



Aidlink Child Protection Policy and Procedures

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 of 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.

1.0 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.

Definition: Child or Young Person

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

Aidlink's commitment to the Rights of the Child

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.

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



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2.0 Child Safe Guarding Statement

Aidlink's Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, the Children First: National Guidance, and Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice.

2.1 Service(s) being provided

Working with overseas programme partners

As an international NGO working through partnership, the majority of Aidlink's work with children and young people occurs indirectly through overseas partner organisations. Aidlink's partner organisations are required to have child protection policies and procedures that are compliant with relevant national standards and international best practice. 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.

Working with Irish schools

As part of Aidlink's development education programme in Ireland, Aidlink interacts directly with children and young people within their school environment. 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 that apply.

In accordance with the Children First Act 2015, Aidlink's immersion programme qualifies Aidlink as a **provider of relevant services** under section 5. *(a) Any work or activity which consists of the provision of— educational, research, training, cultural, recreational, leisure, social or physical activities to children.*

2.2 Risk Assessment

Aidlink carries out a robust risk assessment of any potential for harm to a child while participating in Aidlink facilitated immersion programmes. In conjunction with partner schools, a comprehensive risk register is maintained (available upon request); identifying and categorising risks, and outlining mitigation strategies.



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2.3 Safeguarding Procedures

In addition to the mitigation strategies adopted in our risk register, Aidlink implements a number of procedures and practices to support the safeguarding of children and young people:

2.3.1 Defined 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 Protection Policy and Safe Guarding Statement. The ultimate responsibility for the safeguarding of children and young people who interact with Aidlink lies with Aidlink's Board of Directors.

- i. The chairperson of the Aidlink board is John Lynch, contact: johnmlynch@gmail.com
- ii. Aidlink's designated **Relevant Person** is Executive Director Anne Cleary, contact: anne@aidlink.ie

The role of the Aidlink **Relevant Person** is to:

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

2.3.2 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. Where relevant, Aidlink employees are Garda vetted in line with The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012, enacted in 2016.

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 *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children* as part of induction to the organisation.

2.3.3 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.



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- 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.
- 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.

2.3.4 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).

2.3.5 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 Relevant Person. If the complaint is against the Relevant Person, 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 Relevant Person will initiate the reporting procedure as per the *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children*, informing Tusla: The Child and Family Agency.

Dublin South East Child and Family Agency,

Unit 9,
Nutgrove Retail Park,
Churchtown,
Dublin 14
Phone: 01 9213400

Rathmines Garda Station

Rathgar Road, Rathmines Dublin 6
Phone 01 6666700



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3.0 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.

4.0 Review and Implementation

Aidlink recognise that implementation is an ongoing process. Our service is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while availing of our service. This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed annually and formally evaluated every 3 years.

Aidlink
34 Greenmount Office Park
Harold's Cross
D6W CX81

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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

KENYA

Girl Child Network

Girl Child Network Child Protection Policy

Caritas (Diocese of) Lodwar

Diocese of Lodwar Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures

AMANI KIBERA

Amani Kibera Child Protection Policy

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 Source

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 Act 2015](#)

The Children First Act 2015 (the Act), which was signed into law on 19 November 2015, puts elements of the Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children on a statutory footing.

[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.***

[Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice](#)

Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice is designed as a best practice guide to help all providers of services to children and families to develop guiding principles and safeguarding procedures to keep children and young people using their services safe from harm.

[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.



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[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](#)

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

[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