



YMCA Ireland Child Safeguarding Statement Northern Ireland

Policy, Procedures and Guidelines 2023

ymca-ireland.net

Our vision is a world where young people, their families and communities flourish in body, mind and spirit

National Council of YMCAs Ireland | UK Charity Number XN45820 | RoI Charity Number 20026585 | Company Number NI 15660

SECTION 1: YMCA CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY STATEMENT

The YMCA is committed to taking every appropriate step to ensure the safety and well-being of the young people with whom it works, regardless of class, gender, race, or creed. This policy applies to all children and young people with whom the YMCA is involved regardless of age.

While the association recognises that the primary responsibility for the care of children and young people rests with parents and guardians, the community as a whole has responsibility for their well being and protecting them.

The supplementary Good Practice Guidelines also outline YMCA guidelines for working with young adults (aged 18+). [Guidelines for Working with Young Adults](#)

All YMCA staff or volunteers must be aware of this policy and it is their duty to guarantee its implementation.

THE POLICY STATES:

“All children and young people should enjoy YMCA facilities and activities without fear of physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect. The welfare of children using YMCA services is of paramount importance”

Staff and volunteers in this organisation accept and recognise our responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which cause harm to children and young people and to establish and maintain a safe environment for them. We are committed to reviewing our policy, procedures, and practice regularly. We will endeavour to safeguard children by

- Following carefully the procedures laid down for recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training
- Reporting concerns to statutory agencies who need to know and involving parents and children appropriately;
- Adopting safeguarding children guidelines through a code of behaviour for staff and volunteers;
- Sharing information about safeguarding children and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers;
- Ensuring safety procedures are adhered to.

YMCA Ireland is truly committed to safeguarding the well-being of its members, staff, and volunteers, who should at all times show, and be shown, respect and understanding regarding well-being, safety, and welfare.

Below is the link to YMCA Ireland's Child/Adult Safeguarding and Welfare Reporting Form - this form must be used to record and report child/adult protection or welfare concerns or allegations to the Designated Officer/Designated Liaison Person.

[W YMCA Ireland Safeguarding and Welfare Report form.docx](#)

REVIEW OF POLICY AND PROCEDURES

YMCA Ireland will review this policy on an annual basis with all staff and volunteers.

The date of each review and the staff involved will be recorded for Good Practice and Information purposes.

The Executive Committee will endorse any amendments to the Child Safeguarding policy on an annual basis at Executive Committee meetings.

Policy reviewed on:	18 January 2023
Approved by:	Executive Committee
Effective from	1 March 2023
For the attention of and action by:	All staff and volunteers, management committees, children, young people and their parents/guardians
Review due on	January 2024
Designated Officers: YMCA Ireland DCPO DCPO (Greenhill YMCA) Deputy DCPO (Greenhill YMCA) DCPO (Newcastle YMCA) DCPO (Portadown YMCA) Deputy DCPO (Portadown YMCA)	Geraldine Stinton Brendan Gribben Kenny Baxter Denise Malone Nathan White
Safeguarding Vetting and Advice Panel:	Jade Irwin and Leanne Young are appropriate designated officers

SECTION 2: YMCA CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY STATEMENT

This policy seeks to lay out the value base, procedures, and guidelines required for YMCA staff & volunteers to ensure effective child protection. It can and should be added to where circumstances and programmes require it e.g. residential centres.

For the purposes of this document:

‘General Secretary’ refers to the person who heads the National Department or Association

‘Worker’ refers to a person (18 years or over) who is involved in the leadership of any organisation or group

‘D.C.P.O’ refers to Designated Child Protection Officer

LEGISLATION

The key legislation upon which this policy is based is as follows:

- Children (N.I.) Order 1995
- Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (N.I.) Order 2003
- Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults 2007
- The Family Homes and Domestic Violence (NI) Order 1998
- Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998
- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007 (as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012)
- The Safeguarding Board Act (Northern Ireland) 2011
- The Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2015
- Domestic abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (NI) 2021
- Protection from Stalking Act (NI) 2022

