

# Child Protection Policy

## Policy Statement & Procedures

### Table of Contents

1.0	Purpose .....	1
2.0	Scope .....	1
3.0	Objectives .....	1
4.0	Revision and Changes .....	1
5.0	Our Priority .....	2
6.0	What is a Child? .....	2
7.0	Our Mission and Vision .....	2
8.0	Our Training .....	2
9.0	Vetting .....	2
10.0	Who this Policy Applies To .....	2
11.0	Safe Practice in Our Work .....	3
12.0	Extra Considerations if Going Abroad .....	3
13.0	Safe Use of Technology .....	4
14.0	Guidelines For Use Of Photography And Recordings Of Young People .....	4
15.0	The Roles And Responsibilities Of The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) .....	5
16.0	Reporting Procedures For Dealing With Child Abuse .....	5
16.1	Steps to be taken .....	6
16.2	Allegations Of Peer Abuse .....	6
16.3	Retrospective Disclosures .....	6
16.4	Recording And Retaining Information .....	6
17.0	Complaints Procedure .....	7
17.1	Guidelines For Dealing With Complaints .....	7

### 1.0 Purpose

This policy covers every person over 18 years old involved with Localise, this applies to all Localise staff, new and existing, Localise members, Localise volunteers, collaborators and members.

### 2.0 Scope

This policy covers every person over 18 years old involved with Localise, this applies to all Localise staff, new and existing, Localise members, Localise volunteers, collaborators and members.

### 3.0 Objectives

- To outline Localise Child Protection training and safe practice work guidelines.
- To outline Localise policies regarding use of technology, photography and recordings pertinent to young people.
- To outline the roles & responsibilities of the Designated Liaison Person.
- To present the Localise reporting & complaints procedure for dealing with child abuse.

### 4.0 Revision and Changes

Changes to this procedure must be managed by the Administrative Coordinator and approved by the Director.

## Revision History:

Revision Date	Description of Change	Initiator
February 2013	Updated procedure to comply with changes in law	Wojciech Mroczek
October 2014	Changes to the Designated Liaison Person and the change from CYC to CrossCare	Lily Ramirez-Foran
September 2017	Amend Designated Liaison Person to Sean McEwen	Pamela Behan
February 2019	Amend Designated Liaison Person to Debbie Reid	Pamela Behan
June 2022	Amend Designated Liaison Person to Sean McEwen	Pamela Behan
October 2022	Amend Designated Liaison Person to Cat Scanlon	Pamela Behan

## 5.0 Our Priority

Localise has as its foremost priority the welfare and safety of its young members. We are committed to providing a safe environment for young people enabling them through their volunteer work to care in their community. Localise has a number of procedures in place designed to safeguard every young member involved in our programmes. Our staff and adult volunteers endeavour to ensure that children and young people are protected and kept safe from harm while taking part in any of the Localise programmes.

## 6.0 What is a Child?

In law a child is defined as someone under the age of 18 years, who is not or has never been married (Child Care Act 1991, Children Order 1995). The Localise Code of Good Youth Work Practice and its Child Protection Policy are designed to protect children and young people from neglect, physical, sexual and emotional harm or abuse.

## 7.0 Our Mission and Vision

Enabling young people to care in their community in the service of others. Developing pro-active citizens and community leaders of the future.

## 8.0 Our Training

Localise provides its staff and adult volunteers with information and child protection training to help them understand the various categories of child abuse, what situations might constitute reasonable grounds for concern and advice on how to respond to disclosure. All our staff and community volunteers receive child protection training and are Garda vetted.

The Localise Code of Good Youth Work Practice is based on and consistent with the current Child Protection Guidelines and legislation in the Republic of Ireland. Localise is committed to listening to children and young people and recognises that “each child has a right to express his or her opinion freely and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure” (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child).

## 9.0 Vetting

All Localise staff and adult community volunteers are Garda Vetted through our vetting agency NYCI (see the Localise Volunteering Process & Localise Garda Vetting Policy and Procedure). These procedures are subject to regular reviews to ensure compliance with best practice.

## 10.0 Who This Policy Applies To

The Localise Child Protection Policy and its relevant guidelines, provide safeguards and support for Localise personnel, which includes staff, volunteers, interns, those availing of work experience, board members and those contracted to work in Localise organised activities and events when they are working with children and young people.

In many instances Localise will work with other agencies in organising events with children/young people involved. There are many different forms that this work may take. However, where the event is being run in the name of the Localise, these child protection guidelines will apply.

Localise school programme follows the policy and procedures of the school we work with as the insurance and full responsibility for the programme lays with the school.

Localise is committed to good practice and has developed a range of policies which govern our work including Policy and Procedures for Garda Vetting, Code of Good Youth Work Practice, Code of Behaviour for Localise Members, Accident and Incident Book, Localise Volunteer's Charter, Localise Community Group's Affiliation Policy.

Localise is also committed to ensuring that all Localise personnel are introduced to this child protection policy during their induction period and that they each receive regular child protection awareness training as appropriate to their role.

