



Safeguarding Handbook
Policy and Procedures for Safeguarding and
Promoting the Welfare of Children
2012

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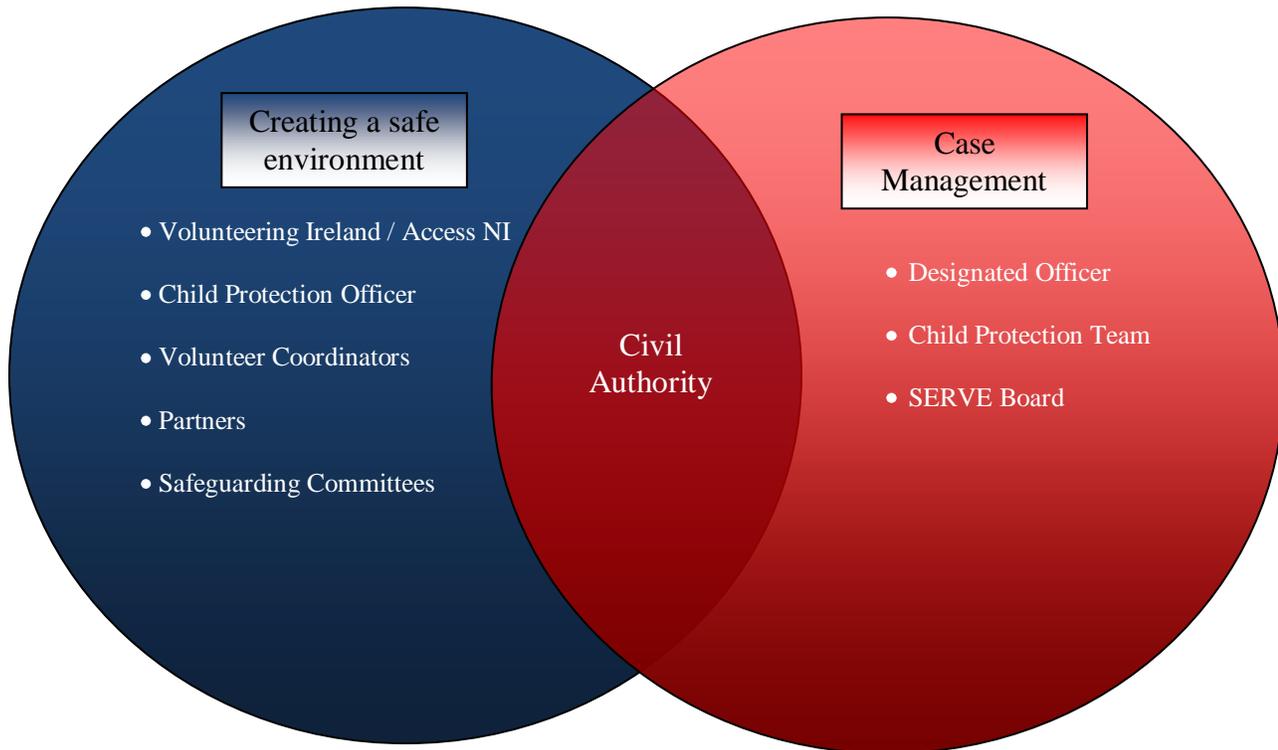
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This diagram illustrates the overall Safeguarding structure in SERVE and how it links with the civil authorities.

On the left are the **preventative safeguarding roles** that are focused on creating safe environments for children involved in SERVE supported projects.

On the right are the **case management roles** that follow through on allegations and work with alleged perpetrators and their victims. In the overlapping segment are the key state agencies / civil authorities.

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Why a Child Safeguarding Policy?