<https://www.volunteernow.co.uk/app/uploads/2022/12/Stalking-is-a-Crime-Factsheet.pdf>

POLICY CONTEXT

“Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland” (Department of Health, August 2017)

www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/co-operating-safeguard-children-and-young

DEFINITION OF A CHILD AND YOUNG PERSON

A child is a child until they have reached their 18th birthday (Children NI Order 1995)

The Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy statement outlines YMCA Ireland’s Child Safeguarding Policy, pursuant to the Children (NI) Order 1995 dealing with the care and protection of children and young people and is drafted with particular reference to the unique nature and structure of the organisation.

YMCA Ireland recognizes that young people attend YMCA Programmes for enjoyment, social contact, and personal development. They should not suffer from abuse wherever or however it occurs.

Staff and volunteers who are selected, or appointed to work with children and young people in local Associations, should enjoy their involvement, be confident in the knowledge of existing clear guidelines and if required, have access to good support and advice.

The Appropriate Statutory Agencies are as follows:

1. GatewayTeams - [Reporting child abuse and neglect | nidirect](#)
2. [Search Results in Child Protection Category](#)
3. NSPCC - [NSPCC Reporting Abuse](#)

Contact numbers for these agencies can also be found in [NI Statutory Agencies Contact Details](#)

Designated Person Contact Details can be found via the link [Designated Safeguarding Team \(NI\) contact details](#)

SECTION 3: PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

YMCA Ireland is committed to best practices in child safeguarding and to keeping children and young people safe from harm. In adhering to best practice, YMCA Ireland will comply with national policy, current legislation and guidance.

The following is a summary of the principles of good practice for the protection of children and young people.

All YMCAs working with children and young people should...

- Promote the general welfare, health, and personal development of children and protect them from harm of all kinds.
- Recognise that children have rights as individuals and treat them with dignity and respect.
- Raise awareness about what children are entitled to be protected from.
- Adopt and consistently apply a thorough and clearly defined method of recruiting and selecting staff and volunteers.
- Plan an appropriate response procedure in relation to accidents and complaints and to alleged or suspected incidents of abuse.
- Establish links with parents and other relevant organisations.

YMCA Ireland supports the Ethical Conduct of Youth Workers as highlighted in the [Ethical Code in Youthwork Document](#)

YMCA Ireland fully accepts young people’s rights to self-protection and:

- *To be safe*
- *To protect their own bodies*
- *To say NO*
- *To get help against bullies*
- *To tell*
- *To be believed*
- *Not to keep secrets*

SECTION 4: YMCA IRELAND SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURES

RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND MANAGEMENT OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

YMCA Ireland consistently applies a thorough and clearly defined method of recruiting staff and volunteers in line with legislative requirements and best practice.

1. There is a clear job description for staff and role description for volunteers, and personnel/volunteer specification outlining key skills and abilities required
2. There is an open recruitment process
3. There is an application form that covers past work/volunteering.
4. There is a declaration form requesting information on previous convictions which are not protected, and investigations if any.
5. A consent form for an AccessNI check is completed, if required
6. There is an interview process suitable to the post/role and task.
7. Written references are sought (and followed up orally when necessary).
8. Where required, an appropriate AccessNI disclosure check is carried out.
9. The post is approved by management.

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERS

When involving international volunteers, two references, as well as a police check from their town of origin, are required prior to service. If necessary, independent translations of these documents must be sought, as well as evidence confirming the volunteer's identity. International Volunteers are also required to complete the Declaration in [Reference form and International Volunteers Declaration](#) as well as undergo an Access NI Check

All appointments should be sanctioned by the Chairperson of the National Executive Committee or National Secretary or in the case of locally managed centres, appointments should be sanctioned by the chair of the local standing committee or the General Secretary or equivalent staff member.

Notes should be taken and filed appropriately in accordance with the YMCA Recruitment and Staff management procedures with regard to appointments, probation, and work review.

