

# WORKING SAFELY IN A YOUTH CLUB

Guidance for  
youth workers on  
how to create a  
safe environment



## **National Youth Council of Ireland**

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) is the representative body for national voluntary youth work organisations in Ireland. It represents and supports the interests of voluntary youth organisations and uses its collective experience to act on issues that impact on young people. [www.youth.ie](http://www.youth.ie)

## **National Child Protection Programme**

The National Child Protection Programme supports and resources the youth work sector to meet its safeguarding responsibilities through the provision of training, events, practice sharing spaces, resources, advice, and advocacy. Supporting organisations to take a whole organisational approach and embedding safeguarding across youth work settings is key to our work.

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Creating safe, inclusive,  
and supportive  
environments is central  
to youth work



# Introduction

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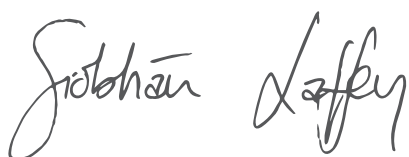
Everyone who works or volunteers with children and young people has a shared responsibility to safeguard their wellbeing and to protect them from harm. Creating safe, inclusive, and supportive environments is central to youth work and to upholding the rights of children and young people.

This resource is a practical guide that has been updated for those working and volunteering across the youth work sector to support them in understanding and meeting their safeguarding and child protection responsibilities. It aims to provide clear, practical guidance to help youth workers and volunteers work safely with children and young people.

Youth work services in Ireland are diverse, operating across a wide range of settings, communities, and organisational structures. While all youth work services are required to have Child Safeguarding Statements and Child Safeguarding Policy and procedures in place, effective safeguarding goes beyond policy compliance alone. It requires ongoing reflection, good practice, and a shared commitment to creating cultures where children and young people feel safe, respected, and heard.

This resource is structured as a series of guidance sheets, each focusing on key aspects of safeguarding practice within youth work. The guidance is intended to complement existing policies and procedures within organisations, supporting services to strengthen and develop their safeguarding approach in ways that are appropriate to their specific context. The information provided should be considered and adapted as needed to reflect the individual circumstances, risk, and needs of each service.

We hope this resource supports you in your work, building confidence within services and among staff and volunteers in their day-to-day work and contributing to safer, more empowering experiences for children and young people across the youth work sector.



**Siobhán Laffey**

National Child Protection  
Programme Manager

National Youth Council of  
Ireland / January 2026



**Practical guidance  
to help youth  
workers and  
volunteers work  
safely with children  
and young people.**

# Developing a Code of Behaviour with Young People

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A code of behaviour explains the rights and responsibilities of everyone in the youth club. It helps children and young people understand what is expected of them and what they can expect from others.

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## For the code to work well:

- Children and young people should help create it, with support from a youth worker or volunteer.
- When children and young people are involved, they are more likely to respect and follow the code.
- A good code promotes fairness, respect, and a positive atmosphere.

## Steps to develop the code

### 1 Talk and agree together

Discuss the code with the children/young people in your group. Let them share ideas and debate what should be included.

### 2 Write it in clear language

Use short sentences and avoid jargon so everyone understands.

### 3 Review it regularly

Check if the code still works and update it when needed.

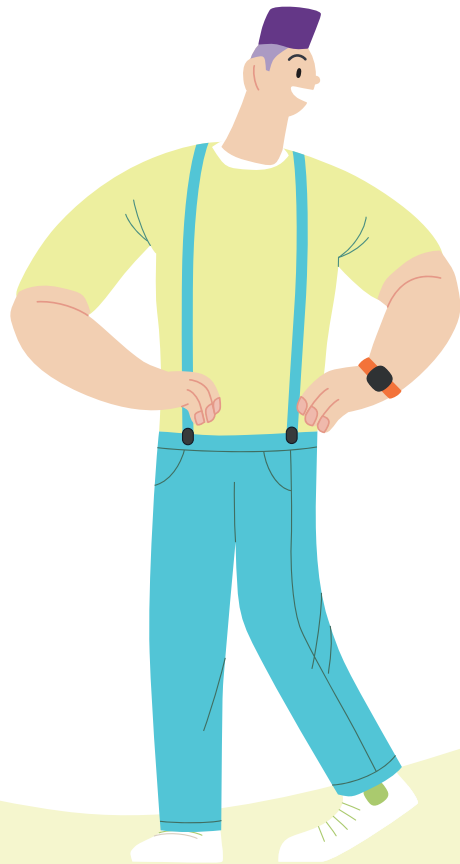
## What the code should include

- The rights and responsibilities of all members.
- How the club encourages and rewards positive behaviour and contributions.
- What behaviours are not acceptable.
- How the club creates a safe and positive environment.
- The club's approach to responding to behaviour that is against the code.
- Rights and responsibilities for online activities.
- How the club welcomes diversity and difference.
- How to prevent bullying and deal with conflict.
- Phone/device usage while children/young people are at the youth club/service.
- How parents/carers are kept informed and involved.
- Details of support available for children/young people and parents/carers.

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- How the code will be monitored and reviewed.
  - Anything else specific to your youth club/service that you or your children/young people feel is important to include.
  - Links and references to organisational policies (youth-friendly versions if available):
    - Anti-bullying
    - Child Safeguarding
    - Substance misuse
    - Complaints



**A code of behaviour helps create a safe, respectful youth service where everyone knows their rights and responsibilities, and children/young people feel protected and valued.**



**Top tip:**

Explain the code to every child/young person and their parent when they join. Ask them to agree to it. Look at it together at regular intervals.

# Responding to Children and Young People Who Breach the Code of Behaviour

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All children and young people have the right to be treated with dignity, respect and fairness. In the previous section we provided guidance on creating a Code of Behaviour with your group so everyone is clear on what is expected of them and how they should behave and treat each other in the group.

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However, children and young people sometimes behave in a way that is disruptive, inappropriate or goes against what was agreed in the group contract. This can be challenging to those around them. We recognise that behaviour can be influenced by adverse childhood experiences, trauma, stress, disability, or neurodivergence, and can signal an unmet need or distress being experienced by the child/young person. Youth clubs have a role to play in promoting compassion and understanding when responding.

A breach of the code of behaviour is a learning opportunity, and our response should always aim to support, not punish, and to help the child/young person stay safely involved where possible.

