



## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY September 2012**

**This Statement of Policy and Procedures is for staff, volunteers, and community family members who are actively involved with Robert Emmet Community Development Project.**

It is the policy of the Robert Emmet CDP to safeguard the well being of all children by protecting them from physical, sexual, emotional harm and neglect.

This policy is developed following the guidance of HSE Children's First ; National Guidance for the protection and Welfare of Children. The policy should be read in conjunction with the appendices.

Robert Emmet CDP aims to develop a quality service for members of the community living in the four flat complexes, Oliver Bond, Robert Emmet Buildings, Bridgefoot Street and St. Audeons and any other young people living within the boundary of Thomas Street, Winetavern street, the South Quays and Walting Street. The aim of this service is for members of the community to participate more fully in their community and society in general by delivering services and activities and using a number of different methods and approaches.

Within this overall aim, Robert Emmet CDP accept the responsibility and obligation to safeguard the protection and welfare of children and young people in our care through our activities and programmes, undertakes to ensure best practice response to child protection issues by having clear child protection policy and procedures which are designed to underpin and demonstrate our commitment to our duty of care.

**This child protection policy refers specifically to the practices and procedures in afterschool project.**

## **SAFE PRACTICES**

For the safe day to day running of the project and to minimise opportunities for accidents or harm to happen to children and young people the following outlines the practices of the project.

### **Good Management:**

- Careful attention is given to application of criteria for admission of new members, volunteers or workers.
- Careful attention is given to the gathering, recording and sharing of necessary information about children's needs, abilities, medical conditions etc., (ie, emergency nos. for each young person recorded etc.,)
- Careful attention is given to the necessary preparation, support or training of all workers and volunteers .
- Careful attention is given to the planning and appropriateness of activities
- Careful monitoring of the development and behaviour of children participating in our afterschool.

### **Supervision of Young People:**

Activities will be chosen that are age and ability appropriate.  
Young people will not be left unattended and will be supervised by a minimum of 2 leaders at all times

Adults on duty know at all times where young people are and what they are doing.

Adults on duty are clearly identifiable.

### **Health and Safety:**

Attention is paid to the general condition and safety of the physical environment, equipment and transport used during activities.

Access to areas that may be considered unsafe (i.e. kitchen), may be restricted.

### **ACCIDENTS PROCEDURE**

Emergency Numbers of Parents/Carers to be kept in the file on each group.  
First Aid Box must be kept in the centre at the top of the stairs, and in the container. A first Aid Box must always go on the bus if a group are going on a trip

An incident book is kept which records near misses as well as incidents.  
All accidents must be recorded in the Incident Book – Date, time, nature of accident, procedures followed etc.,

A separate Health and Safety Statement for the organisation exists.

## **RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES**

It is, essential that we take all reasonable steps to ensure that only suitable people are recruited to work with young people. Unfortunately, persons with a propensity to child abuse are frequently attracted to positions and organisations that offer them access and the opportunity to spend time with children and young people. We therefore need to have a proper selection procedure as follows:

Each new applicant should

- Complete an appropriate application form which will include personal details, past and current work/volunteering experience and any qualifications or skills relevant to the post.
- It will also include a declaration relating to past criminal records.
- Be required to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be unsuitable to work with young people.
- Be briefed on their duties and responsibilities.
- They must be given a copy of our Child Protection Policy and they must sign up to our Code of Behaviour.
- Documentation may be sought confirming the identity of the applicant, such as a long birth cert or a passport or driving licence.
- All applicants will be called for an informal interview to explore information contained in the application form and to check out attitudes.
- Referees for each applicant will be contacted.

## ANTI-BULLYING STATEMENT

The project will:

- Provide a place where every participant can feel secure
- Provide a place where it is known that bullying is not acceptable behaviour
- Provide a place where name calling is not tolerated
- Provide a place where no one suffers abuse of any nature
- Provide a place where no one is victimised
- Provide a place where each member is supported and listened to
- Provide a place where it is each member's responsibility to ensure that all are treated equal
- Provide a place where solutions to problems are the concern of all.

