



COMHALTAS

CHILD PROTECTION

Tomás Ó Maoldomhnaigh

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COMHALTAS & CHILD PROTECTION.

- **TIMELINE:**
- **1990-95: Creating an awareness of Child Protection in Comhaltas.**
- **1995: CCÉ published “Recommendations/Suggestions in Respect of Branch Involvement with Children/Young People”.**

TIMELINE

- **2007: Publication of CCÉ Child Protection Policy**
- Policy updated in 2008
- Copies sent to each Branch in Feb 2008.
- Branches were requested to appoint a DLP (Designated Liaison Person).
- Branches were requested to distribute copy of the policy to officers and teachers.

TIMELINE

- **2008: Began Roll-out of Child Protection Seminars in Regions/Counties**
- **2010: CCÉ Child Protection Policy updated & circulated to branches.**
- **2010: Sought registration with Garda Vetting Unit.**
- **2011: Registration in Jan with GVU.**
- **2011 ---: Vetting of CCÉ Personnel: Teachers/DLPs/Officers etc**

CURRENT STATUS

- **Branch Policy**
- **Branch DLP**
- **Garda Vetting**
- **Seminars**

CHILD PROTECTION

- The Importance of Child Protection in the Comhaltas Branches.
- Adopt Child Protection Policy.
- Appoint DLP (Designated Liaison Person)
- Training of DLP
- Promote Child Protection Awareness in each Branch
- Garda Vetting

TRAINING of D.L.P

Elements of effective training are:

- *Inclusion of different disciplines and agencies*
- *A focus on child protection and welfare legislation and policy.*
- *Dissemination of knowledge about child abuse, including physical and behavioural signs, effects and appropriate intervention*
- *Focus on inter-professional and inter-agency work along with the roles of individuals and organisations.*
- *Dissemination of information about local services, contact addresses and methods of referral.*

THE CONTEXT

- “ Children First – National Guidelines for the Protection & Welfare of Children” 1999 to 2011
- Role of HSE.
- Role of An Garda Síochána
- Role of Comhaltas.

Protocol: HSE & Garda Síochána

- *A joint protocol has been agreed between both bodies, whereby each organisation will notify the other of all reports of suspected child abuse, which are made to them and both are obliged to conduct a preliminary assessment/investigation in consultation with each other. (Children First Guidelines 1999 to 2011)*

Role of Comhaltas

- **‘All organisations, whether statutory or voluntary have an overall corporate responsibility to safeguard children....’** - Children First Guidelines 1999/2011
- Have safe and clearly defined methods of selecting staff & volunteers.
- Develop effective procedures for reporting and management of concerns
- Identify a DLP to act as a liaison with HSE & Garda Síochána on behalf of Comhaltas

Principles for Best Practice in Child Protection

- The welfare of children is of paramount importance.
- Balance between protecting children and respecting the rights of parents/carers
- Children have a right to be heard and taken seriously.
- Early intervention & support should be available.
- Parents/carers have a right to respect.

Principles for Best Practice in Child Protection.

- Actions taken to protect a child should consider the overall needs of the child.
- Intervention should not deal with the child in isolation.
- The criminal dimension of any action cannot be ignored
- Children should only be separated from parents when all avenues are exhausted
- Effective prevention, detection & treatment require co-ordinated multi-disciplinary approach
- Effective child protection requires training & clarity of responsibility for personnel of organisations involved

Comhaltas Child Protection Policy

- **Neglect**
- **Emotional abuse**
- **Physical abuse**
- **Sexual abuse**
- **Guidelines for Best Practice**
- **Create Awareness.**
- **Garda Vetting**

Neglect

- **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.**

Emotional Abuse

- **When a child's need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a caregiver and a child.**

Physical Abuse

- **Any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from willful or neglectful failure to protect a child.**

Sexual Abuse

- **When a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others**

How can child abuse come to your attention?

- **Direct Disclosure**
- **Direct observation**
- **Information from a third party**
- **Observation of an injury**
- **Aspects of the child's behaviour**
- **Consistent signs of neglect over a period of time**

Dealing with disclosure

DO

- Stay calm
 - Listen
 - Accept
 - Reassure
- Record in writing
 - Report
- Record your report

Dealing with disclosure

- **DON'T**
 - **Panic**
 - **Promise to keep secrets**
 - **Ask leading questions**
- **Make the child repeat the story unnecessarily**
 - **Delay - Start the process**

WHY CHILDREN DON'T TELL?

- **Fear of abuser**
- **Fear of the consequences**
- **Fear of being disbelieved**
- **Guilt**
- **Language**
- **Taboo subject**
- **The abuse has been normalised**
- **Bribes**



Branch D.L.P: Designated Liaison Person

- **Trusted member**
- **Knowledge of organisation**
- **Familiar with topic of abuse**
- **Comfortable with subject matter**

D.L.P: RESPONSIBILITIES

- **The Comhaltas Branch should have clear written policies and procedures**
- **Who do you report to?**
- **Who is responsible for handling complaints/concerns?**
- **How do you pass on a concern?**

D.L.P: What Are My Professional Responsibilities?

- **To be alert to the possibility that the children that you come into contact with may be being abused.**
- **To keep yourself informed about child protection and welfare by availing of training.**
- **To report concerns about child abuse or welfare to the HSE or An Garda Síochána**

D.L.P: Know your Role

- To implement and promote the unit's Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- To act as the main contact for child protection within the branch.
- To provide information and advice on child protection for the branch membership.

D.L.P: Know your Role

- To create awareness of the importance of child protection.
- To communicate with members on child protection issues.
- To keep abreast of developments and understand the most recent information on related issues – data protection, confidentiality, legal and other, that impact on child protection.