How youth workers respond has a big impact on well-being, safety, and atmosphere at the youth club. There are some things to consider when this happens.

## Principles for responding

- Focus on the behaviour and encourage yourself to consider why the young person may be behaving like this.
- Use the club's agreed code of behaviour in guiding your response.
- Avoid responses that shame, blame, humiliate.
- Avoid exclusion unless absolutely necessary for everyone's safety.
- Responses should be:
  - Age appropriate
  - Proportionate to the behaviour
  - Consistent, but flexible to individual needs.
- Work as a team with your fellow youth workers to support any young person affected.
- Make a note of the incident(s) and response taken to ensure consistency if it happens again.

## Responding

- Stay calm, respectful, and non-judgemental.
- Be mindful of your own triggers. Regulate yourself first.
- Focus on the behaviour.
- Make sure everyone is safe.
- Give the child/young person time and space to regulate if needed.

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- Offer to support the child/young person to regulate if needed.
  - Give the child/young person a chance to share their view, in a way that works for them.
  - Listen with curiosity: What happened? What was going on for you?
  - Remember that behaviour may be a form of communication, especially for children/young people who find it hard to express feelings.
  - Assume the child/young person may have experienced stress or trauma and avoid actions that could escalate the situation.
  - Be clear, firm, predictable and offer clear explanations.
  - Where possible, help the child/young person to understand what went wrong and learn safer ways to respond next time.

## Potential outcomes

- Where appropriate, and if the relevant training has been provided, use restorative practice approaches to repair harm.
- Support the child/young person to:
  - Understand the impact of their behaviour.
  - Take responsibility in a supported way.
  - Make things right where possible, possibly by apologising and/or explaining their behaviour to those affected.
- Consider time out from the activity or group. They may need space away from the main group to calm down or have a quiet period.
- Consider whether increased supervision by youth workers for a period of time would be helpful to support the child/young person.
- Use of individual agreements that are co-designed with the young person to support them with regulating their behaviour or communicating their needs so they can participate in the club.
- Additional or specialist support with another organisation or agency, to ensure the young person's needs are appropriately met.
- Consider whether the code of behaviour needs adjustments.
- Temporary or permanent exclusion from the club should only be considered as a last resort, and done in full consultation with other youth workers, the young person's parents/carers, and the young person themselves.



**The response should always be proportionate to the actions, be imposed as soon as practicable, and be fully explained to the young person and their parents/carers.**

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## If the behaviour puts others at risk

- Remove the young person or child from the situation if needed.
- Move to a quieter space where others can still see you.
- Explain clearly why the behaviour is not safe or acceptable.
- Document the incident clearly.
- If someone is at immediate risk of harm, ensure you act quickly to keep others safe and inform your Designated Liaison Person (DLP) of any concerns related to safeguarding.
- Consider whether a risk assessment is required to help identify ways to support the child/young person and ensure specific measures are in place to keep everyone safe.

## Working with parents/carers

- Contact parents/carers if the behaviour continues or escalates.
- If something serious occurs parents/carers should be informed immediately, once doing so is in the best interests of the child/young person.
- Share information about the situation in a respectful manner, that does not shame the young person.
- Focus on finding solutions together.

### The following should never be permitted as a way of managing a child/young person's behaviour:

- Physical punishment or the threat of such.
- Refusal to speak with or interact with the child/young person.
- Being deprived of food, water, access to toilets or other essential facilities.
- Verbal intimidation, ridicule or humiliation.

### Top tip:

Ask 'what is going on for this child/young person?' rather than 'what rule was broken?'.



# Conducting a Risk Assessment

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A risk assessment helps you spot anything that could cause harm to children/young people and put plans in place to keep everyone safe. It should be part of your programme planning and reviewed regularly.

Risk assessments are ongoing. Circumstances change, new activities or outings may be planned, so update your risk assessment when needed.

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## Why do a risk assessment?

- To protect children, young people, youth workers, and volunteers from harm.
- To identify risks in activities, trips, and day-to-day operations.
- To make sure measures are in place to reduce risks.

## 5 Steps to a risk assessment

### 1 Identify hazards

A hazard is anything that can cause harm. A risk is the chance, high or low, that someone will be harmed by the hazard.

### 2 Identify who might be harmed and how

Think about:

- Children and young people
- Youth workers and volunteers
- Visitors

#### Remember

some groups of children/young people may be more vulnerable to certain risks due to their circumstances, and this should be given due consideration.

Examples include children/young people:

- With disabilities
- Who are homeless
- From different ethnic/minority backgrounds who face discrimination
- In care
- Who are part of the LGBT+ community.

### Top tip:

Involve children/young people, staff, and volunteers. Different perspectives help spot different risks.

### 3 Analyse the risk

For each hazard, ask:

- How likely is harm to happen?
- How serious would it be?
- Is there anything you could put in place to reduce the likelihood or impact?

Score or rank each risk and note the reason behind your decision.

### 4 Plan Actions

Decide:

- What needs to be done
- Who will do it
- When it will be done

Share the plan with all youth workers, volunteers and anyone else that is relevant. Do not leave it to one person.

### 5 Review regularly

Ask:

- Is the plan working?
- Is it up to date?

Make risk assessment a standing item at meetings.

#### Areas to Include

- Safeguarding risks
  - Inappropriate behaviour
  - Lack of supervision
  - Online safety
- Health and safety risks
  - Trips and outings
  - Transport arrangements
  - Fire safety
  - First aid provision
  - Injury/illness
- Other risks
  - Bullying
  - Substance misuse
  - Emergencies



**Identify what.  
Identify who.  
Identify how.**

**Plan Actions.  
Review.**

# Consent Forms

Consent forms help keep children and young people safe. They show that parents or carers understand the activity and agree to their child taking part.

## Why consent forms matter

- They confirm that parents or carers are fully informed.
- They give permission for a child or young person to join a programme, event, or trip.
- They help youth workers and volunteers.

## What to include in a consent form

- The name of your organisation.
- The name and purpose of the group, activity, event, or trip.
- The child or young person's name, address, and date of birth.
- Parents' or carers' names and contact numbers.
- Emergency contact details if parents or carers cannot be reached.
- Medical or dietary information.
- Any allergies, accessibility needs, or support needs.

