

MACRA NA FEIRME
CHILD PROTECTION GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

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Glossary of Terms

- New Volunteer Leader*** A New Volunteer Leader is a club or county officer who has been affiliated to their current Macra Club for less than one year.
- New Elected Volunteer Leader*** A New Elected Volunteer Leader is a club or county officer who has been elected to an officership position for the first time.
- Existing Volunteer Leader*** An Existing Volunteer Leader is a club officer who has been affiliated to their current Macra Club for more than one year.
- Casual Volunteer Leaders*** Persons who are engaged by Macra clubs on a voluntary basis to assist with particular projects or initiatives eg a producer of a drama or a mentor for public speaking competitions.
- Child Abuse*** Child abuse can be categorized into a number of different areas including: Emotional Abuse, Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse and Neglect. A child may be subject to more than one form of abuse at any given time.
- Child / Young Person*** A 'child' / 'young person' means anyone who is under 18 years of age. This includes young people. In Ireland, the Child Care Act 1991 defines a child as any person under 18 years, excluding a person who is or who has been married. For the purpose of these guidelines we refer to persons under 18 years as 'child/ young person'
- Staff*** Persons employed by the organisation.



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Child Protection Guidelines

We in Macra na Feirme are committed to the implementation of good practice which will protect Children / young persons from abuse. Our Volunteer Leaders and staff recognise our responsibilities to adhere to our child protection guidelines and develop an awareness of the practices which may cause child abuse.

We will endeavor to safeguard those children / young persons and leaders in our clubs by putting the following procedures into practice in accordance with Children First National Guidelines for the Protection of Children and the Child Protection Code of Good Practice for the Youth Work Sector:

- Adopting guidelines through a code of behaviour that endeavors to protect children/young persons.
- Sharing information relevant to the protection of children/young persons with parents/guardians and children/young persons.
- Sharing information about concerns and allegations with relevant agencies as appropriate.
- Following carefully the procedures for the recruitment of staff and volunteer leaders.
- Providing effective support for staff, and all volunteer leaders through supervision, advice, support and training.
- We are also committed to consistent monitoring and reviewing of our procedures at regular intervals.

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Roles and Responsibilities

Role of National Organisation ...

In order to maximise compliance with the overall Child Protection Guidelines, Macra na Feirme shall:

- *Ensure, as far as is practical, that the child protection guidelines are adopted, agreed to and implemented by all members.*
- *Ensure that adequate complaints or disciplinary procedures are in place for breaches of guidelines.*
- *Have in place procedures for dealing with concerns or disclosures of actual or suspected child abuse.*
- *Appoint a Staff Child Protection Officer to administer and support the implementation and reviewing of child protection procedures*
- *Review its child protection procedures regularly through open discussion with its members while also reflecting all new legislation and guidelines in respect of Child Protection.*
- *Examine and take appropriate action in response to any reports or observations of suspected child abuse received from club members or staff.*
- *Ensure that relevant training in Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures is available to Volunteer Leaders and staff.*

Role Of Clubs ...

To ensure, as far as is practical, that best practice is being followed, all Macra clubs are required to work closely with National Office / National Council in adopting and implementing child protection guidelines and practices.

Clubs will:

- *Adopt and implement Macra's Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures as an integral part of club procedures and practice.*
- *Adopt and apply clearly defined recruitment procedures for New Volunteer Leaders working with children/young persons.*
- *Ensure best practice within its club by distributing the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures.*
- *Encourage all Volunteer Leaders in the club to attend Child Protection training.*
- *Treat all personal details in relation to recruitment and vetting with the strictest confidence and within the guidelines laid down in Macra's Confidentiality Guidelines.*

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Code of Behaviour for All Volunteer Leaders and Staff working with children / young persons

- 1) In your behaviour and by your attitude towards people, respect the rights, dignity and worth of all children / young persons in your club.
- 2) Listen, value, respect, encourage and praise all club members especially children / young persons.
- 3) Be alert to the risks of Child abuse and vigilant to the welfare needs of your members.
- 4) Volunteer Leaders and Staff should avoid, as far as is practical, being on their own with children / young persons during club activities or in transit to or from club activities.
- 5) Particular care should be taken to protect the privacy of children / young persons in places such as changing rooms and toilets. Separate provision of changing / toilet facilities should be made for males and females. Clubs should ensure adequate and gender based supervision for children / young persons at all times.
- 6) Appropriate boundaries should be maintained with children / young persons in your care.
- 7) All volunteer Leaders and Staff should avail of Child protection training and make themselves fully aware of the Macra Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures.

All volunteer leaders and staff should sign that they acknowledge, understand and agree to abide by Macra's Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures.

This code of behavior is also recommended best practice for all Macra members.

