



Recognising and Reporting Child Abuse Policy

FILE MANAGEMENT

Date of this revision	January 2022
Scheduled review date:	January 2025
Approved by the Board on:	<i>*Note this policy is currently under review – 2022*</i>
Version Number	0.1
Drafted By	National Children's Officer
Revision History (Version /Date)	<i>Summary of Changes</i>
0.1 – January 2022	Document Creation

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1) Introduction

Under the Children First legislation it is a requirement to report any knowledge, belief, or reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed, to the statutory authorities. By working with young people you have a duty of care to keep them safe; understanding child abuse and the procedures for if you have a concern, or if you receive a disclosure from a young person, will support you in your role. It is everyone's responsibility to keep young people safe. The statutory authorities have a threshold of harm for intervention of abuse; this is the level at which a concern must be reported.

"Harm" means, in relation to a child:

- (a) assault, ill-treatment or neglect of the child in a manner that seriously affects or is likely to seriously affect the child's health, development or welfare
- Or
- (b) Sexual abuse of the child.

2) Scope

This policy applies to all Special Olympics Ireland (SOI) employees (including those on permanent or fixed term contracts and work placement) and volunteers. We all have a duty of care to report any allegation, disclosure or concerns of abuse.

3) Purpose

This policy seeks to ensure that all employees and volunteers are equipped to recognise indicators of abuse and are aware of the reporting procedures in place for any concerns, allegations or disclosure of abuse to a child.

4) Definitions

A designated person should be informed if you witness anything that causes you concern; the following definitions have been taken from the Children First Guidance (ROI) and Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (NI):

Physical Abuse: is when someone deliberately hurts a child physically, or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents. Examples of this might be hitting, pinching, burning etc. It is a reasonable concern if you believe the life of the young person is in imminent danger.

Emotional Abuse: is the systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment of a child as part of the overall relationship between a caregiver and a child. A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when the behaviour becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer. In sport, bullying may also fall under the category of emotional abuse and may occur in the form of online bullying.

Neglect: occurs when a child does not receive adequate care or supervision to the extent that the child is harmed physically or developmentally. This is commonly reported as deprivation of food, clothing, safety, hygiene or medical care. Over a period of time neglect can have a negative impact on a child's emotional and physical development. A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when neglect becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer.

Sexual Abuse: occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others. It includes the child being involved in sexual acts (masturbation, fondling, oral or penetrative sex) or exposing the child to sexual activity directly or through pornography. Any concern about possible sexual abuse constitutes reasonable grounds for concern.

5) Policy Statement

Special Olympics Ireland requires all employees and volunteers to report any knowledge, belief or reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed, to the designated persons or statutory authorities.

6) Process

6.1 Reporting Child Abuse

There are a number of people who may be involved in making a report to a statutory authority if they have a concern, allegation or disclosure of child abuse.

In Special Olympics Ireland the Mandated Person, i.e. the National Children's Officer, has a legal duty to report concerns which meet the threshold of significant harm to the Statutory Authorities.

Within clubs and regions the Designated Liaison Person also has a responsibility to report to the Statutory Authorities or via a joint report with the mandated person. .

However, everyone has a duty of care to report any concern they may have that a child is at risk of harm; they should do so by reporting to the Designated Liaison Person in their club, at an event or the Mandated Person (National Children's Officer) in Special Olympics Ireland.

6.2 Reporting in the Republic of Ireland

Tusla (Child and Family Agency) and An Garda Síochána are the statutory authorities. An informal report can be made by contacting the social worker in the area which the young person resides, contact information can be found www.tusla.ie/children-first/contact-a-social-worker3/ and you can find the Report Form www.tusla.ie/children-first/report-a-concern/ . If it is an emergency and/or out of hours you should contact An Garda Síochána via 112/999.

6.3 Reporting in Northern Ireland

The Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCT) and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) are the statutory authorities. The HSCT can provide advice via their gateway teams to those who have a concern of abuse. A template report form can be requested from the HSCT team during consultation. Out of hours the Emergency Social Work service is available by phone on 0044 28 9504 999 or if the person is in immediate danger contact the PSNI by phoning 999.

Between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. the HSCT can be contacted:

Northern HSCT: 0044 03001234333
South Eastern HSCT: 0044 03001000300
Southern HSCT: 0044 08007837745
Belfast HSCT: 0044 2890 507000
Western HSCT: 0044 2871 314090
(Out of Hours: 0044 2895 04999)

Please see the **Reporting Structure for Safeguarding Issues for Clubs (ROI/NI)** below

6.4 Reasonable Grounds for Concern

The following examples meet reasonable grounds for concern and must be reported:

- Evidence, for example an injury or behaviour, that is consistent with abuse and is unlikely to have been caused in any other way.
- Any concern about possible sexual abuse.
- Consistent signs that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.
- A child saying or indicating by other means that they have been abused.

- Admission or indication by an adult or a child of an alleged abuse they committed.
- An account from a person who saw the child being abused.

