Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Policy Statement

Safeguarding is defined as protecting children and vulnerable adults from maltreatment, preventing impairment of health, ensuring that children and vulnerable adults are provided with safe and effective care.

**Purpose of a Child or vulnerable adult Protection Policy**

To inform parents and volunteers about the Movement’s responsibilities for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. To enable everyone to have a clear understanding of how these responsibilities should be carried out.

**The Movement’s Volunteers**

The Movement’s volunteers are any persons who have been allocated and accepted the role of looking after children or vulnerable adults at a Movement’s event along with the members organising the event,

All volunteers have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults.

Volunteers will be made aware of the safeguarding policy and procedures by the Event Co-ordinator.

**Implementation, Monitoring and Review of the Child or vulnerable adult Protection Policy**

The policy will be reviewed from time to time by the Regional Couples. It will be implemented through being made available to all event organisers and will be published on the Team’s GB Province website.

**2. STATUTORY FRAMEWORK**

In order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults, the Movement will act in accordance with the following legislation and guidance:

* The Children and vulnerable adults Act 1989.
* The Children and vulnerable adults Act 2004.

The Designated Senior Persons for Child or vulnerable adult Protection in this the Movement are the Regional Couples or the organising couple of the specific event if the Regional Couple is not present

The Regional Couples will refer all cases of suspected abuse to the local authority children and vulnerable adults’ social care and:

* Garda (cases where a crime may have been committed).
* Assist in any ongoing enquiries under section 47 of the Children and vulnerable adults Act 1989 and garda investigations.
* Act as a source of support, advice and expertise to volunteers on matters of safety and safeguarding and when deciding whether to make a referral by liaising with relevant agencies.

**Raising Awareness**

* The designated safeguarding lead for each event should ensure the Movements policy is known and used appropriately.
* Ensure the child or vulnerable adult protection policy is available publicly.

**4. THE MOVEMENT PROCEDURES – VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES**

If any volunteer is concerned about a child or vulnerable adult, he or she must inform the event organiser and a Designated Senior Person.

The volunteer must record information regarding the concerns on the same day. The recording must be a clear, precise, factual account of the observations.

The Designated Senior Person will decide whether the concerns should be referred to Children and vulnerable adults’ Services; Safeguarding and Specialist Services. If it is decided to make a referral to Children and vulnerable adults’ Services: Safeguarding and Specialist Services this will be discussed with the parents, unless to do so would place the child or vulnerable adult at further risk of harm.

As a person who works with children and vulnerable adults, volunteers have a duty to refer safeguarding concerns to the Designated Senior Person for child or vulnerable adult protection. However, if:

* concerns are not taken seriously by an organisation or
* action to safeguard the child or vulnerable adult is not taken by professionals and
* the child or vulnerable adult is considered to be at continuing risk to harm

then volunteers should speak to another DSP in the Movement or the Super Regional Couple.

If, at any point, there is a risk of immediate serious harm to a child or vulnerable adult or vulnerable adult a referral should be made to children and vulnerable adults’ social care immediately. Anybody can make a referral.

**5. WHEN TO BE CONCERNED**

All volunteers should be aware that the main categories of abuse are:

* Physical abuse.
* Emotional abuse.
* Sexual abuse.
* Neglect.

All volunteers should be concerned about a child or vulnerable adult or vulnerable adult if he/she presents with indicators of possible significant harm.

Generally, in an abusive relationship the child or vulnerable adult may:

* Appear frightened of the parent’s or other household members e.g. siblings or other outside of the home.
* Act in a way that is inappropriate to her/his age and development (full account needs to be taken of different patterns of development and different ethnic groups).
* Display insufficient sense of “boundaries”, lack stranger awareness.
* Appear wary of adults and display “frozen watchfulness”.
* Abnormal bruising or any other signs of physical abuse.

