be taken to ensure that there must not be any opportunity for anyone to have inappropriate access to any child or vulnerable adult.
- At the start of the year a form can be handed to parents asking for an emergency contact number, relevant medical information and consent for any photographs that might be taken as part of any activities. By doing this once a year such information does not need to be sought for every individual outing or activity.

Appendix 8

Advice for Leaders on Contact with Children

- As explained in [paragraph 6.9](#) above it is advisable for all child workers to avoid any physical contact with children. This includes engaging in contact play with children, general physical contact and any action that could be misconstrued by a child or adult observer as overly affectionate.
- However, if it is deemed necessary to offer comfort to a distressed child or vulnerable adult then this should be done carefully and in the presence of others so that no question can be raised about inappropriate touching or comments. Children and vulnerable adults should be informed that no such contact is permitted unless another adult is present so they do not accept any hugging or kissing in private.
- Language is a very powerful influence on a child. Leaders and helpers should always be careful that their language in front of children must be positive and not derogatory of that child or anyone else. Leaders must never engage in any sexually explicit or suggestive language with children or allow such comments from another adult or child to pass without challenge.
- When taking children or vulnerable adults to the toilet there should, where possible, be two adults present with the children or vulnerable adults. In an unusual case where only one adult is present the adult should stand at the open external door of a toilet block or outside a single toilet where other people can see them.
- It is important that leaders do not develop too close a relationship with a child or children under his/her care. This does not preclude a genuine friendship and concern for children. However it does mean that leaders cannot be accused of favouritism towards one or more children. If a child wishes to engage with a leader on a confidential basis this should be encouraged but should be conducted with the knowledge and preferably under the observation of another leader. Under no circumstances should a leader be alone with a child in the leader's own home.
- Where possible a child or young person should never be left on their own with an adult. If there are a number of small groups of young people then, rather than all sitting in separate rooms, it would be more appropriate to move all the groups to a larger space such as a Hall. If this is not possible then those left on their own with a child should always ensure that the door is left open and that the child is given the seat nearest the door. Such good practice not only ensures the safety of the child but also the adult.

Appendix 9

Advice on pastoral visits

We have an aging population and there are many congregation members who are able to continue living in their own homes but who are unable to attend church regularly. Pastoral visits are important to help them maintain their links with our Church and to help support them in their faith. This Appendix provides some additional points to consider when visiting at home or in residential care but should be read in conjunction with the rest of the Guidance.

- Those visiting vulnerable adults should be AccessNI checked.
- It is not always possible but a home visit should be carried out by two people.
- Telephone in advance to check that a visit is wanted and to arrange a suitable time. If the person is living alone you may wish to arrange for a time when a carer or family member is there to assist in opening the door.
- Bring identification with you and introduce yourself with your name and role.
- If visiting in a residential home or hospital then follow procedures for signing in. If the person asks to leave a public room to go to a separate room to speak in private then ensure that the door is left open.
- When visiting a person in their home let them lead the way into the room and indicate where you should sit. If they go to close the door request that they leave it open.
- It is important to respect the person's privacy and if they are confined to bed then knock or announce your presence and wait for an invitation to enter. Do not sit on the bed and ensure that the door is not closed.
- Details of visits should be recorded. Dates, times and a record of those present should be kept.
- If carers or health care professionals arrive you should leave and offer to return at another opportunity in order to preserve their privacy and dignity. You should not become involved in the details of their medical care.
- Avoid touching or handling personal belongings.
- Do not bring food or chocolates with you as dietary restrictions may be in place for medical reasons.
- If you are in contact with other family members let them know you have visited.
- If you have concerns about the welfare or safety of the person you are visiting then these should be reported following the procedure set out in this Guidance.
- Visits should be tailored to the individual and avoid tiring the person.
- Let the person know when you will next visit or indicate when you will contact them to arrange another visit.

Appendix 10

A Code of Good Behaviour for Children

A primary goal of any voluntary organisation, such as the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church in Ireland, working with children should be to contribute to the growth of each child's self-esteem by encouraging every child's contribution and work and through praise for effort as well as achievement. There is an equally important need to create an atmosphere in which children feel safe enough to share their fears and problems. The following Code of Behaviour is aimed at creating the right atmosphere of trust and respect within a children's organisation.

