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Further Education Centre
 The Neale Road
 Ballinrobe
 Co. Mayo

Ballinrobe Youthreach Child Protection Policy

Child Protection Policy Statement

We at Ballinrobe Youthreach are committed to a child centered approach to our work with young people. We undertake to provide a safe environment and experience, where **the welfare of the child/young person is paramount**. We will adhere to *The Children First Bill, 2014*, which will put elements of the *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011)*, on a statutory footing which was published by the House of the Oireachtas on 14 April 2014. The new legislation will operate in tandem with the existing *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011)*. We have implemented procedures covering:

- Code of behaviour for staff
- Reporting of suspected or disclosed abuse
- Confidentiality
- Recruitment of staff will follow Child Protection Guidelines in line with MSL ETB policies
- Management and supervision of staff
- Involvement of primary carers
- Allegations of misconduct or abuse by staff
- Complaints and comments
- Incidents and accidents

This policy will be reviewed on:

Signed: _____ Designated person

Signed: _____ Deputy designated person

Date: _____





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Code of Behaviour for Staff

1. Child Centred Approach

- Treat all young people equally.
- Listen to and respect young people
- Involve young people in decision making, as appropriate.
- Provide encouragement, support and praise regardless of ability.
- Use appropriate language.
- Offer constructive criticism when needed.
- Treat all young people as individuals.
- Respect a young person's personal space.
- Discuss boundaries on behaviour and related sanctions, as appropriate with young people and their primary carers.
- Use age appropriate teaching materials.
- Lead by example.
- Create an atmosphere of trust.
- Respect differences of ability, culture, religion, race and sexual orientation.

2. Good Practice

- Register each young person (Name, address, phone, special requirements, attendance, and emergency contact)
- Make parents/guardians, visitors and young people aware of the centre's Child Protection Policies and procedures.
- Have emergency procedures in place and make sure that all staff is aware of these procedures.
- Be inclusive of young people with special needs.
- Report any concerns to the Designated Person and follow procedures.
- Encourage young people to report any bullying concerns or worries in line with the centre's anti bullying policy.
- Evaluate work practices on a regular basis.
- Report and record any incidents or accidents.
- Update and review policies regularly.
- Keep parents/guardians informed of any issues concerning their child
- Ensure proper supervision based on age and ratios are in place.

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3. Inappropriate Behaviour

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with a young person.
- Don't use or allow offensive or sexually suggestive physical and or /verbal language.
- Don't allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form.
- Don't socialize inappropriately with students outside of structured centre activities/hours.
- Don't physically chastise students.

4. Physical contact

- Seek consent from young person in relation to physical contact (except in an emergency or a dangerous situation).
- Avoid horseplay or inappropriate touch
- Check with student about their level of comfort when doing physical activities.

5 Health and Safety

- Don't leave children unattended or unsupervised.
- Provide a safe environment.
- Store any dangerous materials appropriately.
- Be aware of accident procedure and follow accordingly.

Reporting Procedures

Staff Notice

Who to contact about issues relating to Child protection and Welfare

Frank Brady has been designated as the person to contact if you have any issue or concern about any aspect of a student's safety and welfare. It is the responsibility of this person to support and advise staff about policy and procedures in relation to child protection and to ensure that procedures are followed. It is also the duty of the designated person to liaise with the Health Service Executive or Gardai where appropriate.

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Frank Brady can be contacted at Ballinrobe Youthreach on 094 9541117

Recording and reporting procedures

We at Ballinrobe Youthreach strive to provide an environment which encourages security, confidence and trust thus enabling young people to have the confidence to share their concerns at times with others. It is important that the young person who discloses child abuse feels supported and facilitated in what, for him or her may be a frightening and traumatic process. It is important that any negative feelings that they may have are not increased by the kind of response which the disclosure elicits.

How to respond

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

- Take what the young person says seriously.
- React in a calm manner.
- Reassure the young person that it was right to tell somebody what happened.
- Use language that the young person can understand
- Listen carefully and attentively;
- Be careful when seeking clarification. Conversation should be supportive and for the purpose of clarification only. Never ask leading questions such as, whether specific acts not mentioned by the young person occurred or whether a specific person not named by the young person carried out the abuse. Do not seek intimate details beyond those volunteered; such questions and suggestions could complicate an official investigation by the Health Board or the Gardai.
- Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser to the person reporting to you.
- Do not confront the alleged abuser.
- Write down immediately afterwards what was said, including where, when, any other significant factors noting marks and signs observed. All reports should be signed and dated by the person recording the event.
- Check with the young person to ensure that what has been heard and understood by you accords with what they actually said.
- **Make no promises that can't be kept.**
- **Do not promise to keep secret what will be revealed.**

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- Explain and make sure that the young person understands what will happen next.
- Ensure that the information you have received is only shared with essential persons and not made available to third parties who have no right to know.
- Inform the Designated person or the deputy designated person who will follow procedures and make contact with the Duty social worker, if appropriate.
- If the Designated person or the Deputy Designated person is not available, contact the local Duty Social Worker directly.
- In cases of emergencies outside HSE Social Work Department hours, contact the Gardai.
- In situations where the immediate safety of the young person is threatened,

It may be necessary to contact the Gardai.