### **11.0 Safe Practice in Our Work**

As Localise personnel who work with children and young people, we all have a duty to care for those young people. This is a serious task and one which should ensure that every young person in our organisation is in a safe, secure environment.

Safe practice in our work is essential and Localise have the following procedures and guidelines for good practice, which govern our work:

- Vetting and Child Protection Training of all Localise personnel and adult volunteers.
- Localise Code of Good Youth Work Practice which applies to all Localise personnel and adult volunteers.
- Localise Health and Safety Policy.

When recruiting and organising events for young people, the following information must be obtained by the group coordinator:

- Localise Member's Registration Form – this must be completed by a parent or guardian when the young person joins Localise. This form allows young person to take part in Localise group meetings and local community service work organised by the group (please refer to the Localise member's registration form).
- Parental Consent Form – this must be completed by a parent or guardian before events, trips, and weekends away out of the normal community work of the group

Localise personnel must have a copy of the contacts details of parents/guardians of young people available to them at all times when working with young people.

A record of registration and attendance must be kept for all events.

In case of an incident or accident occurring at a Localise event, the incident/accident report form must be completed as soon as possible afterwards, a copy must be stored by localise and a copy given to parents when informing them of the details (please see Localise Accident Incident Book).

All buildings and facilities used by the young people must be safe and secure with adequate heating, sanitation, lighting, ventilation, fire precautions. Insurance cover must be adequate for the premises. A risk assessment should be carried out in advance if using unknown premises.

Young people with their parents/guardians in Localise are asked to comply with the Code of behaviour for Localise members and group contract.

### **12.0 Extra Considerations if Going Abroad**

- Appropriate paper work in place, e.g. passports, visa.
- Copies of documents and passport numbers are with leaders at home and away.
- Insurance cover for all aspects of traveling.
- Detailed travel itinerary.
- Staff and young people must have contact details for leaders locally and at home.

- Currency, climate, time zones, cultural differences must be considered.
- Legal differences considered e.g. drinking, age of consent, drugs etc.
- Vaccinations organised if necessary.
- Regular check in and debriefing sessions with staff and young people.
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### **13.0 Safe Use of Technology**

Localise is aware that there exists a wide range of technologies in which young people use to communicate, for example text messaging, e-mail, Facebook, etc. In all of its use of technologies in its communication with young people, Localise will:

- Use Localise phones, email addresses and social networking profiles to communicate with young people and personnel should separate this from personal phone numbers, personal profile pages etc.
- Ensure that access to young people's personal contact details is carefully managed and only available to communications and webmaster personnel.
- Where possible, use group texting, emailing etc. to contact young people and avoid one to one contact with individual young people.
- Obtain the young person's and their parent/guardian's consent to contact them via phone, text, email, etc. where possible.
- Communicate with young people with regard to Localise work related information only
- All information sent to and received from young people should be open, visible and recorded.
- Never use young people's personal contact details for personal use.
- Never accept friendship requests from young people on personal social networking sites or follow them on twitter.
- Ensure that Localise Facebook page has 'fans' instead of 'friends' and thus reducing access to young people Facebook page.
- Respond to and report any inappropriate behaviour, bullying or child protection concerns to Localise Designated Liaison Person.

### **14.0 Guidelines For Use Of Photography And Recordings Of Young People**

- Permission must be received from parents/guardians in order to use a young person's photograph within the context of the appropriate guidelines. Ensure that parent(s)/guardian(s) and children are fully aware what, where and how the images will be used.
- Consideration should be given as to whether children or young people could be identified when personal information is included about them alongside a photograph.
- Consideration should also be given as to whether the images could be used inappropriately – e.g. adapted or copied for use on child abuse websites.
- All children/young people should be appropriately dressed (taking account of ethnic and cultural considerations and what kind of message the image is portraying).

- Recorded images should focus on an activity and, where possible, feature groups of children/young people rather than individuals.
- Ensure that any contracted film makers/photographers are not allowed to spend time with or have access to children/young people without supervision.
- Any complaints or concerns about inappropriate or intrusive images should be reported and recorded in accordance with any other child protection concern.
- The storage, access and ownership of images need to be carefully managed.
- Ensure not to reveal personal details of the children/young people.
- The use of recording devices such as cameras, mobile phones etc. by members during any Localise activity must be authorised in advance by the coordinator in compliance with child protection guidelines.
- The publication, posting and sharing of any images and videos should only be done in consultation with the group coordinator and/or the Community Youth Officer.

### **15.0 The Roles And Responsibilities Of The Designated Liaison Person (DLP)**

The Designated Liaison Person has the following duties in relation to child protection:

- Receive reports of alleged abuse from Localise staff and volunteers and ensure the correct procedures are followed.
- Ensure the relevant authorities are informed where appropriate.
- In the case of an allegation against a Localise staff or volunteer, the DLP will deal with the child protection report and the Director will deal with staff or volunteer.
- Be familiar with and operate within the national guidance on child protection and specific guidelines of Localise.
- Build a working relationship between the Localise and the appropriate statutory authorities and other relevant agencies.
- Advice on good practice for volunteers and staff within Localise.
- To ensure that all Localise staff and volunteers are adequately trained and informed on Localise's guidelines on child protection.
- To maintain proper records on all concerns, allegations and cases reported and to keep them in a confidential and secure manner.
- To remain informed about current developments in relation to child protection practice and policy.
- To liaise with the Director of Localise on the review and implementation of these guidelines.

