

Tipperary  
Regional  
Youth  
Service

Child Protection Policy  
2010

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## Section 1

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Tipperary Regional Youth Service, a limited company with charitable status, is a local youth service in Tipperary and East Limerick. Formerly Cashel and Emly Youth Service, it was founded in 1970 to provide a response to the needs of the young people in the region. Tipperary Regional Youth Service is affiliated to Youth Work Ireland. Tipperary Regional Youth Service targets the social, personal and educational development of young people aged 8 to 18, enabling them to take greater control over their lives by being given opportunities to make choices, take decisions and exercise responsibility.

The issue of good practice in Child Protection has long been to the fore in Tipperary Regional Youth Service as we seek to develop and implement the highest standards of service in all aspects of our work with young people. Tipperary Regional Youth Service staff and volunteers carry a greater responsibility than ever as we are invariably placed in a *loco parentis* role whether it be in the traditional youth club setting, in youth centres, in our youth information services, in face to face work with young people, on study trips abroad or in the vital training of young leaders to take on roles of responsibility in the development of an upcoming generation.

### Our Mission

**To provide a range of quality and professional services to young people in a safe and inclusive environment, contributing to a changing society for the benefit of young people.**

### Our Activities:

Tipperary Regional Youth Service utilises a range of delivery mechanisms to include:

- Programmes
- Groups
- Events
- Individual / one to one work
- Club/ drop in
- Outreach
- Detached

In general we operate through a model of youth work which incorporates:

- Active citizenship
- Youth Participation
- Volunteerism
- Personal / Skills Development
- Empowerment
- Fun

We work with young people aged 8 to 18, and strive to ensure that there is a variety of programmes and events which all young people in our catchment area can enjoy. We are a rural county, and our young people face a variety of disadvantages, not only in the economic sense but through isolation, lack of services and facilities, fewer opportunities and often a lack of critical mass. We aim to develop both targeted interventions particularly with young people who face multiple disadvantages, who suffer from poverty and difficult socio-economic circumstances, but also general interventions on behalf of the general youth population in the county.

## 1.2 CHILD PROTECTION POLICY STATEMENT

### Statement of Intent

- **Tipperary Regional Youth Service will work with children, parents and the community to ensure the safety of children. Tipperary Regional Youth Service intends to create an environment in which children and young people are safe from abuse and in which any suspicion of abuse is promptly and appropriately responded to.**
- **Tipperary Regional Youth Service also intends to promote awareness of child protection throughout its training and learning programmes for adults.**
- **Tipperary Regional Youth Service will empower young people, through its youth work practice to promote their right to be strong, resilient and listened to. Young people will be treated with respect, their views sought, heard and taken seriously.**

Good practice in Child Protection is not merely about adhering to the Children First Guidelines or the Code of Good Practice for the Youth Work Sector as published by the Department of Education and Science. Good practice in Child Protection in Tipperary Regional Youth Service will influence the entire delivery of our work through our affiliated youth clubs, projects and other youth groups. Procedures are in place through this policy, in line with Children First which include the following:

- Reporting procedure
- Confidentiality statement
- Code of Behaviour for staff/ volunteers / young people
- Recruitment
- Training, supervision and management of staff/ volunteers / young people
- Complaints Procedure
- Accidents Procedure
- Procedures for dealing with allegations against staff and volunteers
- Safe management of activities

Tipperary Regional Youth Service's Child Protection Policy is based on current best practice and procedures as implemented by the statutory and voluntary sectors including the HSE. Above all else the Child Protection Policy is based on the key principle that the *"welfare of children is of paramount importance"*<sup>1</sup>. In order to ensure that this policy remains relevant and a key component of our work practice, it will be reviewed on an annual basis. Training will also be provided to all staff and volunteers around Child Protection.

This child protection policy is adapted from the Youth Work Ireland Guidelines and from the HSE Guide for the Development of Child Protection Policy, supported by the Information and Advice Officer – Children First, HSE. The guidelines include extracts and references from Children First (Dept of Health & Children 1999 and 2004), The Code of Good Practice for the Youth Work Sector (Dept of Education & Science 2000), Getting it Right (Volunteer Development Agency 2004), Child Safety and Youth Exchange Programmes Guidelines for Good Practice (Leargas 2004) and Our Duty to Care (Dept of Health and Children 2002).

Tipperary Regional Youth Service's Child Protection Policy has been examined and approved by the HSE North Tipperary Policy Review Panel, in December 2009.

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<sup>1</sup> See Section 1.9 Principles for Best Practice in Child Protection in 'Children First' for more detailed principles, upon which this Policy is based. [http://www.dohc.ie/publications/pdf/children\\_first.pdf?direct=1](http://www.dohc.ie/publications/pdf/children_first.pdf?direct=1)

## 1.3 DEFINITIONS, SIGNS AND INDICATORS OF ABUSE.

### 1.3.1 Definitions of abuse

In this policy, as per National Guidelines "child" means a person under the age of 18 years, excluding a person who is or has been married.

*As per 'Children First' Child abuse is generally described under four headings<sup>2</sup>:*

#### I Neglect

Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, medical care, attachment to and affection from adults or medical care. The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that his or her well being and/or development are severely affected. Neglect generally becomes apparent over a period of time, rather than at any one point. *Harm* can be defined as the ill-treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child.

#### II Emotional Abuse

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

- the imposition of negative attributes on children, expressed by persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming;
- conditional parenting;
- emotional unavailability by the child's parent/carer;
- unrealistic, inappropriate expectations of the child;
- failure to show interest in, or provide age-appropriate opportunities for the child's cognitive and emotional development;
- unreasonable or over harsh disciplinary measures;
- Exposure to domestic violence.

The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interaction dominates and becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/carer.

#### III Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from willful or neglectful failure to protect a child. Examples of physical abuse include:

- shaking;
- use of excessive force in handling;
- deliberate poisoning;
- suffocation;
- Munchausen's Syndrome by proxy where an adult may fabricate stories of illness about a child so as to cause physical signs of illness.

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on definitions of child abuse, see Chapter 3 of 'Children First'. The definitions contained in this Policy are based on the definitions of child abuse as per Children First.

#### **IV Sexual Abuse**

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

- exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of the child;
- intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification;
- masturbation in the presence of a child;
- sexual intercourse with a child;
- sexual exploitation of a child.

**While child abuse has been described under the previous four heading, due consideration should also be given to instances of bullying, organized abuse and peer abuse. (YWI, 2004)**

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

Examples of bullying includes:

- » Teasing
- » Taunting
- » Threatening
- » Hitting
- » Extortion
- » S-texting

Bullying may take place in any setting whether it be in schools, the home or in a youth services setting. The more extreme forms of bullying would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse.

**Organised Abuse:** Child abuse may occur in a number of ways, including organised abuse. This occurs when one person moves into an area/institution and systematically entraps children for abusive purposes (mainly sexual) or when two or more adults conspire to similarly abuse children using inducements.

**Peer Abuse:** In some cases of abuse the alleged perpetrator will also be a child. In these situations the child protection procedures should be adhered to for both the victim and the alleged abuser. 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.

**Vulnerable Children:** Certain children are more vulnerable to abuse than others. These include children with disabilities and children who, for one reason or another, are separated from parents or other family members and who depend on others for their care and protection. The same categories of abuse - neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse - may be applicable, but may take a slightly different form. (Children First, 1999)

**Fatal Child Abuse:** In the tragic circumstances where a child dies as a result of abuse or neglect there are three important facets to be considered: criminal, child protection and bereavement aspects. (Children First, 1999). Refer to Children First for further information.

### 1.3.2 Recognising Child Abuse

There are commonly three stages in the identification of child abuse (Children First, 1999)

These are:

- (i) considering the possibility
- (ii) looking out for signs and indicators of abuse
- (iii) recording of information.

#### *(i) Considering the Possibility*

Tipperary Regional Youth Service endeavors to ensure that staff and volunteers have the skills and information to recognize child abuse. However, the ability to recognize child abuse depends as much on a person's willingness to accept the possibility of its existence as it does on their knowledge and information.

The possibility of child abuse should be considered if a child appears to have suffered suspicious injury for which no reasonable explanation can be offered, if they seem distressed without obvious reason or displays persistent or new behavioural problems. The possibility of child abuse should also be considered if the child displays unusual or fearful responses to parents/ carers.