Confidentiality

All information regarding concerns of possible child abuse should only be shared on a need to know basis in the interest of the young person.

Giving information to those who need to have that information for the protection of the young person who may have been abused, is not a breach of confidentiality.

The Designated person who is submitting the report to the Health Board or An Garda Síochána should inform a parent/guardian unless doing so is likely to endanger the young person or place them at further risk.

A decision not to inform a parent/guardian should be briefly recorded together with the reasons for not doing so.

It is not the responsibility of the centre staff to make enquires of parents or guardians. It is a matter for the appropriate Health Board to investigate suspected abuse and determine what action to take, including informing An Garda Síochána.

In emergency situations, where the Health Board cannot be contacted, and the young person appears to be at immediate and serious risk, An Garda Síochána should be contacted immediately.

Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending Health Board intervention.

Protection for persons reporting Child Abuse

The Child Abuse Act 1998 deals with legislative protection for persons reporting abuse. The purpose of the Act:

1. To provide immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse “reasonably and in good faith” to designated officers of the Health Board or any member of An Garda Síochána.
2. The provision of significant protections for employees who report abuse. These protections cover all employee and all forms of discrimination up to, and including dismissal.



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3. The creation of a new offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report of child abuse to authorities “knowing the statement to be false”



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Responsibilities of all Centre personnel

There is an obligation on all centre personnel to provide the pupils with the highest possible standard of care in order to promote their well being and protect them from harm. If a centre employee receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a young person is being abused, this employee should in the first instance report the matter to the DLP:
Frank Brady.

Definition and Recognition of Child Abuse

Child abuse can be categorized into four different types

1. Neglect
2. Emotional abuse
3. Physical abuse
4. Sexual abuse

A child may be subjected to more than one form of abuse at any given time. Definitions for each form of abuse are detailed in Children First Chapter 3 Section 3.2-3.5 pgs 31-33.

Guidelines for Recognition of Child Abuse

A list of child abuse indicators is contained in Appendix 1 Children First pg 125-131.

It is important to stress that, no one indicator should be seen as conclusive in itself of abuse, it may indicate conditions other than child abuse. All signs and symptoms must be examined in the total context of the young person's situation and family circumstances. All staff members should familiarize themselves with the content of these sections.

There are commonly three stages in the identification of child abuse.

These are:

1. Considering the possibility.
2. Looking out for signs of abuse.
3. Recording of information.



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Bullying

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

Procedures dealing with bullying are recorded in the Code of Behaviour Policy and The Anti Bullying Policy.

Peer Abuse

In a situation where child abuse is alleged to have been carried out by another child, the reporting procedures outlined above should be followed.

Allegations or Suspicions Re: Centre Employees

The most important consideration for the management of Ballinrobe Youthreach is the safety and protection of the young people attending. However employees also have a right to protection against claims, which are false or malicious.

There are two procedures to be followed (Section 4.1.3 page 15 Child Protection)

1. The reporting procedure

2. The procedure for dealing with the employee.

The designated person has responsibility for reporting the matter to the health board. Co. Mayo VEC has responsibility for addressing the employment issues.

If the allegation is against the designated liaison person, the deputy liaison person will assume responsibility for reporting the matter to the health board.

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Reporting Procedure

When an allegation of abuse is made against a Centre employee, the designated person will act immediately in accordance with procedures. A written statement of the allegation should be sought from the person making the report. The Designated Liaison Person must inform MSL ETB immediately.

Centre employees, other than the Designated Liaison Person who receive allegations against another centre employee, should immediately report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person.

When MSL ETB are informed of an allegation of abuse against a centre employee, they will follow procedure by informing the employee the following:

- A) The fact that the allegation has been made against him/her
- B) The nature of the allegation
- C) Whether or not the matter has been reported to the health board by the Designated Liaison Person.

The employee should be given a copy of the written allegation and any other relevant documentation.

The priority in all cases is that no young person be exposed to unnecessary risk.

Therefore as a matter of urgency measures will be put in place. These measures should be proportionate to the level of risk and should not unreasonably penalize the employee in any way unless to protect the young person.

If the nature of the allegation warrants immediate action, the employee may be asked to absent him/herself from the centre with immediate effect.



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Administrative Leave

Any absence by a centre employee would be regarded as administrative leave of absence with pay and not suspension. Such leave of absence would not imply any degree of guilt on the part of the employee.

Informing Parents/Guardians

MSL ETB will inform the Parents/guardians of the students in the centre that it has adopted the Guidelines and Procedures on Child Protection.