- It is important for children to listen to their leaders' advice and instructions so that they can do activities correctly without any risk to themselves or anyone else.
- Children should not display prejudice on the grounds of disability, sectarianism, sexism or racism against other children.
- When speaking to other children or adults, children should use positive language and should never be insolent, aggressive or obscene in what they say.
- Physical contact with other children should be restricted to normal play and should avoid aggressive or violent behaviour.
- Children should not go anywhere that a leader is not present and should never be alone with an adult they do not know.
- Children should never do anything to other children, or allow anything to be done to themselves, that makes them feel uncomfortable.
- When they join an organisation and at the beginning of each year, children should be told or reminded of what is and is not acceptable in terms of behaviour.
- Everyone, children, leaders and parents, should be aware of the steps which will be taken if any incident of bullying is observed or disclosed.

Appendix 11

Anti-Bullying Policy

(A) Definitions of Bullying

It is a basic entitlement of all children that they can play free from humiliation, oppression and abuse from bullying.

Bullying is any malicious or hurtful unprovoked attack on another person who is not able to defend him/herself in the situation.

Bullying behaviour includes physical violence, name-calling, extortion and intimidation.

Victims of bullying can suffer physical and psychological abuse leading to isolation, insecurity and low self-esteem producing unhappiness and underachievement.

There is sometimes bullying in every organisation, and all children can be bullies, but bullying behaviour cannot be tolerated in a church youth organisation.

Possible Signs of Bullying

Parents and leaders are able to observe changes in a child's behaviour which may well indicate that they are being subjected to bullying. Here are some things to look out for:

Items of clothing, property, etc that are damaged or lost more often than you would consider to be normal.

Frequent injuries to the child (bruises, cuts etc).

The child who becomes withdrawn and is reluctant to say why.

Requests to be accompanied going to and from an organisation, or to go by a different route. If this is no longer than the previous one, it could well indicate that bullying had been occurring along the previous route.

Money in the house or church premises going missing.

Depression in the child. Reluctance to eat or play normally. Youngster appears generally unhappy, miserable, moody and/or irritable.

The child who threatens or attempts acts of self harm.

Taken individually, the above may not be due to bullying, but a combination of even some of these signs could be a good reason to suspect it. . If a child is showing signs of, or is experiencing ANY of the above, it can be an indication that all is not well, the child is not happy and therefore, whatever the cause, it should be investigated.

(C) Action to be taken against Bullying

Promote an ethos, in which positive attitudes and achievements are recognised, valued, respected and rewarded.

Operate a high profile anti-bullying code which stresses the unacceptability of bullying behaviour and which is understood by all children.

Identify when and where bullying occurs within the organisation.

Ensure adequate supervision of areas frequented by children at leisure.

Provide appropriate training for all staff in recognising and combating bullying behaviour.

Develop clear guidelines for dealing with bullying incidents and communicate these guidelines to staff, children and parents to provide a consistency of approach.

Monitor and record all incidents of bullying in the Incident Book.

Offer appropriate support for victims of bullying.

Counsel bullies and help them to recognise their behaviour is unacceptable and assist them to effect change.

Enlist the aid of parents and external agencies when appropriate.

Appendix 12

Handling Disclosures

The most difficult thing a leader in a youth organisation may have to face is if a child or another adult, who trusts him/her, decides to confide about the possibility of a child being abused. Such a disclosure must be handled sensitively but positively if the trust between the leader and the person disclosing the information is to be maintained. Here are some suggestions about how to handle this difficult conversation:

