



Child Protection Policy

Members of Youghal Baptist Church approved policy Spring 2011. Reviewed May 2022.

1. Policy Statement

Youghal Baptist Church (YBC) is fully committed to safeguarding the well-being of all the children and young people who attend at YBC events and activities. Our policy on child protection is in accordance with Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children¹.

All staff and volunteers involved in any event with children or young people have agreed to adhere to this policy and the YBC Childcare Guidelines.

The members of YBC are responsible for approving this policy.

The elders are responsible for implementing this policy.

The elders are responsible for reviewing this policy.

2. Purpose

In line with its responsibilities, Youghal Baptist Church will report any concerns and suspicions about physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect to the Health Service Executive (HSE) or the Gardaí.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the church's Garda Vetting Policy and Confidentiality Policy.

3. Scope

- The responsibility of care is to all children (persons under the age of 18) who attend at YBC events. This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, members and visitors at YBC.
- This policy applies to all YBC activities. The general meetings are open to all people of all ages. Activities include Sunday meeting of which children's crèche and Sunday Club are a part, youth group, parents and toddlers, home groups, outreach and other occasional events.
- Currently 'full-time missionary workers' includes Baptist Missions Workers and a ABWE Missionary Worker and 'volunteers' include elders, deacons, leaders of Youth Group, Sunday Club and Crèche.

4. Children First Principles

1. The welfare of the child is of paramount importance.
2. YBC acknowledges the right of children to be protected, treated with respect, listened to and have their views taken into consideration.
3. A balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the needs of parents/carers and families. Where there is a conflict, the welfare of the child must come first.
4. A concern expressed by any child will be listened to and taken seriously.
5. Early intervention and support should be available to promote the welfare of the child.

¹ A copy of 'Children First' can be downloaded from http://www.omc.gov.ie/documents/publications/Children_First_A4.pdf.



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6. Parents/carers have a right to respect and should be consulted and involved in matters which concern their family.
7. Effective child protection involves compulsory training, clarity of responsibility, and understood guidelines.

5. What is abuse

- Section 2 of “Children First” provides guidelines on definitions and recognition of child abuse
- Physical abuse: where it is known or suspected that injury was deliberately inflicted.
- Sexual abuse: the use of children by others for sexual gratification. This can take many forms and includes rape and other sexual assaults, allowing children to view sexual acts or to be exposed to, or involved in, pornography, exhibitionism and other perverse activities.
- Emotional abuse: adverse effects on behaviour and emotional development of a child caused by persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection or exposure to on-going domestic violence.
- Neglect: the persistent or severe neglect of a child whether wilful or unintentional which results in serious impairment of the child’s health, development or welfare.

6. Staff and volunteer training

1. YBC recognises that a key part of child protection is raising the awareness of people to the risks, to the safe practices and to the procedures that are included in this policy.
2. It is the responsibility of all staff and volunteers to have read and understood this policy.
3. A copy of this policy will be given to all staff and volunteers involved in children activities or in contact with children. As part of the Volunteer Form each person will be asked to sign that they have read, understand and will adhere to this policy.
4. Staff and volunteers are required to follow all procedures within this policy.
5. Staff and volunteers are expected to avail of Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children.
6. All staff will participate in **mandatory** training on child protection awareness, which will be renewed every three years. This will be carried out through Tusla E-Learning programme, a link of which will be provided by YBC when due for renewal. The leadership team will monitor this.
7. YBC activities are based on the involvement of volunteers. The Volunteer Form must be completed for all volunteer appointments.

7. Confidentiality

1. YBC has a Confidentiality policy, and information is shared on a strict ‘*need to know basis*’.
2. YBC recognises there are limits to confidentiality, and in accordance with Children First ‘*giving information to others for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality*’.
3. No one should promise to keep disclosed information a secret. (E.g. ‘I may need to share this with somebody else’).
4. Confidentiality in YBC will be extended when a person discloses that:
 - they have perpetrated sexual/physical abuse on another person,



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- they intend to perpetrate sexual/physical abuse on another person,
 - any other issues in relation to Child Protection, as described in Children First.
- 7.5. Any records are kept in a safe and confidential manner, by the DLP. Records may be shared with the HSE when child protection issues arise.

