



CITYWISE EDUCATION

Child Protection Policy Statement and Code of Practice

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Child Protection Policy and Procedures

References:

Children First Act 2015, Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children

The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017

Child Protection Training in Youth Work, NYCI

Children First National Guidance outlines that all organisations working with children and young people should create a culture of safety that promotes the welfare of children and young people availing of their services. This includes Citywise Education. The Guidance also outlines best practice procedures in child safeguarding that all organisations dealing with children and young people should consider. This is in addition to any statutory obligations under the Act. Below are the statutory obligations of Citywise Education under the Children First Act 2015

- Keep children safe from harm while they are using the service
- Carry out a risk assessment to identify whether a child or young person could be harmed while availing of the service
- Develop a Child Safeguarding Statement that outlines the policies and procedures which are in place to manage the risks that have been identified
- Appoint a relevant person to be the first point of contact in respect of the organisation's Child Safeguarding Statement.

The Child Protection Policy for Citywise Education seeks to follow the general direction of Child Protection Guidelines for Primary and Post Primary schools, issued by the Department of Education and Science. Specifically Section 1-3 and Section 6- 8 relate to staff/volunteers/members in Citywise Education. Chapter 4 and 5 relate to duties of mandated persons and are relevant in particular to those listed in Section 8 below. Copies of these reference procedures are available online (see DES website). However the DES oversight requirements on teachers, principal and boards of management are not requirements as such in the youth sector.

The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017 published by the Department of Education and Science aims to give direction to school management and staff regarding the identification of and response to child protection concerns and the process for continued support of the child. Detailed below are some points of adaptation of that policy to Citywise and a Code of Practice for Citywise. In a case of a like for like situation, primary consideration will be given to the DES guidelines over this code. This statement and code of practice also applies to all activities organised by Citywise Education or run at Citywise Education premises.

Citywise Education Child Protection Policy Statement and Code of Practice

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Child Protection Policy Statement

Citywise Education, conscious of the importance of its educational work with young people, is fully committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of its young members, volunteers and employees. All should, at all times, show respect and understanding for the rights, safety and welfare of young people, and conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of Citywise Education.

In this regard staff and volunteers, in endeavouring to safeguard children, will

- Seek to develop an awareness of the issues which cause children harm
- Adopt a code of practice for staff and volunteers, incorporating child protection guidelines
- Share information about child protection and good practice with parents, staff, volunteers, children and other agencies, including schools, that need to know
- Share information about concerns with agencies that need to know, involving parents and children appropriately
- Follow careful procedures for recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers
- Provide effective management for staff through supervision, support and training.

This policy includes, inter alia, consideration of the needs of vulnerable adults who from time to time are involved in our programmes. Where it makes sense the word ‘children’ in this policy can be replaced by ‘children and vulnerable adults’. It is important that staff are aware of who the carer/parent responsible is for looking after the needs of a vulnerable adult.

A summary of this statement is posted in all Citywise Education premises and the website citywise.ie. All staff members are provided with a copy of our child safeguarding statement, child protection policy, and the code of practice. We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice at regular intervals.

2. Issues which cause children harm

2.1 Categories of abuse

There are four categories of child abuse defined

Neglect: the persistent or significant neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold or starvation, or persistent failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive;

Physical: any form of non-accidental injury that causes significant harm to a child;

Emotional: persistent or significant emotional ill treatment or rejection, resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and /or behavioural development of a child.

Sexual: the sexual exploitation of a child or young person for an adult's or another young person's own sexual gratification; the involvement of children or young people in sexual activities of any kind (including exposure to pornography) which they do not understand, to which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate normal family roles.

Recognising abuse depends on: a willingness to consider the possibility (when confronted with suspicious facts); an ability to observe the signs; a commitment to record the information.

2.2 Bullying

Bullying is a highly distressing form of abuse and is not acceptable behaviour.

All staff/volunteers should be vigilant to the possibility of bullying and take immediate steps to counteract it and to protect and reassure the victim. Bullying behaviour is viewed seriously and can result in suspension of the bully from Citywise Education activities. However, such action should only be taken in conjunction with ongoing supportive efforts to help the bully reform. As a matter of course, if a young person drops out of Citywise Education programmes the manager or assigned staff member will make early contact with parents/guardians to ensure that bullying has not been a factor in the choice.

3. Code of Practice for staff and volunteers

The purpose of this code is to protect young people and staff / volunteers by ensuring that everyone who works with Citywise Education has clear guidance on interacting with children and on the action which is required where abuse or neglect of a child is suspected. Failure to abide by this code is unacceptable professional conduct.

