



# Child Protection Policy Procedures and Guidelines

Last reviewed: November 2023

<b>About Belfast YMCA.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Belfast YMCA Child Protection Policy Statement.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Introduction.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. Principles of Good Practice.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4. Belfast YMCA Child Protection Procedures:.....</b>	<b>6</b>
4.1 Recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers.....	6
4.2 Effective management of staff and volunteers.....	7
4.3 Reporting concerns, disclosures and allegations.....	8
<b>Appendix 1: Reporting Procedures.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Appendix 2: Incident Report Form.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Appendix 3: Belfast YMCA Child Protection Guidelines.....</b>	<b>16</b>
Code of Behaviour/Conduct.....	16
Sharing Information.....	19
General Safety and Management of Activities.....	20
<b>Appendix 4: Useful Contacts.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Appendix 5: Guidelines for Self-Protection.....</b>	<b>26</b>
Communication with Children and young people.....	27
<b>Appendix 6 - Retention of Records.....</b>	<b>29</b>

## About Belfast YMCA

We have been serving people and communities across Belfast for over 170 years and we have a rich legacy of supporting children, young people and communities throughout that time. Our main base is in Stranmillis, bordering the Lagan Meadows, where we have purpose built childcare and youth facilities, offices, sports hall and pitches.

Belfast YMCA Limited operates in Northern Ireland and is both a company limited by guarantee (No: NI 04741) and registered Charity (No: NIC 102252).

### Contact Information

Belfast YMCA, 56—58 Knightsbridge Park, Stranmillis, Belfast BT9 5EH

028 9068 4660

[hello@belfast-ymca.org](mailto:hello@belfast-ymca.org)

<https://www.belfastymca.org/>

### Designated Child Protection Officers - Contact Details

Nursery and After School Club	Youth and Community Work
Sarah Ferguson Nursery and After School Manager 028 9068 4668 / 07925829010 <a href="mailto:sarah@belfast-ymca.org">sarah@belfast-ymca.org</a>	Peter McNiece Youth Work Lead 028 9068 4665 / 07926146393 <a href="mailto:peter@belfast-ymca.org">peter@belfast-ymca.org</a>
Anne Donley After School / Deputy Nursery Manager 028 9068 4668 / 07925829025 <a href="mailto:anne@belfast-ymca.org">anne@belfast-ymca.org</a>	Brian Moore Youth Work Lead 028 9068 4665 / 07591840404 <a href="mailto:brian@belfast-ymca.org">brian@belfast-ymca.org</a>

### Our Insurance is provided by:

Ansvar Insurance - Ansvar House, St Leonards Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN21 3UR

0345 60 20 999 or 01323 737541

[ansvar.insurance@ansvar.co.uk](mailto:ansvar.insurance@ansvar.co.uk)

[www.ansvar.co.uk](http://www.ansvar.co.uk)

# 1. Belfast YMCA Child Protection Policy Statement

Whilst Belfast YMCA recognises that the primary responsibility for the care of children and young people rests with parents and guardians, the community as a whole has responsibility for their wellbeing and protecting them.

Belfast YMCA is committed to taking every appropriate step to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the young people with whom it works, regardless of class, gender, race or creed. This policy applies to all children and young people with whom the YMCA is involved with regardless of age. The supplementary Good Practice Guidelines also outline Guidelines for working with Young Adults. All YMCA staff or volunteers must be aware of this policy and it is their duty to guarantee its implementation.

The policy states: **“All children and young people should enjoy Belfast YMCA facilities and activities without fear of physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect.”**

Belfast YMCA is truly committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of its members, staff and volunteers, who should at all times show, and be shown, respect and understanding regarding their rights, safety and welfare.

## 2. Introduction

This policy seeks to lay out the value base, procedures and guidelines required for Belfast YMCA staff and volunteers to ensure effective child protection. It can and should be added to where circumstances and programmes require it e.g. residential centres.

Belfast YMCA has been serving people and communities across Belfast for over 170 years and we have a rich legacy of supporting children, young people and communities throughout that time.

We operate a wide range of activities which can be summarised in the following areas:

**Childcare** - Nursery, after School and holiday clubs

**Youth** - Youth club, summer Projects, schools programmes and residentials

**Community** - Community activities and events

For the purposes of this document:

‘CEO’ refers to the person who heads Belfast YMCA

‘Worker’ refers to a person (18 years or over) who is involved in leadership of any organisations or groups.

‘DCPO’ refers to Designated Child Protection Officer

## Legislation

The key legislation upon which this policy is based is as follows:

- Children (N.I.) Order 1995
- Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (N.I.) Order 2003
- Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults 2007
- Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2017
- Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015

The policy also follows the Guidelines as led out in:

- Choosing To Protect
- Getting It Right
- Our Duty to Care
- Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI)

This statement outlines Belfast YMCA's Child Protection Policy, pursuant to the Children (NI) Order 1995 dealing with the care and protection of children and young people and is drafted with particular reference to the unique nature and structure of the organisation.