8. Reporting A Concern

1. Child Protection Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

- YBC has a volunteer Designated Liaison Person whose role is to ensure that procedures and arrangements are in place within the organisation to protect children in line with national guidelines.
- The Designated Liaison Person is *Sinéad Bateman*.
- Deputy to the Designated Liaison Person is *Paul McFarland*.

2. Responsibility to Report

- Every staff member, volunteer, church member, and adult visitor has a statutory responsibility to report any child protection concerns. Within YBC the procedure is for all concerns to be reported to the Designated Liaison Person. It is the responsibility of this person to then determine whether there are reasonable grounds for concern and where there are reasonable grounds for concern to report this to the appropriate agency; either the HSE or An Garda Síochána.
- The Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse in “*reasonable and in good faith*” to a Designated Liaison Person, the HSE or any member of the Garda.

3. Reasonable Grounds for Concern

In accordance with Children First, reasonable grounds for concern are defined as:

- specific indication from a child that he/she was abused;
- an account by a person who saw the child being abused;
- evidence, such as an injury, which is consistent with abuse and is unlikely to have been caused in any other way;
- an injury that is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it is a case of abuse;
- consistent indication over time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

4. If a child or person discloses something to you

- Listen to what is being said and take it seriously.
- Let the child/person tell it in their own words, do not lead them, but do clarify.
- Do not panic or show signs of disbelief or anger.
- Explain that you can not keep it a secret.
- Make a note of what was said, as soon as possible write down their words, facts, physical signs etc.
- Reassure them, tell them they were right to tell you. Do not blame anyone.
- Do not try to deal with this yourself.
- Do not tell anyone else.



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- Where abuse is suspected immediately inform the Designated Liaison Person, or Deputy, at the earliest possible opportunity and as a matter of urgency. If the DLP is not available raise the issue with the HSE Duty Social Worker (contact details below). In no case should serious concerns be left unaddressed or unreported.
- It is not your responsibility to decide whether or not abuse or neglect is taking place. The DLP will assess this.
- To respect confidentiality there is no need for you to inform anybody else about the concerns reported to the DLP.

5. Standard Reporting Procedure (Designated Liaison Person)

- The Designated Liaison Person may contact the Social Work Department who can assist them in deciding whether or not to report the issue formally to the HSE. They may also contact a member of the leadership team for advice around reporting the matter to the HSE.
- A report should be made to the HSE (to the Duty Social Worker) in person, by telephone or in writing; see page 39 of “Children First” for an outline of the information required when a report of child abuse is being made. Also see page 136 (Appendix 3) in “Children First” for a list of HSE phone numbers and addresses.
- In the event of an emergency, or the non-availability of the HSE, the report should be made to a Garda. This may be done at any Garda Station (page 38, Children First Guidelines).
- The Standard Reporting Form (appendix 1) must be completed at this stage to facilitate Social Worker/Gardaí decision-making. This may entail clarifying or getting more information about the matter where there is doubt or uncertainty, consulting initially with statutory child protection agency to receive their guidance on the matter, or making a formal referral to a statutory child protection agency or the Gardaí.
- A social worker may wish to speak to the person who first witnessed the incident, received the disclosure, or experienced the concern. If the report is made by the DLP the person should be informed of this possibility.
- It is essential to keep accurate notes with dates, times and factual objective information when assessing or reporting abuse.
- If the DLP has made a report to the HSE or Garda then the DLP will inform the leadership team, for the safeguarding of the children’s well-being and so that supports can be made available to people and children concerned if appropriate.
- To follow best practice the DLP will arrange for parents to be informed that a report is to be made to the HSE, unless doing so would put the child further at risk.
- The DLP will keep a record of all concerns and disclosures.