VETTING PROCEDURES

In Northern Ireland, for the purposes of recruitment within the YMCA, a person deemed to hold a 'Regulated Position' will be vetted under the ACCESS NI registers and online vetting procedures. YMCA Ireland's Access NI procedures are outlined in the [YMCA Ireland Access NI Policy-Statement](#)

As a registered body for ACCESS NI, YMCA Ireland follows all best practice policies and guidelines expected by ACCESS NI including the Recruitment of Ex-Offenders. See [YMCA Ireland Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy](#)

Because of the nature of our work, youth work employees and volunteers and anyone employed or volunteering in a regulated position are vetted under enhanced disclosure procedures. Best practice guidelines for vetting as expected by Access NI and as set out in the following document are adhered to: [Access Ni Protocols](#)

In the case of an Access NI Certificate being returned with sensitive information with regard to criminal convictions, a risk assessment using the following template [Vetting Risk Assessment Template](#) will be carried out by the Child Protection vetting and Advisory Panel.

The National Executive requires that ACCESS NI certificates are reissued if a current staff member takes on a substantive new position/role or if an unpaid volunteer takes on a paid staff position. Should a staff member or volunteer be absent for more than 6 months, an updated access NI certificate will again be required before recommencing volunteering or employment with YMCA Ireland.

DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE (NI)

YMCA Ireland will follow any future guidelines issued by Access NI and the Disclosure and Barring Service with regard to the future registration of any staff and volunteers who have access to young people.

EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

YMCA Ireland recognises that the effective management of staff and volunteers will contribute to an organisation providing activities for children and young people in a safe way. Good management will also require making sure that everyone in the organisation is clear about roles, responsibilities, and work plans, and ensuring they are adequately supported in carrying out their role.

There are procedures in place for the effective management, support, and supervision of YMCA staff and volunteers:

1. There is an induction process for staff and volunteers.
2. There is a probationary period for staff and a trial period for volunteers
3. Relevant training is provided, appropriate to the post/role.
4. There is a robust structure and process for support and supervision for all staff and volunteers, appropriate to the post/role.
5. There is an annual appraisal for staff and a review for volunteers.
6. Comprehensive written records are kept of: training completed, support and supervision, annual appraisals/reviews and training of staff and volunteers.

INDUCTION

Child Safeguarding Policy – Each appointee will receive a copy of the Child Safeguarding Policy, confirming having read and understood the document, with Child Safeguarding training being provided as part of the induction process. [YMCA Ireland Staff Induction Template](#)

PROBATIONARY/TRIAL PERIOD

A probation period of no less than 6 months will apply to all new appointees to ensure their suitability for the post, following which the line manager should review their suitability for the post.

TRAINING

As part of its personnel policies YMCA Ireland is committed to ensuring that each staff member receives adequate training around Child Safeguarding issues.

This shall take place in three ways:

- Firstly, each new member of staff as part of their induction will receive access to a copy of the Child Safeguarding Policy and will be informed as to their own responsibility to this. Within YMCA Ireland, this will be carried out by the Designated Child Protection Officer.
- Secondly, YMCA Ireland will facilitate on an annual basis, recognised Child Safeguarding Training (including CSE Awareness). Refresher training will be offered to both YMCA Ireland staff as well as to Local Association Staff every 3 years.

- Thirdly, bespoke training will be provided around specific child protection needs as they arise, either as a result of incidents or identified staff needs.

SUPPORT, SUPERVISION, AND ANNUAL REVIEW

All staff and volunteers will have appropriate support structures in place. This will include regular supervision either as an individual or as part of a team, as well as an annual review of duties known as a work review or job appraisal (Please refer to the YMCA Ireland Employee Handbook, and Supervision Policy.). As part of this process staff will be given an opportunity to voice any concerns they may have about child safeguarding issues.

COMPREHENSIVE, WRITTEN RECORDS ARE KEPT OF TRAINING COMPLETED; SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION; AND ANNUAL APPRAISALS/REVIEWS

Written records will be kept of all training completed by staff and volunteers, support and supervision meetings held, and all annual appraisals/reviews. Both parties should agree on the content of the records and each should have a copy. These records should be stored confidentially and in line with the organisation's data protection policy.