#### *(ii) Looking out for signs and indicators of abuse - possible physical and behavioral indicators of Child Abuse<sup>3</sup>:*

The following are a list of indicators of child abuse. It is important to stress that no one indicator should be seen as conclusive in itself of abuse; it may indeed indicate conditions other than child abuse. All signs and symptoms must be examined in the total context of the child's situation and family circumstances (Children First, 1999).

#### **Neglect**

- Frequent minor or serious injuries
- Untreated illness
- Hunger, lack of nutrition
- Tiredness
- Inadequate and inappropriate clothing
- Lack of supervision
- Low self esteem
- Lack of peer relationships

#### **Emotional**

- Unreasonable mood and/or behavioural changes
- Aggression, withdrawal or an 'I don't care attitude'
- Lack of attachment
- Low self esteem
- Attention seeking
- Depression or suicide attempts
- Persistent nightmares, disturbed sleep, bedwetting, reluctance to go to bed
- A fear of adults or particular individuals e.g. family member, baby-sitter or indeed excessive clinginess to parents/carers
- Panic attacks

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<sup>3</sup> See Section 3.9 Guidelines for Recognition, "Children First" for more information on recognising child abuse [http://www.dohc.ie/publications/pdf/children\\_first.pdf?direct=1](http://www.dohc.ie/publications/pdf/children_first.pdf?direct=1)

**Physical**

- Frequent bruising, fractures, cuts, burns and other injuries
- Torn clothing
- Bite marks burns or welts
- Bruises in places difficult to mark e.g. behind ears, groin
- Undue or unnecessary fear
- Aggressiveness or withdrawn
- Absconding frequently from home

**Sexual**

- Over affectionate or inappropriate sexual behaviour
- Age inappropriate sexual knowledge given the child's age, which is often demonstrated in
  - language, play or drawings
  - Fondling or exposure of genital areas
  - Hints about sexual activity
- Unusual reluctance to join in normal activities which involve undressing, e.g. games/swimming

*(iii) Recording of Information*

If abuse is suspected, it is important to establish the grounds for concern by obtaining as much detailed information as possible. Observations should be accurately recorded and should include dates, times, names, locations, context and any other information which may be relevant. Refer to Section 2 for procedures on recording information and where to bring this recorded information.

## 1.4 TIPPERARY REGIONAL YOUTH SERVICE CODE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Tipperary Regional Youth Service's Child Protection Policy operates a strict code 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.

- Youth Work is based upon trusting relationships and the sharing by young people to youth workers of personal information and problems is not uncommon. If there is a need to discuss the circumstances of a child/ young person or their family with other professionals, steps are taken to seek the child/ family's agreement first, unless it is believed that a child is likely to suffer serious harm without some form of immediate action. Anyone, (youth group member or adult leader), disclosing information in this context needs to know in advance the limits of confidentiality and the responsibilities attached.
- In matters of child abuse a youth worker can never promise to keep secret any information that is divulged. A youth worker should explain to the young person disclosing why s/he cannot keep this information secret and also explain to the young person what s/he intends to do with it. Every effort should be made to get the young person to understand this strategy and consent to it. Those working with a child and a family should make this clear to all parties involved.
- All information regarding concern or assessment of child abuse should be shared on "a need to know" basis in the best interest of the child. The giving of information to relevant others, for the protection of the child, is not a breach of confidentiality (Children First, 1999 :5.2.3). It must be clearly understood that information, which is gathered for one purpose, must not be used for another without consulting the person who provided that information.
- If a child makes a disclosure, allegation or voices a concern to a staff member/ volunteer they must be informed gently but as quickly as appropriate in the conversation that information cannot be kept secret. They must be informed about TRY's procedures about sharing information. They must be informed that the Child Protection Designated Person will be told and the (limited) list of other agencies/ individuals, including parents who may be informed during the follow up.
- If a third party makes a disclosure, allegation or voices a concern, they must be informed that the information cannot be secret. They must be informed that the Child Protection Designated Person will be told and the (limited) list of other agencies/ individuals, including parents who may be informed during the follow up.
- On informing parents about disclosures, they must be informed about Tipperary Regional Youth Services procedures in this regard and the relationship between Tipperary Regional Youth Service's policy and the HSE procedures.
- Any party making a disclosure allegation or voicing a concern must be informed about follow up actions.
- In the interests of natural justice, it is important that anyone making a disclosure be firmly discouraged about discussing such a disclosure with anyone beyond the Child Protection Officer in the initial stages of the report, and beyond relevant statutory agencies further on.
- Records pertaining to any child protection incident will be kept in a safe and confidential manner. They are kept securely, with access limited to the Designated Child Protection Officer only. Individual records will be of limited access on a need to know basis only, according to involvement in individual cases.

**Section 2**

- 2.1 Designated Child Protection Officer - Tipperary Regional Youth Service**
  - 2.1.1 Designated Child Protection Officer Contact Details**
- 2.2 How to deal with disclosures/ concerns**
  - 2.2.1 Dealing with Concerns**
  - 2.2.2 Dealing with Disclosure**
  - 2.2.3 Dealing with Information from Third Parties**
  - 2.2.4 Dealing with retrospective disclosure by an adult**
  - 2.2.5 Dealing with disclosure of abuse from another young person**
- 2.3 Mechanisms for internal recording and reporting**
  - 2.3.1 Tipperary Regional Youth Service Reporting Procedure**
  - 2.3.2 Storing of Information**
- 2.4 Reporting Procedures to the HSE and An Garda Siochana**
  - 2.4.1 Responsibility to report suspected or actual child abuse**
  - 2.4.2 Procedures for reporting concerns to the HSE and Gardai**
  - 2.4.3 Consultation with a Social Worker**
  - 2.4.4 Protection for persons reporting child abuse**
  - 2.4.5 Informing parents that concerns are being passed on to the HSE**
- 2.5. Dealing with Allegations against Staff and Volunteers**
  - 2.5.1 General Procedures**
  - 2.5.2 Guidance on dealing with an allegation of abuse against a staff member/ volunteer**
  - 2.5.3 Additional Considerations involving Staff Members:**
  - 2.5.4 Additional Considerations involving Volunteers:**

## 2.1 DESIGNATED CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER – TIPPERARY REGIONAL YOUTH SERVICE

Tipperary Regional Youth Service has appointed a Designated Child Protection Officer who is responsible for the maintaining of good practice in child protection in the organisation, and who deals with child protection concerns as reported by volunteers, staff members or young people, as per the directions of Children First.

The Child Protection Officer is responsible for ensuring that Tipperary Regional Youth Service implements these Child Protection Guidelines, and adheres to *Children First* (1999 and 2004) and the *Code of Good Practice for The Youth Work Sector* (2003) as issued by the Department of Education and Science. The Child Protection Officer shall also assist in providing relevant training for staff and volunteers in child protection matters and shall act as a liaison person with the HSE and An Garda Síochána.

*The Child Protection Officer should:*

- i. have undertaken specific training in child protection procedures and practices
- ii. have a knowledge of Community/Youth Work
- iii. have good listening/feedback skills
- iv. possess a level of knowledge on the topic of child abuse that is relevant and appropriate to their role
- v. be at ease in discussing emotional or sexual matters

The Child Protection Officers needs to be accessible to all persons associated with the organisation and will also need appropriate support and supervision in their role. A clear job description should outline his or her responsibilities to victims, volunteers, staff members, their employer and statutory authorities.

*The Child Protection Officer will:*

- Operate within the guidelines set by the HSE as approved by Tipperary Regional Youth Service
- Report as appropriate, suspicions and allegations of child abuse to the statutory authorities
- Liaise between the organisation, members, staff and the authorities, where this is necessary
- Build up networks with authorities and relevant agencies/resource groups including HSEs, Gardai and Community Services.
- Facilitate the provision of support to alleged victims, youth leader and staff making a referral or against whom an allegation has been made.
- Advise the organisation, members or staff on individual cases
- Advise the organisation on good practice and on training needs
- Organise/facilitate training and workshops on child protection
- Maintain proper records on all cases referred to him/her in a secure and confidential manner
- Remain informed about current developments re provision, practice, support services, legal obligations/requirements, policy and legislation

**2.1.1 Designated Person Contact Details:****Tipperary Regional Youth Service Designated Person (All) as from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2009:**

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**Cora Horgan**  
CEO  
Tipperary Regional Youth Service  
Croke St.,  
Thurles,  
Co Tipperary  
T: 0504 23426 M: 087 7720111

**Tipperary Regional Youth Service Deputy Designated Person (Projects) as from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2009:**

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**Carmel O'Neill**  
Tipperary Regional Youth Service  
Hogan Sq.,  
Cashel,  
Co Tipperary  
T: 062 62824 M: 087 6188075

**Tipperary Regional Youth Service Deputy Designated Person (Youth Clubs) as from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2009:**

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**Maura Carey**  
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Cashel,  
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## 2.2 HOW TO DEAL WITH CONCERNS / DISCLOSURES

### 2.2.1 Dealing with concerns:

If a person has misgivings about the safety of a child they should discuss this immediately with the Designated Child Protection Officer in Tipperary Regional Youth Service.

