

POLICY DOCUMENT

Code of Good Practice to Protect Children

MS Ireland Code of Good Practice to Protect Children

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1. STATEMENT OF POLICY

The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Ireland is fully committed to safeguarding the well-being of all the children and young people with whom we work. Our policy on child protection is in accordance with “Children First”. MS Ireland is committed to promoting the rights of the child including the participation of children and young people in matters that affect them.

A set of guidelines have been introduced by MS Ireland and all staff and volunteers involved in any event with young participants have agreed to adhere to these guidelines.

MS Irelands guidelines are set out in this document.

2. CONTEXT OF THE POLICY

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the UN in 1989 and ratified by Ireland in 1992. We believe that all work with children and young people should, by its very nature, recognise, implement and promote the fundamental tenets of the Convention.

The Child Care Act, 1991 defines a child as someone under 18 years of age who is not married. The UN Convention defines a child as someone under 18 years of age and the National Children’s Strategy in Ireland, similarly defines a child as someone less than 18 years of age, who is not married.

Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children 1999

The Children First Guidelines were issued by the Department of Health and Children in 1999 and outline procedures, which all organisations dealing with children and young people should put in place. They state that all such organisations should put in place a child protection policy tailored to their specific needs. This policy should outline the procedures and arrangements in place to protect children in line with “Children First”. Equally, the policy will provide protection for employees/volunteers in MS Ireland in their work with children.

Our Duty to Care

Our Duty to Care was published by the Department of Health and Children in October 2002. It offers a practical guide to staff and volunteers who work with children by outlining a number of fundamental principles of good practice.

3. Purpose

The purpose of the document is to:

- (1) Affirm employees, volunteers, branches and board members in their positive role in relation to children;
- (2) Raise the awareness of employees, volunteers, branches and board members regarding situations that could give rise to allegations of child abuse;
- (3) Outline good practice that will protect children, minimise the risk to children, employees, volunteers, branches and board members;
- (4) Provide reporting procedures for dealing with child protection allegations, suspicions or disclosures.

4. MS IRELAND Child Protection Reporting Procedures

Principles of MS IRELAND Code of Practice to Protect Children

To maximise the safety and wellbeing of children in our services MS IRELAND takes the following steps:

- Gives parents, children and employees/volunteers information about what we do and what they can expect from us by providing a Service Information Leaflet.
- Provides access to this Code of Practice to Protect Children for/to all service users, carers and other relevant individuals who are availing of a service that involves children and young people
- Makes sure that all employees/volunteers are carefully recruited and supervised as per the procedures recommended in *Children First* Guidelines
- Establishes a Code of Good Practice for the operation and delivery of children's services
- Trains all relevant employees/volunteers in Child Protection and Welfare. Refresher training is provided at regular intervals for employees/volunteers and at a minimum every three years.
- Monitors, supervises and evaluates our services and employees/volunteers to ensure consistency and quality for all our service users as outlined in the MS IRELAND Human Resource Policy and Procedures and in MS IRELAND Service Policy and Procedures.
- Informs parents and children how they can voice their concerns or complain if there is anything they are unhappy about by providing/displaying the MS IRELAND Complaints Procedure for/to all service users.
- Appoints Designated Person(s) who will provide the necessary mechanism for dealing with suspicions and/or allegations of abuse ensuring that all employees/volunteers are familiar with who these people are and how to access them.
- Undertakes to review and update this Policy and Procedure Document annually.

4.1 What is Child Abuse?

There are various types of child abuse, i.e. neglect, emotional, physical and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to more than one form of abuse at any given time. *Children First* has adopted the following definitions:

- **Neglect**

can be defined in terms of an *omission*, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, medical care.

(*Children First*, 2.2.1)

- **Emotional Abuse**

is normally to be found in the *relationship* between a parent/carer and a child rather than a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's developmental need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met.

(*Children First*, 2.3.1)

- **Physical abuse**

Is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust.

(*Children First, paragraph: 2.4.1*)

- **Sexual abuse**

is normally to be found in the *relationship* between a parent/carer and a child rather than a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's developmental need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met.

(*Children First, 2.3.1*)

Other Forms of Abusive Behaviour Towards Children

Apart from the above very serious forms of abuse, employees/volunteers should also be on the alert for other forms of behaviour that may be harmful to children. The following behaviours are unacceptable among children and employees/volunteers and have been taken from the Department of Education Code of Good Practice Child Protection for the Youth Work Sector.

- **Verbal Abuse**

This can include name calling, sarcasm, and criticism, making reference to some physical characteristic, destructive criticism, derogatory remarks and gestures.

- **Bullying**

Bullying behaviour can be defined as repeated aggression, be it verbal, psychological or physical which is conducted by an individual or group against others. Examples of bullying include teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting or extortion.