SECTION 5: REPORTING CONCERNS, DISCLOSURES AND ALLEGATIONS

The YMCA has clearly defined procedures for raising awareness of, responding to, recording and reporting concerns about actual or suspected incidents of abuse. It is imperative that all staff and volunteers implement the following procedures to report a concern, disclosure, or an allegation of child abuse.

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

The following are considered forms of Child Abuse:

Physical - the deliberate physical injury to a child

Neglect - the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional, and/or psychological needs

Emotional - persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as causing severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

Sexual - involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual behaviours.

Within the youth work setting, staff and volunteers also need to be aware of the potential of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) as a form of Sexual Abuse. CSE is when a person(s) exploits, coerces, and/or manipulates a child or young person into engaging in some type of sexual activity in return for something the child needs. This takes into consideration online grooming, peer exploitation, and child sex trafficking. Abuse involving CSE should also be reported using the following guidelines.

Definitions of abuse

WHAT IS A CONCERN?

Inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour or communication, favouritism or negligence are all examples of what may constitute a concern.

WHAT IS A DISCLOSURE?

A disclosure is when a child/young person tells someone that they have been or are being harmed or abused in some way. This may be physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, neglect, or bullying.

WHAT IS AN ALLEGATION?

An allegation occurs when a child, parent, or other person reports specific unacceptable behaviour where a child/young person has been harmed or abused in some way. Allegations must be reported to one of the organisation's Designated Child Protection officers.

REPORTING PROCEDURES

Any disclosure, allegation, or suspicion of abuse must be taken seriously, recorded, and reported to the DCPO who will decide the appropriate further action. The following Safeguarding Reporting Form may be used:

[W YMCA Ireland Safeguarding and Welfare Report form.docx](#)

This is a template for internal purposes but when a formal referral is being made by the DCPO then the appropriate **UNOCINI** referral form must be used.

If any member of staff or volunteer is concerned or suspects that a child or young person has been abused it is important that evidence is given to the situation and followed up with immediate action.

In the first instance listen to the young person, collect relevant information, record and immediately inform the Designated member of staff.

Where staff or volunteers employed in YMCA Ireland have cause for concern regarding possible abuse or neglect, or if a child or young person has made a disclosure to them, the following action should be taken:

THE MEMBER OF STAFF CONCERNED SHOULD

- Maintain detailed and dated written records of all available information relating to the cause for concern or the disclosure and any subsequent action. Immediately notify in person the DCPO. This notification is to be followed by written confirmation of the incident and details of all actions taken.
- The DCPO should then decide whether or not to report the incident to the Health and Social Services Gateway teams. This reporting may in the first instance be an informal inquiry to the appropriate Gateway Team asking for advice on a situation before a decision is made with regard to a formal UNOCINI report being submitted.
- In the case of a disclosure a UNOCINI Standard Reporting Form report should always be made to the appropriate Gateway Team.

Responding to incidents of alleged abuse is based upon clearly defined procedures within YMCA Ireland which must be followed.

TALKING TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS ABOUT CHILD PROTECTION OR WELFARE CONCERNS

Workers/volunteers may feel uncomfortable approaching a parent about a concern. You may have to discuss a concern about the welfare or protection of a child/young person or an issue that relates to the child/young person's developmental needs. The following best practice tips may be useful:

[Talking to parents/guardians about child protection or welfare concerns NI](#)

ROLE OF DESIGNATED OFFICERS

Key responsibilities of the Designated Officers is to:

- Be responsible to the National Executive
- Has a responsibility to the Office Bearers to encourage Local Associations within the YMCA to comply with the standards and practices outlined in this document.
- Has responsibility for updating information on relevant issues and monitoring the effectiveness of the Child Safeguarding policy.
- Maintains a network of contacts within outside authorities such as local Gateway teams/police/fire authorities/education & library boards/health services, ascertaining contact names and phone numbers and seeking appropriate advice when necessary from the appropriate Gateway team
- Has responsibility for ensuring that all new workers receive a copy of and understand the organisation's Child Safeguarding Policy.