D. L. P: Know your Role

- To encourage good practice and support of the procedures involved.
- To maintain confidential records of reported cases and the action taken.
- To liaise with the statutory agencies and ensure that they have access to all necessary information.
- To regularly monitor and review the branch Policy and Procedures

Remember...

- It is not appropriate for the Comhaltas DLP/Branch to carry out assessments - report what you know.
- Responsibility for the assessment/investigation of child abuse cases, suspected or otherwise rests with the HSE and An Garda Síochána.
- Responsibility for the management and co-ordination of such cases rests with the HSE.

PROTECTIONS FOR PERSONS REPORTING CHILD ABUSE ACT, 1998

- *Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998*
- *This act was passed on 23rd Jan 1999. The main provisions of the act are:*
- *The provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse “reasonably and in good faith” to designated officers of the HSE or An Garda Síochána.*

PROTECTIONS FOR PERSONS REPORTING CHILD ABUSE ACT, 1998

- *The creation of a new offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report “knowing that statement to be false”*
- *“ A person shall not be liable in damages in respect of the communication, whether in writing or otherwise, by him or her to an appropriate person of his or her opinion that
.....*

PROTECTIONS FOR PERSONS REPORTING CHILD ABUSE ACT, 1998

- *1. A child has been or is being assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused, or*
- *2. A child's health, development or welfare has been or is being avoidably impaired or neglected,*
- *3. Unless it is proved that he or she has not acted reasonably and in good faith in forming that opinion and communicating it to the appropriate person”*

Reporting Procedure

You have a concern/suspicion



Inform/consult with HSE - duty social worker

or

An Garda Síochána



Written report to HSE – Standard Report Form

Policies and practices for creating an environment for children that is safe and child centred

Good Practice

- **Mission statement**
- **Recognition and respect for the rights of children**
- **Recognition that the welfare of children is paramount**
- **Recruitment procedures –Garda Vetting.**
- **Induction and continuing training**
- **Comhaltas Branch Child Protection Policy**

Policies and practices for creating an environment for children that is safe and child centred *Good Practice*

- **Clear procedures outlined when working with children**
- **Class and transport**
- **All members should be aware of policy and guidelines**
- **Designated Liaison Person known to members**
- **Adhere to BEST PRACTICE.**
- **Good relations with parents/guardians**
- **Code of conduct/behaviour**
- **Create Culture of openness**

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF!

Good Practice

- **Document – write up details**
- **Keep records accurate**
- **Be clear on procedures**
- **Be clear of own role**
- **Seek supervision and advice**

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF!

Good Practice

- **Attend in-service training**
- **Network**
- **Recognise stress**
- **TAKE TIME OFF!**

CCÉ CODE OF PRACTICE

- **The following guidance includes a variety of contexts in which Comhaltas members carry out their activities:**
- **The Code Of Practice is to safeguard the welfare of the young children/vulnerable adults in our charge and to ensure that safe and sensible steps will continue to be taken to ensure the safe practice and environment for young people, staff, branch members and volunteers alike.**

CCÉ CODE OF PRACTICE

- **1. Branch Classes / Activities**
- a. All Branches should be responsible for the appointment of teachers /tutors.
- b. Ensure that TWO Branch adults, preferably one male and one female, or an adult tutor and one other adult arrive together to open the venue.
- c. Arrange seating appropriately for both tutor and pupil with respect to physical proximity.

CCÉ CODE OF PRACTICE

- d. Where a tutor is dealing with an individual pupil, ensure another adult, preferably a Branch adult is in close vicinity.
- e. It is necessary for a tutor to report inappropriate behaviour to a Branch adult and to the DLP
- f. Trust your intuition if a pupil is acting inappropriately and take action, ie share concerns with the DLP and implement measures to reduce risk.

CCÉ CODE OF PRACTICE

- g. Use verbal affirmation to praise rather than physical touch.
- h. Never use physical forms of discipline.
- i. Tutors and parents should be made aware of class timetable.
- j. Ensure that after class all children are collected promptly and TWO Branch adults, preferably one male and one female or a tutor and one other adult are present to lock up the venue.

CCÉ CODE OF PRACTICE

- k. Drop off and collection times should be strictly adhered to.
- l. There should be adequate supervision of young people while they are waiting for class.
- m. A class register and incident book should be kept.
- (Record details of any incident occurring – date, time, place and summary of the incident pertaining to children's welfare)

GARDA VETTING

- Sole responsibility of Comhaltas H.O.
- Comhaltas Authorised Signatory.
- Completed vetting forms submitted by HO
- Receipt of any disclosures from GCVU
- DLP/Teachers/officers with access to children

Garda Vetting application Form

- All sections completed in BLOCK CAPITALS
- Sections not applicable should be marked N/A
- Forms completed in BALLPOINT PEN only
- ORIGINAL Forms only – no photocopies
- Writing clear & legible
- Incomplete or illegible forms not accepted
- All details of domicile & relevant dates must be supplied

Benefits of Garda Vetting Procedures

- Protection of Children & Vulnerable Adults
- Protection of Comhaltas
- Management of risk in respect of former offenders
- One component part of Human Resource Recruitment and selection procedures.
- Key element of Child Protection & Vulnerable Adult Protection Systems in the State.

SUMMARY

- Create Awareness of Child Protection
- Adopt CHILD PROTECTION POLICY
- Copy to relevant branch personnel
- Appoint D.L.P.
- Garda Vetting
- Record in Branch Minute Book.
- Follow Correct Procedure
- Follow Best Practice
- Follow Comhaltas Guidelines.

CHILD PROTECTION IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

REMEMBER !
YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE
IS FÉIDIR LINN!!