- **Organised Abuse**

Child abuse can occur in a number of ways, including organised abuse. This occurs when one person moves into an area/institution and systematically entraps children for abusive purposes (mainly sexual) or when two or more adults conspire to similarly abuse children using inducements.

- **Peer Abuse**

In some cases of abuse the alleged perpetrator will also be a child. In these situations the Child Protection Procedures should be adhered to for both the victim and the abuser. If there is any conflict of interest between the alleged abuser and the victim, the victim's welfare is of paramount importance.

- **Unwelcome Behaviour**

This can include favouritism, exclusion, sexual harassment and sexual innuendo, humiliating and embarrassing others, deprivation of basic rights and harsh disciplinary regimes.

Reasonable Grounds for Concerns of Child Abuse

Good child protection practice means that employees/volunteers know how to recognise child abuse. This does not mean that they are responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has taken place – even for an expert that is a difficult decision – but they have a responsibility to be alert to behaviour by children or workers which suggests that something is wrong. An employee/volunteer may become concerned for the safety of a child in a number of circumstances:

- An employee/volunteer may witness abuse;
- A third party informs the employee/volunteer of their concerns/suspicions regarding a child;
- A child discloses to a third party who informs the employee/volunteer;
- A child discloses to an employee/volunteer that he/she is being abused;
- An employee/volunteer may overhear other children discussing their concerns about a particular incident, employee/volunteer or other child;
- An employee/volunteer becomes suspicious of unexplained injuries, behaviour or explanations that clearly lead to concerns for the well being of the child.

4.2 Procedures for Reporting Suspected or Actual Child Abuse

The welfare of the child is paramount at all times.

The primary responsibility of the person who first suspects or is told of abuse is to ensure the safety of the child. The child's welfare and safety must be the employee/volunteer's overriding and paramount concern.

Reporting Procedure for a Disclosure of Abuse from a Child to an Employee/Volunteer

It is important that a child who discloses abuse feels supported and facilitated in what, for him or her, may be a frightening and traumatic process. He or she may feel perplexed, afraid, angry, despondent and guilty. A child who divulges abuse makes a profound act of trust and should be treated with respect, listened to and have their views taken into consideration sensitively and with care.

It is important to remember and adhere to the following:

1. React calmly, as over-reacting may alarm the child and compound feelings of guilt.
2. Listen carefully and attentively; be sure to observe carefully and take the young person seriously.
3. Reassure the child that he/she has taken the right action in telling.
4. Do not make false promises. Do not commit to keeping it a secret.
5. Do not ask the child to repeat the story unnecessarily.
6. Ask questions only for the purpose of clarity. Be supportive, but do not ask leading questions or seek intimate details beyond those volunteered by the child. In any case detailed investigative interviews will be carried out, if necessary, by HSE staff or by a member of An Garda Síochána.
7. Check with the child that what has been heard and understood by you is accurate.
8. Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser.
9. Explain and ensure that the child understands the procedures which will follow.
10. Record the conversation using the child's own words as soon as possible, in as much detail as possible.
11. The disclosure should be reported immediately to the Designated Person. If the Designated Person for their region is not available they must contact the National Services Manager (Olga Estridge), if neither is available they must contact directly the Duty Social Worker in the child's area of residence. In the case of an emergency, or the Duty Social Worker cannot be contacted, the employee/volunteer should contact An Garda Síochána. The Designated Person should be informed as soon as possible that this has been reported to the authorities.
12. The Designated Person will liaise with the HSE on behalf of the organisation to ascertain if a report needs to be made. If a report is being made it must use the child's own words.
13. The Designated Person will make contact with the parents/carer to inform them of the disclosure. This is to be done provided it doesn't place the child in danger.
14. Treat the information confidentially, sharing it only with persons who have a right to hear it.

Reporting Procedure for Suspicions or Allegations of Child Abuse

Any person who is concerned about the safety or well being of a child or receives an allegation of abuse should record their concerns/information and report the matter as soon as possible to the Designated Liaison Person for their region.

The following procedure should be followed when dealing with any suspicion/allegation of Child Abuse, including any suspicion, concern or accusation of abuse against a colleague:

1. All information relating to a concern or allegation must be treated in the strictest confidence.
2. Where an employee/volunteer has reason to be concerned about the safety or welfare of any child in receipt of an MS IRELAND service, or any child that an employee/volunteer comes in contact with in the course of their work, they must report it to the Designated Liaison Person immediately. If the Designated Liaison Person for their region is not available they must contact the Regional Services Manager, Olga Estridge, on 087 9959020 / 01 6781611. If the Regional Services Manager is not available they must contact the Duty Social Worker in the child's area. In the case of an emergency, or the Duty Social Worker cannot be contacted, the employee/volunteer should

contact An Garda Síochána. The Designated Liaison Person should be informed as soon as possible that this has been reported to the authorities.