If a staff member / volunteer has a concern, that concern should be immediately recorded.

- It is important that persons reporting suspected child abuse should establish the basis for their concerns. Ways of doing this could include informally checking in with the child or parent/guardian/ carer, as long as this does not put the child at further risk – if the parent/guardian / carer is suspected. Outcomes of any informal check in should be recorded. Recording of concerns should be done on the specific forms provided, and given to the Child Protection Officer for storage.
- Workers can also check concerns with child, parent and colleagues. Check with the Child Protection Officer first. It is important to remember that checking concerns is not the same as interviewing or investigating.
- Do not interview the child or the child's parents/carers in any detail about alleged abuse; this will be carried out by the HSE social worker or An Garda Síochána.
- Notify the Child Protection Officer immediately using the general procedure for reporting. If the incident occurs out of hours, the CEO should be contacted. Out of hours incidents will be referred immediately to the Gardai.

### 2.2.2 Dealing with disclosures

Youth work can provide an environment which encourages security, confidence and trust thus enabling young people to have the confidence to share their concerns with others. A child or young person will select carefully the recipient of his/ her disclosure and the person chosen will be the one who is trusted and in whom they have confidence.

It is important that a child who discloses child abuse feels supported and facilitated in what, for him or her, may be a frightening and traumatic process. A child may feel perplexed, afraid, angry, despondent and guilty. It is important that any negative feelings that the child may have are not increased by the kind of response which the disclosure elicits. A child who divulges an allegation of child abuse to a youth work leader, (whether a volunteer or paid staff member), makes a profound act of trust and must be treated with respect, sensitivity and care.

It is important to note that a disclosure may also involve another young person, either with or without consent<sup>1</sup>. In the case of such a disclosure it is important that both parties are checked in with, and that the same recording and documenting procedures are followed. In the case of a disclosure of consent, TRYS Sexual Health Policy should be referred to. In the case of non-consent the procedures in this policy will be followed, with heed for the needs of all parties.

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<sup>1</sup> The legal age at which a person is currently competent to consent to sexual intercourse is currently seventeen (17) years.

*How to respond*

When responding it is of utmost importance that allegations are handled in a sensitive and discreet manner and any response to a child making an allegation should take the following into consideration:

## DO:

- React in a calm manner
- Accept and take what the child says seriously;
- Reassure the child that it was right to tell somebody what happened;
- Listen carefully and attentively to the child;
- Write down immediately afterwards what was said in the child's own words, including where, when, any other significant factors noting marks and signs observed. All reports should be signed, timed and dated by the person recording the event;
- Be careful when seeking clarification. Conversation should be supportive and for the purpose of clarification only;
- Explain and make sure that the child understands what will happen next;
- Confine and focus the information that is being recorded and referred. Ensure that it is shared with the child officer only and not made available to third parties who have no right to know;
- Report to the Child Protection Officer;
- Record your Report .

## DON'T:

- Do nothing;
- Panic;
- Ask leading questions or seek intimate details beyond those volunteered by the child, such as, whether specific acts not mentioned by the child occurred or whether a specific person not named by the child carried out the abuse;
- Promise to keep secret what will be revealed. It is important to tell the child that Tipperary Regional Youth Service has a 'no secret's policy but try to alleviate fears, while remembering that TRYS cannot guarantee the child's safety outside of the organisation, nor can TRYS reassure the child that they will be safe following the disclosure;
- Make the child repeat the story unnecessarily;
- Delay;
- Express any opinions about the alleged abuser to the person reporting to you;
- Confront the alleged abuser or start to investigate. (Allegations made should not be investigated or judged by Tipperary Regional Youth Service but passed on to the Child Protection Officer within Tipperary Regional Youth Service who will immediately report it to the HSE or Gardai)

**2.2.3 Dealing with information from a third party****What is a third party?**

The following categories of third party may be distinguished, each of which may have distinct requirements for protection:

1. the child's family members
2. other people – other children, friends, carers, neighbours and any other individual who can be identified within the record.

If the third party decides to report directly to the HSE themselves, this must also be recorded in the report, including date of reporting and known responses/ outcomes. The Child Protection Officer will

also contact the HSE to ensure that the third party has made the report. If not, then the Child Protection Officer will then contact the HSE / Gardai themselves.

*The person receiving the information should note the following:*

- The third party must be told that their report cannot remain secret, and there may be follow-up. It should be determined whether the Third Party is willing to be involved in such follow-up.
- The person receiving the information should not express any opinions about the alleged abuser to the person reporting to you;
- All third party information must be recorded immediately. All third party reports must be forwarded to the Child Protection Officer immediately. The Child Protection Officer will then contact the HSE/ Gardai as per general procedures. Neither the person receiving the information or the Third Party should undertake any investigation themselves.

#### **2.2.4 Dealing with retrospective disclosures of abuse by adults**

In recent years there have been increasing numbers of disclosures by adults of abuse which took place during their childhood. These revelations often come to light in the context of the adults attending counselling. In these situations it is essential that consideration is given to the current risk to any child who may be in contact with the alleged abuser. If any risk is deemed to exist, the staff member should carefully record what has been said to them, and report the allegation to the Designated Child Protection Officer who should in turn report to the HSE without delay. The adult concerned should be given contact details of the HSE Adult Counselling Service. Investigation of disclosures by adult victims of past abuse frequently uncovers current incidences of abuse and is therefore an effective means of stopping the cycle of abuse.

**(Children First, 1999 : 4.6)**

#### **2.2.5 Dealing with disclosures of abuse by another YOUNG PERSON**

If an allegation is made against a young person it should be considered a child protection issue for both of the young people involved and the child protection procedures should be adhered to for both the victim and the alleged abuser.

- The standard reporting procedures should be followed, and advice sought from the statutory authorities regarding informing the parents/carers/guardians of the young people concerned.
- The follow up on an allegation of abuse against a volunteer should be made in consultation with the HSE and An Garda Siochana. An immediate meeting should be arranged with these two agencies. Special consideration will have to be given to the legal consideration of the young person(s) age and in particular if they are under 18 yrs of age. These are matters that should be discussed with the statutory authorities as a matter of urgency.
- Decisions regarding the future participation within Tipperary Regional Youth Service of the young person alleged to have committed the abuse should be made at management level, following the assessment made and the decisions arrived at above.

## **2.3 MECHANISMS FOR INTERNAL RECORDING AND REPORTING CONCERNS, DISCLOSURES, INFORMATION**

All concerns, disclosures and information must be recorded at all stages of an incident, both by the reporting party, other staff/ volunteers involved and by the Child Protection Officer. Record only facts and observations, not speculation or opinion. A template for recording concerns, disclosures and information is provided in at the end of this policy. This form should be filled in as soon as possible and submitted to the Child Protection Officer for storage.

Information is recorded as fact or hearsay – if hearsay is being recorded it should be clearly identified as such. However, it may be difficult to distinguish fact and hearsay so the person recording information should indicate in the record if there may be doubt. It is essential that the person recording information records carefully what is said and reports to the Child Protection Officer.

When recording a concern, disclosures or information, record the disclosure / conversation, including the following:

- When the concern/ disclosure or information was given (time, date)
- Who gave the information
- Full account of grounds for concern
- Follow up action

It is important to tell the person making a disclosure that the conversation will be recorded to submitted to the Child Protection Officer.

### **2.3.1 Tipperary Regional Youth Service Reporting Procedure**

Record absolutely everything regarding the concern/ disclosure/ information. Any report to be made must be done so WITHOUT DELAY.