- Ensure that appropriate training and support are provided.
- Receive and deal with all concerns of a child protection nature.
- Make formal reports if necessary
- Keep appropriate records and store them in a safe and confidential manner.
- Has a responsibility to carry out an Annual Audit of procedures.

LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

YMCA Ireland has a legal obligation to report to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

- Any person who has applied for a regulated position when they are disqualified from doing so
- Any person whom they have removed from a regulated position following knowledge of their disqualification

Under their Duty of Care, YMCA Ireland also has an obligation to report any concerns, disclosures or allegations about any individual, child or young person which has been brought to their attention. The organisation has a legal obligation to report any individual who leaves the YMCA or is asked to leave the YMCA as a result of concerns based on child protection issues.

MAKING A PROTECTED NOTICE/WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Whistleblowing occurs when a staff member or volunteer raises a concern about misconduct or abusive practices by individuals and/or an organisation, where such practices cause harm or risk of harm. This will include situations where a staff member or volunteer's concerns are not acted upon by the Designated Officer/Deputy Designated Officer

SECTION 6: YMCA IRELAND CHILD PROTECTION GUIDELINES

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR/CONDUCT

This Code of Conduct has been drawn up in order to support YMCA Ireland **Staff and Volunteers** to inform their youth work and protect them, especially when working in isolation and vulnerable situations. The code of behaviour outlines the behaviour expected of all involved in the organisation.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS ARE EXPECTED TO DEMONSTRATE A CONSISTENT COMMITMENT TO EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND TO YOUNG PEOPLE

- By being honest with, and showing respect for young people.
- By respecting the confidentiality of the young person and by being clear and open when confidentiality cannot be maintained.
- By offering challenging and exciting experiences undertaken responsibly in a safe environment
- By recognising unacceptable behaviour and taking action, enables change to take place.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS ARE EXPECTED TO DEMONSTRATE A CONSISTENT COMMITMENT TO THEMSELVES AND COLLEAGUES

- By being honest with, and showing respect for colleagues
- By respecting and keeping appropriate levels of confidentiality.
- By working and planning to the best of their ability within the constraints of their association, or allocated responsibilities.
- By only working alone when immediate support is available and /or the Health & Safety of the Young People is at Risk.
- By offering support to colleagues and seeking it when necessary.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS ARE EXPECTED TO DEMONSTRATE A CONSISTENT COMMITMENT TO EDUCATING MEMBERS, VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF

- By leading by example and setting good, positive role models:
- Not using language, which is racist, sectarian, sexist or abusive.

- Dressing appropriately to the occasion task, and company present.
- Not smoking, drinking alcohol, or using other illegal substances whilst on duty and working with young people.
- By creating an environment within which young people can feel safe and learn.
- By enthusiastically seizing all learning opportunities either programmed or otherwise.
- By fully implementing the aims and objectives of YMCA Ireland.

RECOMMENDATIONS

All staff and volunteers need to be aware of the impact that their behaviour has on young people. The trust required between adults and young people is fundamental to the work of the YMCA and should never be jeopardised.

In recognising the issues highlighted in the Code of Conduct, it is expected that all staff and volunteers will:

- Respect everyone as an individual
 - Provide a good example of acceptable behaviour
 - Respect young people's rights to privacy
 - Be available to listen and, if necessary, refer to more appropriate help
 - Try to ensure that your actions cannot be misunderstood or cause offence and are acceptable within a relationship of Trust
 - Show understanding when dealing with sensitive issues
 - Plan not to put yourself in a situation where you are alone with a child or young person
 - Adhere to YMCA Ireland policies which can be found online on the Shared Policy Folder
 - Be aware that you are accountable for your actions to the young people, their parents and YMCA Ireland.
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- Staff and volunteers should **never**:
 - Spend excessive time alone with children away from others.
 - Take children alone on car journeys no matter how short.
 - Take children to their home.
 - Engage in inappropriate physical contact
 - Engage in rough physical games including horseplay – apart from structured sports activities.
 - Engage in sexually provocative games.
 - Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form.
 - Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
 - Make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child even in fun.
 - Let allegations a child makes go unchallenged or unrecorded.
 - Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do themselves.
 - On residential, sleep in a room with children, enter young person's bedrooms, or allow young people to enter staff bedrooms.
 - Establish relationships with participants that may have sexual overtones
 - Deliberately place yourself or others in a compromising situation.