3. The incident(s) which raised the concern must be documented accurately by the employee/volunteer as soon as possible after it occurs. Only exact details should be recorded, an employee/volunteer's feelings should not be part of this record. This record must be signed and dated by the person making it.

4. The employee should store the record in a private secure place until it is handed over to the Designated Person. The full details should be reported to their Designated Person as soon as possible.

5. Where both parties agree that there is a risk to the child the incident will be reported to the HSE by the Designated Liaison Person without delay by using the Reporting Form available from the Designated Liaison Person in each region.

6. Where both parties agree there is no risk to the child no further action will be taken and the report will be filed in a secure location. However support for families or referral to other agencies/services should be considered at this stage. Advice can be received from the Duty Social Worker in the child's area.

7. Where both parties disagree on whether a report should be made to the HSE the individual employee/volunteer who raised the concern should be given a clear written statement of the reasons why the organisation is not taking action. The employee/volunteer is to be advised that if they remain concerned about the situation they are free to consult with or report to the HSE or An Garda Síochána. The employee/volunteer must notify the Designated Liaison Person that they are continuing with this course of action.*

8. At any time if a Designated Liaison Person is unsure as to whether he/she should refer or not, they should seek advice/consultation with the Duty Social Worker in the child's area.

9. It is good practice that the Parents/Guardians of the child are notified; however, particular care should be taken especially if this will cause increased risk for the child.

10. Potential risks to unidentifiable children should also be reported to the HSE. (e.g where an adult discloses abuse which occurred when a child and the perpetrator may still be active).

11. The Designated Liaison Person will liaise with the Statutory Authorities on behalf of MS IRELAND.

*Under *Children First* Guidelines the Designated Liaison Person and employee/volunteer may consult with the local HSE Child Care Manager regarding any risk to children before making a formal report.

It is important to be aware that The *Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998* provide civil immunity from civil liability to persons/organisations/groups who report Child Abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to the HSE or An Garda Síochána.

4.3 Procedure for Dealing with Suspicions or Allegations of Child Abuse Against an Employee/Volunteer

When an allegation is made against an employee/volunteer, MS IRELAND has a dual responsibility in respect of both the child and the employee/volunteer or other accused person. The organisation should, as a matter of urgency, take any necessary protective measures to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk.

There are two procedures to be followed when allegations of abuse are made against employees or volunteers who are providing services to children in MS IRELAND:

1. *The reporting procedure in respect of the child.*

2. *The procedure for dealing with the employee/volunteer.*

The Designated Liaison Person will have responsibility for the child and will follow the standard reporting procedure and will liaise with the Parents/Carers and Statutory Authorities on behalf of MS IRELAND.

The procedure for dealing with accusations against employees/volunteers is set out in the MS IRELAND HR Department, Dignity and Respect at Work Policy and Procedures Document. The CEO and relevant senior management will remain in consultation with the Designated Liaison Person, HSE and An Garda Síochána for the duration of the process. The possibility of collusion of other employees/volunteers should be recognised. It will be necessary for An Garda Síochána and senior management to agree their strategy for investigation and

maintain open communication throughout the process.

There are various situations in which allegations may be made involving persons associated with the organisation. These may include:

- An allegation of abuse against an employee;
- An allegation of abuse against a volunteer;
- A complaint or allegation against a child, who may be a service user.*

*If an allegation is made against another child, it should be considered a child protection issue for both children involved and child protection procedures should be adhered to for both the victim and the alleged abuser.

Reporting Procedure for Dealing with an Allegation against an Employee/Volunteer

When an allegation is made against an employee/volunteer the following steps should be followed and the rules of natural justice should apply. Procedure as follows:

1. The Chief Executive Officer should be informed as soon as possible by the Designated Liaison Person.
2. Necessary steps should be taken to ensure that the child is not exposed to unnecessary risk and protective measures should be taken to protect the child.
3. The Designated Liaison Person should be contacted immediately to ensure that the needs of the child are being met. The Designated Liaison Person will work on behalf of the child with the statutory authorities and will follow the standard reporting procedure for dealing with a suspicion/allegation of child abuse as outlined in this policy document.
4. These measures should be proportionate to the level of risk and should not unreasonably penalise the employee/volunteer, financially or otherwise, unless necessary to protect children. Where protective measures do penalise the employee/volunteer, it is important that early consideration be given to the case.
5. Any employee/volunteer who has been accused of any allegation of child abuse should be given the right to respond to the accusation. This response should be recorded and securely filed by the CEO. The employee/volunteer should receive support from their line manager under the direction of the CEO until the issue is resolved.
6. MS IRELAND does not investigate the accusation. This is the responsibility of the statutory authorities.
7. The CEO should arrange a meeting with the HSE as soon as possible to agree the procedures that need to be followed. The Designated Liaison Person should have the relevant contact details to set this up.
8. After these consultations and when pursuing the future position of the employee/volunteer, accused of the allegation, the CEO will advise the employee/volunteer of the procedures that have been agreed with the HSE and An Garda Síochána.
9. MS IRELAND Management should take care that actions taken do not undermine or frustrate the investigations being conducted by HSE or An Garda Síochána. Strong liaison with these agencies must be maintained to ensure that the process is as effective as possible.
10. Following such an investigation careful consideration should be given to the welfare of the child and the employee/volunteer, particularly if the allegation was not true. This should be carefully managed by the CEO and relevant line manager.