When reporting a suspected incident/ concern the following should take place:

1. The person making the initial report should write down the concern/ issue.
2. They should then contact the Designated Child Protection officer IMMEDIATELY. Where the Designated person is not available, contact the deputy designated person. Where this person is not available, contact the HSE/ Gardai.
3. The Designated Person will contact the Duty Social Worker/HSE Designated Officer<sup>2</sup> in the HSE with the report, by telephone/ written report in the Standard Reporting Form. If a third party makes the report (e.g. Child Protection Officer), it is likely that the duty care social worker will wish to speak to the person who first witnessed the incident, received the disclosure or felt concerned to make the report.
4. For out of duty social work hours, any emergency situation should be referred to the Gardai.

### **2.3.2 Storing of Information**

- The Designated Child Protection Officer, and Deputy Designated Child Protection Officer have copies of the Standard Reporting Form. It is also available in this policy – see Appendix 2.
- Written accounts of all meetings held in the initial report of a concern/ incident should be kept and submitted to the Designated Child Protection officer.
- The Child Protection Officer will keep a copy of the Standard Reporting Form submitted to the HSE
- The Child Protection Officer will maintain a file containing any correspondence / follow up / actions on the incident / concern/ individual child.

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<sup>2</sup> All HSE staff members are now considered designated HSE officers.

- This information will be stored in a safe secure location, separate to any other files on any of the individuals involved and accessible only to the Designated Child Protection Officer.
- A report of suspected abuse to the HSE would not normally be released under Freedom Of Information (FOI), as it would be considered to be 'third party confidential' information. However, if a request was appealed to the FOI commissioner, or if it was subject to a discovery order, the information could be released. The rule of thumb is, that when it comes to reporting information, there is no guarantee of confidentiality. This is written on the back of the yellow Standard Form for Reporting.

## 2.4 Reporting Procedures to the HSE and An Garda Siochana

### 2.4.1 Responsibility to report suspected or actual child abuse

Society has a duty of care towards children. Parents/carers are primarily responsible for the safety and welfare of the children in their care. The HSE is the statutory body responsible for child protection and welfare and must intervene when children are harmed or fail to receive adequate care. However, HSE professionals are dependent on the co-operation of members of the public and professionals in contact with children to bring child care and protection concerns to their attention in as comprehensive a fashion as possible. (Children First, 3.10.7).

If staff and volunteers of Tipperary Regional Youth Service know/suspect/ have grounds for reasonable concern that a young person has been or is at risk of being harmed, they have a duty to convey this concern to the Designated Person/Child Protection Officer, who will report the information to the HSE. The HSE and Gardai have protocols in place for sharing reports on suspected child abuse. In an emergency situation, particularly out of hours, report directly to the Gardai.

*Tipperary Regional Youth Services has the following responsibilities:*

- To ensure that the protection and safety of the child is paramount
- To ensure that the principle of natural justice is preserved in that a person is innocent until proven otherwise
- To ensure that the principle of confidentiality whereby only those that need to know should be told of a suspicion/allegation/disclosure of abuse and that the number that need to be kept informed should be kept to a minimum
- To ensure that all staff/volunteers are committed to the adherence of our Child Protection Policy – the child protection policy should form part of an staff member's written contract of employment / volunteer contract and should also form part of the condition of affiliation/registration by any group to the organisation.
- To provide children with the highest possible standard of care in order to promote their well-being and safeguard them from harm.

### 2.4.2 Procedures for reporting concerns to the HSE and Gardai

The statutory authorities should always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse. A suspicion that is not supported by any objective indicator of abuse or neglect would not constitute reasonable grounds of for concern.

*The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:*

- specific indication from the child that s/he was abused;
- an account by the person who saw the child being abused or a third party
- evidence such as injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused in any other way;
- an injury or behaviour, which is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse. An example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour;
- consistent indication, over a period of time, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

(Children First, 1999 :4.3.2 and 4.3.3)

*Information required when a report is being made to the HSE/ Gardai<sup>3</sup>*

When the Child Protection Officer/ an individual is reporting an allegation of abuse to the HSE and/or An Garda Síochána, the Standard Reporting Form (Standard Form for Reporting Child Protection and/or Welfare Concerns to the HSE) should be filled in in as much detail as possible. The standard reporting form to the HSE is included in this policy.

Ensure that as much detail as possible is recorded from the outset, including all relevant names and contact details, including the person making the report, relevant dates, a record of the incident / grounds for concern and details of any actions taken or to be taken.

### **2.4.3 Consultation with a Social Worker**

Disclosure and allegations of abuse and information from a third party are clear grounds for reporting to the HSE and must always be reported without delay. If the Child Protection Officer is unsure about any aspect of the referral, or if they need to establish if there are reasonable grounds for reporting to the HSE, prior to making a formal written report to the HSE, the Child Protection Officer may find it useful to make an initial phone call. It is generally most helpful if the person wishing to report child abuse concerns makes personal contact with the duty social worker<sup>4</sup> as this will assist in gathering as much information as possible about the child and their situation.

### **2.4.4 Protection 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 HSE or An Garda Síochána. This means that even if a reported suspicion of child abuse proves unfounded a plaintiff who took an action would have to prove that the reporter had not acted reasonably and in good faith in making the report. This protection applies to organisations and to individuals. It is considered therefore that organisations should assume full responsibility for reporting suspected child abuse to the appropriate authorities. Reports to HSEs and to the Gardai should be made by the Child Protection Officer, as per the organisation's policy and guidelines.

*Section 3 (1) of the Act (1999) states:*

*3. (1) A person who apart from this section, would be so liable shall not be liable in damages in respect of the communication, whether in writing or otherwise, by him or her to an appropriate person of his or her opinion that:-*

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

*(b) a child's health development or welfare has been or is being avoidably impaired or neglected, unless it is proven that he or she has not acted reasonably and in good faith in forming that opinion and communicating it to the appropriate person.*

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 2 for the Standard Reporting Form to the HSE

<sup>4</sup> The duty social worker is the designated person at any one time in the Social Work Department responsible for Child Protection.

**2.4.5 Informing parents that concerns are being passed on to the HSE**

The ideal scenario in any situation is that parents/carers are informed of any reasons for professional concern and that a report is being made to the HSE about a suspected incident / concern. Informing the parent/ carer should be done by the Child Protection Officer, in consultation with the duty Social Worker, in order to ensure that the safety of the child is maintained. Parents will not be informed by TRYS if this would constitute a risk to the child. Irrespective of whether the parent/ carer is informed prior to the concern being passed on to the HSE, they will be contacted by the HSE on foot of further action being taken.

**See Appendix 3 for relevant local numbers for the Gardai / HSE**

## 2.5 DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF/ VOLUNTEERS

In the case of an allegation against a staff member/ volunteer<sup>5</sup>, Tipperary Regional Youth Service has due regard for the rights and interests of the child and those of the staff member/volunteer against whom the allegation is made. In recognising this dual responsibility in respect of both the child and the staff member/ volunteer, Tipperary Regional Youth Service has agreed procedures to address the situations where allegations of child abuse are made against a staff member or a volunteer and will access legal advice as necessary. All Tipperary Regional Youth Service staff members and volunteers, will be informed of this policy on commencing employment/ voluntary work/ membership with Tipperary Regional Youth Service.

### 2.5.1 General Procedures

It is important to note that there are two basic procedures to be followed in Tipperary Regional Youth Service when an allegation is made against an employee or a volunteer:

- i. the reporting procedure in respect of the child.
- ii. the procedure to be followed in dealing with an employee/volunteer, against whom an allegation has been made.

The same person should not have responsibility for dealing with both the reporting issues and the employment issues/support to staff member / volunteer. It is preferable to separate these issues and manage them independently. In the case whereby the Chief Executive is also the designated person, the Deputy Designated Child Protection Officer will be involved in the reporting side of the issue/ concern, while the CEO will have responsibility for the employment issues / support to staff member or volunteer.

Staff/volunteers may be subjected to erroneous or malicious allegations. Therefore, any allegation of abuse should be dealt with sensitively and support provided for staff including counselling where necessary. However, the primary goal is to protect the child while taking care to treat the staff member/volunteer fairly.

### 2.5.2 Guidance on dealing with an allegation of abuse against a staff member/ volunteer

Where an allegation of abuse has been made against a staff member or volunteer, the first priority of the organisation is to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk. In addition the right of that staff member or volunteer to natural justice and due process has also to be respected. Tipperary Regional Youth Service must deal with the matter expeditiously, and with the highest possible standards of confidentiality, conscious at all times of the rights of the child, families and staff and the need for fairness to all concerned.