The term **Safeguarding** clearly designates a pro-active, inclusive, and development approach. Safeguarding emphasises an active concern for the safety and welfare of all children and young people, not just those at high risk. This is everybody's responsibility, not just that of the child protection specialist or the civil authorities. Safeguarding reminds us that, as well as responding appropriately to concerns and allegations of abuse, it is clear that we need to work actively to prevent abuse before it can begin. Safeguarding is about taking a comprehensive approach that pre-emptes risky environments and protects children and young people from potential sources of harm. An emphasis on safeguarding means, in practice, that we take preventative action to obviate the possibility of harm to children occurring.

In 1992 the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** was ratified by Ireland. Part of this Bill of Rights for Children is especially relevant to Child Protection and Safeguarding. It stated that parties shall take appropriate action, legislative, administrative, social and educational to protect a child from any/all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse.

As a national and international non-governmental organisation that supports initiatives in favour of children and young people, there is an imperative on SERVE to ensure that it operates **best practice in terms of child protection and safeguarding** policies and recognises the legal guidelines governing child protection in each jurisdiction in which SERVE works. The child protection policy attempts to ensure that effective procedures and guidelines are put in place to protect children under 18 years of age from coming to intentional or unintentional harm. Child protection policies are important in raising awareness and also act to increase the understanding of staff, volunteers and partners about child protection issues and are designed not only to protect children but also the organisations and individuals who work with and for them as well. Without proper policies and procedures in place, NGOs can unwittingly support an abusive environment, and are vulnerable to false allegations of child abuse and risk damaging their reputation.

A child protection policy also provides a **framework of principles, standards and guidelines** on which to base individual and organisational practice in relation to a number of areas, including recruitment procedures and working with partner organisations.

This document also provides **good practice guidelines** for all who work with children and young people and is aimed at ensuring a consistent response in dealing with children and what to do when a concern about possible abuse arises.

The policy was developed by SERVE's Child Protection Committee and is aligned and compliant with civil guidelines in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. In the Republic of Ireland: *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 1999*. In Northern Ireland: *Cooperating to Safeguard Children, 2003*. SERVE's Child Protection Committee also drew heavily from the principles and guidance set out in *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland (2009)*. The SERVE Child Protection Committee wishes to express its gratitude to the Redemptorists in Ireland and SUAS for access to their child protection guidelines.

Please note that the Child Protection Policy, procedures, and practice will be reviewed on a regular basis by the designated Child Protection Team and are subject to change following further legal and professional consultation with the relevant bodies.

For a clarification of terms used in this document please see Appendix 1 - 'Definitions within the Policy'.

1.2 Context of the Policy

SERVE is a development and volunteering organisation established in Ireland with an international focus. Committed to a partnership model, SERVE establishes formal partnerships with community based organisations, non-governmental organisations and faith based organisations. Our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policies are based on principles and guidelines articulated in law and based on guidelines and orientation presented by civil and religious agencies that have responsibility for best practice in child protection. This broad context reflects the varied type of partners that SERVE works with.

Legal Basis

SERVE's child protection policy is firmly based on the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (www.ohchr.org/en/lish/law/pdf/crc.pdf). The UNCRC provides a comprehensive framework for the protection, provision and participation of all children without discrimination to ensure their survival and maximum development.

Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children 1999

The Children First Guidelines were issued by the Department of Health and Children in 1999 and outline procedures, which all organisations dealing with children and young people should put in place. They state that all such organisations should put in place a child protection policy tailored to their specific needs. This policy should outline the procedures and arrangements in place to protect children in line with "Children First". Equally, the policy will provide protection for SERVE staff and volunteers in their work with children.

Our Duty to Care

Our Duty to Care was published by the Department of Health and Children in October 2002. It offers a practical guide to staff and volunteers who work with children by outlining a number of fundamental principles of good practice.

The Child Protection Policy also considers the legal responsibilities as outlined under the Child Care Act, 1991. The Child Care Act, 1991 defines a child as someone under 18 years of age who is not married. The UN Convention defines a child as someone under 18 years of age and for the context of this document SERVE similarly defines a child as someone less than 18 years of age, who is not married. (For further definitions please see Appendix 1).

