



Aidlink Child Protection Policy and Procedures

1. Introduction

Consistent with the principles of Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2011), every organisation, both public and private, that is providing services for children, or that is in regular direct contact with children should develop guidance and procedures for staff who have reasonable grounds for concern about the safety and welfare of children involved with the organisation.

As an international NGO working through partnership, the majority of Aidlink's work with children and young people occurs indirectly through partner organisations. With the expansion of Aidlink's development education programme in Ireland, Aidlink increasingly interacts directly with children and young people.

Aidlink is committed to protecting and promoting the Rights of the Child in all aspects of the organisation's work. Protecting and promoting children's rights means¹:

- Creating an environment, in which children are valued, encouraged and affirmed, have their rights respected and are treated as individuals.
- Taking steps to ensure that children know their rights and responsibilities.
- Accepting that the welfare of the child is the most important consideration when providing services to children.
- Eliminating as far as possible any threatening, violent or degrading behaviour.
- Adopting a child protection policy to keep children as safe as possible.

Aidlink is committed to the protection of children from all forms of abuse and harm. Aidlink's Child Protection Policy and Procedures articulates Aidlink's commitment to upholding the welfare of children, best practice in ensuring child safety, and processes for dealing with incidences of suspected child abuse or neglect.

This policy is intended to inform Aidlink staff, board members, volunteers or anyone who may act as a representative of Aidlink. The policy is in-line with the Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2011).

Definition: Child or Young Person

A child or young person for the purposes of this document is defined in accordance with the Child Care Act, 1991 **as a person under 18 who has not been married.**

Working with Irish schools – Ireland and Overseas

When working in partnership with Irish schools and students, including Aidlink facilitated overseas immersion trips, it is the Irish school's child protection policies and procedures which apply.

Working with overseas partners

Children who interact indirectly with Aidlink through Aidlink supported programmes overseas are protected under the relevant partner policies and procedures.

¹Our Duty to Care: The Principles of Good Practice for the protection of Children and Young People
http://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/ODTC_Full_Eng.pdf



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2. Aidlink Child Safeguarding Policy Statement

Aidlink recognises and upholds the fundamental rights of the individual child and young person to be nurtured, cared for and treated with dignity and respect, irrespective of their ability, ethnicity, faith, gender, sexuality and culture. It is the policy of Aidlink to safeguard the welfare of all children by protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional harm. Aidlink is committed to upholding these standards in all interactions with children and young people.

3. Aidlink Child Safeguarding Procedures

Aidlink employs a number of safeguarding procedures to minimise potential risk to a child's safety and wellbeing. Recognising that procedures do not absolutely remove the risk of abuse, procedures for recognising and reporting of abuse are also included.

3.1 Safe Recruitment

Aidlink is committed to best practice in recruitment of staff or volunteers which includes, taking up of references and good HR practices in interviewing. Staff and volunteers undergo induction training, and are subject to probation periods, and ongoing supervision and management. All Aidlink employees and board members are Garda vetted.

Aidlink staff, board members, volunteers or anyone who may act as a representative of Aidlink, must be familiar with Aidlink's *Child Protection Policy and Procedures* and *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children* as part of induction to the organisation.

3.2 Code of Conduct

When working with children and young people, Aidlink staff, board members, volunteers or anyone who may act as a representative of Aidlink will:

- Treat all children equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Recognise that the safety and wellbeing of children and young people is of paramount importance.
- Always work in an open environment, avoiding unobserved situations as far as practicable.
- Show consistently high standards of professional behaviour and appearance.
- Avoid using inappropriate language in front of a child or young person.
- Avoid physical contact unless it is justified in the context of the activity, explained to the individual, and with their permission.
- Establish with participants at the start of any activity the behaviour required of them.
- Challenge any form of abuse, bullying, discrimination, bad language, violence or any other offensive or inappropriate behaviour.
- Ensure all participants are supervised at all times, in line with recommended and agreed supervision ratios (both in numbers and in gender) for each activity.



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- Be aware of all necessary procedures and information relevant to your position. This will include emergency procedures, risk assessment, registration procedures, medical information, parental consent, etc.
- Report any concerns using the process of this policy.

3.3 Recognising Abuse

Aidlink staff, board members, volunteers or anyone who may act as a representative of Aidlink, must be familiar with *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children* definitions of child abuse (neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse) and with the “Guidelines of Recognition”.

3.4 Reporting Abuse

Aidlink staff, board members, volunteers or anyone who may act as a representative of Aidlink, who suspects a child or young person interacting with Aidlink to be subject to child abuse (neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and/or sexual abuse), must inform the Aidlink Child Protection Officer (see below: Responsibility and Roles). If the complaint is against the Child Protection Officer, the Chairperson of the board must be informed.

It is important to establish grounds for concern by obtaining as much information as possible. Observations should be accurately recorded and should include dates, times, names, locations, context and any other information that may be relevant.