The staff member who receives a complaint/ allegation about another staff member or volunteer will automatically follow normal child protection procedures. The CEO / Chairperson of Tipperary Regional Youth Service will, as a matter of urgency, take any necessary protective measures. Referrals to the Chairperson is the role of the CEO / Child Protection officer. These measures should be proportionate to the level of risk and should not unreasonably penalise the staff member or volunteer, financially or otherwise, unless necessary to protect the children. Where protective measures do penalise the staff member or volunteer, it is important that early consideration be given

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<sup>5</sup> This also includes board of directors, work placement students, assistant leaders .

to the case. **It may be necessary to take legal advice in this regard.** Any action taken, based on an allegation, should be based on opinion formed reasonably and in good faith.

The standard reporting procedures should be followed for any report being made to the HSE. If the CEO is dealing with the matter, he/she may still require the assistance or advice of the Deputy Child Protection Officer. Where an allegation is made against the CEO or the Deputy Child Protection Officer, they cannot be involved. In this case of allegations being made against the CEO, the Chairperson of the organisation becomes the person responsible to deal with the situation, with support from the Deputy Designated Child Protection Officer.

*In responding to an allegation against a staff member / volunteer the following must apply:*

- The allegation must be recorded at source – record what the child has told the initial person, as soon as possible.
- The allegation must be reported to the CEO or chairperson immediately
- Determine what arrangements are required to protect children involved so that they are not exposed to any unnecessary risk. Determining the level of risk will consider other children, including access to other children, both within TRYS and in other fora. This should be considered as part of the assessment and, thus, any such information should be passed on to the HSE.
- The CEO must refer the matter immediately to the Chairperson of Tipperary Regional Youth Service and to the HSE.
- An assessment of the allegation will be carried out immediately involving the minimum amount of people in order to protect confidentiality. The CEO will work with the HSE to facilitate the assessment.
- The CEO must inform the staff member or volunteer that an allegation has been made and afford the staff member/ volunteer the right to respond in accordance with established grievance procedures.
- The staff person's/ volunteer's response and all other such detail should be offered to the HSE.
- The parents of the child must be informed of the allegation and this should be done following consultation with the statutory authorities.
- Where a child made the initial allegation, the child involved will be informed, in the presence of their parents, of the outcome of their allegation and any actions planned and/or taken. This action may be the role of the HSE/ Gardai – the decision regarding this will be made by the HSE.
- The Designated Child Protection Officer will ensure that any actions taken by them do not undermine or frustrate any investigation being conducted by the HSE or An Garda Síochána. It is strongly recommended that a close liaison remain between the CPO and the authorities to maintain such a relationship.

*When it is proposed to interview the staff person/volunteer who is the subject of the allegation, the following procedures will apply:*

- He/she will be advised that an allegation has been made, and that an assessment is being carried out.
- He/she will be asked to attend a meeting with the HSE/ Gardai if this is the decided course of action, and will be advised that he/she may be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative who may, at this stage, act as an observer.
- At the meeting, he/she will be informed of the allegation or statements that have been made by whom and he/she may be offered an adjournment before responding. The adjournment may be very brief. All responses must be noted and such notes passed on to the relevant authorities should the matter proceed to that stage.
- Ensure that records are kept and retained on file, as per the recording procedure.
- Records must be accurate

***There are four possible outcomes of this assessment:***

- i. The allegation may be shown to be unfounded, perhaps due to factors of time and place, or because there is a satisfactory explanation for whatever gave rise to the concern or allegation. In this event, the CEO must notify, in writing, the individual who initially made the complaint, giving the reasons why the allegation has been shown to be unfounded.
- ii. The allegation may be substantiated, in which case the Statutory Authorities will recommend to the CEO/Chairperson what action should to be taken. Such action will depend on the nature/level of the abuse.
- iii. The HSE may conclude that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that abuse may have taken place but that further technical expertise is required.
- iv. The assessment may be inconclusive, without any prospect of additional evidence coming from a further assessment. This outcome will require a decision on what action if any is to be taken, and the HSE will make a recommendation to the CEO and the Chairperson, which may involve consultation with the relevant authorities (i.e. HSEs or An Garda Síochána). Such consultation should take place as a matter of priority.

The CEO will inform the Chairperson of the outcome of this assessment. The person who is the subject of the allegation will also receive a copy of the final outcome report presented to the Chairperson.

**2.5.3 Additional Considerations involving Staff Members:**

- Tipperary Regional Youth Service's HR Procedures, incorporating the Disciplinary Procedures, apply at all times. These procedures are provided to all staff members at the time of their induction.
- Legal advice will be sought to support the organisation. Due process and assessment will take place.
- Where disciplinary action is recommended, the normal disciplinary procedures will apply.
- Tipperary Regional Youth Service will endeavour to support the persons involved to accessing support services.
- Other staff members who may be involved in an incident may also require support, and such support should be tailored to their needs.
- The staff member/ volunteer who is the subject of the allegation may be suspended on full pay until the assessment is concluded and any consequent action, internally and externally is implemented. This decision will be taken following initial assessment by the Chief Executive/ Chairperson as appropriate, and may be made in conjunction with the HSE/ Gardai.

**2.5.4 Additional Considerations involving Volunteers:**

- Where a volunteer is a member of a Youth Club, the volunteer will be requested to withdraw from participation in the Club immediately. In order to ensure natural justice and confidentiality, only the Chairperson of the Youth Club will be informed of the allegation.
- The Child Protection Officer will also inform the HSE of any other agency/organisation working with children with which the alleged abuser is thought to be involved. In the event of an investigation the HSE will include these organisations in any of their inquiries.
- The person accused will require support pending an investigation. Tipperary Regional Youth Service will endeavour to support the person accused to external services, as it would not be appropriate for Tipperary Regional Youth Service to provide this service ourselves.
- After these consultations referred to above, and when pursuing the question of the future position of the volunteer the child protection officer should advise the volunteer and the agreed procedures be followed.

**Section 3**

- 3.1 Complaints Procedure**
- 3.2 Recruitment Procedures**
  - Garda Vetting**
- 3.3 Management of Staff and volunteers**
  - 3.3.1 Management Responsibility**
  - 3.3.2 Ongoing Review and Assessment - Youth Club Volunteers**
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### **3.1 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

Tipperary Regional Youth Service aims to provide a safe and quality service for the young people, staff, volunteers and communities that we serve. A Complaints Procedure is in operation within the organisation that aims to address any complaints made against Tipperary Regional Youth Service, its staff, volunteers or young people, in a consistent and fair manner.

In the instance of a child protection issue, the Complaints Procedure will operate in parallel with the procedures outlined in this Child Protection Policy, giving due care not to impede any HSE/ Gardai involvement, and to ensure the safety of our young people at all times.

See Appendix 4 for the Tipperary Regional Youth Service Complaints Procedure.

## 3.2 RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES

Tipperary Regional Youth Services aims to operate rigorous recruitment procedures in line with best practice in Human Resources, bearing in mind the contact that staff and volunteers will have with young people, and utilising a transparent and accountable approach. All staff members and volunteers must provide application forms, references and garda vetting forms, which will be assessed by Tipperary Regional Youth Service, and in the case of garda vetting, passed through our YWI procedures.

Recruitment and selection procedures for both staff and volunteers take the safety of young people, the needs of the organisation and fairness to potential staff / volunteers into account.

All new staff / volunteers to Tipperary Regional Youth Service will spend an initial agreed amount of time partnered to an experienced youth worker/ volunteer at the beginning of their work with Tipperary Regional Youth Service.

See Appendix 5 for Tipperary Regional Youth Service's Staff Recruitment Policy

See Appendix 6 for Tipperary Regional Youth Service's Volunteer Recruitment Policy.

### 3.2.1 Garda Vetting

Garda Vetting is a check against the criminal record of a staff member/volunteer based on names and addresses. Garda Vetting is a part of the recruitment process, but should not be seen as the only check for potential volunteers and staff members, but rather completed as part of a reference process.

All potential staff and volunteers of Tipperary Regional Youth Service must fill in the Garda vetting form. In the case of volunteer led youth clubs, the Chairperson / Secretary gives each new volunteer a Garda vetting form and envelope, and agrees a date to collect the forms, in the sealed envelope, marked with the youth club's name, to be forwarded to Tipperary Regional Youth Service.

The Completed Garda Vetting Form comes to Tipperary Regional Youth Service to be checked that all information has been filled in. If the form is incomplete, it will be returned to the person being vetted.