4.4 Procedure for Dealing with Retrospective Disclosures by Adults

This section refers to situations when an adult discloses abuse that took place during their childhood. In these situations it is essential that consideration is given to the current risk to any child who may be in contact with the alleged abuser. If any risk is deemed to exist the following procedure must be followed.

1. The employee/volunteer who the disclosure is made to must report it directly to the Designated Liaison Person.
2. The Designated Liaison Person will ascertain if there is any current risk to children who may be in contact with the alleged abuser.
3. If any risk is deemed to exist the Designated Liaison Person will report it to the HSE without delay.

4. If the alleged abuser is an MS IRELAND employee/volunteer the procedure for dealing with an allegation against an employee/volunteer must be followed as outlined in this policy document.
5. MS IRELAND has a duty of care towards an adult who discloses childhood abuse to an employee/volunteer. Support should be offered to the adult to help him/her to deal with the disclosure and the consequences of the abuse. Information should be obtained from HSE for counselling that is available in the community. This needs to be handled with the utmost confidentiality. This information should only be shared with employees who need to know.
6. MS IRELAND employees/volunteers who are not employed as counsellors should not engage in counselling any adult who discloses childhood abuse. It is the duty of MS IRELAND to support adults to access this support if they want it from professional counselling services.

5. Confidentiality and Record Keeping

It is essential that all child protection information within MS IRELAND and the information exchanged between HSE and An Garda Síochána is treated with the utmost confidentiality in order to safeguard the privacy of the children and families concerned and to avoid prejudicing any subsequent legal proceedings.

Child Protection information should only be shared with individuals who need to know and are involved in the reporting procedure for dealing with suspicions or allegations of child abuse.

6. Complaints

The primary responsibility of the person who first receives a complaint of abuse or witnesses an accident is to report it and to ensure that their concern is taken seriously. The guiding principles in regard to reporting child abuse may be summarised as follows:

- The safety and well-being of the child or young person must take priority;
- Reports must be made without delay;
- The principle of natural justice should apply, which means that a person is innocent until proven otherwise;
- The principle of confidentiality should apply, whereby only those that need to know should be told of a suspicion/allegation/disclosure of abuse and the number that need to be kept informed is kept to a minimum;
- Parents and Guardians have a legal right to know about any circumstance or situation that affects their child/children.

7. Accidents

It is the responsibility of all employees/volunteers to carry out their work safely, not to take unnecessary risks, and be constantly vigilant to the possibility of accidents to themselves or others, and to be aware of any hazards that may exist. There are added responsibilities when working with children that employees/volunteers need to be aware of when dealing with an accident. These responsibilities are as follows:

- Parents/guardians must be notified of any accident/incident that occurs regardless of how small it may seem;
- Record every incident/accident that occurs regardless of how small it may seem;
- Emergency numbers for parents/guardians and emergency services must be kept close to hand;
- Follow the formal complaints procedure for children and parents;
- All employees/volunteers know what information will be needed to process a report of an accident.

8. Safe Recruitment and Selection

Many people who apply to work with community and voluntary organisations on either a voluntary or paid basis are interested, well motivated and suitable for the various tasks involved. However, it is very important that MS IRELAND takes all reasonable steps to ensure that only suitable and appropriately qualified people are recruited. Unfortunately, people with a tendency to abuse children can be attracted to the type of work that gives them the opportunity to be with children, and this always has to be borne in mind when recruiting/selecting employees/volunteers to work with children.

All employees/volunteers taking responsibility for children in MS IRELAND should undergo a recruitment process. This recruitment process is as follows:

- Responsibilities of the role and the level of experience/qualifications required should be drawn up and clearly stated beforehand;
- It must be clear from the outset the type of factors which would exclude applicants, i.e. convictions against children;
- Appropriate application forms should be used for employees and volunteers. Please refer to MS IRELAND HR Department for these;
- Interviews should be undertaken by at least two MS IRELAND representatives;
- Two references should be obtained, non relation, in writing and checked in accordance with MS IRELAND Human Resources Policy and Procedures;
- All potential employees/volunteers should sign a declaration giving permission to MS IRELAND to carry out a Garda Vetting process. It is MS IRELAND Policy that the Garda Vetting process is carried out prior to commencement of duties. Garda Vetting is managed by the HR Department so please refer all queries to the MS IRELAND Authorised Signatories;
- A probationary period must be outlined;
- All employee/volunteer contracts must be agreed and signed off by management.