Please note the YMCA expects staff and volunteers to act with sensitivity and self-control when working with all age groups. Those engaged in YMCA work need to recognise the issues of power and responsibility. It is YMCA practice that staff and volunteers do not misuse their role by taking advantage of participants of any age and establishing 'personal relationships'. The behaviour of all Staff, and Volunteers whilst on duty must, of course, be within the Law. (see Ethical Conduct in youth work AND Guidelines for Self Protection

SANCTIONS

Should a staff member or volunteer be in breach of this Code of Conduct, YMCA Ireland's disciplinary procedures, as outlined in the Staff Handbook will be activated and followed.

COMMUNICATION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE, PARENTS AND OTHERS.

USE OF MOBILE PHONES/EMAIL:

It is not appropriate for staff to hold the personal mobile phone numbers of young people, unless for Health and Safety reasons, for example, when on residential. After such residential, these contact numbers must be removed from any mobile phone used for work purposes.

Parental permission must be given to communicate directly with a young person via mobile phone or email. Texting or emailing young people directly should always take the form of a group text/email to all of the group members; however, in circumstances where there may need to be an individual response, the communication must always be copied into another staff member and appropriate language should be used.

SHARING PHOTOS AND/OR VIDEOS

Parental permission must be sought before sharing photos or videos of young people on websites, social media networking sites, or PR Materials.

Youth workers are advised to pay particular attention to the use of cameras and picture mobile phones and in some cases, their use will not be permitted. Under no circumstances must photographs be taken without the consent of the group or on personal media/mobile devices.

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

With regard to the use of Social Media, YMCA Ireland has developed Social Media Guidelines that all staff and volunteers must adhere to when using social media as part of programme delivery or as a communication method with young people. These guidelines can be found on the following link:
YMCA Ireland Policy Guidelines for Staff and Volunteers use of social media 2020

PHYSICAL CONTACT AND ADDITIONAL NEEDS:

In circumstances where physical contact with a member is unavoidable, it must be predetermined and take place with the member's permission. This means that:

- The way it is going to be done must be thought through, explained, and understood.
- The member's permission must be obtained to allow the physical contact to be carried out in the agreed way.

NOTE: It may be sometimes necessary for staff and volunteers to do things of a personal nature for young people in a local Association, particularly if they are young people with disabilities. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the young person and the parents. In an emergency, parents should be fully informed.

In such circumstances, it is important that you ensure that all staff are sensitive to the child and undertake personal care tasks with the utmost discretion.

SHARING INFORMATION

- Where child protection concerns arise, information must be shared on a 'need to know' basis in the best interest of the child.
- Sharing information regarding child protection concerns with the appropriate person is not a breach of confidentiality
- Parents/guardians and children and young people have a right to know if personal information is being shared and or a report is being made unless doing so could put the child/young person at further risk.

WRITTEN INFORMATION SOUGHT FROM PARENTS

It is essential that YMCA gain information relating to children in relation to membership and consent for activities, day trips, residential, and emergency situations. Any consent that is provided must be from someone with parental responsibility and all YMCAs must inform those giving consent that it must be obtained from those with parental responsibility.

Parents should always be informed of the limits of confidentiality around their contact details and any information they provide to the YMCA.

CONFIDENTIALITY

On the premise that the welfare of the child is paramount, considerations of confidentiality must not be allowed to override the right of children and young people to be protected from harm.

Staff, volunteers, and participants must be aware that there are circumstances in which confidentiality must be broken, specifically if it is suspected that abuse has occurred and an offence committed.