On receipt of a completed vetting form, the form is sent directly to Youth Work Ireland, the designated national organisation for Tipperary Regional Youth Service. The designated person then forwards the forms to the Garda Vetting Unit. After they have been processed the results will be sent to the YWI designated person who in turn forwards the results to the Tipperary Regional Youth Service Garda Vetting Designated person. If a form returns with a query mark, the individual is contacted directly and privately. Depending on the nature of the query/ issue uncovered by the Garda Vetting form, the person may not be eligible for work within Tipperary Regional Youth Service. Any incident of child abuse will automatically disqualify the person from working with Tipperary Regional Youth Service as will any incident which undermines the person from acting as a role model for children in our care, eg substance misuse, assault. There is a list of misdemeanours in the TRYS disciplinary policy.

### **3.3 MANAGEMENT OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

Tipperary Regional Youth Service recognises the challenges that working with young people, either as a staff member, or a volunteer brings, and endeavours to place appropriate structures and supports in place in order to enhance the experience of staff members, of volunteers and of young people in their dealings with TRYS. Tipperary Regional Youth Service is particularly aware of the role that management can play in minimising the risks of child abuse in the organisation, and in dealing with incidents of child abuse or alleged child abuse in a manner that places the protection of children first while also supporting staff and volunteers.

#### **3.3.1 Management Responsibility**

The Board of Directors is responsible for the overall management of Tipperary Regional Youth Service. On a day to day basis, this responsibility is exercised by the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive is the direct line manager of all core staff in Tipperary Regional Youth Service. The FAS CE Supervisor, who reports to the CEO, is the first line manager of all Tipperary Regional Youth Service Thurles CE Scheme CE staff, in conjunction with the project workers that they work with. CE Scheme staff from other schemes are managed by the project workers with the individual projects that they work with. All CE workers are ultimately managed by the Chief Executive of TRYS. Volunteers are firstly managed by the club committee with support from the project worker with whom they work, and by the Chief Executive of TRYS.

#### **3.3.2 Ongoing Review and Assessment - Youth Club Volunteers**

The Youth Club Committee of each youth club, with support from the Rural Outreach Project workers, is responsible for the ongoing assessment and support of individual volunteers. Each youth club receives at least one visit from the rural outreach project workers per quarter. Concerns and support, as well as training needs are addressed at that time. The Rural Outreach Workers are also available on an ongoing basis to support volunteers. At the end of each youth club year, each volunteer is required to contribute to an evaluation form assessing their work for the previous year.

#### **3.3.3 Ongoing Review and Assessment - Project Volunteers**

Project workers conduct end of year evaluations with each youth club.

#### **3.3.4 Ongoing Review and Assessment - Staff Members**

Staff support and supervision (SSS) is given to each staff member on a monthly basis, by their line manager. There are three elements to SSS, administrative, practice related, and personal support. Tipperary Regional Youth Service recognises the importance of SSS, and should individual staff require additional SSS, particularly in areas relating to issues such as child protection, this will be made available as far as possible. Staff support and supervision allows staff to raise concerns, highly possible patterns and talk over queries relating to any area of their job.

Support in everyday practice is provided by line managers. Management in TRYS operate an 'open door' policy whereby staff are requested to raise any concerns, particularly around the young people they work with immediately, and each staff member understands their responsibility to do so. Monthly staff meetings allow for discussion on general issues on practice (individual cases are not discussed) and provide peer support for staff.

### **3.3.5 Support for Individuals dealing with/ have dealt with a child protection concern or disclosure**

Should individual staff / volunteers deal with a concern or disclosure, an agreed schedule of SSS will be put in place immediately with the staff member involved and the CEO. The initial meeting will also determine whether extra supports are needed, what those supports might be, and where to access them. TRYS recognises the impact that concerns and disclosures may have on staff/ volunteers and works to minimise any distress caused, for the support of the staff member/ volunteer (s) involved and for the direct care of young people.

### **3.3.6 Induction Training – Staff Members**

Tipperary Regional Youth Service is responsible for ensuring that all staff and volunteers are given the appropriate training to respond to the needs of young people in our care. Tipperary Regional Youth Service endeavours to ensure that all staff/ volunteers not only undertake the mandatory induction training, but also have on-going access to training and supports that enhance their work practice and maintain the safety and protection of young people in their care

All new employees will have an induction programme at the commencement of their employment. The purpose of induction is to help the new employee settle into the position as soon as possible and to make sure he or she has all the necessary information needed in order to do the job effectively. The duration and content of induction will vary according to the needs of the employee and the position. This induction period will allow for an assessment of knowledge and skills of the new employee. There will be an agreement between the employer and employee on how gaps, if identified, will be filled, through, for example, training or mentoring and/or coaching.

On joining Tipperary Regional Youth Service new members of staff will be welcomed by their supervisor/line manager. The line manager is responsible for introducing the staff member to the immediate team. The new staff member should receive both written and verbal information regarding in house policies and procedures and any other information required for them to perform their duties. The induction period should give the new staff member opportunities to gain information on the following areas:

- Who's who in Tipperary Regional Youth Service and areas of responsibility
- Tipperary Regional Youth Service Strategic goals and priorities
- Tipperary Regional Youth Service external relationships and strategic alliances
- Tipperary Regional Youth Service Policies and procedures (including the outline and explanation of the Child Protection Policy, including details of the designated Child Protection Officer)
- Procedures for the administration, efficient running and coordination of Tipperary Regional Youth Service

On completion of the induction programme the new employee will acknowledge, in writing, that he or she has completed the induction programme. All new employees will be furnished with a copy of the Tipperary Regional Youth Service Child Protection Policy. All new employees undergo training in Child Protection immediately, and undergo the Keeping Safe training as soon as possible.

### **3.3.7 Volunteer Induction Training**

All new volunteers to Tipperary Regional Youth Service are required to undergo induction training before taking a direct supervision role. This training involves five modules, delivered over four nights by TRYS rural outreach staff. Child protection training receives a night by itself, and follows the YWI / NYC1 programme. In addition, each club is required to have a Child Protection Liaison person, who is fully trained in Keeping Safe, and Tipperary Regional Youth Service delivers at least two Keeping Safe courses per year for volunteers.

All volunteers are required to familiarise themselves with TRYS' policies as part of induction training, and to agree and sign up to the TRYS Child Protection Policy.

## 3.4 TIPPERARY REGIONAL YOUTH SERVICE CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

Tipperary Regional Youth Service's Code of behaviour aims to protect not only the children and young people in the organisation but also staff and volunteers. Ensuring a safe environment for children is our primary concern, and the behaviour of staff and volunteers must reflect this.

### 3.4.1 Using this code

- Our code of behaviour has been drawn up in consultation with staff and volunteers, and is included in any induction training being delivered, with new staff and volunteers signing up to the code.
- The code of behaviour is regularly revisited, and it is the responsibility of each staff member / volunteer to adhere to the code, and remind others of it.
- Individual programmes and group work must reflect both adherence to the code, and also support to young people to develop the personal and social skills to transfer the principles behind the code both in their participation in TRYS activities but also in their daily lives.

### 3.4.2 Inclusion of all

Tipperary Regional Youth Service recognises the value that all young people and their families bring to the community with their different ideas and contributions. We run a service that is:

- free from discrimination;
- welcoming to all young people and their families
- actively supporting diversity and equality
- sending a message for greater equality across local communities and the wider society

We are committed to providing a welcoming, inclusive environment that treats no one less favourably for any reason, particularly on the grounds of sex (gender), marital status, disability, sexual orientation, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, anti-body status, age, membership of the Traveller community, political or religious beliefs, family status or responsibility for dependants, or put at a disadvantage by unjustifiable conditions or requirements. We will ensure that diversity is not just about concentrating on issues of discrimination, but about ensuring that all young people maximise their potential and their contribution.