Belfast YMCA recognises that children and young people attend YMCA programmes for care, enjoyment, social contact and personal development. They should not suffer from abuse wherever or however it occurs.

Staff and volunteers who are selected, or appointed to work with children and young people, should enjoy their involvement, confident in the knowledge of the existence of clear guidelines and where required, access to good support and advice.

Investigating agencies are:

1. Gateway Teams from each of the Health Trusts.
2. Police Service Northern Ireland –P.P.B. (Public Protection Branch)

According to the Children's Order (NI) 2005, a child or young person is anyone under the age of 18.

## Review of Policy and Procedures

Belfast YMCA will review this policy on an annual basis or whenever relevant changes are required. This will be undertaken by the CEO, or senior management team, while working with relevant staff members.

The updated / reviewed policy will then be approved by the Board or relevant subcommittee.

### **3. Principles of Good Practice**

The following is a summary of the principles of good practice for the protection of children.

All staff and volunteers working with children and youth should:

- Promote the general welfare, health and personal development of children and protect them from harm of all kinds.
- Recognise that children have rights as individuals and treat them with dignity and respect.
- Raise awareness about what children are entitled to be protected from.
- Adopt and consistently apply a thorough and clearly defined method of recruiting and selecting staff and volunteers.
- Plan an appropriate response procedure in relation to accidents and complaints and to alleged or suspected incidents of abuse.
- Establish links with parents and other relevant organisations.

**Belfast YMCA fully accepts young people's rights to self-protection and:**

- To be safe
- To protect their own bodies
- To say NO
- To get help against bullies
- To tell
- To be believed
- Not to keep secrets

### **4. Belfast YMCA Child Protection Procedures:**

#### **4.1 Recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers**

For the wellbeing and protection of programme participants all potential staff and volunteers must be vetted prior to their appointment or involvement in activities, in accordance with Access NI requirements.

In order to secure the suitability of staff, and volunteers/trainers the following process will be adhered to:

- All roles must be clearly defined including what is expected of the person through an up to date Role Profile prior to recruitment beginning
- Each potential worker and volunteer (whether paid or unpaid) should be made aware of all duties pertaining to the appointment and their responsibilities as outlined in the Child protection policy
- References - a minimum of two written references, one of which should be from the most recent employer / education provider will be obtained and must not include

- family members
- A self-declaration form and Access NI check should be completed where necessary (we will comply with Code of Practice requirements concerning the fair treatment of applicants and the handling of information)
- Safeguarding will be discussed at interview with applicants who have been shortlisted
- All appointments should be sanctioned by the CEO or equivalent senior staff member.

### **International Volunteers**

When involving international volunteers, two references, as well as a police check from their town of origin, are required prior to service. If necessary, independent translations of these documents must be sought, as well as evidence confirming the volunteer's identity. International Volunteers may also be required to complete a declaration, as well as to undergo an Access NI check.

### **Access NI Procedures**

For the purposes of recruitment within the YMCA, a person deemed to hold a 'Regulated Position' and who must therefore be vetted under the Access NI registers can be defined as those who, in the course of their normal duties:

- Care for
- Train
- Advise
- Counsel or supervise
- Are in sole charge of children or vulnerable adults as well as the supervisor/line manager of individuals in regulated positions

Due to the nature of our work, employees and volunteers are vetted under enhanced disclosure procedures.

Belfast YMCA is registered with YMCA Ireland who are the body registered with Access NI. Belfast YMCA has complied with the registration process outlined by YMCA Ireland and adheres strictly to their procedures in respect of all Access NI checks. Belfast YMCA will follow any future guidelines required to adhere to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

In the case of an Access NI Certificate being returned with sensitive information with regard to criminal convictions, a risk assessment will be carried out by an agreed Child Protection vetting panel.

## **4.2 Effective management of staff and volunteers**

### **Induction Procedure**

Each new starter will be expected to read and sign a copy of the Child Protection Policy, confirming their having read and understood the document, with Child protection training being provided as part of the induction process for all roles.

Staff will also be made aware and given access to the most up to date organisation policies including:

- Complaints policy and procedure
- Whistle blowing policy
- Equity and diversity policy
- Staff handbook

### **Probation**

A probation period of no less than 6 months will apply to all new starters to ensure their suitability for the post. Throughout the probation period regular reviews should be held where the line manager will review their suitability for the post, ongoing training and learning needs.

### **Training**

Belfast YMCA is committed to ensuring that each staff member receives adequate training around Child Protection issues.

This shall take place in three ways.

- Firstly, each new member of staff as part of their induction, will receive a copy of the Child Protection Policy, and will be informed as to their own responsibility to this. This is the responsibility of each line manager.
- Secondly, Belfast YMCA will facilitate on an annual basis, recognised 'Keeping Children Safe' Child Protection Training.
- Thirdly, bespoke training will be provided around specific child protection needs as they arise, either as a result of incidents or identified staff needs.