3.1 General

Adults should not be alone with a child on a one-to-one basis. For example, when a premises is closing, the last child should be leaving with the second last child or second last adult. Likewise, staff should not customarily give a lift to an individual child. If any emergency arises, for example, if a child needs to be brought to a hospital, it is acceptable for a leader to accompany the child alone.

Staff should not allow jocose comments of a sexual nature to be made by anyone about any child or any leader. Such comments should be reported to the manager in charge if a staff member is unable to stop them occurring.

All interaction of Citywise Education groups with members of the general public should be planned and should not impromptu. Thus, strangers should not be allowed to tag along with a group.

A female staff member or volunteer must at all times accompany a group of female children, while a male staff or volunteer must at all times accompany a group of male children.

Any activity which a Citywise Education staff member or volunteer organises for children whom he knows through Citywise Education should be part of the established programme and therefore approved by the management. If this is not so, the parents of the children involved should be aware of this fact before the event is scheduled to take place.

Staff should ensure that their relationships with young people are appropriate to the age, maturity and sex of the young people, taking care that conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought. Citywise Education management or staff in charge should be ready at all times to give directive advice where deemed appropriate.

3.2 Physical contact and use of physical force

Staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with children. They should not involve themselves in horseplay or manhandling of younger people, or retaliate to provocation. Physical contact is often open to misinterpretation by others.

A child should only be touched if it is necessary to protect the child, another person or property from harm, or to administer first aid. First aid should be administered in the presence of another adult (or failing that, another child); this requirement should never hinder anyone from providing first aid in an emergency.

It is a criminal offence for a teacher/ youth worker/ volunteer to strike a child. In the very exceptional event of a child having to be physically restrained, the utmost in common sense and the minimum of force must be applied to the situation.

Staff should assist each other, for example, through discussion and feedback to the manager, in achieving the standards in this section. Any incident in which a staff member or volunteer feels that the actions of others may be misconstrued, should result in the witness writing up a report of the incident and submitting it immediately to the manager.

3.3 Classroom / group sessions / tutoring / mentoring

All one-to one meetings should be conducted in rooms with visual access or with the door ajar. Where this is not possible, staff and volunteers should ensure that another adult knows the meeting is taking place. 'Do not enter' signs should never be placed on doors in such circumstances. Staff and volunteers should avoid the use of classroom materials, the choice of which might be misinterpreted. If there is a doubt the staff or volunteer should consult with the manager.

3.4 Sports and Outdoor

Staff and volunteers should take care not to overestimate children's capacities (e.g. long walks, traffic awareness, ability to withstand weather conditions, safety on hikes or in the water).

Staff and volunteers should know the safe thing to do, and one leader should always have the necessary skills to adjudicate on this.

One adult should not be alone with children in changing rooms. Young people should be encouraged to be modest in changing rooms. A practical procedure to ensure adequate supervision in a changing room is for a leader to go in and out occasionally of the room to hurry people along, or be outside the door etc.

Adults should not shower or change with children.

3.5 Residential activities

In general, Citywise Education does not organise mixed residential activities. Should a mixed residential activity be undertaken, separate accommodation (i.e. bedrooms, bathrooms) must be secured for male and female participants. Such trips must also have at least one male and one female leader.

Residential activities should be overseen by at least one leader of the same sex as the group. When this is not possible the activity should not take place.

Adult leaders should have separate sleeping accommodation from children. Efforts should be made beforehand to ensure that this can be guaranteed. If, in extreme circumstances, this is not possible, more than one leader must be in the room with children.

In circumstances where youth are proving troublesome at night it is acceptable behaviour to leave bedroom doors ajar.

If it is evident that an activity does not meet the standards set in this code, then the activity should be postponed or cancelled.

3.6 Child protection procedures and guidelines

The key principles underlying these guidelines are:

- confidentiality regarding all concerned
- discretion in the handling of any suspicion / allegation of abuse
- sensitivity to the needs of all involved.

Leaders and volunteers are encouraged to report *suspensions regarding possible abuse* to a designated person. Staff are obliged to report allegations to a designated person or to the TUSLA / Gardaí. Where there is indisputable evidence that a crime has been committed the matter must be reported directly to the Gardaí.

If *an allegation is made regarding employees / volunteers* this should be conveyed immediately to a designated person who in turn will communicate with the CEO (if not the same person).