**6. DEALING WITH A DISCLOSURE**

If a child or vulnerable adult discloses that he or she has been abused in some way, the volunteer should:

* Listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief.
* Accept what is being said.
* Allow the child or vulnerable adult to talk freely.
* Reassure the child or vulnerable adult, but not make promises which might not be possible to keep.
* Not promise confidentiality – it might be necessary to refer to Children and vulnerable adults’ Services: Safeguarding and Specialist Services.
* Reassure him or her that what has happened is not his or her fault.
* Stress that it was the right thing to tell.
* Listen, only asking questions when necessary to clarify.
* Not criticise the alleged perpetrator.
* Explain what must be done next and who must be told.
* Make a written record.
* Pass the information to the Designated Senior Person without delay.

**Support**

Dealing with a disclosure from a child or vulnerable adult, and safeguarding issues can be stressful. The volunteer should, therefore, consider seeking support from him/herself and discuss this with the Designated Senior Person.

**7. CONFIDENTIALITY**

Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults raises issues of confidentiality that must be clearly understood by all volunteers in the Movements.

* All volunteers in the Movements have a responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children and vulnerable adults with other professionals, particularly the investigative agencies (Children and vulnerable adults’ Services: Safeguarding and Specialist Services and the Garda).
* If a child or vulnerable adult confides in a volunteer and requests that the information is kept secret, it is important that the volunteer tell the child or vulnerable adult in a manner appropriate to the person’s age/stage of development that they cannot promise complete confidentiality – instead they must explain that they need to pass information to other professionals to help keep the child or vulnerable adult or other children and vulnerable adults safe.

**8. COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS**

*The Movement will:*

**Ensure the safeguarding policy is available publicly either via the Movement’s website or by other means.**

Parents should be informed prior to referral, unless it is considered to do so might place the child at increased risk of significant harm by:

* The behavioural response it prompts e.g. a child being subjected to abuse, maltreatment or threats / forced to remain silent if alleged abuser informed;
* Leading to an unreasonable delay;
* Leading to the risk of loss of evidential material;
* Placing a volunteer at risk.

**Ensure that parents understand the responsibilities placed on the Movement and volunteers for safeguarding children.**

**9. RECORD KEEPING**

When a child or vulnerable adult has made a disclosure, the volunteer should:

* Record as soon as possible after the conversation.
* Don’t destroy the original notes in case they are needed by a court.
* Record the date, time, place and any noticeable non-verbal behaviour and the words used by the child or vulnerable adult.
* Draw a diagram to indicate the position of any injuries.
* Record statements and observations rather than interpretations or assumptions.

All records need to be given to the Designated Senior Person promptly. No copies should be retained by the volunteer.

**10. ALLEGATIONS INVOLVING THE MOVEMENT VOLUNTEERS**

An allegation in any information which indicates that a volunteer may have:

* Behaved in a way that has, or may have harmed a child or vulnerable adult.
* Possibly committed a criminal offence against/related to a child or vulnerable adult.
* Behaved towards a child or vulnerable adult or children and vulnerable adults in a way which indicates she/he would pose a risk of harm if they work regularly or closely with children and vulnerable adults.

This applies to any child or vulnerable adult the volunteer has contact within their personal, professional or community life.

The person whom an allegation is first reported should take the matter seriously and keep an open mind. She/he should not investigate or ask leading questions if seeking clarification; it is important not to make assumptions. Confidentiality should not be promised and the person should be advised that the concern will be shared on a “need to know” basis only.

Actions to be taken include making an immediate written record of the allegation using the informant’s words – including time, date and place where the alleged incident took place, brief details of what happened, what was said and who was present. This record should be signed, dated and immediately passed on to the Event co-ordinator.

If the concerns are about the event co-ordinator the Senior designated person should be approached. If this is not deemed possible and the matter is considered serious, the Super Regional Couple should be contacted directly.

The recipient of an allegation must **not** unilaterally determine its validity.

The Senior Designated person will assess whether it is necessary to refer the concern to the Local Authority or Gardai..