### **Support, supervision, Annual Review.**

All staff and volunteers will have appropriate support structures in place. This will include regular supervision either as an individual or as part of a team, as well as an annual review of duties known as an annual review or appraisal (Please refer to Belfast YMCA Employee Handbook). At all times and as part of this process staff will be given an opportunity to voice any concerns they may have about child protection issues.

## **4.3 Reporting concerns, disclosures and allegations**

**It is imperative that all staff and volunteers implement the following procedures to report a concern, disclosure or an allegation.**



**What is a concern?**

Inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour or communication, favouritism or negligence are all examples of what may constitute a concern.

**What is a disclosure?**

A disclosure is when a child/young person tells someone that they have been or are being harmed or abused in some way. This may be physical, sexual (including CSE\*), emotional abuse, neglect or bullying.

\* 'Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse in which a person(s) exploits, coerces and/or manipulates a child or young person into engaging in some form of sexual activity in return for something the child needs or desires and/or for the gain of the person(s) perpetrating or facilitating the abuse.' (SBNI 2014, adopted from CSE Knowledge Transfer Partnership NI).

**What is an allegation?**

An allegation occurs when a child, parent or other person reports specific unacceptable behaviour where a child/young person has been harmed or abused in some way. Allegations must be reported to one of the organisation's Designated Child Protection officers.

**Reporting Procedures**

Any disclosure, allegation or suspicion of abuse must be taken seriously, recorded, and reported to the DCPO, who will decide the appropriate further action.

If any member of staff, or volunteer is concerned or suspects that a child or young person has been abused it is important that evidence is given to the situation and followed up with immediate action.

In the first instance listen to the young person, collect relevant information, record and immediately inform the Designated member of staff.

Where staff or volunteers employed in Belfast YMCA have cause for concern regarding possible abuse or neglect, or if a child or young person has made a disclosure to them, the following action should be taken.

**The member of staff concerned should:**

- Maintain detailed and dated written records of all available information relating to the cause for concern or the disclosure and any subsequent action.
- Immediately notify in person the DCPO. This notification is to be followed by written confirmation of the incident and details of all action taken.
- The DCPO should then decide whether or not to report the incident to the Health and Social Services Gateway teams. In the case of a disclosure a report should always be made to the appropriate Gateway Team.

Responding to incidents of alleged abuse, affecting members within the YMCA is based upon clearly defined procedures which must be followed. Under no circumstances should a volunteer or worker carry out their own investigation into an allegation or suspicion of abuse.

### **Role of Designated Officers (DCPO's)**

Key responsibilities of the Designated Officers are to:

- Encourage everyone within the YMCA to comply with the standards and practices outlined in this document
- Update information on relevant issues and monitor the effectiveness of the Child Protection policy
- Maintain a network of contacts with outside authorities such as local Gateway teams / police / fire authorities / education & library boards / health services, ascertaining contact names and phone numbers and seek appropriate advice when necessary from the appropriate Gateway team
- Alongside line managers, carry responsibility for ensuring that all new workers/volunteers receive a copy of and understand the organisation's Child Protection Policy
- Ensure that appropriate training and support is provided
- Receive and deal with all concerns of a child protection nature
- Keep appropriate records and store them in a safe and confidential manner

### **Legal Obligations**

Belfast YMCA has a legal obligation to report to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS):

- Any person who has applied for a regulated position when they are disqualified from doing so
- Any person whom they have removed from a regulated position following knowledge of their disqualification

Under their Duty of Care, Belfast YMCA has an obligation to report any concerns, disclosures or allegations about any individual, child or young person which has been brought to their attention. This reporting may in the first instance be an informal enquiry to the appropriate Gateway Team asking for advice on a situation, before a decision is made with regard to a formal report being submitted.

The organisation has a legal obligation to report any individual who leaves the YMCA or is asked to leave the YMCA as a result of concerns based on child protection issues.