- Stay calm, do not panic or appear shocked.
- Listen to exactly what the person says.
- Try not to respond except for clarification – comments or leading questions could affect the quality of your report. It is what the person says in her/his own words, especially if it is the child concerned disclosing, that is important not words you inadvertently put into his/her mouth.
- Reassure the person who is disclosing information about abuse that he or she is doing the right thing – especially if that person is the child affected.
- Do not promise to keep the information secret but reassure the person that only those who need to know will be told.
- As soon as possible after you receive such a disclosure you must write down what you actually heard as accurately as you can. A standard Report of Concern Form (see Appendix 13) may be used if it is readily available but a written report is essential.
- The information and written report should be shared with the appropriate person (see Appendix 14) as soon as possible afterwards.
- In all cases a copy of your report or Form should go to the Designated Person as soon as you are able.
- If you do not receive a written acknowledgement of your report within **two weeks** you should contact the Designated Person.
- You should ensure that the report is followed up and you are officially informed of any action taken.
- All information relating to the disclosure must be kept in a secure area where no one else can access the information. Once an outcome has been reached this information must be securely destroyed and should not be retained.
- It is important that you keep the person who made the disclosure informed that action is being taken on what he/she told you so that their confidence in you is sustained.

One thing you **must** not do is NOTHING

Appendix 13

Restricted Information
Report of Concern About a Child

Please use this form to record any concern you have about a child. Give the form to the Designated Person immediately. If you need help in completing this form please talk to the leader in charge of your organisation or the Designated Person.

CHILD'S NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

_____ POSTCODE _____

State as clearly as possible why you are concerned, from whom you received the information and when. Continue overleaf if necessary.

SIGNED.....ORGANISATION.....DATE.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ORGANISATION _____

CHILD'S NAME _____

I ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF YOUR REPORT IN RESPECT OF THE ABOVE NAMED CHILD

Name of Designated Person.....

Signature..... Date.....

Appendix 14

Referral Procedure

The following procedure should always be observed in dealing with complaints of alleged or suspected child abuse:

- Allegation/suspicion/concern noted on Report of Concern Form or separate written report.
- The concern should be reported immediately to the leader-in-charge of the organisation, unless the concern is about that person.
- The leader reports to the Designated Person.
- The Designated Person consults with the Child Protection Group in the congregation.
- In certain circumstances, e.g. the concern is about the minister of the congregation, concerns may be taken up with the Clerk and/or Moderator of Presbytery.
- A further investigation is instigated or action is decided on.
- If deemed necessary, the Designated Person consults with a statutory agency.
- The Child Protection Group then follow the advice given by the appropriate agency.
- The original complainant is informed of the action taken.
- The parents of the child should be informed of the suspicion, unless it concerns them.
- As soon as recommended by the outside agency, the alleged perpetrator should be informed of the complaints laid against her/him.
- Any action recommended by the outside agency should be followed.
- If deemed appropriate the Designated Person formally refers the case to Social Services/Health Board or to the Police or, in Northern Ireland, to the NSPCC.
- Everyone involved in the handling of the complaint should be kept informed as the case proceeds. In this way it can be made obvious to all parties that complaints are dealt with seriously and are followed up fully.
- However at all stages it is important that the details of a complaint are kept confidential to those who need to know. While general updates need to be made as appropriate the names of those involved must be kept confidential as far as possible.

Northern Ireland

PSNI

There is one Child Abuse Investigation Unit (CAIU) in each policing district. They are specially trained to investigate alleged and suspected cases of child abuse. If a child is believed to be at risk contact the relevant CAIU via the central number 0845 600 8000 or in an emergency ring 999.

Health and Social Service Trusts

Each Trust has a Social Service Gateway Team to deal with Child Protection issues. Contact details for are listed on the nidirect website