A good recruitment process will improve the chances that the right people are placed in the right positions.

9. Supervision and Support.

Supervision

MSI is primarily an adult service; we do however, provide activities for children/young people, whose lives have been affected by MS. It is important that all employees/volunteers, have a mechanism to discuss any aspect of their work, that raises concerns regarding a child/young person.

MSI line management structure should be used in all situations;

Coordinator/Manager meet with employees/volunteers to discuss their work.

Regional Coordinators meet with Community Workers individually and in teams.

Concerns/problems can be discussed at these meetings.

MSI are committed to attend and share information, as required, at formal child protection and welfare meetings as organised by the HSE Children and Family Services.

Training.

There is a schedule in place to extend Child Protection Training throughout the organisation.

Appendices.

Appendix 1.

Role & Responsibility of Designated Liaison Person

General Description.

The Designated Liaison Person is responsible for dealing with any concerns about child protection that arise within MS IRELAND. Each region within MS IRELAND has a Designated Liaison Person named to deal with any child protection queries, concerns, suspicions or allegations.

The role of the Designated Liaison Person is to:

- Refer suspicions/allegations/cases of child abuse on behalf of MS IRELAND to the HSE and/or An Garda Síochána;
- Ensure appropriate information is available at the time of referral and that the referral is confirmed in writing under confidential cover;
- Be a resource on child protection matters locally to employees/volunteers;
- Co-ordinate locally on particular cases that arise;
- Ensure that an individual case record is maintained of the action taken by MS IRELAND, the liaison with other agencies and/or involvement of any MS IRELAND employee/volunteer and record the outcome;
- Store all related files in a safe and secure place in accordance with the relevant legislation;
- Liaise with and support parents/carers, children and MS IRELAND employees/volunteers ensuring safety for the children accessing our services;
- Maintain a working knowledge about Child Protection issues;
- Establish contact with the senior member of community services responsible for Child Protection in each catchment area on behalf of MS IRELAND, i.e. Child Care Manager or Principle Social Worker;
- Provide information and advice on Child Protection within MS IRELAND as requested e.g. local HSE Keeping Safe Training Programmes;
- Ensure that MS IRELAND's Code of Practice to Protect Children is followed when dealing with child protection concerns;
- Liaise with Community Services/An Garda Síochána on behalf of MS IRELAND as appropriate;
- Report any child protection training needs that come to their attention to the National Child Protection Officer;
- Keep relevant people informed within MS IRELAND of any Child Protection issue that arises i.e. National Child Protection Officer or Senior Management within the region as appropriate;
- Work within the Child Protection Team* to give and receive support that is needed for working within the area of child protection;

Note: All suspicions/allegations of child abuse within MS IRELAND should be reported directly to the Designated Liaison Person with specific responsibility for MS IRELAND, contact details are included below. The Children's Officers in MS IRELAND are also available to assist with any child protection concerns that arise in MS IRELAND. The details of local officers are available from MS IRELAND.

*The Child Protection Team consists of the National Services Manager and the Designated Liaison Persons.

Designated Liaison Person Role and Responsibility and Contact Details Regional Co-ordinators.

Midlands Region – Mary Leonard 090 64 76353 / 087 2663659.
Mid-West Region –Carol MacKenzie 061 335565/ 087 2499270.
North Eastern Region – Kevin Curran 042 9664410 / 087 2663334.
Western Region – John MacDonald 091 862478 / 087 2502009.
North Western Region – Catherine Peoples 07491 25017 / 087 2663570.
Eastern Region (East) – Geraldine Dunne 01 2866800 / 087 2484267.
Eastern Region (South West) – Roseanna Duke 01 4905933 / 087 2482462.
Eastern Region (North) – Sean Kinsella – 01 2569585 / 087 2500563.
South Eastern Region – Katie Hourigan – 0567751522 / 087 2663564.
Southern Region - Carmel Coughlan – 021 4300001 / 087 9759711.

National Services Manager Contact Details.

Olga Estridge – 01 6781611 / 087 9959020.

MS IRELAND wishes to provide the best possible environment for all persons involved in the Society and to provide enjoyable, safe opportunities, free of abuse of any kind. All persons involved in MS IRELAND have rights which must be respected.

All children in contact with MS Ireland services should be treated equally by staff, volunteers, and other participating children. They should never be shouted at or be subjected to derogatory name calling or referred to in such a manner.

Appendix 2.

Operation of Programmes for Children.