It is the responsibility of the CEO (as Designated Liaison Person) to bring allegations or complaints to the attention of the board chair, who will act in accordance with guidelines issued by the TUSLA, bearing in mind in particular the 2017 procedures for schools. As the CEO will normally be the DLP that person is a mandated person under the Act and is obliged to follow guidelines in Section 8 of this policy below and in Chapter 4 and 5 of The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post- Primary Schools 2017.

If an allegation - which is not obviously spurious - is made against a staff member / leader / volunteer this matter will be reported to the statutory authorities and the child's name will not be publicised. The staff member / leader / volunteer will first be informed that an allegation has been made and the nature of the allegation, affording the person an opportunity to respond. Citywise Education will act to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk.

Internal investigations are not appropriate where child abuse is suspected or alleged.

Staff and volunteers must act with tact and sensitivity in *responding to disclosures* made by a distressed child. As they will be required to relay any disclosures of abuse, the leader should indicate to the child that the matter will necessarily involve other adults. The leader should be as supportive as possible to the child, record the details in writing, and maintain confidentiality, while following standard reporting procedures.

If a child makes a disclosure to an adult leader that gives rise to concerns about possible abuse, the leader should inform the designated person. The leader should not investigate the allegation. The designated person should discuss the matter with the chairperson of Citywise Education at the earliest opportunity, to plan a course of action. The designated person should also make a written record of the original exchange.

Staff have the right to bypass internal procedures and to notify the TUSLA or the Gardaí.

This document should be read in parallel with guidelines on child protection in schools (2017 Procedures for Schools, in particular Chapters 1-3 Chapter4, 5 and Chapters 6-8). While acknowledging that reporting procedures for teachers, principals and board of management of schools do not apply to Youth Work, any action following on a complaint will seek to match the actions proposed in the DES procedures.

4. Sharing information

4.1 Contact persons

Designated liaison person for Citywise Education

Designated Liaison person, Citywise Education

Daire Hennessy 0857795147

Deputy Designated Liaison person, Citywise Education

Laura Sheerin 0851117159

Chair of board of Citywise Education

Paul Whinnery 0857404648

Tusla (Child and Family Agency)

Duty Social worker, Child and Family Agency, St Marys, Craddockstown Road,
Naas, Co Kildare
(045) 839300

Gardaí

Tallaght Garda Station, Belgard Road East, Tallaght, Dublin 24, D24 K796.
Tel 01 666 6000

4.2 Policy statement for parents

- Citywise Education is committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of its members and to ensuring leaders are aware of their responsibilities and have clear guidance on how to act where abuse or neglect is suspected.
- Citywise Education is obliged to report any allegation of abuse made by a child to TUSLA. The established procedure is that the CEO of Citywise Education is the Designated Person to deal with such matters.
- A Code of Practice exists to help leaders deal with young people in their charge in a manner that is above reproach.
- Child abuse is defined under four categories:
 - **Neglect:** the persistent or significant neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a

child from any exposure to danger.

- **Physical:** any form of non-accidental injury that causes significant harm to a child;
 - **Emotional:** persistent or significant emotional ill treatment or rejection, resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a child.
 - **Sexual:** the sexual exploitation of a child or young person for an adult's or another young person's own sexual gratification.
- Bullying is a highly distressing form of abuse and is not acceptable behaviour. Bullying behaviour is viewed seriously and can result in suspension of the bully from Citywise Education activities. As a matter of course if a youth drops out of Citywise Education programmes the manager or assigned staff member will make early contact with parents to ensure that bullying has not been a factor in the choice.

5. Recruitment procedures and selection of staff / volunteers

All staff will be subject to appropriate background checks at the time of recruitment. This will include:

- Discussion in the interview of any previous experience in working with children, and of the applicant's ability and commitment to meet the standards set in the child protection policy;
- Conducting Garda Vetting in line with the organisation's Garda Vetting Policy.
- Reviewing the personal identification (e.g. driver's licence or passport) of the applicant and comparison of signatures to ensure there is no false identity;
- A requirement of a professional reference, ideally one detailing an applicant's previous work with children;
- Follow up telephone calls or email regarding character references;

Volunteers are required to follow the same procedures. All new staff will work alongside existing staff for an induction period, which for voluntary staff will be a trial period.

6. Training plan regarding this policy

In two training sessions per year (generally in September, January or May/June) child protection issues and the code of practice will be covered with volunteers and employees. All staff are expected to attend these sessions. The code will also be explained as part of basic training for new staff / leaders. A copy of this Child Protection Statement and Code of Practice, alongside the organisation's Child Safeguarding Statement, will be provided to all new employees / volunteers.