**Next Review**

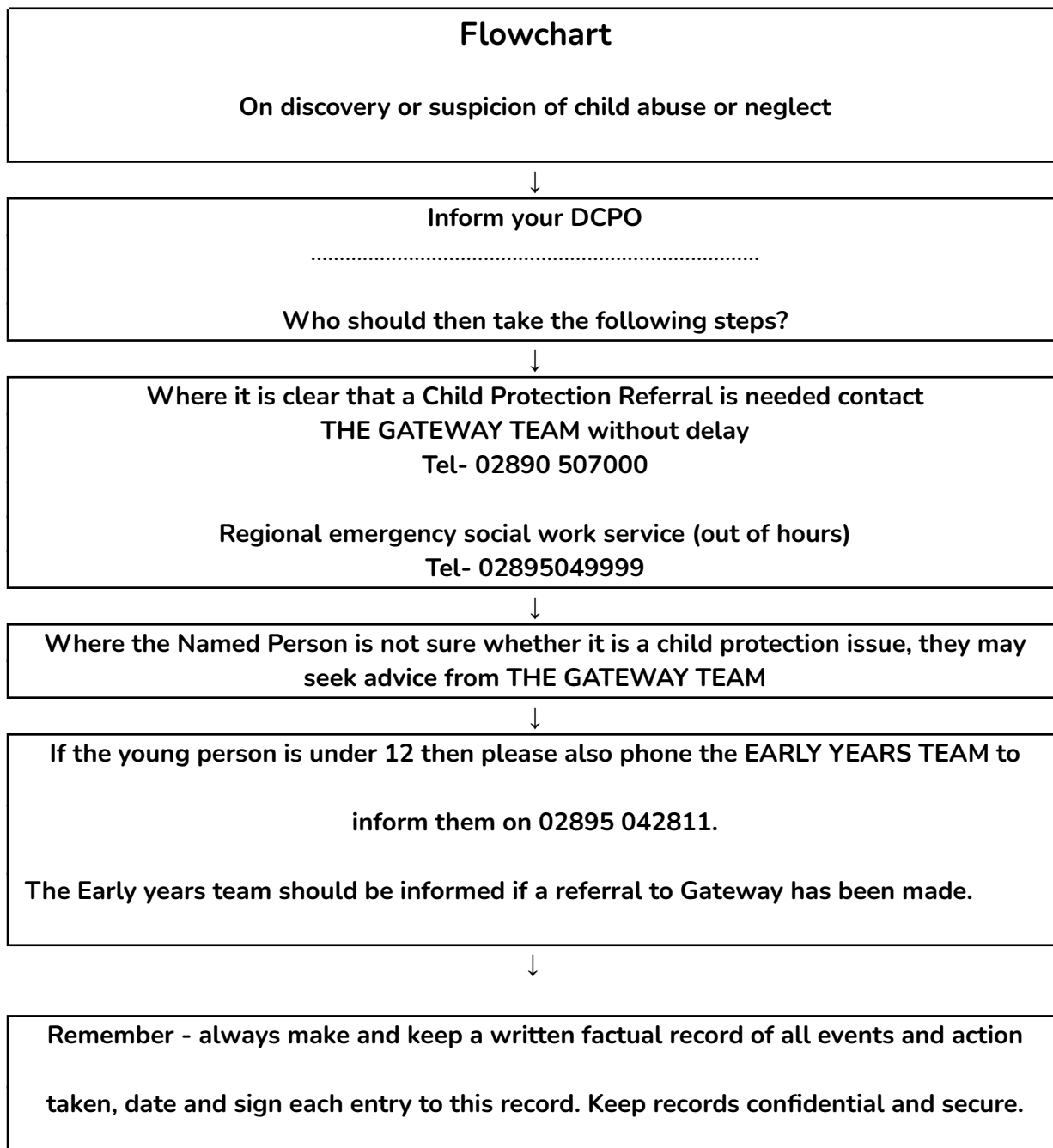
This policy will be reviewed in November 2024 by the CEO, Senior DCPO and approved by the Board of Management.

**Signed:** 

**Belfast YMCA CEO:** Chris Cupples

**Date:** November 2023

## Appendix 1: Reporting Procedures



## Recording information

In cases of child abuse the main aim is to keep calm and provide a positive, friendly attitude to encourage the child to talk

- **Do** listen
- Do stay calm
- Do accept without question what you are being told
- Do reassure
- Do take notes
- Do report and record to whom you reported the incident to
- **DON'T** Panic
- Don't ask direct or leading questions
- Don't try to stop the child telling you about their problem
- Don't make promises
- Don't investigate or allow anyone else outside the police or social services to interview or ask questions of the child
- Don't assume!
- Don't Delay

The complexity of child protection issues means that there can never be a set of prescriptive questions. Don't try to get too much information, rather, let the child give you as much as they feel prepared to give. The adult listening should try to act as natural as possible throughout. Make notes during the interview, but only those necessary; for example, it might be possible to gain certain contact information from existing administrative records.

COMMON QUESTIONS that could be used in some situations.

### THE DOs - open questions/statements

- Would you like to tell me what happened?
- Can you tell me where/when this happened?
- Would you like to tell me who was involved?
- Can you tell me what happened next?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me?
- Thank you for telling me this but you do realise I will have to do something about it

### THE DON'Ts - leading/closed questions/comments

- Was it your father/coach/friend that did this to you?
- Are you sure that's what happened?
- Why did you let them do that to you?
- Why do you think this happened?
- I expect you must be very upset about this.

## Appendix 2: Incident Report Form

Try to keep the process friendly rather than formal. You want the child to feel as comfortable as possible during this stressful process. Do not run and get this form take notes and complete it immediately you finish talking to the child or young person.