### Permission for specific activities, such as:

- Trips or outings
- Photography or video
- Ways the club can contact the young person
- Online engagement or activities

### Signatures from:

- A parent or carer
- The young person (if appropriate)

## Important points about consent

Consent must be:

### 1 Informed

The parent or carer knows what the activity involves.

### 2 Specific

It covers the exact activity or event.

### 3 Time-bound

It is valid for a set period, for example, for one year or for one programme.



**Use clear consent forms that include all key details. Make sure parents or carers, and where suitable the young person, understand and agree to each activity.**

Where possible, involve the child or young person in the process if they are old enough to understand. Listen to their views and respect their preferences.

### Top tip:

Review and renew consent forms every year or when a new activity or programme starts.

# Ratios when Working with Children and Young People

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There is no single ratio that suits every activity with children and young people.

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Ratios depend on the following:

- The type of activity
- The age and needs of the group
- The location and setting

Good planning helps keep everyone safe and supported, and these practice principles should guide you in deciding what is right for your group:

## Key principles

- Always make sure there are enough adults to keep activities safe, fun, and inclusive.
- As a general guide, the minimum ratio is: 1 adult for every 8 young people, **plus 1 extra adult.**
- Add one more adult for every additional group of 8 young people.

**When you decide on ratios, think about:**

- The age of the group
- The needs and abilities of the young people
- The experience of youth workers and volunteers
- The location and nature of the activity

If your group includes young people of different genders, try to have adults of those genders involved in supervision to supervise activities and premises.

## When are more adults needed?

You may need more adults in situations such as:

- Residentials and trips abroad
- Trips away from your normal venue
- Higher-risk activities, for example swimming or adventure activities
- Activities where a young person might need care away from the main group
- Groups that include young people with additional needs, disabilities, or health issues that may require a quick response, for example epilepsy.

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## Do junior leaders count towards ratios?

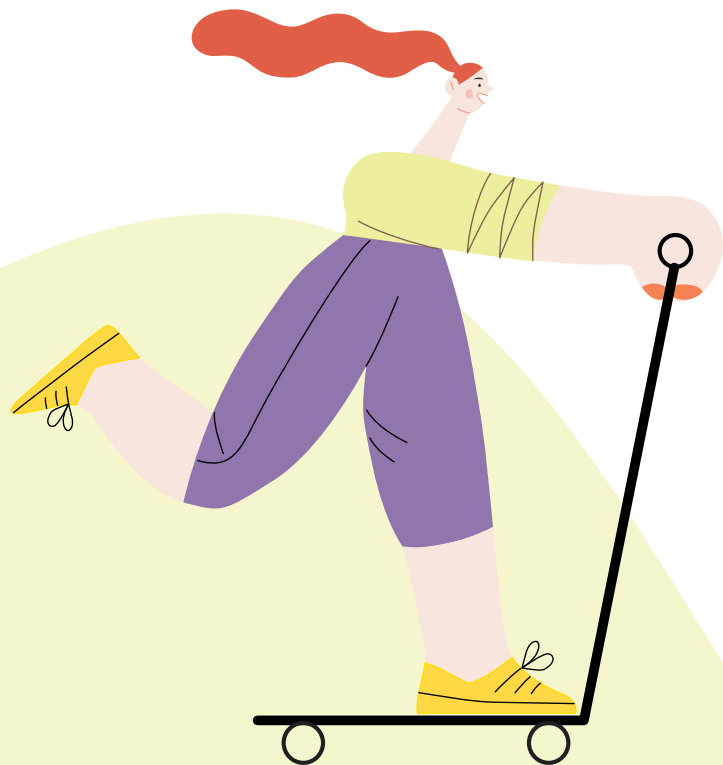
Young people under 18 can act as junior leaders. This can help them build responsibility and develop leadership skills.

However:

- Junior leaders under 18 should not be counted in the core adult ratio.
- They should not have full responsibility for a group of children or young people.
- This should be clear to all junior leaders, youth workers, and volunteers.



**1 adult: 8 young people + 1 extra adult**



**Top tip:**  
Plan ahead in case a youth worker or volunteer cannot attend at short notice, as this could affect your ratios.

# One-to-One Working

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Generally speaking, in youth work settings, one-to-one work with a child or young person may happen in two ways:

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## 1 Reacting to a situation

- A child or young person asks to speak to you in private without warning.
- A child or young person needs time away from a group.
- A child or young person has a medical emergency.

## 2 Planned work

- A structured programme or activity that involves individual sessions and is part of a pre-agreed plan of work between the child or young person, their parents or carers, the organisation, and the youth worker.

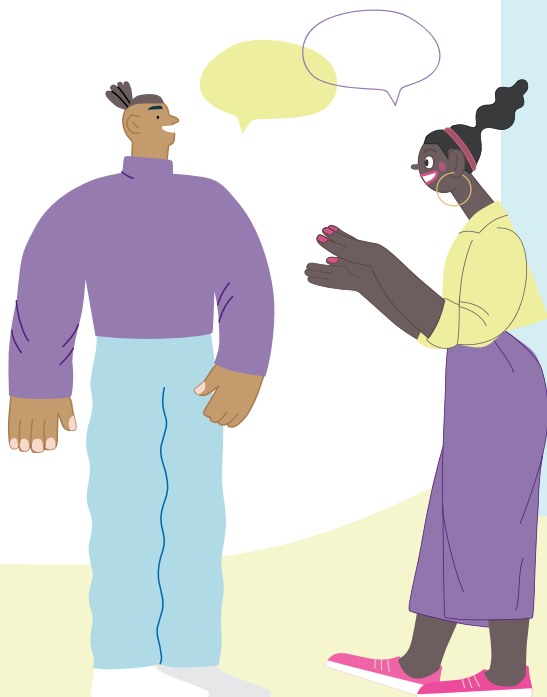
## Guidelines for reacting to a situation

- If possible, meet in an open space where others can see you.
- If that is not possible:
  - Use a room with a window or keep the door open.
  - Choose a space where other people are nearby.
- Tell another staff member or volunteer that the meeting is happening and why.
- Keep a brief written record that includes:
  - Names
  - Date and time
  - Location
  - Reason for the meeting
  - Outcome
- Avoid being in a building alone with a child or young person.
- Meet at a suitable time (not late at night or offsite).