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Supporting New Volunteer Leaders working with children/ young persons

Child Protection Form for working with children/young persons – See Appendix 1

The application form should be supplied to the newly **elected** 'new volunteer leader'. The form should, as far as is possible, elicit relevant information about the applicant, including their past experience of working with children.

The form includes a declaration by the applicant that 'nothing within my personal or professional background deems me unsuitable for a post which involves working with children'. The completed form should be returned directly to the Child Protection Officer at National Office. All applications shall be treated in the strictest confidence.

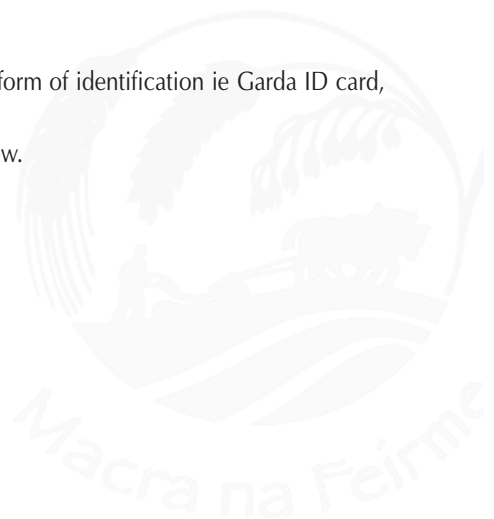
References

New Volunteer Leaders should provide two referees (non relative, non Macra staff & non club members) who will testify as to their character and suitability as a volunteer leader working with children. Macra's Child Protection Officer will check all references. In particular referees will be asked to confirm that they have no concerns about the Volunteer working with Children. Suitable referees include teachers, employers, community leaders and other responsible persons to whom the individual is known.

Identification

New Volunteer Leaders should provide a verifiable form of identification ie Garda ID card, Driving Licence, or Passport.

This can be produced at the meeting referred to below.



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Meeting

A meeting with the new volunteer leader should be conducted by Macra's local Training & Development Officer and the regional Vice President. The meeting should explore the information stated on the application form. This opportunity should also focus on explaining the Macra Child Protection Guidelines & Procedures.

A copy of Macra's Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures should be given to the New Volunteer Leader.

The new volunteer leader should sign that they acknowledge, understand and agree to abide by Macra's Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures.

The Training & Development Officer and the regional Vice President should sign the form to indicate satisfactory completion of the meeting.

Acceptance

When satisfied about the applicant's suitability for the role, having considered all the information available, the Child Protection Officer will formally write to the regional Vice President and the applicant's Club indicating acceptance of the 'New Volunteer Leader'.

Information

A copy of the Child Protection Guidelines Statement and the Child Protection Code of Behaviour should be given to all New Volunteer Leaders and will also be available on the Macra website.

Casual Volunteer Leaders

It may not be practical to implement the Organisation's full 'Recruitment Procedures' for Casual Volunteer Leaders particularly due to the short time frame that may be associated with their involvement. It is the responsibility of the Macra Club to provide such persons with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures including the Macra Code of Behaviour and to outline the contents of these documents. This guidance will be of benefit to all Casual Volunteer Leaders.

Casual Volunteer Leaders will be asked to sign a form stating that they acknowledge, understand and agree to abide by Macra's Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures.

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Recruitment procedure for staff working with children / young persons

We will ensure that staff are carefully selected, trained and supervised to provide a safe environment for all children and young people, by observing the following procedures:

Advertisement

Staff vacancies will be advertised openly and widely in an attempt to secure the best possible candidates for the job. All jobs will have clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

Application re Suitability for working with children / young persons

The application form will be supplied to the candidate. The form should, as far as is possible, elicit information about the applicant, including their past experience of working with children/young people.

Identification

New Staff should provide a verifiable form of identification ie Garda ID card, Driving Licence, or Passport.

Meeting

All potential new staff will attend a meeting with at least two members of staff, including Macra's Child Protection Officer, who will inform the applicant of Macra's Child Protection Guidelines & Procedures.

References

New Staff will be required to provide two referees (non relative) who will testify as to their character and suitability as a leader working with children. Macra's Child Protection Officer will check all references. In particular referees will be asked to confirm that they have no concerns about the Volunteer working with Children. Suitable referees include teachers, employers, community leaders and other responsible persons to whom the individual is known.

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Garda Vetting

All New Staff from the date of adoption of the Child Protection Guidelines must complete a Garda Vetting Application Form. This form must be submitted to Macra's Child Protection Officer in National Office and it will be treated in the strictest of confidence. The vetting application form requires that all applicants should disclose any past criminal convictions and a vetting return from An Garda Siochana will state any convictions and/or prosecutions, successful or not, pending or completed against the applicant. Any such information collated will be dealt with in a confidential manner and will be retained only for as long as deemed appropriate.

It is recommended that all staff will be vetted every four years.

Staff may be subject to re-vetting at the discretion of the Child Protection Officer or Chief Executive Officer.