## **THE CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER – Máirín Ó Cuireáin**

### **ROLE**

- Provide information and advice on child protection within the organisation.
- Ensure that the child protection policy and procedures are followed and, particularly, to inform the Health Service Executive of reasonable concerns about individual children.
- Ensure appropriate information is available at the time of referral and that the referral is confirmed in writing, under confidential cover.
- Liaise with HSE/Garda Síochána and other agencies as appropriate.
- Keep relevant people informed within the organisation, particularly the chairperson.
- Ensure that an individual case record is maintained of the action taken, the liaison with other agencies and the outcome.
- Advise the project of child protection needs. The Child Protection Officer must be clear, familiar and at ease discussing any issues relating to child protection.

### **Responsibility**

- The Child Protection Officer is responsible for acting as
  - A source of advice on child protection matters and should develop contacts with HSE and remain up to date on issues, training etc.,
  - For co-ordinating action within the project, and
  - For liaising with HSE and An Garda Síochána and other agencies about suspected or actual cases of child abuse.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT**

Confidentiality is about managing information in a respectful, professional and purposeful manner. Confidentiality should be maintained in respect of all issues and people involved in concerns about the welfare of a child or bad practice within a group. It is important that the rights of both the child and a person about whom a complaint has been made are protected.

- Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned.
- All information regarding concern of child abuse should be shared on a “need to know” basis in the interests of the child.
- No undertaking regarding secrecy can be given.
- Giving information to others for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality.
- Information that is gathered for one purpose must not be used for another without consulting the person who provided that information.

Any records of concerns, complaints, or disclosures will be kept in a confidential file in a secure place with access only to designated people i.e. child protection officer and/or chairperson.

Parents, volunteers and all participants will be made aware that all such records are kept strictly confidential.

## **COMPLAINTS, DISCLOSURES, and REPORTING PROCEDURES**

### **Who can make a Complaint;**

- Young People involved with Robert Emmet CDP
- Their parents/carers
- Youth Workers/Volunteer

(A separate complaints procedure exists if not dealing with the wellbeing and safety of children which will be dealt with differently).

Some one can make a complaint if

- They are concerned about the welfare of a child.
- Receive a disclosure of abuse from a child
- Witness an incident which puts a child at risk
- Witness a child being abused
- Have concerns about a staff member or volunteer's behaviour in relation to child protection and safeguarding
- Receive an allegation against a staff member or volunteer

### **How to make a Complaint:**

- If the complaint is in relation to the safety and welfare of children the complaint should be made to the Child Protection Officer.
- Complaints of any other nature should be made to either the manager or a committee member ( preferably the chairperson if available).
- If a complaint is made about a worker or volunteer, the person who is the subject of the complaint will be informed by the Child Protection Officer or chairperson.

### Information you need to Provide when making a complaint

- The name and address of the child affected.
- If the complaint is being made by a parent/guardian or other adult the name and address of the parent/guardian or other adult.
- Exactly what you are dissatisfied with
- The names of the people or person who are the subject of the complaint.
- If your complaint is complicated, you may find it best to put it in writing so that no important detail is overlooked. Remember to send in copies of all relevant documentation/correspondence that you have

### How we will deal with your Complaint

- If the complaint relates to the safety and welfare of a child, it will be examined in accordance with good practice in relation to the safety and welfare of children.
- We will treat your complaint properly, fairly and impartially and in the best interests of the child.
- We promise that making your complaint will have no implications for your dealings with the project.
- An individual other than those originally involved will examine your complaint.
- We will examine and review your complaint and send a reply to you within 20 working days of the receipt of your complaint. Where it is not possible to meet this target, we will inform you and continue to do so until the matter is resolved.
- We will apologise for any mistreatment of the young person, explain what happened and put it right wherever possible.
- We will change the way we do things to avoid making the same mistakes in future.