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## Guidelines for planned work

- The programme should have:
  - A clear purpose and aims.
  - A method and evaluation plan.
  - A written work plan.
- Put a supervision structure in place to support the youth worker and the young person.
- Get written consent from parents or carers for the one-to-one work.
- Keep a register that includes:
  - Name, address, and phone number.
  - Any specific needs.
  - Attendance record.
  - Emergency contact details.
- Agree and follow a code of behaviour for both the youth worker or volunteer and the child or young person.



**One-to-one meetings should be visible and documented. When planned, they should be agreed with parents or carers. This helps ensure both the young person and the worker or volunteer feel safe and supported.**

### **Top tip:**

Tell the child or young person who they can talk to if they feel uncomfortable or are worried about being alone with an adult.

# Appropriate Physical Contact

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Some youth work activities involve physical contact. This might include helping with sports, supporting a young person with mobility, or giving first aid.

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## General principles

- Only use physical contact that is part of your agreed role and responsibilities.
- Physical contact should meet the needs of the child or young person, not the adult.
- Never use physical punishment with children or young people.
- Do not use physical force in response to misbehaviour, except in very rare cases where restraint is needed to prevent immediate harm.

For example, you may need to move a young person if they are in immediate danger and do not realise it.

## Talking to the young person

When physical contact is needed:

- Explain what you are going to do and why.
- Ask the child or young person for permission, unless it is an emergency.

For example, when giving first aid:

- Explain where you need to touch and what you need to do, for example to clean a cut and put on a plaster or bandage.
- Ask the young person if this is okay.

## What contact is not suitable

Physical contact should **not** involve touching:

- Genital areas
- Buttocks
- Breasts
- Any other area that might cause distress or embarrassment

## Where physical contact should happen

- Try to have physical contact in an open or visible space.
- Avoid situations where physical contact happens in secret or where no one else can see.
- Be sensitive to culture, religion, and gender when offering physical contact.
- Have someone else present if possible and appropriate to the situation.

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## Supporting children and young people with disabilities

Some children and young people with disabilities may need specific physical support.

- Follow all relevant health and safety guidelines and training.
- When lifting or supporting a young person, treat them with dignity and respect.
- Explain what you are doing and why, where possible.
- Involve the young person and their parents or carers when planning support.
- When enrolling a young person with a physical disability, make sure you discuss their need for physical support at enrolment and identify what staff or volunteers can support with.

## Comforting a distressed child or young person

Sometimes a distressed child or young person may want comfort.

- Think carefully about what is suitable and age appropriate.
- Do not assume that every young person wants physical contact when upset.
- Respect their wishes if they say no or move away.
- Remember consent is key.

Youth workers should make sure that frequent or unnecessary physical contact does not become normal in the club, especially with the same young person over time. Your code of behaviour for youth workers should give clear guidance on appropriate and inappropriate contact.

**\* Any form of physical punishment is unlawful. Physical contact should be limited, respectful, and used only when needed to support or protect a child or young person.**

### Top tip:

Encourage children and young people to speak up if any physical contact makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe.



# Recording and Sharing Information

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When a concern arises, a disclosure or allegation is made, or an incident is reported, it is very important to write it down as soon as possible. This applies whether or not the concern is later reported to Tusla or An Garda Síochána.

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## Good practice for written reports

Written reports should:

- Be factual, consistent, and accurate.
- Be written as soon as possible after the event or concern.
- Avoid opinions unless clearly marked as such.

If you are writing by hand:

- Write clearly, so the text is easy to read.
- Do not use correction fluid.
- Use dark ink so it can be photocopied if needed.

If you are writing on a computer:

- Do not use your own personal device.
- Make sure records are stored in a secure and suitable way.
- Make sure only the relevant people can access it.

All reports should:

- Be dated and timed.
- Be signed, with the name printed clearly or otherwise easy to identify.

## Storing information

- Keep any extra letters, emails, or records of communication linked to a child protection or safeguarding concern with the main report.
- Store reports in a safe and secure place, on paper or electronically.
- Decide who can access these reports and under what conditions.
- Access should be limited to people who need the information to carry out their role.
- This should be clearly defined in a policy for all staff and volunteers.

Reports and records should be kept for as long as needed and as required by your organisation's policies and in line with GDPR requirements. Child protection records are kept permanently. If you are unsure about any of this, seek advice.

## Further support:

NYCI's Child Protection Programme offers training on '[Responding to Disclosures](#)' to equip you with the skills and knowledge necessary to respond to a child or young person that discloses an experience of harm or abuse.



**Giving information to Tusla or An Garda Síochána to protect a child is not breaking confidentiality or data protection rules.**

# Communicating with Parents/Carers

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Clear and positive communication with parents/carers helps build trust and supports young people and children's involvement in your youth club!

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## Good communication includes:

- Being clear about what activities are taking place; when, where, and also why.
- Making parents/carers aware of what you need from them, such as emergency contact information, consent for particular activities, or details of any additional supports their child may require.
- Sharing information with appropriate notice, especially if parents/carers are required to pick-up or drop-off of their child at your venue.
- Being open to questions or feedback that parents/carers may have about the nature of your organisation or activities that you have planned.
- Actively listening and responding to any concerns or questions and giving helpful responses.
- Handling all information about the child/young person and their family in a confidential and sensitive manner.

## Information that should be shared with parents/carers

- Your youth club's mission, ethos and values, and practices.
- Policies and procedures, including the Code of Behaviour for youth workers/volunteers, the Child Safeguarding Statement, the child safeguarding policy (accessible versions if available).
- Group contract for children/young people outlining the ways they're expected to behave while in the youth club.
- Any programme specific information if they're participating in a structured programme or project (e.g. youth diversion project, mentoring programme etc.).
- Detailed information on any trips or activities that require specific consent, such as a trip abroad or sporting activity like go-karting.
- They also need to be informed of any issues that arise for their child, when it is considered in the child's best interest in-line with your child safeguarding policy.

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## Information needed from parents/carers

- Consent for their child to attend your youth club.
- Child/young persons:
  - Address
  - Date of Birth
  - Dietary needs
  - Medical needs
  - Any circumstances to be made aware of to support the child/young person
- Contact details for parents/carers.
- Contact details for another responsible adult in case of emergency and parents/carers cannot be reached.