National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church

Guidelines were published by the National Board (NBSCCC) in its 2009 publication, *SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland*. The guidelines state that "All children have a fundamental right to be respected, nurtured, cared for and protected. This right is embedded in Gospel values, best practice and international and domestic laws." (*Standards & Guidance Document, NBSCCC 2009, p.20*).

Moral Context

SERVE recognise the right of all children and young people to be respected, nurtured, cared for, and protected. The over-riding concern of the policies and procedures outlined in the Handbook is to ensure the safety and welfare of all children who are involved in any way in SERVE projects. The procedures include best practice guidelines for the prevention of child abuse and for an appropriate

response, in full cooperation with the civil authorities, where child abuse is alleged or suspected.

These procedures are also concerned to ensure a secure and supportive atmosphere in which those who have suffered abuse in the past can be assured of a sensitive, caring and compassionate response and offered appropriate care.

These procedures seek to ensure that the rights in natural justice of any person who is accused of abuse are respected and that appropriate care and legal advice is provided to them. Nonetheless, where there is a conflict of rights, the welfare of children will be paramount.

SERVE believes that any individual or organisation working for the rights of vulnerable children has a duty to report any incidents relating to abuse, mistreatment and exploitation from within organisations. Without adequate standards and mechanisms of protection in place, an organisation is not only failing in its primary duty of care but may also be negligently or recklessly encouraging an abusive environment.

1.3 Principles and values of which our child protection policy is based on

SERVE is fully committed to safeguarding the well-being of all the children and young people with whom we work. We aim to create a safe and healthy environment for the young people with whom we work and we are committed at all times to ensuring their safety and welfare. SERVE seeks to ensure that throughout its work it commits to policies, practices and procedures that are consistent with the best interests and the protection of the child at all times.

SERVE's Child Safeguarding and Protection policy is based on the principles that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer.

SERVE are committed to:

- **Best practice** in ensuring the safeguarding of children and young people.

- **Creating safe environments and minimising risks** in order to safeguard the interests of children and young people.
- **Ensuring that all SERVE personnel, board members, our paid employees, and volunteers are** carefully recruited, selected, trained, supported and supervised.
- **Ensuring** all SERVE personnel, paid employees and volunteers are aware of, trained in, and work to the Code of Behaviour for Adults.
- **Supporting** victims of abuse.
- **Working closely with statutory authorities** to ensure that all allegations of abuse are dealt with justly and promptly and that offenders are brought to account.

1.4 Our approach to working with our partners on Child Protection Issues

SERVE works through a partnership model by assigning volunteers to work with partners in both Ireland and overseas. SERVE also funds partner's development projects. Most of our partners work with children and young vulnerable adults. In assigning volunteers to Irish and International partners, and through our funding support, SERVE in its status as an intermediary organisation works both directly and indirectly with children. As an intermediary organisation SERVE has a limited mandate to act or enforce the policies and practices of our partner organisations, but still bears a responsibility for the impact their work has on children. Therefore, SERVE cannot guarantee a safe and supportive environment for children within their host countries. We can facilitate discussions and dialogue with partners on the issue and provide relevant support on dealing with incidences of abuse where appropriate.

We are conscious that we are not experts in this field, and that we cannot demand that partners comply with our policy nor necessarily develop their own. On the other hand, we have a legal and moral responsibility to make sure that our child protection policy is communicated effectively to partners and understood.

SERVE will support our partners to develop their own policies and procedures on child protection through helping them to understand and recognise the importance of a child protection policy and where possible facilitating access to experts in the field to help them develop their own policies.

At the very least, our work with partners will be underpinned by the principles outlined in the first section of this policy. In the spirit of participation and empowerment, it is hoped that agreement will be reached with partners on a joint commitment to safeguarding children from abuse and creating child-safe organisations.

It will be necessary in the future for all of our international partners to develop a Child Protection Policy that is appropriate to their own culture and legal system (taking into account the universal human rights standards of the Convention on the Rights of the Child).