### **DEALING WITH DISCLOSURES**

The following Actions should be taken by any person receiving a disclosure :

- Deal with any allegation of abuse in a sensitive and competent manner through listening to and facilitating the child to tell about the problem.
- Stay calm and do not show any extreme reaction to what the child is saying and take it seriously.
- Permit the child to speak without interruption, accepting what is said.
- Reassure the child that they have taken the right action in telling.
- Ask questions only for the purpose of clarification. Be supportive, but do not ask leading questions or seek intimate details beyond those volunteered by the child. Detailed investigative interviews will, if necessary, be carried out by HSE staff or members of an Garda Síochána.
- Explain and ensure that the young person understands the procedures which will follow.
- Any and all consultations with others should be entirely confidential and should not involve investigative procedures.
- Record the conversation as soon as possible, in as much detail as possible and in the child's own words. Sign, date and pass to Child Protection Officer (who will complete Standard Report Form and forward it to the duty social worker in the Health Service Executive).
- Do not panic

- Do not make a judgement or make negative comments about the alleged abuser.
- Do not promise to keep secrets
- Do not interview the young person – do not probe for more information than is offered
- Do not make the young person repeat the story unnecessarily
- Do not delay.

## **REPORTING PROCEDURE**

Reasonable Grounds for Concern  
(as per Children First. Department of Health & Children)

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

1. A specific indication from a child that he/she was abused.
2. A statement from a person who witnessed abuse.
3. An illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse.
4. A symptom, which may not in itself be totally consistent with abuse, but which is supported by corroborative evidence of deliberate harm or negligence.
5. Consistent signs of neglect over a period of time.

Everyone must be alert to the possibility that children with whom we are in contact may be being abused. Concerns should be reported as follows:

- Observe and note dates, locations and contexts in which the incident occurred or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information.
- Report the matter as soon as possible to the Child Protection Officer.
- The Child Protection Officer should speak to the parents.
- If the Child Protection Officer has reasonable grounds for believing that the child has been abused or is at risk of abuse, he/she will make a report to the Duty Social Worker in the child's local HSE office, who have a statutory responsibility to investigate and assess suspected or actual child abuse. (Reasonable Grounds for Concern per Children First)
- If the Child Protection Officer is unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist or not, s/he should informally consult with the local duty social worker. (Lord Edward Street 01 - 6486555) She will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report.
- In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the Child Protection Officer is unable to contact a duty social worker the police authorities should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the Statutory Authorities.
- A Child Protection Officer reporting suspected or actual child abuse to the HSE should first inform the parents of their intention to make such a report, unless doing so would endanger the child or undermine an investigation.

- A report should be made to the HSE in person or by phone, and in writing without delay. The Standard Reporting Form will be completed by the Child Protection Officer and the person who raised the issue/concern.  
A copy will be kept safely and securely.
- It is best to report child abuse concerns by making personal contact with the relevant personnel in the HSE and follow up with the written report.
- If the Child Protection Officer decides that a concern raised does not warrant reporting to the HSE our policy is that the concern should be recorded, dated and filed securely.
- Any concern raised through the work of Robert Emmet CDP will be brought to the attention of the child/young person's parent/caregiver.
- If the person raising the concern is not satisfied he/she can report their concern to HSE. In this case the Child Protection Officer must provide a written account of why he/she decided against reporting.

The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998: Provides protection to anyone making a report of child abuse "reasonably and in good faith" to Designated Officers of the HSE or to a member of the Gardai.

### **ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF and VOLUNTEERS**

There are two procedures to be followed when allegations of abuse are made against volunteers:

- The reporting procedure in respect of the child.
- The procedure for dealing with the alleged abuser.

The Child Protection Officer will deal with the procedure in respect of the child as already outlined.

The Chairperson or Manager will deal with the procedures in respect of the Volunteer.

Where an allegation is made against the Child Protection Officer, the allegation should be made to the Chairperson, or to the HSE.

- The standard procedure for reporting allegations to the Health Service Executive should be followed.
- This action should be based on an opinion formed reasonably and in good faith.
- When an allegation is received it should be assessed promptly and carefully.
- A decision will need to be made whether a formal report should be made to the HSE. This decision will be made by the Child Protection Officer.



- At no time will a child/young person be left in immediate danger or at risk of abuse and suspension of volunteer/worker may be immediately necessary pending investigation.
- The Volunteer should be informed in private by the Chairperson that an allegation has been made against him/her and the nature of the allegation.
- He/she should be afforded the opportunity to respond. His/her response should be noted and passed on to the HSE if a formal report is being made.
- The Volunteer should be afforded appropriate respect, fairness, support and confidentiality at all stages of the procedure.
- An allegation against another child/ young person or volunteer under18 must be dealt with as 2x Child Protection cases/issues..

