

## Code of Good Youth Work Practice

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### 1.0 Introduction

Good practice will contribute towards raising the standards of youth work through the creation of a healthy and safe environment within which children and young people may mature and develop. As far as is reasonably practicable, ensure that the following guidelines are observed:

- In all behaviour and attitude towards people one should always respect the rights, dignity and worth of every human being.
- Ensure that the buildings and/or facilities used for activities with young people are suitable, safe and secure.
- Ensure that adequate and appropriate supervision is in place before organising youth work activities. There should always be one adult leader to every eight young people.
- Parental consent must be obtained from the parents or guardians before organising activities for the children in one's care and it is always necessary to enquire for special medical information or dietary requirements.
- A record must be kept at all times (with access of it), with the names, addresses and contact numbers of the parents or guardians of the young people in one's care.
- Volunteers and employees must be sensitive to the risks involved in participation in some contact sports with young people and exercise particular caution in areas such as swimming pools, showers etc.
- Ensure that every activity conducted at or by the youth club, youth group or summer project is covered under the public liability insurance arrangements organised through Localise.
- Particular care must be taken to ensure that the privacy of young people is respected in places like swimming pools, showers, toilets and changing rooms. Separate provision must be made for boys and girls. Where possible, there must be adequate gender based supervision of boys and girls. Supervision must be provided by more than one person.
- One must be sensitive to the possibility of becoming over involved or spending a disproportionate amount of time with any particular individual.
- Appropriate boundaries when dealing with young people entrusted to one's care must be maintained.
- The physical integrity of children and young people must always be respected. This should not preclude normal expressions of warmth or happiness provided that they are acceptable to all parties concerned.
- Day trips, exchange visits or weekends away organised by groups require careful

- advance planning and a proportionate number of volunteers to provide supervision. Particular attention should be taken to ensure that the privacy of young people is respected when young people are away from home and sleeping over.
- In residential environments there must be adequate and gender based supervision for boys and girls. Arrangements and procedures must be put in place to ensure that supervision is provided. Rules and boundaries are made known to the boys and girls involved; and those who have special needs should be accommodated where possible.
- Volunteers and staff must not be alone in dormitories or bedrooms in which children are sleeping. If by extraordinary circumstance a volunteer considers it necessary to be in a dormitory or bedroom without accompaniment, a written record should be maintained of the circumstances.
- Volunteers and staff should be sensitive to the potential risk to personal safety and false allegation (which may arise when they meet alone with a young person in a room). Where it is feasible they might consider leaving the door slightly ajar or informing another colleague that they will be alone in the room with the individual in question. It is recommended that each organisation or group develops a positive attitude among young people that respects the personal space, safety and privacy of their peers.
- Casual visits by children and young people to the home of volunteers and youth workers are to be avoided.
- Comments and jokes of racial, gender or sexual orientation and identity are to be avoided.
- Do not give lifts in cars to individual young people.
- Follow an agreed Code of Discipline when dealing with disruptive behaviour; children and young people benefit from appropriate correction and clearly understood code of discipline. However, corporal punishment of children is not permitted in any circumstances.
- Avail of opportunities for further Youth Work training.
- Youth organisations / groups should offer ongoing development opportunities for volunteers and employees to facilitate the operation of safe practices.
- Volunteers must not arrive for an activity under the influence of drugs or alcohol (prescribed medication is not necessarily included in this. Volunteers are asked to discuss and clarify the use of medication that may affect behaviour or judgment with the relevant Group Coordinator and / or with the assigned Localise staff).
- Bullying of any kind must not be ignored or tolerated and should be dealt with immediately and appropriately by adult leadership team in conjunction with Localise personnel. Please have a look at Localise anti-bullying policy.

## **2.0 One To One Meetings Between Employees / Volunteers And Young**

- With the emergence of specific interventions and programmes in Youth Work, it is now accepted that there are occasions where workers deal with individual young people on a one to one basis. This may also arise in the context of required sanctions or support where a young person needs to be taken out of a group, in everybody's best interest. Due to the nature of the relationship between the worker and the young person there may be occasions where the young person wishes to speak or confide in, or make a disclosure to a worker. This can be extremely important for the young person and should be handled appropriately.

## **3.0 Objective Guidelines for Workers**

- If a young person requests a one to one meeting without warning or when a young person needs to be removed from a group: If you need to talk separately, try to do so in an open environment, in view of others. Try to meet in rooms with visual access, the door open or in an area or room where others are nearby.
- Another worker and/or volunteer should be advised that such a meeting is taking place and the reason for it. A record should be kept of the meeting including names, dates, times, location, reason for the meeting and outcome.
- Workers should never have meetings with individual young people where they are on their own in a building. Should they find themselves in these situations, the group's coordinator and the Director of Localise must be notified as soon as possible.

- As part of a planned structured piece of work: the particular programme or activity should have a clear rationale, aim, methodology, evaluation mechanism and accompanying work plan. Such meeting should take place in an appropriate environment.
- Parents or guardians should be informed as to the nature and purpose of this work, except in circumstances where to do so might place the child in danger.
- Young people should be advised who they should contact if they have any concerns or feel uncomfortable about any aspects of these meetings.