### 3.4.3 Standards of practice

In order to maintain the highest standard of conduct and practice to protect children using our services it is imperative that the following be applied at all times:

Staff/ volunteers **do**:

- Create a relaxed fun environment for young people
- Encourage discussion and confidence in interactions with young people
- Create an atmosphere of trust with young people
- Cultivate a positive relationship with parents on an ongoing basis
- Give firm guidelines on sexually inappropriate behaviour to the child/young person. Explain that the behaviour is unacceptable and could get them into difficulty, but do not make them feel guilty. The behaviour may be an imitation of abuse the child has suffered and is not the child's fault
- Be careful of physical embraces from children/young people, particularly when working with children/young people with special needs. This is equally important for the protection of staff/ volunteers and children/young people
- Carry identification when on journey's with children/young people
- Have a no alcohol policy for all engaging on a residential, young people, staff, volunteers and residential staff

- Discourage personal relationships between staff/staff, staff/volunteers, volunteers/volunteers

**Staff/volunteers do not:**

- Spend time alone with children/young people, away from others (If it is a one-to-one situation, make sure the door is open. Tell another member of staff if you are going to see a child/young person on your own, and ensure that they are close by.)
- Take children/young people alone in a car on journeys
- Take children/young people to your home
- Engage in inappropriate contact with young people outside projects or clubs. Boundaries must be established and respected
- Engage in rough, physical games, including horseplay. If you physically restrain a child/young person for any reason, be aware that it could be misinterpreted as assault
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any kind. Never pat a child/young person on the bottom. Lap-sitting is only appropriate for babies and pre-school children
- Allow children/young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Suspicions of abuse or inappropriate behaviour of a colleague should be reported to the designated officer within the organisation, but not discussed amongst staff
- Make suggestive comments about a child/young person, even in jest
- Do things of a personal nature that children/young people can do for themselves as it may be misconstrued
- Go into the toilet alone with children/young people (In the case of an intimate care situation, to respect the child's need for dignity and privacy it is not recommended that two people go to the toilet with the child in these particular circumstances. In this case a procedure including safe practice should be agreed with parents. This may include leaving the door ajar, informing a colleague, recording and following the agreed procedure.)

**Keep records of**

- Any allegations a child/young person makes against you or other staff, e.g. "you're always picking on me", "you hit me", "don't touch me" etc. Keep records of dates and times.
- If a child touches you or talks to you in a sexually inappropriate way or place, record what happened and tell a colleague. Ignoring this or allowing it to go on may place you in a very difficult position.
- In the event of injury ensure that it is recorded and witnessed by another adult.

**Physical Contact must at all times be appropriate**

**3.4.4 Additional considerations for events/ daytrips**

- Draw up a programme of activities with input from staff, young people, volunteers and parents;
- Ensure that parents are fully aware of the proposed event, including who has parental responsibility, what transport and accommodation arrangements are, and what will happen in the case of an emergency;
- All staff and volunteers must be fully aware of TRY'S' protocols and procedures for day trips and events;
- All staff and volunteers must be fully aware of TRY'S' transport policy;
- All staff/volunteers will show respect and understanding for the children/young people involved;
- Inappropriate behaviour/language will not go unchallenged;
- A list of 'ground rules' will be drawn up for each event, with the participation of the young people and these will be distributed to all participants and will be signed up to, prior to the event. The ground rules will be displayed in prominent locations during the event;
- The privacy of the participants will be respected at all times particularly in changing rooms, communal circumstances;

- Participants should be encouraged to report to a staff member any cases of bullying and the staff member in charge must be made aware of this;

#### **3.4.5 Additional considerations for residential:**

- Draw up a programme of activities with input from staff, young people, volunteers and parents;
- Ensure that parents are fully aware of the proposed event, including who has parental responsibility, what transport and accommodation arrangements are, and what will happen in the case of an emergency;
- All staff and volunteers must be fully aware of TRY'S' protocols and procedures for residentials and events;
- Pre-residential meetings should take place with leaders, young people and parents;
- Ensure that a pre-trip visit is taken if possible;
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of the check lists in the codes of practice for residential work and adhere to them.
- In a residential setting never under any circumstances, take a child/young person into your bedroom.
- No personal relationships between staff/staff, staff/volunteers, volunteers/volunteers
- Do not allow mixed sleeping arrangements for boys and girls. In the case of an LGBT residential, in so far as possible, ensure that all young people are given privacy and additional consideration shown for gender.

#### **3.4.6 Additional considerations intimate care procedures:**

Tasks of a personal nature should be only carried out for very young children or children/young people with disabilities with the full understanding and consent of parents. Any intimate care procedure should be individually drawn up in writing with the agreement of the young person, their parents and TRY'S. All tasks of a personal nature are to be undertaken with the utmost discretion and sensitivity. Adults should explain what help they are going to give the child with personal care and in accordance with their understanding gain their consent.

#### **3.4.7 Bullying**

Tipperary Regional Youth Service recognizes the seriousness of bullying on the lives of young people and works to ensure that such behaviour is stopped in any service or project we have links with.

See Appendix 7 for the TRY'S Bullying Policy

## 3.5 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Tipperary Regional Youth Service is committed to ensuring that parents are:

- Informed about our Service, and what we are doing on a regular basis through newsletters
- Given the opportunity to establish relationships with the staff and volunteers who are working with their children
- Informed about our policies and procedures, in particular those relating to the safety and welfare of their children
- On initial contact made aware of our child protection policy, our reporting procedures and mechanisms for feedback and complaint
- Encouraged to become involved where appropriate as volunteers, and to attend TRYS events
- Informed about who the project worker, support staff and volunteers for the project are.

### 3.5.1 Mechanisms for sharing of information with parents

This is achieved through:

- Membership packs which include consent form, membership form, membership contract, child protection policy and contact details
- Quarterly newsletters
- Ongoing contact with individual parents

Where a staff member/ volunteer has concerns about any young person in their group, where appropriate they should check in with the parent/ carer as soon as possible. In the case of child protection, the staff member/ volunteer should first discuss concerns with the Child Protection Officer.

### 3.5.2 Parental Consent

Written parental consent is required for the following:

- Initial registration with the youth service for anyone under 18 years old
- Any activities that take place away from the young persons' normal service base
- Particular programmes that are not part of the normal group activities

See Appendix 8 for a copy of the consent form

## 3.6 INVOLVING CHILDREN/ SHARING INFORMATION

Youth participation is a key principle of Tipperary Regional Youth Service. Youth participation means developing the skills and confidence for young people to become involved in decisions that affect them, and to be able to vocalise the needs challenges and difficulties that face them. Youth participation is youth led, with a high level of youth/ adult partnership. Youth participation will not be meaningfully realised without positive relationships and trust between young people and staff members / volunteers. Communication tools and resources take a number of guises taking the skills and capacity of the young people into consideration. This may include written resources, multi-media resources, verbal communication and group work.

### 3.6.1 Youth participation in TRYS takes place in a number of ways:

- Planning sessions take place regularly with young people and their input included in programme development
- Group contracts are developed by young people themselves in the initiation of groups
- Young people are actively encouraged to undertake fundraising events for individual actions they wish to undertake
- Each centre has a youth committee

### 3.6.2 Sharing information with young people

All young people are given a membership pack which includes the following:

- Membership form
- Parental consent form
- Medical form
- Young person's code of behaviour
- 'Know what's what' information leaflet (Junior/Senior)
  - o Young people's right to be heard and respected
  - o Information on Leaders
  - o Child protection
  - o Bullying
  - o Safety
  - o Discipline

On getting involved in a youth project/ club, young people undergo induction in a number of ways:

- Young people becoming newly involved through a new group/ club  
The full group/ club will undergo an initial introductory session, which covers the group contract, code of behaviour, group information, relationship building etc
- Young people becoming newly involved in an existing group/ club (self referrals)  
An initial meeting with the project worker, where expectations, the group and the policies are gone through, and the membership pack explained
- Young people becoming newly involved in an existing group/ club (referrals from other sources)
- An initial meeting with the project worker, where expectations, the group and the policies are gone through, and the membership pack explained

In relation to child protection, each child is informed about TRYS' policy in terms of child protection, including what to do if something concern's a child, and about TRYS' no secret's approach.

**3.6.3 Communicating the Child Protection Policy to young people**

- "Know what's what" Information leaflet

Each project has a leaflet which is age appropriate (junior/senior) which explains a number of relevant policies, as well as the child protection and complaint's procedures

- This is also gone through verbally with new members
- At the beginning of each new group or new term, the group contract is revisited in the group setting and explained again. Group contracts will typically include respect, no bullying, right to be listened to and to be heard

## 3.7 ACCIDENTS/ INCIDENTS PROCEDURE

The first priority of Tipperary Regional Youth Service is to ensure as far as possible that no young person is exposed to unnecessary risk. However, it is the nature of youth work that incidents / accidents occur. Staff members/ volunteers/ committee members must be aware of the correct approach to take at all times. If ever in doubt, contact the CEO as soon as possible. When an incident takes place, record it as soon as possible, on the same day / night as the incident.