**All information about the child/young person and their family should be handled in a confidential and sensitive manner.**



### **Top tip:**

To help you develop a version of your child safeguarding policy for parents/carers, please see our [Child Safeguarding Policy Development Toolkit](#)

# Communicating Directly with Children and Young People

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Good communication is central to safe and effective youth work. In most instances, all communication relating to a child or young person's participation in your service will be with their parent/carer. However, you may decide to communicate directly with older young people once they reach a certain age. For older young people, direct communication can be particularly important as it:

- Recognises their growing independence and capacity.
  - Supports their participation in decision-making.
  - Helps prepare them for adult responsibilities.
  - Promotes autonomy while still providing appropriate support and safeguards.
- 

Direct communication should always be balanced with safeguarding responsibilities and should be appropriate to the age, needs, and circumstances of the young person. All communication should be appropriate, professional, transparent, and consistent with your role as a youth worker or volunteer. Consider the following when deciding whether you should communicate directly with children and young people.

## Age and understanding of the young person

Always adapt communication to the age, maturity, and understanding of the young person.

- Use clear and simple language.
- Avoid jargon or complicated explanations.
- Check the young person understands what you are saying.
- Be clear about boundaries, consent, and confidentiality.

## Consent and transparency

Young people should understand:

- Why you are communicating with them.
- What the communication is about.
- How often you will be in contact.
- Get consent from the young person and their parent/carer before contacting them directly.
- Follow your organisational policy on consent and communication.
- Be clear about the limits of confidentiality, especially if a safeguarding concern arises.

Never pressure a young person to communicate in a way they are not comfortable with.

## Choosing a method of communication

Only use communication methods that are approved by your organisation and necessary for your role.

Common methods include phone calls, text messages, emails or messaging apps such as WhatsApp. When choosing a method, always consider:

- Is this method suitable for the young person's age?
- Is it necessary and appropriate?



**Be clear,  
age-appropriate,  
and transparent.**

- 
- Does it minimise safeguarding risks?
  - Can communication be seen, recorded, or checked if needed?
  - Do I need to communicate to the group or to each individual?
  - If I decide to set up a group for sharing information:
    - What limits or permissions can be placed on the messaging app to reduce sharing of inappropriate content by group members?
    - Are all the group members under 18?
    - Do we need to discuss how this group will be used with young people and agree a group contract?

## Using messaging apps

If messaging apps (for example WhatsApp) are permitted by your organisation:

- Use them mainly for practical information, such as times, locations, or reminders.
- Keep messages professional, clear, and respectful.
- Avoid private or ongoing one-to-one conversations.
- Do not message late at night or outside agreed times.
- Do not use personal devices for sending messages.
- Use group chats and work accounts.
- Keep records of communication in line with your organisational policy.

## Social media

Youth workers and volunteers should be cautious when using social media and follow your organisational policy and procedures. General principles include:

- Do not connect with young people through personal social media accounts.
- Do not use private social media messaging to communicate with young people.
- Keep personal and professional online lives separate.

## Safeguarding reminders

Safeguarding must always guide all communication with young people and should be included in your safeguarding risk assessment. There should be strict guidelines in place that are clear to everyone.

Before communicating, ask yourself:

- Is this communication necessary?
- Is it appropriate and professional?
- Would I be comfortable if this message was seen by others?

### Top tip:

Always choose safe communication methods that protect both the young person and the youth worker/volunteer.



# Online Safety and Using Social Media

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Online spaces can support learning, creativity, and connection in youth work. They can also create risks for privacy, safety, and wellbeing.

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## Promoting online safety

Youth workers and volunteers should actively promote safe and responsible online behaviour.

- Make sure youth workers and volunteers understand and follow the organisation's online safety policies and procedures.
- Use only approved and secure platforms for online activities.
- Set appropriate privacy and security settings on all platforms and devices being used.
- Encourage young people to think carefully before posting or sharing content, and avoid sharing personal information such as their address, school, or phone number online.
- Talk openly with young people about online risks in a supportive and non-judgemental way.
- Promote kindness, respect, and positive behaviour online with young people.

## If social media or online groups are used as part of your work

- Beforehand, you must **ensure parents/carers have given informed consent for their child** to take part in any online communication or activities linked to your youth club.
- Use organisation accounts rather than your own personal account.
- Make sure more than one youth worker or volunteer has access to each account or group, for oversight of any messages or content shared.
- Be clear with young people and their parents/carers about the purpose of the group or platform.
- Agree clear rules and boundaries that reflect the club's code of behaviour.
- Keep communication focused on youth work activities only.
- Respond within suitable hours and avoid late night communication.
- Only use work devices where possible.
- Remove or block harmful or inappropriate content and report it through your organisation.

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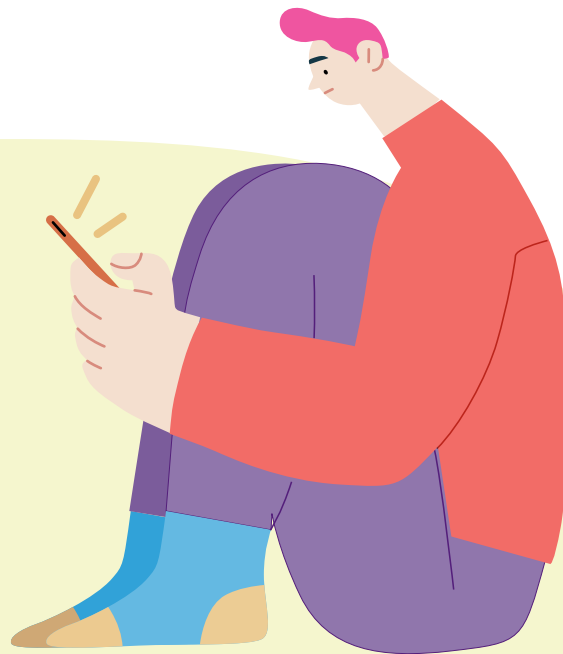
## Supporting young people if concerns arise

If a young person is upset, worried, or harmed by online behaviour or content:

- Encourage them to tell a youth worker or trusted adult.
- Help them understand how to block, mute, or report harmful online behaviour on the specific platform.
- Take their concerns seriously and act in line with your child safeguarding policy.
- Be supportive in your approach and try to understand why they are upset.
- If needed, report concerns to your Designated Liaison Person (DLP).



**Use only approved and secure platforms when communicating with young people online.**



### **Top tip:**

Review your organisation's online safety policy regularly so it stays up to date with new technology and trends.