In the operation of these programmes, employees and volunteers should at all times:

- Put in place a sign-in/sign-out system for participants to record attendance, dates, times and venues at any particular club/event/session (the content of all such sessions should also be noted);
- Use language that is appropriate to the age and ability of the children;
- Ensure that programme content and materials are appropriate to the age, ability and maturity of the child;
- Avoid using content and materials that are not conducive to the positive healthy development of children, e.g. issues of violence or subversion;
- Seek the permission of parents/guardians where matters being dealt with are of a sensitive nature, e.g. matters relating to health or sexuality;
- All records regarding working with children should be stored in a safe place;
- Please use a check list when preparing to work with children to ensure that all aspects of the activity are well prepared taking into account safety, fun, ability of children and any other issues that need to be covered.

Appendix 3.

Appropriate Physical Contact.

Some activities require a 'hands on approach', especially in a personal care and a coaching situation, e.g. it may be necessary to support a child learning a new activity. As part of a normal healthy relationship between an employee/volunteer and a child, socially acceptable physical contact will occur from time to time. This will include a handshake, a pat on the back or a comforting arm on the shoulder in times of distress etc. These contacts should be made with integrity and respect for the child and should be made solely in the best interests of the child.

Inappropriate physical contact with children must be avoided at all times including instances that may occur from one child to another. Any discomfort or resistance on the part of the child should be respected.

Employees/volunteers need to be aware that even the most informal physical gestures e.g. putting a hand on a shoulder or arm, could be misconstrued by a child or an observer, especially if they are continually repeated with the same child. Discretion and good judgement must be used at all times with regard to necessary physical contact in some activities including:

- Personal Care Tasks
- Swimming
- Coaching e.g. crafts, sports, photography, etc.
- First Aid
- Games

or with physical contact that could also arise in the following situations:

- Comforting a distressed child
- Intervening in a physical fight between children
- When a child greets with a hug/hand shake

Employees and volunteers should be aware of the particular conditions within which appropriate physical contact could properly take place, for example:

- In open view
- With at least one other adult present
- When the child is clearly informed of the process to be followed and freely gives their permission

Physical force should not be used, except in circumstances where such force is the only means of protecting a child or adult from injury.

Appendix 4.

Guidelines for Challenging or Disruptive Behaviour.

Disruptive behaviour involves consistent patterns of behaviours that "break the rules." Children of all ages break some rules, especially less important ones. This behaviour is a normal part of childhood. Situations may arise where the behaviour of a participant is routinely challenging or disruptive and may cause harm to them or other children. It is recommended that in instances of challenging or disruptive behaviour which require the intervention of the employee/volunteer and which put at risk the safety and well being of the child or other children, the following steps could be taken;

- The employee/volunteer who knows the child at the centre of the behaviour well should approach the child and try to convince the child to stop the behaviour;
- In a group setting if the behaviour persists the child could be taken out of the group/activity brought to one side, following good practice guidelines for one-to-one work with children, and helped to deal with whatever is causing the problem;
- It may be appropriate for the child to return to the group/activity once the problem has been resolved;
- It may also be appropriate for the child to go home and if so the parents/guardians must be notified immediately;
- Depending on the nature of the incident the rest of the children involved in the group/activity may need to discuss their reactions to the behaviour. This must be considered and if necessary discussed with their parents/guardians.
- In all cases parents/guardians must be made aware of instances of challenging or disruptive behaviour

that their child/children have expressed.

Recording Challenging or Disruptive Behaviour

MS IRELAND guidelines require that serious instances of disruptive behaviour which necessitate the intervention of an employee/volunteer be documented on the MS IRELAND Incident Record Form, which will be kept on file. This report should be available to MS IRELAND management and where necessary, in confidence, to other employees/volunteers involved with the particular group.

The written report should describe:

- a) The programme running at the time
- b) What happened and who was involved
- c) Where and when it happened
- d) What was said, if significant
- e) Any injury to person(s) or property
- f) How the situation was resolved and what the employee/volunteer did to bring about its resolution
- g) Any follow-up or consequences to the situation
- h) This report should be made available to the parents/guardians of the incident.

Appendix 5.

Guidelines for Particular Situations of Risk.

Employees/volunteers need to be aware of particular situations and environments where children are more vulnerable to abuse and where allegations of child abuse are more likely to occur. As outlined in Section 5 of this Code it is recognised that there are occasions when meetings/services take place on a one-to-one basis with children. This section covers points of good practice that need to be considered to provide a safe environment for children, employees and volunteers.

Some examples include:

5.1 Meetings with Children

Many times children will seek to confide with a person outside of their family supports and this can be a regular part of working with children in informal/social settings. This can be a very rewarding experience for a child and an employee/volunteer as the child can discuss aspects of their life which can be very serious or just regular issues that they have on their mind. Employees/volunteers should be aware of the potential risks which may arise from meetings with individual children or a small group of children. Where possible:

- Avoid being alone with one participant, if you need to talk separately do so in an open environment, in view of others;
- Such meetings should be conducted in a room with visual access, or with the door open, or in a room/area where other people are nearby;
- Employees/volunteers should advise another adult that such a meeting is taking place, and the reason for it. A record should be kept of participants present, dates, times and content of such meetings. Others in the building could be encouraged to drop in occasionally if necessary;
- Employees/volunteers are strongly advised to avoid meetings with individual children where they are on their own in a building;
- Private meetings should take place at an appropriate time e.g. not late at night.