www.nidirect.gov.uk/gateway_teams_contact_details.pdf

Ireland

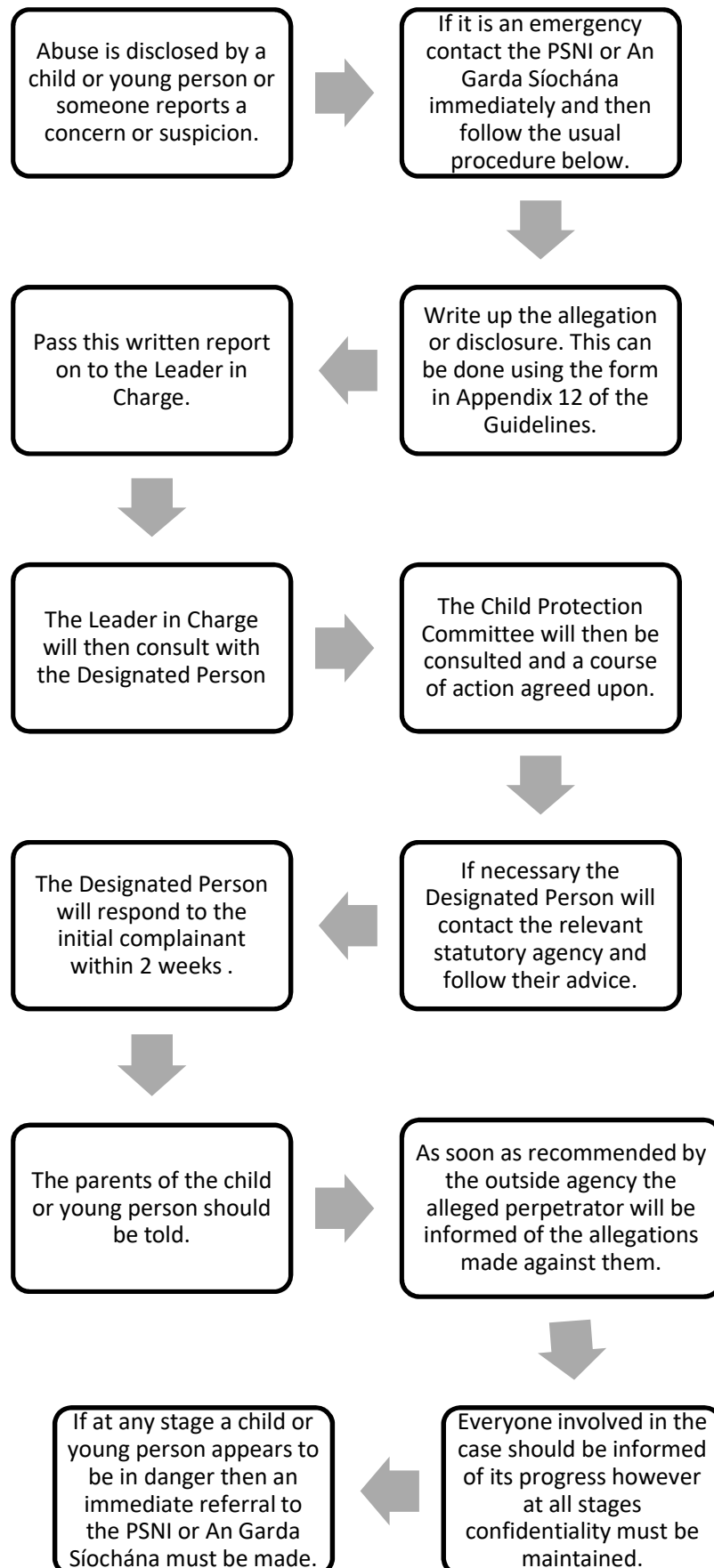
An Garda Síochána

If a child is believed to be at risk contact An Garda Síochána at the appropriate Garda station or in an emergency ring 999 or 112.

Health Service Executive

There is a Duty Social Worker at each HSE Child and Family Services Office. Contact details for the 32 local health offices can be found on the HSE website www.hse.ie.

Outline of Referral Procedure



Appendix 15

Information management

The NSPCI complies fully with AccessNI's Code of Practice regarding the correct handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of Disclosure Applications and Disclosure information.

Disclosure information will be kept securely in a lockable storage container with access strictly controlled and limited to those who are entitled to see it as part of their duties.

Disclosure information will only be passed to those who are authorised to receive it in the course of their duties. Disclosure information will only be used for the specific purpose for which it is requested and for which the applicant's full consent has been given.

Once a recruitment decision has been taken, Disclosure information will not be kept for any longer than 2 months. Information will not be retained after this date and Disclosure information will be destroyed by secure means i.e. by shredding or burning. Whilst awaiting destruction, Disclosure information will not be kept in any unsecured receptacle (e.g. waste-bin or confidential sack).