### 3.7.1 Preventative actions:

- Ensure that adequate and appropriate insurance is provided.
- Ensure that the hall/ facility the club is using is suitable for young people, for the number of young people you have, for the activities being undertaken.
- Ensure all staff / volunteers have leadership induction training
- Ensure all staff / volunteers have child protection training
- Adopt Tipperary Regional Youth Service's child protection policy
- Ensure that all young people know that they should approach a staff member / volunteers if they have any worries about their own or other people's safety
- Ensure that if a young person wants a private conversation, they have the opportunity to do so, but in view of other adults
- Always communicate with other staff / volunteer if you are unsure about an activity/ incident
- Ensure that there is at least one trained first aider in the project, and that the project has a first aid kit
- Identify possible hazards in the hall
- Know where all exits to the hall are
- Make sure the equipment to be used is safe and suitable
- Ensure that there is easy access to emergency numbers at all times.
- Ensure that up to date contact numbers of parents/ carers and other staff/ volunteers are kept at all times.
- If the project/ group/ club are undertaking any activity which is out of the norm, ensure that the CEO is informed in order to ensure that adequate insurance is in place.

### 3.7.2 If an incident happens

- Communicate with another staff member / volunteer / committee member immediately, and with the CEO as soon as possible.
- If a child has hurt themselves, move them out of the vicinity of the general group – don't allow the other young people to crowd them
- One adult should take lead responsibility for the child – but never out of sight of other staff / volunteers
- All incidents, even minor accidents should be recorded on the incident report sheet
- The incident report sheet should be filled out full, including follow on actions, and submitted to the CEO
- Ensure that the incident report sheet is witnessed by another staff member / volunteer
- Child protection / substance misuse and other policies should be followed at all times.
- If a medical emergency occurs, a trained first aider should perform first aid if appropriate
- The young person's parent / guardian should be contacted to inform them of the incident. They should if possible, and appropriate collect the young person and bring them for further treatment.
- If the parent/ guardian is not reachable, then the young person's doctor / emergency services should be contacted.
- If taking a young person to the doctor/ hospital either use a taxi, or if using your own car, place the young person in the back, with another adult / young person

- The safety of the young person is vital, and getting the young person to treatment should not be delayed.

See Appendix 9 for Accident/ Incident report sheet

## 3.8 MANAGEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Tipperary Regional Youth Service operates a strict code of practice, which outlines the general practices and procedures to be followed in order to ensure the safety, protection and supervision of young people at all times.

Each volunteer led youth club is issued with a comprehensive manual outlining practice, procedures and policies in order to ensure that quality youth work is taking place in individual clubs.

### 3.8.1 Tipperary Regional Youth Service: Youth Work Code of Practice

**The purpose of the Youth Work Code of Practice is to guide the staff and volunteer leaders working with Tipperary Regional Youth Service in their activities with our young people. This code of practice for youth work is supplemented with other policies and codes in a range of areas. It is essential that all adults working with Tipperary Regional Youth Service familiarise themselves with our full range of policies and codes.**

#### 1. What is the purpose of Youth Groups/Projects:

Youth Groups and Projects exist to assist in the personal and social development of young people so as to enable them to take decisions, exercise responsibility and contribute towards the development of society. All of Tipperary Regional Youth Service's Groups and projects will reflect our organisational strategy.

#### 2. Membership of Youth Groups:

- Youth Groups should aim have at least 10 members participating on a regular basis in regular groups. This may vary however, according to the needs of the group participants.
- Youth Groups should operate in different sections depending on the needs of participants, aims of groups and age/ gender appropriateness. *eg one for the 8-12 age group, one for the 12-15 age group and one for over 15.*
- Youth Workers should keep a current record of membership and attendance by young people. Parental consent forms must be received for membership.

#### 3. Facilities

- All Youth Projects should where possible, provide adequate facilities to allow members develop through both large group activities and small group programmes.
- Venues should be formally assessed once per year by Youth Workers, with particular regard to accessibility and safety issues.
- Venues should have adequate toilet facilities for males and females.

#### 4. Youth Workers

- Youth Groups should have at least one trained worker (over 18 years of age) for every ten members.
- A core youth worker and one other person (youth worker or leader) should be on duty at all times.
- Youth Workers are expected to show the highest degree of responsibility and example to project / group members. The mutual expectations and obligations of voluntary leaders and the professional youth work staff of the youth service should be formally written up in a regional leader's charter.

#### 5. Voluntary Leaders

- Youth Leaders are expected to show the highest degree of responsibility and example to group/ project members. The mutual expectations and obligations of voluntary leaders and

the professional youth work staff of the youth service should be formally written up in a regional leader's charter

- Leaders aged 18 years old should not work with members aged 16 or older.
- Senior leaders will be required to complete an application form providing names of two referees that will be checked by Tipperary Regional Youth Service and must provide a Garda Clearance Certificate under Section 4 of the Data Protection Act 1988.

#### 5. **Voluntary Leaders - Training**

- The completion of basic leadership training by at least half of the voluntary leadership team of a Youth Group/Project is essential. This training should cover support to leaders in personal development, interpersonal skills and specific programme areas, e.g. arts, outdoor pursuits, programme planning, child protection etc.
- Where appropriate, young people should receive training in managing the affairs of their Youth Group/Project, running groups, programme planning and club development.

#### 6. **Participation**

- Youth Projects should have a junior committee to enable young people to participate with their peers in the exercise of responsibility and real participation in the decision-making
- Young people who form a members' committee should receive training appropriate for their roles from the Youth Project Worker
- Specific measures should be put in place to ensure participation by club members in the organisation of activities in the project, including:
  - Fundraising
  - Management of the project
  - Determining value for money in all programmes, having regard to objectives and resources available
  - Decision-making in youth matters through participation in the organisation at regional and national levels.
  - Parents should be encouraged to play an active, supporting role through helping with fund-raising, transport, advice and support.

#### 7. **Programme**

Youth Projects/ groups should:

- Provide regular programme activities at least once per week
- Provide encouragement for participation on an equal basis by young men and women
- Provide opportunities for young people to test values and beliefs
- Encourage participation in creative and aesthetic activities
- Encourage participation in sporting and recreational activities
- Encourage Voluntary Community involvement
- Provide opportunities for civic and international awareness
- Respond to the different needs of members- particularly minority interests and small groups within the club.
- Leaders and members must not partake of alcohol, engage in smoking etc while involved in these activities

#### 8. **Administration**

Each Youth group / project should maintain adequate records receipts etc. Youth Projects should maintain a file containing the following:

- Member application forms
- parental consent forms
- relevant medical information
- Incident / discipline forms

- Youth Project members should be aware of the rules of the Youth Project and disciplinary matters should be dealt with in accordance with the rules and principles of natural justice

### **9. Child Protection**

The safety of young people is paramount at all times. All leaders / volunteers should be fully versed in the Tipperary Regional Youth Service Child Protection Policy, the procedures for reporting concerns, and who the Designated Child Protection Officer is. Any concerns or disclosures should be recorded reported to the Designated Child Protection Officer immediately.

### **10. Dealing with Challenging Behaviour**

Staff members / Volunteers are be trained and prepared for coping with challenging/ disruptive behaviour. It is recommended that

- More than one staff member/ volunteer is present when challenging behaviour is being dealt with
- A record is kept in a report book, describing what happened, the circumstances, who was involved, any injury to a person or to property and the situation was resolved
- All reports are submitted to the CEO

#### **3.8.2 Guidelines for Dealing with Difficult Behaviour in Young People**

- Make it clear to the members the boundaries of behaviour you will tolerate. Members need to know what the bottom line is.
- Take the young person aside (make sure a second adult is present).
- A record of all incidents must be kept in the project file.
- Give the young person an opportunity to tell their side of the story.
- Explain to them that they may be asked to give evidence to others
- Maintain eye contact at all times.
- There should never be any physical or verbal abuse towards any young person.
- Avoid making direct threats as you will then be put in the awkward position of deciding whether to follow through on the threat or not.
  1. Try to act from a position of "You are a valued member of the group, but I don't like what you did", rather than I will only like you if you stop doing that.
  2. Sit beside or between potential disrupters.
  3. Divide up groups of troublesome members.
  4. Let the members see that ultimately disruptive behaviour affects them and the running of their club more than it affects you, the leader.
  5. Assign tasks of responsibility to the young person.