Therefore, in relation to the work of its partners, SERVE will:

- Advise its' partners on the procedures and practices of SERVE's Child Protection Policy.
- Create an environment where child protection issues are discussed openly in a non- threatening, safe and supportive environment within SERVE and with our partners.
- Promote open lines of communication both internally and externally within and between organisations to improve awareness and to document learning from the implementation of child protection policies and procedures.
- Create a framework to deal openly, consistently and fairly with allegations concerning both direct and indirect abuse where information is properly recorded, signed, dated clearly marked as opinion or fact, whether witnessed by anyone else etc.
- Support our partners to create an environment where children are better able and willing to speak out about abuse (where this is appropriate within the context of a programme of work.)
- Actively raise awareness and express our concerns where appropriate in relation to behaviour and/or practice that does not support and respect a child's rights.

SECTION 2. CREATING SAFE ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN

Good Practice Guidelines

SERVE believes that its employees and volunteers must demonstrate behaviour that is not simply consistent with protocols and legislation, but also with an appropriate set of personal and professional standards. Everybody who works with children has a duty of care to them and this is a responsibility which must be taken seriously.

The aim of the good practice guidelines outlined in this handbook is to protect children from abuse. By setting standards for appropriate behaviour it also protects people who come into contact with children from unfounded accusations of improper conduct.

All staff and volunteers are encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations. Section 2.1 outlines common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate and minimise any risk situations for staff or volunteers who come into contact with children. Section 2.4 develops many of the examples outlined in Section 2.1 and presents a Code of Behaviour for Adults.

The Code of Good practices outlined in Section 2.1 includes a 'Should Not' section which gives explicit clarification of unacceptable forms of behaviour that will result in a formal enquiry and which could lead to disciplinary measures being taken, or criminal proceedings instituted.

Sections 2.1 to 2.6 includes safeguarding standards and practices which are in place to empower concerned people to anticipate problems, recognise unsafe practice, and take action to prevent abuse happening.

The function of a Code of Behaviour, for instance, is to provide clear guidance on how to behave while working with children and young people. When a Code of Behaviour is in place, and actively promoted, people have increased awareness about what is good practice and what is not. And they can draw the attention of a colleague or employee or volunteer to the existence of the Code without raising major implications.

This means that the environments in which our young people are involved become SAFER environments for them, and UNSAFE for potential predators. SERVE are committed to encouraging environments that minimise the risk of children and young people being abused by:

- Adopting safe recruitment and vetting practices
- Implementing Codes of Behaviour for adults and children
- Operating age-appropriate safe activities for young people in a safe environment
- Ensuring adequate supervision ratios of adults to young people
- Obtaining Parental Consent for children and young people participating in activities
- Ensuring safe access to IT equipment

2.1 SYNOPSIS OF GOOD PRACTICE

It is Good Practice to:

- Treat all young people equally with respect and dignity.
- Always put the welfare of each young person first.
- Always work in an open environment avoiding private or unobserved situations
- Avoid placing yourself in a compromising or vulnerable position
- Be accompanied by a second adult whenever possible
- Avoid doing something that could be misinterpreted by a third party
- Immediately note the circumstances of any situation which occurs which may be subject to misinterpretation by a third party.
- Wait for appropriate physical contact to be initiated by the child (e.g. holding a small child's hand)
- Ask permission from children, parents and guardians before taking photographs
- Be aware of the potential for peer abuse and bullying and address it with both individuals where possible.
- Avoid placing children in high-risk peer situations (e.g. unsupervised mixing of older and younger children).
- Not stand aside when inappropriate action is being inflicted by children on other children e.g. sexually provocative games.
- Not show discrimination of race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexual persuasion or any other status.

- Ensure, in so far as is reasonably possible, that buildings, facilities and equipment, used by young people, are safe.
- Be aware of the location and contents of the nearest first-aid kits.
- Be sensitive to risks of personal safety and the possibility of unfounded allegations that can arise.
- Anticipate and control disruptive behaviour by young people by setting clear boundaries and maintaining a group contract.