The Child Protection Officer will initiate the reporting procedure as per the [Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children](#), informing the HSE Child and Family Services.

HSE Child and Family Services (TUSLA)

Duty Social Work Department, Carnegie Centre, 21-25 Lord Edward Street, Dublin 2

Phone 01 6486500

Office Hours 9am - 5pm

Rathmines Garda Station

Rathgar Road, Rathmines Dublin 6

Phone 01 6666700

3.5 Responsibility and Roles

Aidlink staff, board members, volunteers or anyone who may act as a representative of Aidlink must uphold and adhere to the Aidlink Child Safeguarding Policy Statement. The ultimate responsibility for the safeguarding of children and young people who interact with Aidlink lies with Aidlink’s Board of Directors.



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Aidlink's designated Child Protection Officer is Anne Cleary, contact details 01 4736488/
anne@aidlink.ie

The chairperson of the Aidlink board is Clive Byrne, contact details 01 6627025/
clivebyrne@napd.ie

The role of the Aidlink **Child Protection Officer** is to:

- act as a source of advice on child protection matters
- coordinate action within the organisation and
- liaise with the Health Services and Gardaí and other agencies about suspected or actual cases of child abuse.

3.6 Working with Partners

3.6.1 Partner NGOs

Aidlink's partner organisations are required to have child protection policies and procedures in place which are implemented in line with best practice and regularly reviewed. This is a prerequisite for Aidlink entering into any programme contract or agreement, and is reviewed by Aidlink every three years. Children who interact with Aidlink supported programmes overseas are protected under the relevant partner child protection policies and procedures.

3.6.2 Partner Schools

When working in partnership with Irish schools and students, including Aidlink facilitated overseas immersion trips, it is the Irish school's child protection policies and procedures which apply. The school child protection policy is reviewed by all team leaders in advance of departure for all immersion programmes.

3.7 Communications

When using images of children in Aidlink's communications, children must not be shown in stages of undress or in inappropriate poses. Permission must be given by children and their guardians to take their image and use their information, either directly or through partner organisation. Aidlink is a signatory to the Dóchas Code of conduct on Images and Messages.

3.8 Review and Implementation

Aidlink is committed to the implementation of this policy. The policy will be reviewed annually and formally evaluated every 3 years.

REVIEWED DECEMBER 2015



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Annex 1 Partner Child Protection Policies (All available with Aidlink)

UGANDA

Caritas Maddo

Masaka Diocesan Development Organisation Child Abuse Protection Policy

Voluntary Action for Development

Voluntary Action for Development (VAD) Child Protection Policy

EMESCO

EMESCO Development Foundation Child Protection Policy

KENYA

Girl Child Network

Girl Child Network Child Protection Policy

Caritas (Diocese of) Lodwar

Diocese of Lodwar Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures

GHANA

Congregation of the Holy Spirit

Child protection policies and procedure for the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, Province of Ghana



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Annex II Policy Sources

Aidlink's child protection policy and procedures are informed by national and international legal standards and best practice, and by Aidlink's own ethos of respect, dignity and equality, as outlined in the Aidlink Employee Handbook, Section 6: Dignity and Respect.

The following sources inform this policy:

[The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is a comprehensive, internationally binding agreement on the rights of children, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989.

[Children First Bill 2014](#)

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 was published by the Houses of the Oireachtas on 14 April 2014 (Children First Bill 2014).

[Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children](#)

*Children First: National Guidance is a document published by the Department of Youth and Children intended to assist people in identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect and deal effectively with concerns. **Reporting procedures should not deviate from the Children First: National Guidance.***

[Our Duty to Care: The Principles of Good Practice for the protection of Children and Young People](#)

Our Duty to Care is a document aimed at community and voluntary organisations of any size or type that provide services for children. It offers guidance on the promotion of child welfare and the development of safe practices in work with children.

[Keeping Children Safe: Child Safeguarding Standards and how to implement them](#)

Keeping Children Safe: Child Safeguarding Standards and how to implement them, is a guide designed to assist organisations to meet their responsibilities for safeguarding children.

[Aidlink Human Resources Policy and Employee Handbook](#)

The Aidlink Human Resources Policy and Employee Handbook describes the rights and the responsibilities of employees in Aidlink. It details how Aidlink employees may expect to be treated as an employee, and the behaviours for employees to display to make a positive contribution to Aidlink.

[Child Protection Policy for St. Mary's College](#)

The Child Protection Policy for St. Mary's College protects all students of St Mary's College, including during overseas immersion programmes facilitated by Aidlink.



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[The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools](#)

The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools have been developed following extensive consultation with the education partners and are based on the Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children

Peer NGOS

[SERVE Solidarity in Action Safeguarding Handbook Policy and Procedures for Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children](#)

[Misean Cara Child Protection Policy](#)