

## **Section 4: Guidelines and Procedures for Designated Liaison Person and National Leader (CPO)**

The care, welfare and protection of people under the age of 18 is paramount.

The DLP is responsible for implementing SU procedures in the event of an allegation or disclosure of abuse. The DLP will refer all incidents of concern, disclosures or allegations of abuse to the appropriate authorities.

Even where there is only a suspicion, the welfare of the child requires that any matter be taken very seriously. Caution should be exercised when considering the subjective views of the camp leader and the volunteers.

If a volunteer is concerned about the welfare of a person under 18 at an SU event, they can bi-pass (in exceptional circumstances only) the camp leader and go directly to the DLP or National Leader.

If a disclosure of abused allegedly carried out during a SU activity is reported, the camp leader will contact the DLP or the National Leader for guidance. The camp leader will share the information they already have. The DLP will agree with the camp leader a strategy for handling the situation and decide on the interim location and status of the alleged perpetrator. The DLP will ask the camp leader or volunteer to record all relevant details carefully, using the Disclosure Report Form.

The care of the child must be a priority and medical assistance must be obtained immediately where necessary. The DLP will advise the camp leader that the child should not wash off any evidence or cover any physical signs of the abuse before the A&E staff deal with the enquiry.

The DLP or the National Leader may either travel to the camp or mission location or arrange for another suitable person to do so. The function of this visit will not be to speak to the child or young person. The purpose of this visit is to discuss the matter more fully and offer onsite support to the camp leader, and if possible, talk with the person identified in the allegation.

It is the responsibility of the DLP or the National Leader to contact the parents of the young person, if appropriate. They should be told that their child has been involved in an incident and emphasise that these are only allegations at this stage. They will tell them of the emotional and physical status of their child and inform them of what measures have already been implemented. The identity of the accused should not be revealed.

Should external agencies be involved the National Leader or the DLP, in consultation with the camp leader, will agree as to how this is to be handled.

After the notification, the DLP will review the facts carefully and objectively review the actions just taken. The DLP will fill out the Designated Person Report Form.

The Disclosure Report Form, completed by the camp leader, will be sent to the DLP.

If the disclosure is of abuse that has happened outside an SU event, the DLP must still advise the camp leader to fill out the Disclosure Report Form within in six hours of the event being disclosed and send it to the DLP. They must consider the physical and emotional status of the child and whether the child requires additional support to deal with the situation. The DLP must provide support for the volunteer who received the disclosure. It is the responsibility of the DLP to contact the person under 18's parents (if it doesn't put the child at risk) and advise them that their child has made an allegation of abuse and what measures have already been implemented. If involving the parents is not advisable, then the DLP needs to contact the Duty Social Worker at Tusla. The DLP must fill in the Designated Liaison Person Report Form.

The DLP must contact the National Leader and if necessary seek further advise from the Duty Social Worker at Tusla.

In reporting a disclosure of abuse to the authorities (that either happened at an SU event or outside an SU event but disclosed at an SU event) the DLP will contact the Duty Social Worker at Tusla (01 9213400) for advise on how best to proceed.

Under no circumstances should a person under 18 be left in a situation that exposes him or her to harm or risk of harm pending intervention by Tusla. If you believe the person under 18 is in immediate danger, you should contact An Garda Siochana without delay. You can make a follow up report to Tusla within 72 hours.

The DLP will be required to provide Tusla with a full report of the incident, including details on the geographical location of the event. They will also be required to provide an update on the location of the alleged offender. Tusla will require contact names and numbers for the Child Protection Officer (Gareth - 01-2869098 M: 087-2978524) and the DLP (Suzie -086 1985143/085 1464573 or Andrew - 086 8624289/ 0402 35118)

A child protection concern may also be a criminal offense. Under these circumstances, the DLP is required to report this to the Gardai and also make a report to Tusla. Under the Criminal Justice Act 2012, it is a criminal offense to withhold information about a serious offense, including a sexual offense, physical abuse and willful neglect against a person under 18 years or a vulnerable person. The offence arises where a person knows or believes that a specific offense has been committed against a person under 18 or vulnerable person and that he or she has information that would help arrest, prosecute or convict another person but fails without reasonable excuse to disclose that information as soon as possible to An Garda Siochana. It is the responsibility of the DLP to report a crime to An Garda Siochana, and to report child protection concerns to Tusla. Making a report to Tusla does not absolve the DLP of their responsibility to report a crime to An Garda Siochana. However, not every child protection concern warrants you contacting the Gardai.

It is the responsibility of the CPO to ensure that a list of important telephone numbers is compiled and available for use.

It is the responsibility of the Vetting Officer to ensure that all volunteers working with people under the age of 18 have read and agreed to the sections of the child protection policy that apply to them.