<b>Interviewer's details</b>	
<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Position:</b>	
<b>Child's details</b>	
<b>Name:</b>	<b>Date of birth:</b>
<b>Address:</b>	
<b>Parents / Carers names:</b>	
<b>Address:</b>	

**Record what was said and reported (use additional paper, as required)**

--

--

<b>Reported to YMCA DCPO</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Name:</b>	<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>		
<b>Details of advice received:</b>			

<b>Reported to Gateway Team/PPU Team</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Name:</b>	<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>		
<b>Position</b>			
<b>Details of advice received:</b>			

<b>Asked advice:</b>
<b>Organisation:</b>
<b>Person advice received from</b>
<b>Date &amp; Time:</b>
<b>Details of advice received:</b>

Signed by the interviewer, as above: ..... Date: .....

This copy of this form should be kept in a secure place and the original forwarded to the appropriate Designated Child Protection Officer who has been contacted.

## **Appendix 3: Belfast YMCA Child Protection Guidelines**

### **Code of Behaviour/Conduct**

This Code of Conduct has been drawn up in order to support Belfast YMCA staff and volunteers to inform their work, and protect them especially when working in isolation and vulnerable situations.

#### **Staff and volunteers are expected to demonstrate a consistent commitment to equal opportunities and to children and young people**

- By being honest with, and showing respect for, children and young people.
- By respecting the confidentiality of children and young people and by being clear and open when confidentiality cannot be maintained.
- By offering challenging and exciting experiences undertaken responsibly in a safe environment
- By recognising unacceptable behaviour and taking action, enabling change to take place.

#### **Staff and volunteers are expected to demonstrate a consistent commitment to themselves and colleagues**

- By being honest with, and showing respect for colleagues.
- By respecting and keeping appropriate levels of confidentiality.
- By working and planning to the best of their ability within the constraints of the association, or allocated responsibilities.
- By only working alone when immediate support is available and /or the Health & Safety of children and young people is at risk.
- By offering support to colleagues and seeking it when necessary.

#### **Staff and volunteers are expected to demonstrate a consistent commitment to educate members, volunteers and staff**

- Leading by example and setting good, positive role models.
- Not using language, which is racist, sectarian, sexist or abusive.
- Dressing appropriately to the occasion task and company present.
- Not smoking, drinking alcohol, or using other illegal substances whilst on duty and working with young people.
- By creating an environment within which children and young people can feel safe and can learn.
- By enthusiastically seizing all learning opportunities either programmed or otherwise.
- By fully implementing the aims and objectives of Belfast YMCA.



## **Anti-bullying Policy**

It is important to recognise that bullying is a very common form of abuse both physically and emotionally and causes great stress. Bullying can leave children and young people with feelings of worthlessness and self-hatred; they can feel lonely and isolated. At its worst, bullying can result in a child or young person attempting suicide. It is important that all staff are aware of Belfast YMCA's Anti-bullying policy.

### **Physical contact and special needs**

In circumstances where physical contact with a child or young person is unavoidable it must be predetermined and take place with their permission. This means that:

- The way it is going to be done must be thought through, explained and understood.
- The child or young person's permission must, where appropriate, be obtained allowing the physical contact to be carried out in the agreed way.

**NOTE:** It may be necessary for staff and volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children or young people, particularly if they are young people with disabilities or very young babies and children as in our childcare. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the child/young person and the parents and in line with our Child Protection procedures. In an emergency, parents should be fully informed.

In such circumstances it is important that you ensure that all staff are sensitive to the child and undertake personal care tasks with utmost discretion.

All childcare staff must follow Belfast YMCA additional Child Protection Procedures as discussed and agreed with social services and in accordance with registration protocol.

### **Recommendations**

All staff and volunteers need to be aware of the impact that their behaviour has on children and young people. The trust required between adults and young people is fundamental to the work of the YMCA and should never be jeopardised.

In recognising the issues highlighted in the Code of Conduct, it is expected that all staff and volunteers will:

- Respect everyone as an individual
- Provide a good example of acceptable behaviour
- Respect young people's rights to privacy
- Be available to listen and, if necessary, refer to more appropriate help
- Try to ensure that your actions cannot be misunderstood or cause offence and are acceptable within a relationship of Trust
- Show understanding when dealing with sensitive issues

- Plan not to put yourself in a situation where you are alone with a child or young person
- Adhere to Belfast YMCA policies which can be in our staff handbook
- Be aware that you are accountable for your actions to the young people, their parents and the YMCA

Staff and volunteers should **never**:

- Spend excessive time alone with children away from other
- Take children alone on car journeys no matter how short
- Take children to their home
- Engage in inappropriate physical contact
- Engage in rough physical games including horseplay
- Engage in sexually provocative games.
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child
- Let allegations a child makes go unchallenged or unrecorded
- Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do themselves
- Sleep in a room with children
- Establish relationships with participants that may have sexual overtones
- Deliberately place yourself or others in a compromising situation

**Please note** the YMCA expects staff and volunteers to act with sensitivity and self-control when working with all age groups. Those engaged in YMCA work need to recognise the issues of power and responsibility. It is YMCA practice that staff and volunteers do not misuse their role by taking advantage of participants of any age and establishing 'personal relationships'. Behaviour of all Staff and volunteers whilst on duty must, of course be within the law

### **Positions of Trust**

All adults working with children, young people and vulnerable adults are in a position of trust. All those in positions of trust need to understand the power this can give them over those they care for and the responsibility they have because of this relationship.