7. Standard information required for reporting

7.1 Incident Report Form

The following wording constitutes the Incident Report Form

Note:

- Information should be concise, factual and neutral in language
 - Notetaker's personal impressions or reactions should not be noted
 - The form should be completed on the presumption that parents and relevant professionals will have access to it.
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1. Name of individual child about whom the report is being made
 2. Day(s), Date(s) and Time(s)
 3. Observation(s) e.g. behaviour, injuries
 4. Child / young person's statement
 5. Name(s) and position(s) of personnel advised / involved in the situation / referral
 6. Action taken (dates, times, informed etc)
 7. Signed & dated.
 8. Date of receipt by designated person & signature of designated person

7.2 Restricted Information

The standard reporting form for Citywise Education (in regard to information likely to be passed to Tusla and/or Gardai should contain the following information:

1. Name & address of person reporting
2. Relationship with child
3. Family details of child : name, alias, date of birth, address, telephone
4. Indicate category of abuse and whether suspected or actual
5. Details of other family members if known
6. Details of other professionals known to be involved with child
7. Report details on the nature, timing, circumstances of the problem
8. Have any explanations been given: by child, parent, carer?
9. Describe the state of the child's physical, emotional, mental well being
10. Details on alleged abuse (if any) & who is the cause
11. What risks is the child now exposed to?

12. How did the situation come to your attention?
13. What evidence of harm exists?
14. Are there contributory factors which may be relevant (bereavement, separation, addiction etc)?
15. Are the child's parents aware that a report is being made to the Tusla?
16. Is there an urgent need for protective action?
17. The form should be signed and dated by the author.

Please note that all the information above is not requested in the Tusla reporting form. However it is good practice that all the information be gathered by the responsible person (usually the Designated Liaison Officer).

7.3 Reporting forms available from Tusla

Any necessary reporting forms can be had from the Designated Child Protection Officer or Deputy Officer or downloaded from <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/report-a-concern/>

Tusla has two forms for reporting child protection and welfare concerns – **the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form (CPWRF)** and the **Retrospective Abuse Report Form (RARF)**. The Child Protection and Welfare Report Form is to be completed and submitted to Tusla for concerns about children under the age of 18. A web portal has been developed for mandated persons to securely submit CPWRFs. The Retrospective Abuse Report Form is to be completed and submitted to Tusla for cases of adults disclosing childhood abuse.

8. Mandated persons under the 2015 Act

The following relevant persons are included mandated persons under the 2015 Act:

- (a) Safeguarding officer, **child protection officer** or other person (howsoever described) who is employed for the purpose of performing the child welfare and protection function of religious, sporting, recreational, cultural, educational and other bodies and organisations offering services to children;
- (b) child care staff member employed in a pre-school service within the meaning of Part VIIA of the Child Care Act, 1991;
- (c) **person responsible for the care or management of a youth work service** within the meaning of section 2 of the Youth Work Act, 2001.
- (d) **Youth worker** who—
 - (i) holds a professional qualification that is recognised by the National Qualifications Authority in youth work within the meaning of section 3 of the Youth Work Act, 2001 or a related discipline, and (ii) is employed in a youth work service within the meaning of section 2 of the Youth Work Act, 2001.

8.2 Designated Liaison Persons and Mandated Persons

Some designated liaison persons will be working in organisations where mandated persons are also employed. It is important to note that a mandated person is responsible for fulfilling their obligations under the Children First Act 2015.

This cannot be done on their behalf by the designated liaison person. If you are a mandated person and also have the role of designated liaison person in your organisation, you must fulfil your statutory obligations as a mandated person. If, as a designated liaison person, you are made aware of a concern about a child that meets or exceeds the thresholds of harm for mandated reporting, you have a statutory obligation to make a report to Tusla arising from your position as a mandated person. While mandated persons have statutory obligations to report mandated concerns, they can make a report jointly with another person. This means that a mandated person can make a joint report with a designated liaison person.

8.3 Mandated person's duty to report

If you are a mandated person and have a concern about a child, it is your legal responsibility to make a decision as to whether the concern meets the threshold for a mandated report under the Children First Act 2015 or not. If you are satisfied that this threshold has been reached, you should clearly identify on the report that it is a mandated report made under the Children First Act.

If you are unsure whether your concern reaches the legal definition of harm for making a mandated report, you can discuss the concern with a Tusla social worker. However, the responsibility for making the decision rests with you as a mandated person under the Act.