9. If a concern is not reported

- If a concern is not reported by the DLP to the HSE or Garda, the DLP with the YBC leadership will give a clear explanation to the person who raised the concern. The



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person should be advised that if they remain concerned they can consult with or report directly to the HSE or Garda.

10. A Member of Staff/Volunteer is Accused of Abuse

- Any reasonable grounds for concern involving a staff or volunteer will be reported in line with 7 above.
- If a member of staff or volunteer is accused of abuse, the matter will be investigated immediately in collaboration with external authorities.
- If an allegation is made against a staff or volunteer, two separate procedures must be followed:
 - Firstly, the standard reporting procedure in respect of suspected child protection concerns in line with 7 above and,
 - Secondly, the procedures for dealing with the staff or volunteer involved in the complaint are:
 - Inform the Pastor or one of the elders.
 - Ensure no child is exposed to unnecessary risk.
 - Confidentiality is of the utmost importance and only those who need to be informed should be notified or made aware of the situation.
 - A staff or volunteer may be suspended from their duties to protect the child and other children attending the church, at all times considering the rules of natural justice.
 - Staff or volunteers may be subject to erroneous or malicious allegations. Therefore all allegations should be dealt with sensitivity and support, such as counselling, offered.
 - An action following an allegation of abuse against a person should be managed in consultation with the HSE and the Gardaí. An immediate meeting should be arranged with these bodies for this purpose.
 - After these consultations and when pursuing the future position of a staff or volunteer, the pastor or elder should advise the person accused of the allegation and the procedure that is to be followed.
 - The pastor or elders should take care that the actions taken by them do not undermine or frustrate any investigations being conducted by the HSE or Gardaí.
- It is recommended that the same person should not have responsibility for the reporting issues and the staff or volunteer issues. They should be separated and managed independently. There may be situations where the allegations turn out to be unfounded. But it is important that suspicions are treated seriously and in the manner outlined above.
- All stages of the process will be recorded by DLP and YBC leadership, and will be subject to confidentiality as set out in 6 above.

11. Special Considerations

1. Abuse by visitors to YBC.
 - The possibility of abuse by a visitor must be recognised. If such abuse occurs, it will be dealt with in the same way as other incidents of suspected abuse.
2. Unidentifiable children
 - Potential risks to unidentifiable children will be reported.
3. Third party concerns



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- Any concerns raised by a third party will be dealt with in line with this policy and will be reported by DLP if there are reasonable grounds.

11.4. Retrospective disclosure

- YBC will report retrospective disclosures of child abuse by adults to the HSE.

11.5. Peer abuse

- In a situation where child abuse is alleged to have been carried out by another child, the child protection procedures should be adhered to for both the victim and the alleged perpetrator (meaning it should be considered a childcare and protection issue for both children). Refer to page 105 Children First.

12. Follow up on Child Protection Report with Statutory Services

- Where YBC has an ongoing relationship with a child or person involved in a child protection report, or their respective families, the DLP will liaise with the Social Worker in respect to YBC's involvement in providing support for those concerned and their families, and to protect the well-being of all children within YBC.

13. Garda Vetting

- Refer to YBC Garda Vetting policy. In essence the policy outlines that all staff and volunteers working directly with under 18s or vulnerable adults will be required to furnish details of past addresses to facilitate Garda vetting and that any individuals with past offences in relation to child abuse will not be facilitated access to children or vulnerable people by YBC.

14. Safe Practice

- Refer to YBC Childcare Guidelines.
- If a parent or a guardian brings a child to a meeting or event the child will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian. As far as possible the child will remain with the adult.
- Children should at no time be left unattended.
- Staff or volunteer should not at any time be in a closed room with a child, or be alone in a car with a child.
- There is a system for recording accidents and incidents.
- There should be no unnecessary physical contact between an adult and a child.
- The events involving children are organised in a structured way, and the volunteers are identified.
- A Youth Group Consent Form is used to cover the involvement of children in the Youth Club and other related activities.