It is vital that all workers ensure they do not, even unknowingly, use their position of power and authority inappropriately. They should always maintain professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which could be misinterpreted.

As of April 2022 it is illegal (England and Wales)(Northern Ireland) for those in Positions of Trust in a faith setting to engage in sexual activity with a 16 or 17 year old under their care or supervision.

### **Sanctions**

Should a staff member or volunteer be in breach of this Code of Conduct, Belfast YMCA's disciplinary procedures, as outlined in the Employee Handbook will be activated and

followed.

## **Sharing Information**

### **Written Information sought from parents**

It is essential that Belfast YMCA gains information relating to children and young people in relation to membership and consent for activities, day trips, residential and emergency situations. Any 'consent' that is provided must be from someone with parental responsibility and the YMCA must inform those giving consent that it must be obtained from those with parental responsibility.

Parents should always be informed of the limits of confidentiality around their contact details and any information they provide to Belfast YMCA.

### **Confidentiality**

On the premise that the welfare of the child is paramount, considerations of confidentiality must not be allowed to override the right of children and young people to be protected from harm.

Staff, volunteers and participants must be aware that there are circumstances in which confidentiality must be broken, specifically if it is suspected that abuse has occurred and an offence committed.

On receipt of both a verbal and a written report on suspected abuse the Designated Child Protection Officer will refer to the appropriate authorities.

All staff and volunteers must have a working knowledge of the referral procedure. An up to date summary statement of Belfast YMCA's Child Protection Policy can be found in the employee handbook.

### **Record Keeping**

All staff and volunteers need to be aware of and follow the written procedures for keeping records such as:

- Attendance register
- Accident and incident books
- Consent forms
- Cause of concern forms

All records will be kept in compliance with Belfast YMCA's 'Retention of Records' document (Appendix 6)

### **Complaints and grievances**

All staff, volunteers and participants must be aware of the organisation's complaints procedures.

Everyone has a right to complain or report a grievance, regardless of whether they are children, parents or staff/volunteers.

## **General Safety and Management of Activities**

### **Accidents and Incidents**

When an accident occurs, the danger must be removed immediately, the injured person treated, and the accident recorded.

- A telephone should be accessible wherever a group meets.
- Every leader should know how to access this facility. Notice of the nearest telephone should be clearly displayed.
- Emergency telephone numbers should be displayed prominently.
- It is desirable that a trained First Aider be available within the staff team.
- Professional help should be sought if and when the trained First Aider cannot help or if further assistance is required when the First Aider can do no more.
- A first aid box should be provided at each location.
- The worker in charge of the group must inform the H&S Officer and/or the DCPO. of any accidents at the earliest possible opportunity.
- The worker in charge of the group must ensure that the child's parent/guardian is immediately informed of the accident.
- The worker in charge of the group must record all details of accidents in the Accident Book and also obtain witness statements within 24 hrs.
- Identify the cause of the incident and prevent reoccurrence.
- If an accident is serious, the H&S Officer or the CEO should inform the insurance company named in the Accident Book as soon as possible.

### **Insurance**

All children's and youth work activities should have professionally advised and adequate insurance cover to include key areas of:

- Personal Accident
- Public Liability
- Property and Contents Insurance
- Vehicle Insurance

It is the responsibility of the activity organiser and Belfast YMCA CEO to ensure that all relevant insurance policies are currently valid.

In the case of activities or events which are considered 'high risk', the worker should consult

with the H&S Officer or the CEO who will decide on the appropriateness and adequacy of the cover available.

No high-risk activity should be engaged upon without first following the above procedure to ensure that the insurance cover provided is adequate.

Insurance cover for transportation of children/youths should be adhered to at all times.

### **Premises**

Staff and Volunteers can help ensure that activities and the environment that is being used for activities and programmes are safe, by identifying potential hazards and concerns

The premises used for all children's and youth work should be suitable and safe. This includes:

- Adequate provision of toileting facilities
- Appropriate and adequate lighting. (Torches/night lights should be available for emergencies)
- Appropriate and adequate heating systems
- Adequate provision of security and safety appliances
- All fire exits and entrance and exit routes should be kept clear and marked for any situation
- All keys to entrance/exit doors should be easily accessed for emergency situations
- All fire alarms and appliances should be installed following professional advice and maintained as advised. Where appropriate staff should be trained in their use
- All work/meeting areas should be marked with an 'Assembly Point' in the case of an emergency
- No heating/cooking items, electrical appliances, or naked flames other than those tested and fitted to the venue by a professional should be used

It is the responsibility of the YMCA to maintain the upkeep of the premises to a safe and suitable standard. However, the CEO has a responsibility to ensure that the procedures outlined in Belfast YMCA's Health and Safety policy are fulfilled.