If you are a mandated person, you cannot submit a mandated report anonymously.

The Children First Act 2015 requires mandated persons to report a mandated concern to Tusla “as soon as practicable”. The Children First Act requires Tusla to appoint authorised persons to receive mandated reports. Authorised persons are obliged to acknowledge in writing all mandated reports they receive.

If you feel urgent intervention may be required to make the child safe, you can alert Tusla of the concern in advance of submitting a written report. You must then submit a mandated report to Tusla on the report form or via the web portal within three days.

Bullying Policy and Statement

This document has been created in dialogue with young people following engagement with Citywise young leaders and consultation with the Citywise Youth Steering committee. It sits within the frame of the Child Protection Policy Statement and Code of Practice;

“2.2 Bullying

Bullying is a highly distressing form of abuse and is not acceptable behaviour.

All staff/volunteers should be vigilant to the possibility of bullying and take immediate steps to counteract it and to protect and reassure the victim. Bullying behaviour is viewed seriously and can result in suspension of the bully from Citywise Education activities. However, such action should only be taken in conjunction with ongoing support efforts to help the bully reform. As a matter of course if a youth drops out of Citywise Education programmes the manager or assigned staff member will make early contact with parents to ensure that bullying has not been a factor in the choice.”

What is bullying?

Citywise Education, its staff, volunteers, leaders and young people, do not accept bullying in any of its form. Through the process of creating this policy and statement, Citywise leaders put forward the following definition;

“Bullying is unwanted and repeated negative behaviour towards another person (physical, mental, psychological) and can happen between peers, in person or online”

It is important to note several implications of this definition and the underlying assumptions which were discussed by leaders;

- Bullying can often have a connection to discrimination such as sexism, racism etc
- It occurs over time and takes the form of a series of incidents
- These incidents can take various forms including abuse, which is physical, verbal, emotional and/or online
- Bullying may also take the form of actively excluding others from activities
- It extends to the damaging of personal belongings

What can we do about it?

Throughout this process, a shared responsibility was identified in regard to preventing and stopping bullying in all its forms. As staff, volunteers, leaders and young people of Citywise we each have a role to play and agree to uphold the values of our organisation.

A series of measures are and should be in place to prevent bullying before it begins. This

includes open discussions with groups about bullying and its consequences. This can be done within groups through discussions and in some cases by establishing group contracts. The risk of bullying can also be ameliorated by incorporating personal development components into all Citywise programmes as anti-bullying education tools. Active roles should also be taken by staff, volunteers and leaders to include everyone in activities and to mitigate the risk of bullying.

All those involved in Citywise Education, as per the Child Protection Policy Statement and Code of Practice, should be vigilant to the possibility of bullying. Again, we all have a shared responsibility and as such there should be no by-standers to bullying. It is important that any incidences of bullying are reported to the leader in charge by young people and leaders.

Online bullying / social media engagement

Citywise endeavours to provide training for online safety for all staff, volunteers and young people. In the event of online bullying, young people should “stop, block, tell”. This means that if you are being bullied online, you can feel safe to block the bully and tell an adult.

Under normal circumstances no staff member should liaise with any Citywise member under the age of 18 on any social media platform. Ideally all digital communication between adults and young people should be conducted through the Citywise company phone or using a company email address. Should volunteers wish to communicate with any Citywise member via email, they should ‘cc’ a staff member.

In the event of bullying being discovered by an adult volunteer or staff, in the midst of an incident, immediate steps to counteract it and to protect and reassure the victim must be taken. All suspicions of bullying must be reported to the staff member in charge.

The relevant person should then, in consultation with management, put together a plan of action to investigate the bullying. This should include documenting any and all incidents of suspected bullying. This can be conducted through the use of review sheets, monitoring and incident reports. The relevant manager or staff member should also contact the parents of the member in the event of any youth dropping out of Citywise programmes to ensure that bullying has not been a factor in the decision.

Where bullying has taken place, it may be necessary for the relevant person to take actions such as calling parents or inviting parents to the centre to speak. The situation may need to be escalated, as bullying is taken very seriously by Citywise Education and suspension from activities may result. In certain circumstances, in consultation with management, it may be necessary to report recurring incidents of bullying to Gardaí.

It is important that all incidents of bullying and any subsequent action taken is in conjunction with ongoing support efforts to help the bully reform.

Signed

Chair of Board of Directors

CEO

Chair Youth Steering Committee