### **Further support:**

Check out [Stay Safe Online: Empowering Young Minds Against Cyberbullying](#) from NYC's Youth Health Programme for more information on cyberbullying and online safety.

# Transporting Children and Young People

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Keeping everyone safe must be a priority when planning or providing transport to children and young people.

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## General principles

- Follow your organisation's transport policy.
- Have clear informed consent from parents or carers before transporting any young person.
- Make sure the driver of the vehicle is suitable, has the appropriate licence, and has the appropriate insurance to transport people for paid work or volunteer work.
- Only use vehicles which are well-maintained and legally roadworthy by confirming a valid NCT (or equivalent) is in place.
- Follow all road safety laws, including seatbelts for every passenger.
- Plan your routes in advance, allowing enough time for travel and traffic.
- Avoid last-minute or unplanned lifts for young people.



**Best practice is to avoid transporting a child alone, but circumstances may arise where it is necessary to do so. Clear communication is vital if this happens.**

## Best practice

Avoid transporting a child or young person alone, however it might be necessary in specific situations where there are no other safe alternatives. There are a number of safety measures to consider in order to minimise any risk:

- The child/young person, as well their parent/carer, are informed and fully consent to the travel arrangement.
- They have been told who will be driving them, where they are going, why it is necessary, and who else will go with them
- If possible, somebody other than the driver should talk to the child about transport arrangements to check they are comfortable with the plan.
- Ratios still need to be maintained, and the driver should try to have another adult with them for the journey.
- The person who leaves children home should be alternated. This reduces the risk of any one individual always being alone with a child.
- The driver should have a point of contact for the parents/carers should they be delayed or break down.
- Parents/carers should be advised of expected arrival times and should be told when their child arrives safely at their destination.
- In situations of late collections, youth workers should have access to contact numbers for parents/carers and be provided with an alternative contact number.

### Top tip:

Youth workers and volunteers should ensure that children are aware of their rights and that they know who to contact to report any concerns they may have.

# Planning a Day Trip or Residential

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Day trips and residential offer children and young people the opportunity for new experiences, to build confidence, and friendships. Good planning is key and helps the experience to be safe, fun, and inclusive! The following should be considered when planning:

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## Have the children/young people:

- Been consulted about the trip during the planning stages?
- Been given space to voice their opinions or views on the proposed trip and any related activities?
- Agreed a group contract for expected behaviour, with boundaries for “free time” and consequences if the group contract is breached?
- Been given information about what they need to bring such as spending money, food/snacks, or appropriate clothing for activities like swimming or camping etc.?

## Have parents/carers:

- Been given a copy of the organisation’s child safeguarding policy?
- Consented in writing to their child participating on the trip?
- Given you up to date information such as:
  - Their contact information
  - An emergency contact in case you can’t reach them
  - Medical details including illnesses, medications, allergies or dietary requirements for their child?
- Received a briefing with the details of the trip, including pick-up and drop-off times?

## Have youth workers:

- Carried out a risk assessment as part of the planning process?
- Selected a staff member/volunteer as the designated contact for parents/carers?
- Ensured they have an appropriate ratio of adults to children, taking account of the needs of the young people and risks of the activities during the trip?
- Checked their own insurance and ensured there is coverage for all activities?
- Checked the transport being used has appropriate insurance, is roadworthy, and has qualified drivers, seatbelts etc.?



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- Ensured they have an appropriate first aid kit, with a first aid trained volunteer/staff member available to attend the trip?
  - Ensured there is secondary plan in case of emergencies, including returning home early?
  - Allowed for emergency costs in the trip budget?
  - Reviewed the offsite location's child safeguarding statement and child safeguarding policy and procedures?
  - Considered any changing areas for the young people, and if they are accessible for those with additional needs or a disability?
  - Considered the preferences of individual young people when it comes to gendered changing areas, and any inclusive options they can avail of?

### **If staying overnight, you may need to consider the following:**

- A supervision schedule between youth workers during the evening or nighttime.
- Any additional risks based on the location or facility being used.
- What the sleeping arrangements for the young people will be, considering their preferences based on identity or gender, or individual need for separate provision.
- What the sleeping arrangements for youth workers will be, and if they will be within earshot of the young people or children if required.
- The drugs and alcohol policy of the centre.
- The centre's supervision as well as facility security.
- If the accommodation is physically accessible for any children or young people with disabilities or additional needs.

**\* Include young people in your planning, and make sure they feel heard if they have any suggestions or ideas about future trips**

**Top tip:** Ratios of staff to young people for offsite activities should always be increased to cover all contingencies.



# Planning a Trip Abroad

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Trips abroad can be powerful learning experiences for young people and children, but require careful planning and clear information for both them and their parents/carers.

The previous section (Planning a Day Trip or Residential) contains information to be considered when planning trips in Ireland. However, other things need to be considered when planning a trip abroad.

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## Planning

- Start planning well in advance of the trip.
- Check visa, passport, and entry requirements for the destination.
- Research local laws, customs, and relevant cultural expectations. Think about how these may impact the group or activities you're planning.
- Review up to date travel advice from the Department of Foreign Affairs.
- Before travelling, obtain up to date emergency contact information for each young person's parents/carers.
- Contact the insurance company to ensure appropriate coverage for the trip.
- Check health insurance cover for the destination in the event of an emergency.



**Parents/carers should meet with youth workers and be informed of the programme and young people should be involved in the planning.**

## Best practice

- Create a risk assessment, consider how you will reduce identified risks during travel and time in a different country.
- Consider whether young people will be allowed to bring personal devices (e.g.: phones, tablets, etc.) with them.
  - Involve young people in this discussion to get their views.
  - Agree boundaries about the use of personal devices.
  - Agree clear communication plans with young people and their parents/carers.
- Consult your Designated Liaison Person (DLP), make them aware of the details of the trip so they can be available to contact if a safeguarding concern arises.
- Appoint a youth worker or volunteer as the home contact during the trip in the event of an issue where support is needed rearranging logistics, contacting parents/carers, or liaising with supports in Ireland.
- Check access to and location of hospitals, police stations, emergency services, dental clinics, pharmacies etc.

### Top tip:

Ratios of staff/volunteers to young people for offsite activities should always be increased to cover all contingencies.

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- Create a contact list for the above services in case of emergency and share it with youth workers/volunteers attending the trip.