Until such times as a vetting application has been completely and satisfactorily processed staff should be accompanied by an existing club officer at Macra gatherings when working with children.

Information

A copy of the Child Protection Guidelines Statement and the Child Protection Code of Behaviour should be given to all new staff and will also be available on the Macra website. New and existing staff will be required to consent to and sign up to the Code of Behaviour. The new staff member should sign that they acknowledge, understand and agree to abide by Macra's Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures.

Casual Staff

It may not be practical to implement the Organisation's full 'Recruitment Procedures' for Casual Staff particularly due to the short time frame that may be associated with their involvement. It is the responsibility of Macra's Child Protection Officer to provide such persons with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures including the Macra Code of Behaviour and to outline the contents of these documents in detail. This guidance will be of benefit to all Casual Staff.

Acceptance

When satisfied about the applicant's suitability for the role, having considered all the information available, Macra's Child Protection Officer will formally write to the Macra's President confirming that they consider the new staff member suitable for working with children.

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No person who was deemed to constitute a 'risk' to children / young persons will be employed by Macra na Feirme.

Training

All new staff will receive child protection training in line with 'Children First' and Macra's Child protection guidelines. This should take place during the staff member's probationary period with review discussions at staff meetings during the year.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is about managing sensitive information that arises in a trusting relationship and doing so in a manner that is respectful, professional and purposeful.

All information regarding concern or assessment of child abuse should be shared only on 'a need to know' basis in the best interest of the child / young person. In other words, it should never be the subject of conversation between any other persons in the organisation, employees, volunteers or young persons unless they are directly involved. Passing information to relevant authorities due to concerns, allegations or knowledge of abuse shall not be deemed as a breach of confidentiality.

All information gathered as part of Macra's recruitment and selection procedures for new volunteer leaders will be securely stored at National Office and will be under the control of the Child Protection Officer.



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Supporting New Volunteer Leaders Procedures including Garda Vetting

Macra Na Feirme is committed to the implementation of good practice which will protect children/young persons from abuse. This practice includes the use of application forms, seeking two references from all applicant leaders, a meeting, on-going training and supports for people in the various role(s) and the use of Garda Vetting services.

All ***newly elected*** Volunteer Leaders (ie all persons who become club officers for the first time) from the date of adoption of the Child Protection Guidelines must complete a Garda Vetting Application Form. This form must be submitted to Macra's Child Protection Officer in National Office and it will be treated in the strictest of confidence.

The vetting application form requires that all applicants should disclose any past criminal convictions and a vetting return from An Garda Siochana will state any convictions and/or prosecutions, successful or not, pending or completed against the applicant. Any such information collated will be dealt with in a confidential manner and will be retained only for as long as deemed appropriate.

It is recommended that all volunteer leaders will be vetted every four years.

Volunteer leaders may be subject to vetting / re-vetting at the discretion of the Child Protection Officer.

Until such times as a vetting application has been completely and satisfactorily processed New Volunteer Leaders should be accompanied by an existing club officer at Macra gatherings when working with children.

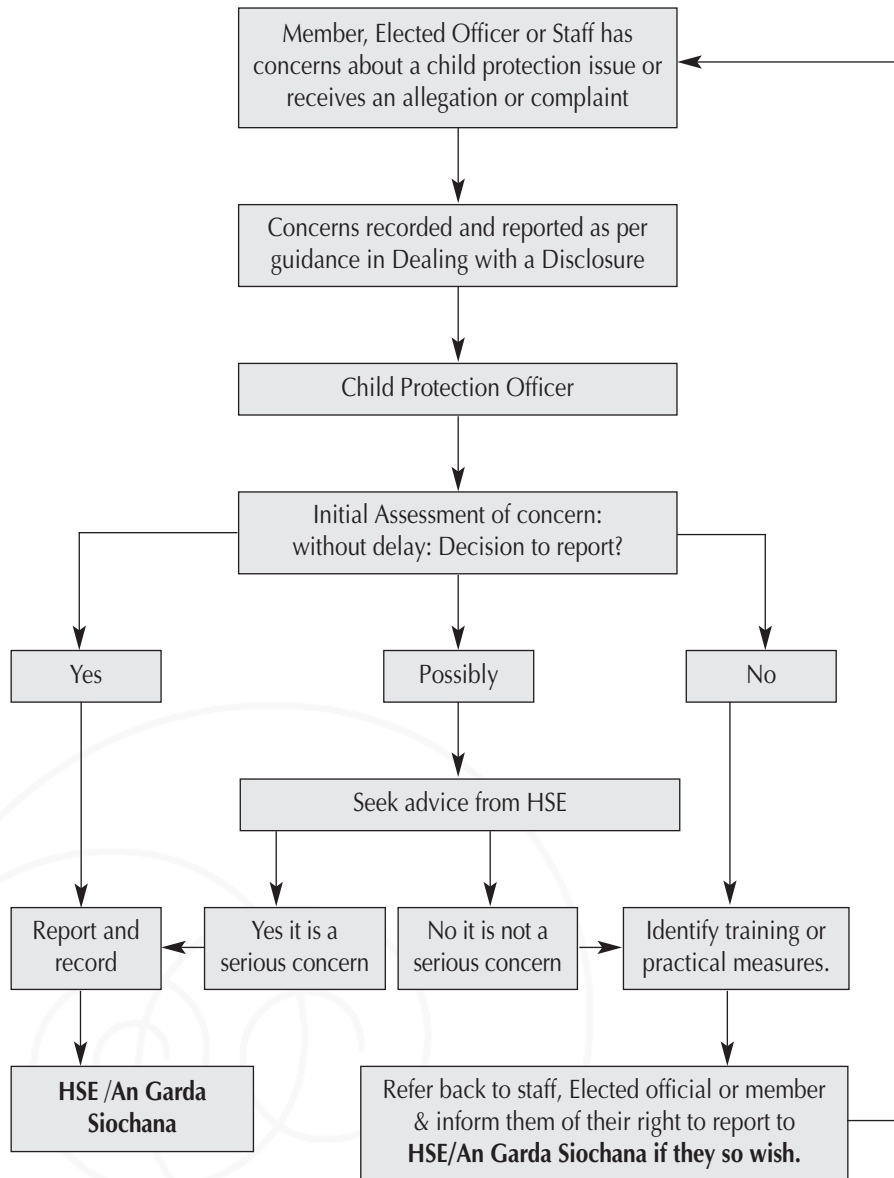
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Dealing with a Disclosure of Abuse from a Young Person