5.2 Dormitory & Changing Room Supervision

- Employees/volunteers should never share rooms/dormitory with children;
- Children share rooms with those of same age and gender and adults should knock before entering rooms;
- Proper advance planning should reduce the risk of inappropriate sharing of rooms. Consultation with the children and parents/guardians during planning is essential.

5.3 Travelling with children

There is extra responsibility taken on by all persons when they travel with children. When travelling with children employees/volunteers should:

- Ensure that there is adequate insurance cover;

- Not carry more than the permitted number of passengers;
- Ensure the use of all safety equipment including belts and clamps;
- Employees/volunteers are discouraged from being alone with a child. If, however, it is necessary in unforeseen circumstances to travel alone in a car with a child it is recommended to have the child travel in the back. Seek parental permission to transport an individual child, clearly state times of pick-up and drop off and duration of journey. Inform the parents/guardians of any delays while en route.

5.4 Social media contact with service users outside the work environment.

Employees / volunteers are discouraged from contact with children who are service users outside of the work environment through social media sites, texting through personal mobile phones, e mail etc.

Appendix 6.

Guidelines for Residential/Day Trips Away.

The following guidelines are put in place to assist MS IRELAND employees/volunteers to facilitate the organisation of a trip involving overnight stays away from home for children. The guidelines are designed to maximise the enjoyment, learning opportunities and safety of those involved.

The following checklist acts as a guide for employees/volunteers who are involved in organising residential trips away for children. It is recommended that these are used to ensure best practice approach for these trips and to minimise the risk to children and the persons working with them. The checklist has been split into three categories,

1. Preparing for the Trip
2. During the Trip
3. Monitoring and Evaluation

Preparing for the Trip

• Planning & Documentation

- Ensure permission forms are signed and received from parents/guardians prior to departure;
- Ensure that all necessary medical forms are filled out detailing medical conditions, allergies and/or procedures that may need to be looked after during the trip in line with MS IRELAND medical policies and procedures documents;
- Ensure you have adequate MS IRELAND insurance cover for the trips and activities involved;
- Selection process for choosing the children for the trip must be done in a fair and transparent way;
- Follow proper recruitment procedures when selecting employees/volunteers to go on the trip allowing enough time for Garda vetting, police checks and reference checks, whether they are recruited internally or externally;
- Ensure that all employees/volunteers have received adequate child protection training and are aware of MS IRELAND's child protection protocol.
- Ensure that emergency contact phone numbers for parents/guardians are documented and available at all times. Take particular care in this as some parents/guardians take holidays at these times so they may not be contactable;
- All employees/volunteers should be given clear roles and responsibilities for the trip;
- There should be one person appointed as the leader of the overall group who will have final decision making authority during the trip.

• Accommodation

- In the planning stage check the proposed sleeping arrangements for participants, employees/volunteers and other support personnel;
- Check health and safety issues relating to the accommodation such as emergency evacuation for upstairs rooms, accessibility of rooms and corridors for mobility of the participants;
- Ensure that single gender dormitories/rooms are used for children;

- Ensure that children of similar age share. It is not appropriate for an over 18 year old to share with a child under 18 years of age. It may not be appropriate for a child of 17 years of age to share with a 10 year old. Please ensure to plan this carefully and obtain written parental permission to cover the eventual sleeping arrangements;
- Always consult with the children and parents/guardians regarding their preferred choice of accommodation with regard to sharing or having a single room. This may be an important issue for some children particularly regarding personal care or being away from home for the first time;
- Ensure that employees/volunteers are accommodated in separate rooms from the children;
- Ensure all employees/volunteers have a rooming list;
- Adults should never enter a room without knocking first.
- **Preparing participants & programme**
 - Prepare an information pack for participants including the programme of activities and emergency information if necessary.
 - It is essential that the children are involved in every aspect of the process. This is an ideal opportunity for them to share the responsibility for the trip/activities that take place.
 - Communications with parents/guardians and participants is useful to inform of travel details, accommodation details, other activities, special requirements, medical requirements, special dietary needs and any other necessary details. This can take the form of meetings or written correspondence;
- **Emergency procedures**
 - Have clear emergency procedures if you need to evacuate, have an emergency fund and know where the children, employees and volunteers are at all times;
 - Children should be under reasonable supervision at all times and should never leave the venue or go unsupervised without prior permission;
 - Have a back up plan if the programme changes for any reason;
 - Bring a medical kit with you;
 - Employees/Volunteers should ensure they have the contact details of two senior managers with them while on the trip;
 - Please note, for foreign trips in particular, it is advisable to have an agreed contact person in MS IRELAND who will be able to respond to emergencies if they occur at any time of the day or night. This may involve liaising with parents/guardians in difficult situations that can be hard to do over the phone. This person should ideally be the line manager responsible for the trip/activity and should have the full contact details of the group and full itinerary for the trip.