## Information for parents/carers

- Purpose of the trip.
- Travel destination, dates and times.
- Transport details, such as airports/stations, flight/train times and length.
- Accommodation details of where the group will be staying and sleeping arrangements.
- Supervision arrangements, such as agreed “free time” the young people may have and any mandatory group activities planned.
- Behaviour expectations while travelling out of the country particularly when there are different laws or customs.
- Detailed itinerary of the trip should be prepared and shared.
- Co-create a suggested packing list with the group based on the planned activities and destination and share.
- Contact details for the youth workers/volunteers going on the trip and a clear communication plan outlining when they should expect updates should be shared.

## During the trip

- Keep daily attendance, supervision, and incident records.
- Make sure the young people know how to get help if they feel unsafe or unwell.
- Share contact details for youth workers/volunteers on the trip with young people in the event of separation or someone getting lost.
- Agree meeting places in the event the group gets separated or someone gets lost.
- Share the itinerary with young people so they know what to expect each day.
- Communicate regularly with parents/carers about the well-being of their child.
- Have regular check-ins with fellow youth workers and the group of young people.
- Ensure everybody is made aware of any unexpected changes to plans and consider the impact it may have on the young people.
- Keep all passports and travel documents in a secure place.
- Have a clear plan in place for illness, injury, or emergencies.

## Remember to check before travelling

- Copies of documents and passport numbers are with youth workers at home and away.
- Insurance cover for all aspects of traveling.
- Currency, climate, time zones, cultural differences etc.
- If there any issues occurring locally that may impact on the trip e.g. protest, recent rioting etc.
- Legal differences e.g. drinking, age of consent, drugs etc.
- If vaccinations are necessary.
- Contingency plans are in place for getting home in the event of travel interruptions.

# Working with Children and Young People with Additional Needs or Disabilities

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As per the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, people with disabilities have a fundamental right to participate fully in education, community life, and decision-making, on an equal basis with others. This includes young people!

Some children and young people may need extra support in order to fully participate. Youth clubs should be inclusive and welcoming to all. To ensure every child or young person with a disability or additional needs are properly supported, the following should be considered:

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## Youth work services

- Avoid assumptions based on a young person's diagnosis and recognise that needs and strengths vary widely.
- Respect the child/young person's autonomy and privacy.
- Assume capacity and support the child/young person to make informed choices, in line with their understanding.
- Discuss if the youth worker or volunteer is the most suitable person to provide any additional support that is required.
- Use clear, accessible and flexible communication methods.
- Allow extra time for processing information and responding.
- Check understanding without pressuring the child/young person to respond in a certain way.
- Ensure training and information sessions for staff on relevant topics such as disability awareness and neurodiversity.
- Ensure non-discrimination and reasonable accommodation are embedded across policies, practice, and culture.

## Young people and their parents/carers

- Talk with the young person about what support they need and barriers to participation and actively involve them in any related decision-making.
- Seek to understand the following:
  - Communication preferences
  - Sensory sensitivities
  - Triggers, stressors, regulation needs
  - Support strategies that work well
- Talk with their parents/carers as well about additional supports they could require or barriers to participation.
- Be sensitive and clear in your communication with the young person, and actively seek their views wherever possible when making arrangements for them.

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## The environment

- Is the building physically accessible for wheelchairs, mobility devices, crutches etc.?
- Are the activities suitable for children and young people of all abilities so that everyone will feel they can participate in a meaningful way?
- Consider noise, lighting, crowding, visual stimulation.
- Is there access to quiet or regulation spaces?
- Provide information about activities, changes, or transitions to reduce anxiety.
- Offer flexibility in participation (e.g. breaks, opting out, different seating or formats).

## Intimate/personal care

- When necessary to carry out tasks of a personal nature, there needs to be a discussion with the child/young person and their parents/carers.
- The child/young person's consent should always be sought.
- Sensitivity and discretion need to be shown when carrying out any personal care tasks, with the child's best interests always in mind.
- Any care task of a personal nature which a child or young person can do for themselves should not be undertaken by a youth worker or volunteer.
- Children and young people may prefer to be accompanied by youth workers of their own gender in relation to toilets or bathrooms. This preference should not be overlooked and needs to be respected where safe and practical.

**\* Children and young people with additional needs or disabilities may depend on adults more than other children for their care and safety. Sensitivity and clear communication are particularly important.**

### Top tip:

Youth workers should respect the young person's right to privacy and dignity and involve them in any decision-making processes.



# Working Jointly with Other Organisations

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Youth clubs often collaborate with organisations on joint pieces of work e.g. trips, competitions, educational activities etc. Good cooperation supports young people's learning, safety, and wellbeing. Below are some guidelines to support you to work jointly with other organisations or groups.

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## Before working together

- Agree roles and responsibilities clearly, as well as the details of the activity or event.
- Complete a safeguarding risk assessment together to identify any risks, and agree how they will be reduced, as well as who will be responsible for this.
- Ensure all involved organisations and adults understand their safeguarding responsibilities and agree whose policy and procedures will be followed during the activity.
- Ask for copies of the other organisations' child safeguarding statement, and safeguarding policy (if needed).
- Check that all adults involved are suitable to work with children/young people, have up-to-date Garda vetting and have completed the relevant safeguarding training as required.
- Identify a main contact person for each organisation/group and agree their role and responsibility in relation to reporting child protection concerns.
- Agree what Code of Behaviour will be followed, for both adults and children/young people, or decide if a specific code needs to be created while working together.
- Consider how information will be shared between groups before the work begins, and if there will be a key contact in each group.
- Schedule check-in meetings between and throughout the joint work at regular intervals as needed.
- Keep written records of all agreements and plans.
- Share relevant information about the activity or work taking place with parents/carers, as well as children and young people.
- Consider practical issues such as transport, insurance, parental or carer consent, and responsibility for supervision.



**Clear agreements and good communication help avoid confusion and support better teamwork between organisations and groups.**

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## While working together

- Share schedules and activity plans in advance.
- Clarify who to contact if plans change.
- Stay in regular contact with partner organisations as needed.
- Ensure supervision is safe and consistent for any events or activities.
- Make sure all groups understand who is responsible for each child or young person at all times.
- Adjust plans responsibly if risks change.
- Record any incidents and concerns in line with agreed policies and procedures.