### **Management of Activities**

#### **Competency of Leaders**

It is vital that all staff involved in activities and programmes have adequate training. All staff, volunteers and external trainers/facilitators will be expected to provide written documentation as proof of their required or necessary qualifications.

#### **Safety of Equipment**

All equipment used by a youth or children's group must be safe and suitable for use by the age range of the young people participating. Where a National Standard is applicable, the

equipment should conform to it.

In addition:

- All equipment should be thoroughly checked for defects before use
- If there are defects the equipment should not be used
- All defects must be reported to the activity organiser
- All workers should be fully conversant with assembly and use of equipment
- No child is to assist with the assembly of equipment
- Use of all equipment must be monitored by a worker
- Care should be taken that all paint, glue, felt tips, etc. are non-toxic
- Safe storage should be provided for all equipment

### **Supervision ratios**

The level of supervision must be adequate and decided upon depending on the nature and venue of the activity as well as the age range of the children and young people involved. Therefore when deciding how many staff and volunteers are required to supervise, leaders must take into consideration a range of practical measures.

- The number of participants in the group
- The nature of the site / venue
- The activities to be undertaken – if the activity is one of a hazardous nature e.g. mountain climbing
- It is important that each supervisor knows the responsibilities that they are expected to bear
- It is recommended that no journeys/visits should be undertaken without a minimum of two staff/volunteers in attendance
- It is for the line manager to exercise their professional judgement in deciding the level of supervision, taking into account the guidance as stated above
- In a youth work event, where a party consists of children/young people of both sexes male and female supervision should be provided unless otherwise agreed

### **Off-site activities**

All trips, camps and residentials must be thoroughly planned and documented well in advance and relevant information made accessible to all parties involved. The following procedures must be followed:

- Parents/guardians should be informed of the arrangements for any trip to be taken outside of the normal venue. Registration forms should be completed and processed as soon as possible when beginning new projects.
- A copy of the trip information should be forwarded to the line manager/DCPO and/or the CEO

### **Residentials**

When on residential the following recommendations should be adhered to alongside the procedures and recommendations outlined throughout this policy:

- Each residential should have at least two staff, preferably 1 male and 1 female with appropriate ratios having been considered as outlined previously
- Leaders must ensure that males and females have different sleeping rooms. In exceptional circumstances workers must be sensitive to the needs of individuals and monitor the situation carefully
- Young people participating should have their privacy respected by other participants e.g. rooms, changing rooms, showers, etc
- Staff members (workers) must always use common sense and sensitivity and not leave themselves open to allegations of sexual misconduct. For example:
  - Do not enter rooms without permission
  - Do not enter changing rooms without permission
  - Do not enter showers without permission
- Always knock or call out and ask permission to enter areas where people may be changing
- Never put yourself in a position of being alone with vulnerable individuals e.g. cars, closed rooms, out of public view
- Staff members should, when possible, ask another staff member to accompany them when entering rooms etc
- Staff members or volunteers should not sleep alone in dorms with young people
- When changing or when with a group that is changing - be discreet and only do so if absolutely necessary
- If behaviour by one of the young people causes offence or is deemed inappropriate, it is the staff's responsibility to discuss and deal with this as soon as possible
- Registration forms for under 18's must be completed by all young people attending residentials
- Staff members and volunteers should use common sense and sensitivity around the areas of touching, hugging, etc
- All staff and volunteers in leadership roles on residentials will have undergone routine vetting
- Prior to each residential, staff should meet as a group to discuss the implementation of these guidelines on the residential

## Appendix 4: Useful Contacts

### Social Services Gateway Teams

**Belfast HSC Trust 028 9050 7000 (Belfast YMCA local team)**

SE HSC Trust 0300 1000 300

Northern HSC Trust 0300 1234 333

Southern HSC Trust 0800 783 7745

Western HSC Trust 028 7131 4090

Regional Emergency Social Work Service 028 9504 9999

### PSNI

[Child Protection | Police Service of Northern Ireland](#)

In an emergency call 999 or 101

### Thirtyone:eight Safeguarding Helpline

0303 003 1111

[Safeguarding Helpline](#)

### NSPCC

NSPCC CSE helpline 0808 800 5000

If you have any concerns at all about a child's safety or wellbeing, don't hesitate to contact the NSPCC Helpline. It doesn't have to be an emergency – you might be looking for guidance and support on issues affecting children.

Dedicated NSPCC child protection specialists will be able to advise and take any necessary action. You can contact the NSPCC Helpline seven days a week by emailing [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk) or on 0808 800 5000.