### **16.0 Reporting Procedures For Dealing With Child Abuse**

In all aspects of the reporting procedure, the safety of the young person while in our care should always be paramount. Localise personnel and adult volunteers have responsibility and duty of care to report any allegations or concerns that they may have in relation to the safety of a young person(s). The Localise Code of Good Youth Work Practice explains the usual reporting procedures. In case of allegations against employees and volunteers, there are two procedures to be followed: the reporting procedure in respect to the child and the procedure for dealing with the alleged abuser.

Good practice indicates that the same person does not have responsibility for dealing with both the reporting issues and employment/contractual issues.

The DLP will have responsibility for the young person. The director of Localise will have responsibility for dealing with allegations made against the employee/volunteer. It will

be necessary for the Gardai and senior personnel to agree together a strategy for investigation, and remain in contact throughout the process. If an allegation is made against the DLP, the director must handle procedure. If an allegation is made against the director, the chairperson of the board of governors will take responsibility for the procedure.

### **16.1 Steps To Be Taken**

Immediately take appropriate measures to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk. These measures should not unreasonably penalise the worker, unless necessary to protect children. If a decision is made to report the matter to The Child and Family Agency, the DLP will follow the standard reporting procedure. The director will inform the worker/volunteer that an allegation has been made and explain the nature of that allegation. Any response made by the worker/volunteer will be recorded and passed on to The Child and Family Agency. The employee/volunteer has a right to reply to the allegations made against them. Natural justice principles are to be applied.

The DLP/Director may also inform The Child and Family Agency of any other organisation working with children, with whom the alleged abuser is involved. Following advice from statutory authorities, parents/carers of the young person may be informed, unless doing so is not in the best interest of the child. The follow-up of an allegation of abuse against a worker will be made in consultation with The Child and Family Agency and Garda Síochána. The DLP/Director will take due care to ensure that any action taken by them does not impede any investigations being carried out by The Child and Family Agency or An Garda Síochána. The person accused may require support pending an investigation. It is advised that external services be provided for the purpose.

### **16.2 Allegations Of Peer Abuse**

Abusive behaviour, which is carried out by children and young people, must be taken seriously and it is important that such cases are referred to The Child and Family Agency. Child protection procedures are adhered to for both children. If there is any conflict of interest between the welfare of the alleged abuser and the victim, the victim's welfare is of paramount importance. The standard reporting procedure will be followed, and advice will be sought from the statutory authorities with regard to informing the parents/carers of the young people concerned.

### **16.3 Retrospective Disclosures**

In case of receiving a retrospective disclosure from an adult, it is very important that consideration is given to the current risk to any child who may be in contact with the alleged abuser. Adult reporters should be encouraged and supported to report their abuse and Localise have duty to report any concerns they have. Advice should be sought from The Child and Family Agency on reporting retrospective disclosures. Investigations of disclosures by adult victims of past abuse frequently uncover current incidences of abuse. This is therefore an effective means of stopping the cycle of abuse.

### **16.4 Recording And Retaining Information**

All details of concerns, allegations or reported incidents, regardless of whether or not a referral is subsequently made to a statutory agency, will be recorded. This should happen as soon as possible after the observation, disclosure or incident has taken place. Any reports/completed forms should be stored in a safe and secure location and accessed only by the DLP, and the Director where appropriate. All information in relation to child protection concerns, allegations and reports should be stored in a secure locked cabinet in the DLP's office and should be marked as confidential. With regard to personal or sensitive information on young people or Localise personnel, this information should be held for the duration of the involvement of the particular person in the organisation and for an agreed period of time thereafter. Where cases are closed, files should be transferred to locked cabinets and retained in perpetuity. They should be filed so as to be easily accessible in the future.

## **17.0 Complaints Procedure**

Localise recognises that complaints may be made by, or about, staff and volunteers. Localise will endeavor to deal with complaints in an efficient and timely way.

### **17.1 Guidelines For Dealing With Complaints**

- If a volunteer wishes to make a complaint, they should contact the group co-ordinator or community youth officer in Localise head office at the earliest opportunity to discuss the matter. If the volunteer is unhappy with the outcome of this meeting, they can put his/her complaint in writing to the director of Localise. The Localise director will then decide on how to proceed.
- If the complaint relates to the safety and welfare of a young person, it will be examined in accordance with good practice in relation to the safety and welfare of young people.
- The complaint will be dealt with properly, fairly and impartially and in the best interest of the young person.
- Making a complaint will have no implications for further dealings with Localise.
- An official other than those originally involved will examine the complaint.
- The complaint will be reviewed and a reply will be sent within 20 working days. Where it is not possible to meet this target, the complainant will be informed on an ongoing basis until the matter is resolved.
- Localise will endeavour to rectify all matters with regards to any upheld complaints.
- All review outcomes can be appealed to the Director of Localise within a month of the review.
- All false and malicious complaints will be dealt with accordingly.