Try not to:

- Show favouritism or spend excessive amounts of time with one child
- Encourage any inappropriate attention seeking behaviour, such as tantrums by a child.
- Show discrimination of race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexuality, or political persuasion.
- Allow children to engage in inappropriate or high risk games with each other.
- Act in any way that intends to embarrass, shame, humiliate or degrade a child.

Should Not:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse a child.
- Use language that will mentally or emotionally harm a child.
- Suggest inappropriate behaviour or relations of any kind.
- Develop a sexual relationship with a child.
- Kiss, fondle or touch a child in an inappropriate or insensitive way.
- Do things of a personal nature that a child could do for him/herself, including dressing and bathing.
- Condone or participate in behaviour that is illegal or unsafe.

2.2 SAFE RECRUITMENT AND VETTING PRACTICES

SERVE will endeavour to recruit and select volunteers and staff in a transparent and equitable manner.

SERVE understands that a clear and proactive inclusion of child protection in recruitment of staff can deter applications from individuals who may place young people at risk during their employment. For this reason, SERVE will include reference to child protection at various stages of the recruitment process, particularly for roles that are likely to have a higher level of contact with projects and partners. It is important that all possible steps are taken to prevent unsuitable people working, or volunteering to work, with children and young people. While the vast majority of people who want to work with children are well-motivated, good recruitment and selection procedures will help screen out those who are not suitable and enhance the prospects of identifying the best person for the post.

SERVE recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children.

In engaging staff or volunteers for SERVE, the following procedures will be followed:

- Evidence of identity (passport or driving licence with photo).
- All volunteers must complete an application form, and provide two referees.
- A referee will be clearly asked to provide a written statement outlining their opinion on whether the candidate is suitable to work with children.
- Applicants with convictions against children will be excluded from employment and / or volunteering.
- SERVE Child Protection Policy will be explained to all staff and volunteers prior to departure. All staff and volunteers will sign a 'contract' outlining that they understand and will adhere to SERVE child protection policies and guidelines.

2.3 SAFE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION CHECKLIST

All SERVE personnel who are employing staff or volunteers need to follow in detail all stages as outlined in this Checklist:

Contact with children

- What contact with children will the job involve?
- Will the employee have unsupervised contact with children or hold a position of trust?
- What other forms of contact will the person have with children e.g. email, telephone, letter, Internet?

Defining the role

- Have the tasks and skills necessary for the job been considered?
- Does the job description make reference to working with and having responsibility for children?

Key selection criteria

- Has a list of essential and desirable qualifications, skills and experience been developed?

Written application

- Have all applicants been asked to supply information in writing, including personal details, past and current work / volunteering experience?
- Have you developed application forms?

Interview

- Have at least two representatives from the organisation been identified to meet with an applicant to explore information contained in their application?
- Have the applicant and the application forms been carefully considered, highlighting points to raise in interview including:
 - the applicant's attitudes towards working with children
 - areas you want to explore in more detail
 - gaps in employment history
 - vague statements or unsubstantiated qualifications
 - frequent changes of employment.

Declaration

- Have applicants been asked to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be considered unsuitable to work with children?
- Have applicants been asked to declare any past criminal convictions and cases pending against them?

Identification

- Have successful applicants been asked for photographic documentation to confirm their identity, e.g. birth certificate, passport?
- Is documentation relating to the applicant's identity and relevant qualifications checked at interview?

Qualifications

- Are applicants asked for documentation to confirm qualifications?

References

- Are applicants asked to supply the names of two referees who are not family members and, ideally, who have first-hand knowledge of the applicant's experience of work / contact with children?
- Are referees asked specifically to comment on the applicant's suitability to work with children?
- Are all references provided in writing and followed up with a telephone call if appropriate?
- Is the identity of referees verified?

Records

- Are details kept of the selection and induction process on the personnel file of the person appointed?
- Are references kept on file as part of the record of the recruitment process?