**Additional Information :**  
**Childrens First; National Guidance for the Protection and wellbeing of Children.**  
**Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2011.**



## APPENDIX 2

### Code of Good Practice for working with young people in Robert Emmet CDP

Part of this policy is having clear good practice guidelines which will be followed by any employee or volunteer working with or in contact with young people through this service.

#### Guidelines for Volunteers and Staff.

*In your behaviour and by your attitude, respect the right, dignity and worth of every human being.*

In all its activities, this project seeks to facilitate children and young people to reach their full potential, within a safe, protected environment. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the child protection policy and procedures.

#### Activities and Programmes

Any activity should be planned within an overall programme of activities that meets the identified developmental needs of the young people in the area and is within the framework of the annual workplan.

All activities and programmes will be planned as far in advance as possible with each group having 4-6 week programmes plans which will take place within the annual workplan. As far as practical, all leaders and volunteers leaders will be involved in planning activities.

Adequate insurance cover will be in place for each activity. In the event that a new activity is started it must be covered by RECDP insurance or by the facility providing the activity – a copy of the other centre public Liability Insurance should be sought .

Any volunteers in contact with young people through Robert Emmet CDP will have a brief induction, complete child protection training, have been vetted by the Gardaí and will have a copy of these guidelines.

Care must be taken to ensure any building or facility used for activities with young people is suitable for that activity, safe and secure.

In any activity organised, there must be adequate supervision for young people with **one adult for every eight young people** and supervision should be provided by more than one person with gender based supervision where possible. Where a leader is with a group with only one leader, there **must be other adults in the building** and the activity must take place in a location which is visible to those other adults.

No young person will participate in any activity prior to having a consent form signed by a parent or guardian. These records will be kept by leaders and contact details of parents and guardians will be maintained by leaders.

The Privacy and dignity of young people should be respected by governing the use of multi-media imaging phones and digital cameras.

During excursions and trips away from the project, a risk assessment will be completed 24 hours in advance of the planned trip, to ensure the following

- appropriate numbers of leaders will attend ,
- an up to date easy to access contact sheet with contact information of guardians.
- Roles and responsibilities on the trip
- Identify any other health and safety issues
- On return, an evaluation will be completed.

### Relationships with Young People

Appropriate boundaries should be maintained with young people entrusted to your care at all times.

Workers and Volunteers should be sensitive to the possibility of becoming over involved in spending a disproportionate amount of time with particular individuals. It is the responsibility of the volunteer or youth leader to ensure this does not happen, and in the event that a volunteer or leader feels it is beginning to happen, they should bring it to the attention of their immediate supervisor.

The project works with groups of young people the majority of times. On some occasions, a young person may approach a member of the team for support around particular individual issues. Members of the team will in every case refer a young person to an appropriate organisation or service that meets the needs of the individual at that time. Robert Emmet CDP do not work with young people on an ongoing individual basis.

All volunteers and leaders must be sensitive and aware of the risks involved in participation in some contact sports with young people. Particular care and caution must be exercised with young people in swimming pools, showers and changing rooms and the privacy of young people should be respected in such venues also.

Individual young people should not be offered lifts in cars.

Casual visits by young people to the homes of volunteers and workers should be avoided at all times. The home of a young person may in particular circumstances be visited for the purposes of meeting the parents only.

## Drugs, Alcohol and Smoking

Volunteers and workers will not present to work with young people under the influence of any alcohol or drugs. In the event that this happens the individual will be asked to leave and may be subject to the disciplinary procedures of the Robert Emmet CDP.

Any young person participating in an activity found to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol will be immediately asked to leave the activity. If the group are on an excursion, the group will return immediately and the activity will be cancelled.

A young person may be precluded from participating in any further activities, or their membership may be suspended. This will be discussed by the team and the consequences of the action will be explained to the young person. The incident and consequences will be recorded.

Workers and Volunteers will not promote the use of drugs or alcohol in the presence of young people. Discussions about social events or occasions involving alcohol or drug use is not acceptable in the presence of young people.

Workers and volunteers should never smoke while a group is in their care unless on an allocated break and should be out of sight of the young people in their care.

Young people under the age of 16 will not be permitted to smoke on any activity.