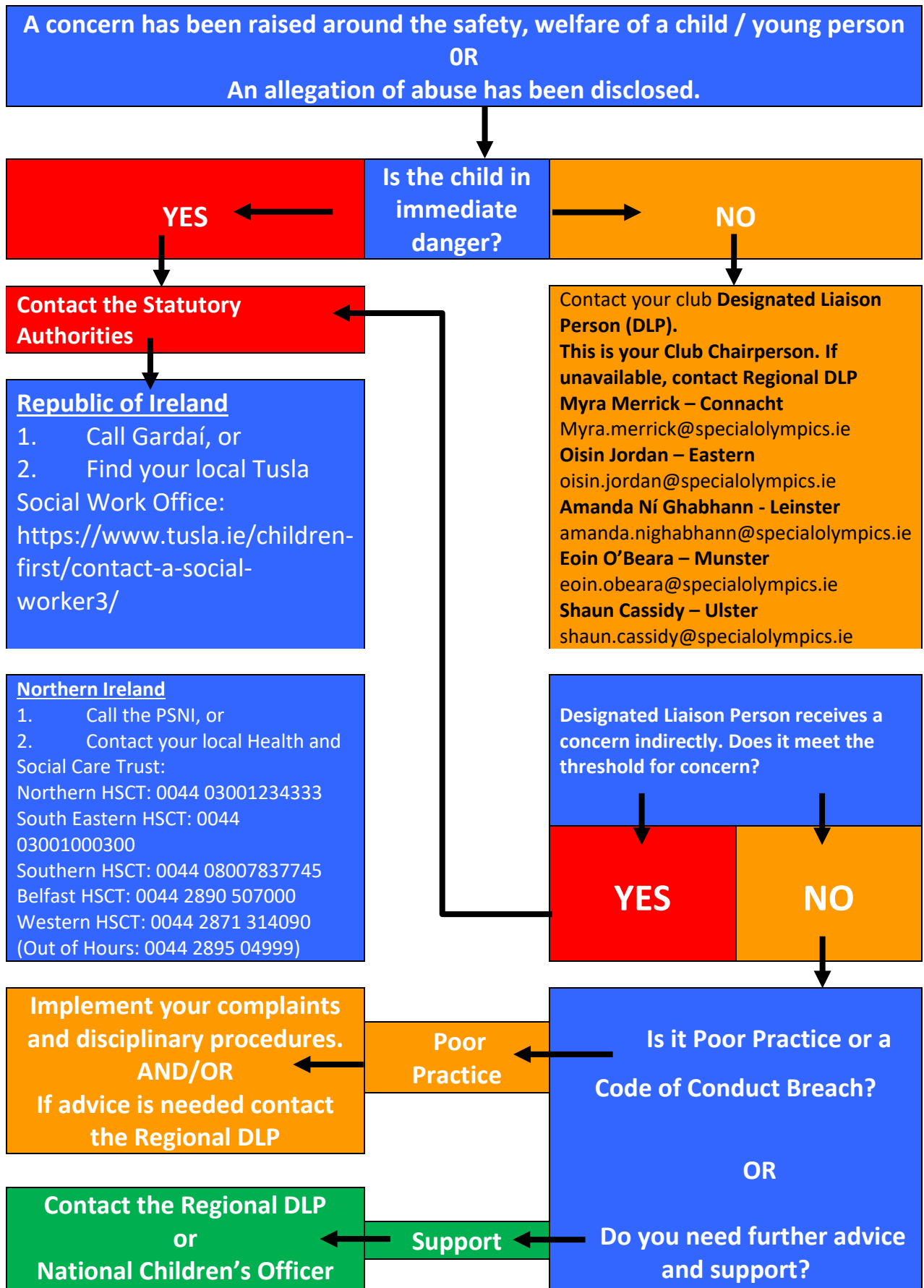
It is important to remember that if a child has chosen to disclose something to you it is because they trust you. It is important to note where a child has made a disclosure which meets the threshold of Reasonable Grounds for Concern you have a duty to report it – you cannot keep this a secret. Remember they are looking for help. Actions that can help you manage the situation include:

- Be sensitive – listen and facilitate vs interview.
- Stay calm – don't react emotionally.
- Take the child seriously.
- Don't promise to keep information a secret.
- Make no judgmental statements.
- Use open, non-specific questions.
- Explain – what happens next?

You should keep a record of the report and note dates, times, locations and contexts in which the incident/s occurred. The next step is to report the allegation to the Designated Liaison Person. If they do not find that it meets grounds for concern you can still choose to report to the statutory authorities yourself. If it is an emergency or you feel the child is in immediate danger you should contact the Gardaí/Police immediately.

IMPORTANT – You must employ a “needs to know” approach. This is confidential outside of the reporting structure and must only be passed on if the person needs to know

Reporting Structure for Safeguarding Issues for Clubs (ROI/NI)



7) Non-compliance

Any non-compliance with this policy will be treated in accordance with legislative / regulatory requirements, the relevant contract and where appropriate, SOI's Disciplinary Policy.

8) Related documents

Policy on Recognising and Reporting Abuse of Adults at Risk