#### **4.0 Home Visits**

- House visits must have a clear purpose and a record of the same must be kept.
- The Group Coordinator and where necessary the Designated Liaison Person should be informed if a house visit is taking place.
- Casual visits to homes of young people must be avoided.
- Do not enter the home of a young person if they are alone in the house.
- Visits by young people to homes of staff members should be avoided. If a young person calls to a staff member home, the matter should be dealt with at the front door and they should never be invited inside the house.
- When the need for a visit to the house of a child or young person arises, professional boundaries must be observed at all times.

#### **5.0 Use of Cars**

- Staff should not undertake any car or minibus journey alone with a child or young person. If, by any circumstances, only one adult is available, there should be a minimum of two children or young people present for the entire journey.
- In the event of an emergency, where it is necessary to make a journey alone with a child, a record of this should be made and the child's parent or guardian and the group's coordinator and/or the Director of Localise should be informed as soon as possible.
- Although using personal staff cars for transporting young people is to be avoided, in the event that this is required, staff must have adequate insurance cover (fully cover), and should never carry more than the permitted number of passengers.
- Staff can choose not to transport young people if they so wish, but they must be reminded to act in the best interest of the child at all times.

#### **6.0 Recruitment and Selection Procedures**

- All new staff members/volunteers must comply with the Localise Good Practice Recruitment and Selection Procedures. Each applicant will receive a pack containing Localise information, application form, character reference form and Localise Code of Good Practice. Employment/volunteer duties may commence on notification of a successful outcome by Localise.

#### **7.0 Reporting Procedures**

- If a young person makes a disclosure of abuse to a staff member or volunteer leader, this matter needs to be dealt with confidently and sensitively and it must be reported without delay to the Localise Designated Liaison Person.
- Where reasonable grounds for concern of child abuse exist, a report will be made, through the Designated Liaison Person, without delay. The DLP must make the report to the duty social worker in the local area of the child's residence. This report may be by telephone, in writing or in person (but must always be followed up in writing and documented, using HSE reporting forms).
- In case of the DLP making the report, the social worker may wish to talk with the person to whom the disclosure was first made or who has the concern.
- In the event of an emergency or the non-availability of the HSE, the report will be made to An Garda Síochána.
- If on receipt of a report, where the DLP concludes that reasonable grounds for concern do not exist and thus does not make a report, the DLP must inform the reporter, in writing, as to this decision and the reporter may decide to report themselves directly to the statutory agencies. The reporter will still be covered

- under the Protections for Persons Reporting Act. In case of doubt the DLP will seek advice from the HSE social worker.
- When Localise is making a child protection report to the HSE, parents must be informed, unless doing so would put the young person at risk. The DLP will make this decision in conjunction with advice received from the HSE. The basis for a decision not to inform will be recorded.
- All action, communication and attempted action and communication in relation to Child Protection will be promptly and accurately recorded and stored safely by all of those involved.
- If the report/referral receives an appropriate response from the HSE, Localise may continue to work with the child where appropriate (and with advice from the HSE).
- If referral does not receive an appropriate response, the DLP will contact the appropriate HSE social worker/team leader to seek clarification.
- Supports for young person and staff/volunteers involved need to be considered throughout the process.
- This reporting procedure is in accordance with NYCI Child Protection Guidelines.

## **8.0 Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse**

- The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to the Health Service Executive or An Garda Síochána. This protection applies to organisation/groups as well as individuals. It is considered, therefore, in the first instance, organisations/groups should assume responsibility for reporting child abuse to the appropriate authorities. Reports to the Health Service Executive and An Garda Síochána should be made by the Designated Liaison Person; following their own organisations procedures. Each organisation should ensure that reports are passed on as quickly as possible to the statutory authorities.

## **9.0 Garda Vetting**

- In keeping with good practice procedures Localise is mandated to implement Garda Vetting as part of our recruitment and selection procedures. As and from 1st September 2006 all staff members volunteers must complete a Garda Vetting Form. Employment and volunteer duties cannot be commenced until the applicant receives notification from Localise.

## **10.0 Confidentiality**

- It is important that the Child Protection Policy of a group or organisation operate strict codes of confidentiality. Confidentiality is about managing sensitive information that arises in a trusting relationship and doing so in a manner that is respectful, professional and purposeful. In matters of child abuse a volunteer/ employer should never promise to keep secret any information which is divulged. If a young person discloses information to a volunteer / employee, he or she should explain that it cannot be kept secret. The volunteer/employee should also, as supportively as possible, explain what will happen to the information and what the outcome of reporting is likely to be. All information regarding concern or assessment of child abuse should only be shared on "a need to know" basis in the best interest of the child. In other words, it should never be the subject of conversation between other persons in the group or organisation, employees, volunteers or young people, unless they are directly involved. Passing information to the relevant authorities is not a breach of confidentiality. Information, which is gathered for one purpose, should not be used for any other purpose without consulting the person who provided the information.