15. Consequences of failure to report

- Under Irish legislation failure to report and failure to take steps with regard to child protection and abuse is considered reckless endangerment of children and is an offence under sec 176 Criminal Justice Act 2006, and is liable to a fine and or imprisonment.

16. Complaints

- Any complaints in relation to this policy should be communicated to DLP or YBC leadership. Any complaints will be dealt with promptly by YBC leadership.



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External advice may be sought. Any matter that is a reasonable concern for child protection will be reported to the HSE or Garda.

17. Consequences of failure to report

- o Under Irish legislation failure to report and failure to take steps with regard to child protection and abuse is considered reckless endangerment of children and is an offence under sec 176 Criminal Justice Act 2006, and is liable to a fine and or imprisonment.

18. Phone contacts

DUTY SOCIAL WORKER	021 4923001, 4923220
YOUGHAL GARDA STATION	024 92200
NATIONAL COUNSELLING SERVICE	021 4861360

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Appendix 1

Standard Reporting Form, this is the same as the reporting form at the back of the Children First Guidelines.



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FORM NUMBER: CC01:01:00

STANDARD REPORT FORM

(For reporting CP&W Concerns to HSE)



A. To Principal Social Worker/Designate: _____

1. Date of Report

2. Details of Child

Name:		Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
Address:	DOB		Age		
	School				
Alias	Correspondence address (if different)				

3. Details of Persons Reporting Concern(s)

Name:		Telephone No.	
Address:	Occupation:		
	Relationship to client:		
Reporter wishes to remain anonymous	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reporter discussed with parents/guardians	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Parents Aware of Report

Are the child's parents/carers aware that this concern is being reported to the HSE?	Yes	No
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Details of Report

(Details of concern(s), allegation(s) or incident(s) dates, times, who was present, description of any observed injuries, parent's view(s), child's view(s) if known.)



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FORM NUMBER: CC01:01:00

STANDARD REPORT FORM

(For reporting CP&W Concerns to HSE)



6. Relationships

Details of Mother		Details of Father	
Name:		Name:	
Address: (if different to child)		Address: (if different to child)	
Telephone Nos.		Telephone Nos.	

7. Household composition

Name	Relationship	DOB	Additional information, e.g. school/occupation/other

8. Name and Address of other personnel or agencies involved with this child:

	Name	Address
Social Worker		
PHN		
GP		
Hospital		
School		
Gardaí		
Pre-School/Crèche/YG		
Other (<i>specify</i>):		

9. Details of person(s) allegedly causing concern in relation to the child

Relationship to child:		Age		Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name:		Occupation:					
Address:							

10. Details of person completing form

Name:		Occupation:	
Signed		Date:	



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Writeable MS Word version available at www.hse.ie/go/childrenfirst

Guidance Notes

The HSE has a statutory responsibility under the Child Care Act 1991 to promote the protection and welfare of children. The HSE therefore has an obligation to receive information about any child who is not receiving adequate care and/or protection.

This Report Form is for use by:

- Any professional, individual or group involved in services to children, including HSE personnel, who becomes aware of a child protection or welfare concern, or to whom a child protection or child welfare concern is reported.
- Professionals and individuals in the provision of child care services in the community who have service contracts with the HSE.
- Designated persons in a voluntary or community agency.

Please fill in as much information and detail as is known to you. This will assist the Social Work Department in assessing the level of risk to the child or the support services required. If the information requested is not known to you, please indicate this by putting a line through the question. It is likely that a social worker will contact you to discuss your report.

The HSE aims to work in partnership with parents. If you are making this report in confidence, you should note that the HSE cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality for the following reasons:

- A Court could order that information be disclosed.
- Under the Freedom of Information Act 1997, the Freedom of Information Commissioner may order that information be disclosed.

You should also note that in making a 'bona fide report', you are protected under the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998.

If you are unsure if you should report your concerns, please telephone the HSE duty social worker and discuss your concerns with them (see *Appendix 2 for a full list of HSE offices nationwide*).