On receipt of both a verbal and a written report on suspected abuse, the Designated Child Protection Officer will refer to the appropriate authorities.

All staff and volunteers must be clear about the referral procedure.

RECORD KEEPING

All staff and volunteers need to be aware of and follow the written procedures for keeping records such as:

- Attendance register
- Accident and incident books
- Consent forms
- Cause of concern forms

All records will be kept in compliance with the YMCA Ireland Data Protection policy and procedures.

COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES

All staff, volunteers, and participants must be aware of the organisation's complaints Procedures.

[W YMCA Ireland Complaints Policy and Procedures 2020-2023.docx](#)

Everyone has a right to complain or report a grievance, regardless of whether they are children, parents, or staff/volunteers.

GENERAL SAFETY AND MANAGEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

This Safeguarding policy should be read in conjunction with the

[☰ YMCA Ireland Health and Safety Policy 2022-2023](#)

which will outline in greater detail the processes and responsibilities with regard to Health and Safety matters in the organisation

GENERAL SAFETY

When an accident occurs, the danger must be removed immediately, the injured person treated, and the accident recorded on the agreed form.

- A phone should be accessible wherever a group meets.
- Emergency telephone numbers should be displayed prominently.
- It is desirable that a trained First Aider be available within the staff team.
- Professional help should be sought if and when the trained First Aider cannot help or if further assistance is required when the First Aider can do no more.
- A first aid box should be provided at each location.
- The worker in charge of the group must inform the General Secretary and/or the D.C.P.O of any accidents at the earliest possible opportunity.
- The worker in charge of the group must ensure that the child's parent/guardian is immediately informed

of the accident.

- The worker in charge of the group must record all details of accidents in the Accident Book/Form and also obtain witness statements within 24 hrs.
- Identify the cause of the incident and prevent reoccurrence.
- If an accident is serious, the D.C.P.O or the manager should inform the insurance company named in the Accident Book as soon as possible.

INSURANCE

All children's and youth work activities should have professionally advised and adequate insurance cover to include key areas of

- Personal Accident
- Public Liability
- Property and Contents Insurance
- Vehicle Insurance

It is the responsibility of the activity organiser and YMCA General Secretary to ensure that all relevant insurance policies are currently valid.

In the case of activities or events which are considered 'high risk', the worker should consult with the D.C.P.O and/or the YMCA General Secretary who will decide on the appropriateness and adequacy of the cover available.

No high-risk activity should be engaged in without first following the above procedure to ensure that the insurance cover provided is adequate.

Insurance cover for transportation of children/youths should be adhered to at all times

PREMISES

Staff and Volunteers can help ensure that activities and the environment that is being used for activities and programmes are safe, by identifying potential hazards and concerns

The premises used for all children's and youth work should be suitable and safe.

- Adequate provision of toileting facilities.
- Appropriate and adequate lighting. (Torches/night lights should be available for emergencies)
- Appropriate and adequate heating systems.
- Adequate provision of security and safety appliances.
- All fire exits and entrance and exit routes should be kept clear and marked for any situation.
- All keys to entrance/exit doors should be easily accessed for emergency situations.
- All fire alarms and appliances should be installed following professional advice and maintained as advised. Workers should be trained in their use.
- All work/meeting areas should be marked with an 'Assembly Point' in the case of an emergency.
- No heating/cooking items, electrical appliances, or naked flames other than those tested and fitted to the venue by a professional should be used.

It is the responsibility of the YMCA to maintain the upkeep of the premises to a safe and suitable standard. However, the worker in charge has a responsibility to ensure that the procedures outlined in the YMCA Ireland Health and Safety policy are fulfilled.

COMPETENCY OF LEADERS

It is vital that all staff involved in activities and programmes have adequate training. All staff, volunteers, and external trainers/facilitators will be expected to provide written documentation as proof of their required or necessary qualifications.