During the Trip

- **Documents to bring on the trip**
 - Participant details such as application forms;
 - Copy of programme and Group contract;
 - Completed parental/guardian consent forms and emergency contact details;
 - Accommodation details;
 - Child Protection Policy. When partnering with a group from another organisation the policy that is most stringent is the governing policy for the project.
- **Orientation on arrival**
 - Have a meeting soon after arrival to discuss the venue, house rules, where the children can reach the employee/volunteers in emergency etc...
 - Discuss issues relating to home sickness, agree a group contract particularly if partnering with another group;
 - Ensure that everyone gets to know the layout of the venue as soon as possible;
 - Introduce the programme;

- Introduce the information point board where everyone can find out important information;

- **Employees/volunteers support**

- It is essential that all employees, volunteers or young leaders meet on a daily basis;
- There must be a common understanding and position on certain issues – particularly in emergency situations;
- Establish clear responsibilities for employees/volunteers;
- Have a clear system for keeping records during the trip;
- Put in place a support system for employees and volunteers;
- Employees/volunteers must refrain from drinking alcohol while away with young people;
- There must be at least one adult of each gender with a mixed group;
- Access to medical support should be available to the group where necessary. Not only in emergencies but for specific personal care tasks that need such intervention;
- Proper equipment, to assist employees/volunteers to carry out their duties including access to telephones for communication must be available;
- In the event of the venue not providing night supervision one employee/volunteer must remain awake through the night. Should the need arise, the night duty person will call on other adults (male/female) as appropriate. Employees/volunteers should not retire to bed and hand over to the night duty person until they are satisfied that the participants are in bed and settled;
- When selecting venues for trips away, due consideration should be given to the practicality of implementing these guidelines. It is also important to check if other groups are using the particular venue and to consider the implications if this is the case.

- **The Participants/Children**

- All group socialisation should take place in communal areas (i.e. no boys in girls' rooms and vice versa);
- Alcoholic drink, smoking or other illegal substances are forbidden to children;
- There should be proper access to medical personnel;
- There must be an employee/volunteer available to the children at all times during a trip to deal with any concerns;
- Agree with employees/volunteers and parents on a personal code of behaviour for participants throughout the trip and give good leadership in the implementation of this code;
- Ensure that the personal belongings such as money, medication and other possessions are stored in appropriate places during the trip and agree this with the participants;
- If a participant becomes ill he/she should, if necessary, be referred to a doctor or hospital as soon as possible and the parents/guardians notified ASAP;
- Participants should be made aware of likely variations in climate and be adequately equipped with protective clothing, sunscreen lotions etc;
- Arrangements should be put in place to cater for any special dietary requirements;
- Lights out time should be agreed and enforced.

Monitoring and Evaluation

To put an effective monitoring and evaluation system in place, each of the following should be addressed:

- Systems for monitoring and evaluation should be developed prior to the trip and agreed among the team;
- Monitoring and evaluation should be carried out with the participants, employees and volunteers;
- If expectations and ground rules are clear at the beginning, it is easier to monitor progress and difficulties;
- Have an evaluation box where participants can post comments whenever they like;
- Use creative forms of evaluation;
- Carry out a full and final evaluation which should be a real exercise to learn from;
- Make sure there is a system for keeping records and reports during the trip.

Appendix 7.

Guidelines on the use of Photographic, Mobile Phone and Filming Equipment.

MS IRELAND has adopted a policy in relation to the use of images of children on their websites and in other publications. There have been concerns about the risks posed directly and indirectly to children through the use of photographs on websites and other publications. Where possible MS IRELAND will try to use models or illustrations when promoting an activity and avoid the use of the name of individuals in a photograph. This reduces the risk of inappropriate, unsolicited attention from people within and outside MS IRELAND.

Photography Guidelines:

- If the child is named in an article, avoid using their photograph
- If a photograph is used, avoid naming the child
- Ask for the child's permission to use their image
- Parental permission must be obtained in writing before the child's image is used. This ensures that all are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent MS IRELAND
- Only use images of children in suitable dress to reduce the risk of inappropriate use. The content of the photograph should focus on the activity not on a particular child
- Follow MS IRELAND Child Protection Procedure for reporting the use of inappropriate images.
- Employees/volunteers should be aware of the potential misuse of digital and mobile phone technology and should take appropriate steps to prevent it occurring. Camera phones should not be used in any way, which is disrespectful to the dignity and privacy of any individual. Camera phones should not be used in toilets, dormitories or changing areas