Confidentiality

- Is information about the applicant only seen by those directly involved in the recruitment process?
- Are applicants reassured that information about them, including information about convictions, will be treated in confidence and not used against them unfairly?

Vetting procedure

- Has the vetting procedure that you will need for your selected applicant been considered? (In the Republic of Ireland, An Garda Síochána Central Vetting Unit, if applicable. In Northern ACCESS NI vetting.)
- Has the applicant been informed that you will need to conduct essential background checks before they take up any appointment?

2.4 CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR ADULTS

This CODE OF BEHAVIOUR must be formally agreed to and signed by all SERVE employees and volunteers on joining or participating in activities involving children and young people, using the DECLARATION in **Appendix 12**.

It is important for all those in contact with children to:

- Treat all children in a way that fully respects their dignity and rights
- Behave in a way that sets an example of the good conduct you wish others to follow
- Operate within SERVE principles, guidance and any specific local procedures
- Be visible to others when working with children
- Respect each child or young person's boundaries
- Help children to develop an awareness and understanding of their own rights and the rights of others
- Provide children with information as to how, and from whom, they can seek help if they have a problem
- Challenge and report behaviour that is potentially abusive or in conflict with this Code
- Develop a culture where children can talk openly about their contacts with staff and others

In general, it is inappropriate to:

- Spend excessive time alone with children away from others
- Take children to your own home, especially where they will be alone with you
- Use alcohol, tobacco or non-prescriptive drugs in the company of children or to attend a youth event under the influence of any mood altering substance
- Give personal contact numbers (e.g. a mobile phone number) to a young person

You must never:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or abuse a child
- Develop a sexual relationship with a child
- Develop a relationship with a child which could be deemed exploitative or abusive
- Act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse

You must avoid actions or behaviour that could be construed as poor practice or potentially abusive. For example, you must never:

- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive
- Behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative
- Have a child with whom you are working to stay overnight at your home

- Sleep in the same room or bed as a child with whom you are working
- Do things for children of a personal nature that they can do for themselves
- Condone, or participate in, behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade
- Discriminate against, show different treatment towards, or favour particular children to the exclusion of others

2.5 BEST PRACTICE IN WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

(Sections 2.5.1 to 2.5.11 develop some aspects of the Code of Practice for Adults outlined in Section 2.4. They are adapted from Chapter Three of 'Our Children, Our Church' (Veritas, 2005)).

2.5.1 GENERAL CONDUCT

Physical punishment of children is not permissible under any circumstances.

Verbal abuse of children or telling jokes of a sexual nature in the presence of children can never be acceptable. Great care should be taken if it is necessary to have a conversation regarding sexual matters with a child or young person.

Being alone with a child or young person may not always be wise or appropriate practice. If a situation arises where it is necessary to be alone with a child, another responsible adult should be informed immediately, by telephone if necessary. A diary note that the meeting with the young person took place, including the reasons for it, should be made.

Best practice in relation to **travel with children** and young people should be observed. SERVE personnel and volunteers should not undertake any car or minibus journey alone with a child or young person. If, in certain circumstances, only one adult is available, there should be a minimum of two children or young people present for the entire journey. In the event of an emergency, where it is necessary to make a journey alone with a child, a record of this should be made and the child's parent or guardian should be informed as soon as possible.

Children and young people should not be permitted to **work or remain at a SERVE project** unless there are at least two adults present.

SERVE personnel and volunteers should not engage in or **tolerate any behaviour** – verbal, psychological or physical – that could be construed as bullying or abusive.

A disproportionate amount of time should not be spent with any particular child or group of children. All children and young people must be treated with equal respect; **favouritism is not acceptable.**

Under no circumstances should SERVE personnel or volunteers give **alcohol, tobacco or drugs** to children or young people. In addition, alcohol, tobacco or drugs must not be used by SERVE personnel or volunteers who are supervising or working with children and young people.