## Appendix 5: Guidelines for Self-Protection

1. In the event of any injury to a child, accidental or otherwise ensure that the incident is recorded and witnessed by another adult.
2. Keep records of any false allegations a child makes against you. This should include everything from 'you're always picking on me' to 'you hit me'; and comments such as 'don't touch me'. Use the incident form to keep dates and times.
3. Get another adult to witness the allegation, if possible. If you are in a school or residential setting, take the child to the leader in charge and explain what happened. A record of that meeting should also be kept.
4. If a child touches you in an inappropriate way, record what happened and ensure that another adult is also informed. It could be a totally innocent touch, so do not make the child feel like a criminal. However, remember that ignoring this or allowing it to go on may place you in an untenable situation. Neither is it a good idea for the child to be allowed to continue this behaviour as another person might use such a situation to their advantage and then say the child instigated it.
5. On journeys, always have two members of staff along. If it is on overnight trip or residential, always check the rooms in pairs where possible.
6. Do not place yourself in a situation where you are spending excessive amounts of time alone with one young person away from other people. If you are speaking one to one, ensure that the door to the room is kept open at all times.
7. If you are in a residential setting never, under any circumstances, take a child or children into your bedroom.
8. It is inappropriate to take children in your car alone.
9. Children should never be taken into your home, as they then could describe rooms, furnishings, etc.
10. If you are in a care situation with children with special needs, always have another person present when changing nappies or clothing or bathing a child.
11. Never do something of a personal nature for children that they can do themselves. This includes cleaning bottoms, unbuttoning trouser buttons, or any activity that could be misconstrued.
12. Do not go into the toilet alone with children.
13. Be mindful of how and where you touch children. Never pat a child on the bottom, or touch any part of the 'swim suit' area

14. Do not extend hugs and kisses on the mouth from children. This might be particularly relevant to those working with special needs children. Though we want to give love and attention to children, this guideline is important not only for a worker's protection, but also for the children as well.
15. When taking children on an outing, think of how you appear to the public when dealing with the children. It may mean that disruptive children cannot go on outings
16. If you are suspicious of abuse by a colleague, peer or any other person, you must disclose this to the DCPO or the CEO. If there is an attempted cover-up, you could be implicated by your silence. "Why didn't s/he tell? - Something to hide?"
17. Always inform people (ie. Line manager or other team members) of any uneasiness or fears you may experience during your work with young people.

## **Communication with Children and young people**

### **Use of Mobile Phones/email**

It is not appropriate for staff to hold the personal mobile phone numbers of children and young people on their own personal phones, unless for Health and Safety reasons, for example when on a residential. After such residential these contact numbers must be destroyed. Staff should use work mobile phones in these instances and contact should only be made in relation to YMCA business i.e. for contacting or sharing appropriate information.

### **Mobile camera phones/social media**

Personal cameras/camera phones must not be used in the presence of children in our nursery and afterschool. To do so is a breach of our Child Protection Policy and is subject to disciplinary procedure.

Any work related issue or material that could identify an individual who is a YMCA Participant or work colleague, which could adversely affect the organisation or our relationship with any participant must not be placed on a social networking site. This means that work related matters must not be placed on any such site at any time either during or outside of working hours and includes access via any computer equipment, mobile phone or PDA.

Parental permission must be given to communicate directly with a child or young person via mobile phone or social media.

### **Sharing photos and/or videos**

Parental permission must be sought before sharing photos or videos of children and young people on websites, social media networking sites or PR Materials.

Staff are advised to pay particular attention to the use of cameras and picture mobile phones and in some cases their use will not be permitted. Under no circumstances must photographs be taken without the consent of the group.

### **Use of Social Media**

With regard to the use of Social Media staff must adhere to guidelines found in Belfast YMCA's Social Media Policy. Further information can be found in YMCA Ireland's Policy Guidelines for Staff and Volunteers use of Social Media.

## Appendix 6 - Retention of Records

Retention of Records – Belfast YMCA Youth Team

Document	Retention period	Reason for retention period
<b>Parental consent forms</b>	7 years after young person turns 18 years of age	Child protection
<b>Application forms and interview notes (for unsuccessful candidates)</b>	Six months to a year	Disability Discrimination Act 1995, Race Relations Act 1976
<b>Records of complaints</b>	Six years	Data protection Act
<b>Incident reports</b>	Permanently	Child protection
<b>Personnel files and training records</b>	Maximum of six years after employment ceased	Limitations Act 1980, Data Protection Act 1998
<b>Photocopies of passports</b>	As soon as possible after travel	To obtain emergency travel documentation in case of loss/theft
<b>Youth programme records</b>	Permanently	Data Protection Act
<b>Expression of interest forms</b>	Six months to a year	Disability Discrimination Act 1995, Race Relations Act 1976
<b>Unique Learner numbers (OCN)</b>	Permanently	YMCA Ireland Policy
<b>Attendance registers for youth programmes</b>	7 years after young person turns 18 years of age	Child protection