## After working together

- Review how the activity went together.
- Note what went well, and what to improve in future.
- Update agreements for future work as needed.
- Consult the children or young people who participated, get their views and feedback on what they enjoyed, how they felt about working together, and anything they think could be improved.



### Top tip:

Put the roles, responsibilities, and contact details of each organisation in writing before the activity starts.

# Photography and Videography

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Photos and videos can be a positive way to celebrate activities and share the achievements of children and young people in your youth club. They can also raise concerns about privacy and safety if not used carefully.

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## When taking photos or videos

- Make sure written consent has been given by parents/carers, as well as the child/young person.
- Be clear about why photos or videos are being taken, how they will be used by the youth club, and where they will be shared.
- Only take images that reflect the activities in a positive and respectful way.
- Avoid images that could cause embarrassment, distress, or put a young person at risk.
- Do not take photos or videos in changing rooms, toilets, or private spaces.

## Managing consent and use

- Consent forms should clearly outline where images may be used, such as on websites or social media, and in reports or promotional materials from the organisation and any funding bodies.
- Young people should be given a free choice and have their views be respected if they do not wish to be included in any images or videos.
- Consent can be withdrawn at any time, and this should be explained to parents and carers as well as young people.

## Equipment and access

- Avoid using personal cameras and devices, and make use of a designated organisational or group camera where possible.
- Limit access to the images to named staff or volunteers only.
- Store the images securely in line with data protection and safeguarding policies.

## Sharing images and videos

- Only share images through channels and platforms approved by the organisation and highlighted in your consent forms.
- Do not share images with third parties, such as funding bodies or other organisations, without clear permission beforehand.
- Do not allow guests or visitors to take photos or videos unless this has been agreed in advance and specific consent is in place.

### Top tip:

Use a designated organisational camera and keep a clear record of access to avoid confusion or misuse.



**Always be clear about consent, purpose, and who can access photographs and videos of children and young people in your youth club.**

# Inviting Guests and Speakers

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Guests and speakers can enhance children and young people's learning and engagement by offering new perspectives, information, and inspiration. However, careful planning and safeguarding considerations are essential.

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## When inviting guests or speakers

- It is important that you complete a risk assessment beforehand in order to assess what risks are involved, how to manage these risks, and who is responsible.
- Ensure they have been Garda vetted in line with your child safeguarding policy, garda vetting policy and the garda vetting legislation.
- Provide the guest or speaker with clear information on the club's values, ethos, and practices.
- Share your child safeguarding policy with them and highlight specific practices such as not being alone with any young people or children, or expectations around use of language.
- Share your Code of Behaviour for staff and volunteers and seek their agreement to follow this in their interactions with children/young people while in your service.
- Delegate a youth worker to be responsible for welcoming the guest and ensuring they are supervised at all times when with the children or young people.
- Make them aware of any additional needs the young people may have, so that steps can be taken for them to engage fully in the presentation or activity.
- Where topics are sensitive, ensure they are discussed in age-appropriate, respectful ways that support inclusion and wellbeing.
- Do not allow the guest or speaker to take photographs or videos without clear consent from the young people and their parents/carers, with details on what the images may be used for.
- Seek feedback from children/young people before and after the visitor to assess their relevance and impact.
- It is important that children/young people feel heard before any decision is made to invite a guest or speaker into your venue.



**Always have a staff member or youth workers present during guest sessions.**

### Top tip:

Before they attend, provide guests and speakers with a brief written overview of your safeguarding procedures and how they're expected to behave and interact with young people.

### Additional Resource:

Have a look at NYCI's resource: ['Braver, Safer Engagements'](#) for more in-depth advice and guidance.

# Information, Resources, and Training

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## Information

- For more information on safeguarding and child protection in youth work from NYCI's National Child Protection Programme, please visit [www.childprotection.ie](http://www.childprotection.ie)
  - For general information on child protection and safeguarding, as well as contact details for local social work departments, please visit [www.tusla.ie](http://www.tusla.ie).
  - Further information from the Department of Education and Youth can be found at <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/>.
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## Resources

### Resources from NYCI

- [Children First: Guide to Implementation in Youth Work](#)
- [Child Safeguarding Policy Development Toolkit](#)
- [Peer Abuse Guidance: Supporting Youth Workers to Respond Effectively](#)
- [Stay Safe Online](#)
- [Transforming Hate in Youth Work Settings](#)
- [8 Steps To Inclusive Youth Work](#)
- [Braver Safer Engagement](#)

### Resources from Tusla

- [Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017](#)
- [Child Safeguarding Resource List](#)
- [Changing Futures website, for young people made by young people with experience of Tusla services](#)
- [Children First Information and Advice Service](#)
- [Child and Family Support Networks](#)

## Training

### Training from NYCI

- Child Protection Programme
  - [Child Protection Awareness Programme](#)
  - [Designated Liaison Person training](#)
  - [Responding to Disclosures training](#)
  - [Informing Parents/Carers of Concerns training](#)
  - [Managing Complaints & Allegations](#)
  - [Information Session for Boards of Management on Children First](#)



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- Youth Health Programme
    - [Understanding Young People and Pornography](#)
    - [Relationship Education and Sexuality Wellbeing in the Youth Work Sector eLearning](#)
  - Global Youth Work
    - [Intro to Global Youth Work](#)
  - Equality & Intercultural
    - [Transforming Hate in Youth Work Settings](#)
    - [8 Steps to Inclusive Youth Work training](#)

#### **Training from Tusla**

- [Children First E-Learning Programme](#)
  - [Mandated Person eLearning module](#)
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## **Queries**

- NYCÍ's National Child Protection Programme can be contacted with any queries in relation to working safely with young people by calling 01 425 5933.
- If you have a concern about a young person, it is very important that you take one of the following actions:
  - Report your concern to your Designated Liaison Person (DLP) within your organisation.
  - If you do not have a DLP, report directly to your local duty social worker in Tusla.
  - In an emergency, or if a social worker is not available, contact your local Garda station to speak with a member of An Garda Síochána.

## Further Information and Support

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The below organisations offer additional information, advice, training, and support

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- Hotline.ie
- CyberSafeKids
- Webwise
- AsIAm
- Inclusion Ireland
- Irish Wheelchair Association
- Belong To
- Irish Traveller Movement
- Irish Refugee Council
- ISPC
- Ombudsman for Children's Office
- Children's Rights Alliance











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