SAFETY OF EQUIPMENT

All equipment used by a youth or children's group must be safe and suitable for use by the age range of the young people participating. Where a National Standard is applicable, the equipment should conform to it. In addition:

- All equipment should be thoroughly checked for defects before use.
- If there are defects the equipment should not be used.
- All defects must be reported to the activity organiser.
- All workers should be fully conversant with assembly and use of equipment.
- No child is to assist with the assembly of equipment.
- Use of all equipment must be monitored by a worker.
- Care should be taken that all paint, glue, felt tips, etc. are non-toxic.
- Safe storage should be provided for all equipment.

SUPERVISION RATIOS

The level of supervision must be adequate and decided upon depending on the nature and venue of the activity as well as the age range of the children involved. Therefore when deciding how many staff and volunteers are required to supervise, leaders must take into consideration a range of practical measures.

- The number of participants in the group.
- The nature of the site /venue.
- The activities to be undertaken – if the activity is one of a hazardous nature e.g. mountain climbing
- It is important that each supervisor knows the responsibilities that they are expected to bear.
- It is recommended that no journeys/visits should be undertaken without a minimum of two volunteers in attendance.
- It is for the leader in charge to exercise their professional judgement in deciding the level of supervision, taking into account the guidance as stated above.
- Where a party consists of children of both sexes, males and females supervision should be provided unless otherwise agreed.

OFF-SITE ACTIVITIES

All trips, camps, and residential must be thoroughly planned and documented well in advance and relevant information made accessible to all parties involved. The following procedures must be followed:

- Parents/guardians must be informed in writing of the arrangements for any trip to be taken outside of the normal venue.
- The worker in charge must obtain from parents their written consent to the participation of their child and a completed copy of the health form prior to departure.
- A copy of the trip information form should be forwarded to the D.C.P.O and/or the General Secretary.
- Copies of the consent and health forms must be forwarded to the D.C.P.O or held in the Local Association by an appropriate contact person.
- A detailed itinerary of the trip should be given to all the parents/guardians, workers, and the D.C.P.O and/or the General Secretary at least 2 weeks in advance of departure (a pre-trip information night for all concerned would be an appropriate opportunity to present this information).

RESIDENTIALS


When on residential the following recommendations should be adhered to alongside the procedures and recommendations outlined throughout this policy.

- Each residential should have at least two leaders-in-charge, preferably 1 male and 1 female with appropriate ratios having been considered as outlined previously.
- Leaders must ensure that males and females have different sleeping rooms. In exceptional circumstances, workers must be sensitive to the needs of individuals and monitor the situation carefully.

- Young people participating should have their privacy respected by other participants e.g. rooms, changing rooms, showers, etc.
- Staff members (workers) must always use common sense and sensitivity and not leave themselves open to allegations of sexual misconduct. For example:
 - Do not enter rooms without permission
 - Do not enter changing rooms without permission
 - Do not enter showers without permission.
 - Always knock or call out and ask permission to enter areas where people may be changing.
 - Never put yourself in a position of being alone with vulnerable individuals e.g. cars, closed rooms, or out of public view.
- Staff members (workers) should, when possible, ask another staff member (worker) to accompany them when entering rooms, etc.
- Staff members or volunteers should not sleep alone in dorms with young people.
- When changing or when with a group that is changing - be discreet.
- If behaviour by one of the young people causes offence or is deemed inappropriate, it is the leaders' responsibility to discuss and deal with this as soon as possible.
- Parental permission slips for those under 18's and medical forms must be completed by all young people attending residential.
- Staff members and volunteers should use common sense and sensitivity around the areas of touching, hugging, etc.
- All staff and volunteers on residential will have undergone routine vetting.
- Prior to each residential, staff should meet as a group to discuss the implementation of these guidelines on the residential.

REVIEW

This will include an Annual review and checklist of Safeguarding, as well as an action plan for the year ahead

 Safeguarding Action and Training Plans 2023

Links are provided to the policies, procedures and Guidelines listed and are available upon request.

IMPLEMENTATION

We recognise that implementation is an ongoing process. Our service is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the policies, procedures and guidelines that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while availing of our service.

This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed at the National Executive meeting on an annual basis, or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.