1. React calmly, as over-reacting may alarm the young person and compound feelings of anxiety and guilt.
2. Listen carefully and attentively; take the young person seriously.
3. Reassure the young person that they have taken the right action in telling.
4. Do not make false promises, particularly regarding secrecy.
5. Do not ask the young person to repeat the story unnecessarily.
6. Ask questions only for the purpose of clarification. Be supportive but do not ask leading questions or seek intimate details beyond those volunteered by the young person. Detailed investigative interviews will, if necessary, be carried out by HSE staff or members of an Garda Síochána.
7. Check with the young person to ensure that what has been heard and understood by you is accurate.
8. Do not express any opinion about the alleged abuser.
9. Record the conversation as soon as possible, in as much detail as possible.
10. Sign and date the record.
11. Explain and ensure that the young person understands the procedures which will follow.
12. Pass the information to the Child Protection Officer who will decide upon the appropriate course of action.
13. Treat the information confidentially, sharing it only with persons who have a right to hear it.

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Reporting Process



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Appendix 1:

Child Protection Form for Leaders working with children/young persons Child Protection Form for 'New Volunteer Leader'

(where A New Volunteer Leader is a club or county officer who has been affiliated to their current Macra Club for less than one year)

Macra welcomes you as a New Volunteer Leader and wishes you every success and enjoyment in your new role. As a Club Officer you may, from time to time, be in a responsible position in relation to the care of young persons (under 18 years of age). To comply with our obligations towards the care of young persons you are required to complete this form and make yourself available for a meeting to be informed about and agree to abide by Macra's Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures.

- 1) Name _____
- 2) Any other Name previously known as _____
- 3) Address _____

- Tel. No. (Daytime) (Evening) _____
- 4) Date of Birth ____/____/____
- 5) Occupation _____
- 6) Please give details of previous experience of working with children (ie under 18 years).

- 8) Please give details of any illness/disability/medical condition that may at times affect your ability to work with young people.

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- 9) Please supply the Name, Address, Telephone Numbers and position of two people (non relative & non Macra staff) who know you well and can provide us with a reference:

Name:
Address:
Tel:
Position:

Name:
Address:
Tel:
Position:

Declaration:

I declare that nothing within my personal or professional background deems me unsuitable for a post which involves working with children.

I confirm that I will adhere to Procedures and Practices laid down by Macra Na Feirme including the code of conduct for elected officers.

Signed: _____

Date: ____/____/____

you will be contacted by a Macra Na Feirme staff member to arrange a meeting with your local Training & Development Officer and your regional Macra Vice President. Please bring a verifiable form of identification to this meeting ie Garda ID card, Driving Licence, or Passport.

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Appendix 2:

Relevant Contacts

The State, acting through Department of Health and Children, has a statutory obligation to protect children. Contact your local or regional hospital and request to speak to a duty Social Worker or Child Protection Officer.

Contact your local Garda Station or dial 999 and request An Garda Siochana.

Macra Na Feirme
Child Protection Officer
Irish Farm Centre
Bluebell
Dublin 12

Tel: 01 4268900 (during office hours)
www.macra.ie