Only **age-appropriate language**, material on media products (such as camera phones, internet, video) and activities should be used when working with children and young people. Sexually explicit or pornographic material is never acceptable.

2.5.2 RESPECT FOR PHYSICAL INTEGRITY

The **physical integrity** of children and young people must be respected at all times.

SERVE personnel and volunteers must not engage in **inappropriate physical contact** of any kind – including rough physical play, physical reprimand and horseplay (tickling, wrestling, etc.) – any sexual contact is, of course, completely ruled out. This should not prevent appropriate contact in situations where it is necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of a child (for example, where a child is distressed).

2.5.3 RESPECT FOR PRIVACY

The **right to privacy** of children and young people must be respected at all times. Particular care regarding privacy must be taken when young people are in locations such as changing areas, swimming pools, showers and toilets.

Photographs or videos of children or young people (i) can only be taken with their parents' permission (see below) and (ii) must never be taken while they are in changing areas (for example, in a locker room or bathing facility)

Tasks of a personal nature (for example, helping with toileting, washing or changing clothing) should not be done for children or young people if they can undertake these tasks themselves.

2.5.4 MEETINGS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

If the care of a child or young person necessitates **meeting alone** with them, such meetings should not be held in an isolated environment. The times and designated locations for meetings should allow for transparency and accountability (for example, be held in rooms with a clear glass panel or window, in buildings where other people are present, and with the door of the room left open).

Both the **length and number of meetings** should be limited.

Parents or guardians should be informed that the meeting(s) took place, except in circumstances where to do so might place the child in danger (for example, if a child discloses abuse by a parent).

Visits to the home or private living quarters of SERVE personnel and volunteers should not be encouraged, nor should meetings be conducted in such locations. However, this does not include visits to, or meetings in, communal areas of SERVE projects such as recreation rooms and common space.

When the need for a visit to the home of a child or young person arises, professional boundaries must be observed at all times. A record of the visit should be kept and the Co-ordinator informed that it has taken place.

2.5.5 CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS OR DISABILITY

Children with special needs or disability may depend on adults more than other children for their care and safety, and so **sensitivity and clear communication** are particularly important.

Where it is necessary to carry out tasks of a personal nature for a child with special needs, this should be done with the **full understanding and consent of parents or guardians**.

In carrying out such personal care tasks, **sensitivity must be shown** to the child and the tasks should be undertaken with the utmost discretion.

Any care task of a personal nature which a child or young person can do for themselves **should not be undertaken by a worker**.

In an **emergency situation** where this type of help is required, parents should be fully informed as soon as is reasonably possible.

2.5.6 VULNERABLE CHILDREN

Since especially vulnerable children may depend on adults more than other children for their care and safety, sensitivity and clear communication are of utmost importance.

SERVE personnel and volunteers should be aware that vulnerable children may be **more likely than other children to be bullied** or subjected to other forms of abuse, and may also be less clear about physical and emotional boundaries.

It is particularly important that **vulnerable children should be carefully listened to**, in recognition of the fact that they may have difficulty in expressing their concerns and in order that the importance of what they say is not underestimated.

2.5.7 RECOMMENDED SUPERVISION RATIOS

For all activities involving children, *Safeguarding Children* (p. 44) proposes the following recommended ratios of staff to children:

AGE	STAFF : CHILD RATIO
0 - 2 years	1 member of staff to 3 children
2 – 3 years	1 member of staff to 4 children
3 – 7 years	1 member of staff to 8 children (6 children for outdoor activity)
8 years and over	2 members of staff (preferably 1 of each gender) for up to 20 children (15 children for outdoor activity)
	There should be one additional staff member for every 10 extra children.
Children with disabilities	The ratio of staff and volunteers to children with disabilities is dependent on the needs of the individual children.

SERVE partners in the developing world working under significantly different legislative, resources, and cultural settings, are very unlikely to be in a position to adhere to these ratio guidelines. SERVE endeavours to encourage partners to adhere to the ratios relevant to their local jurisdiction and in the absence of such ratios to work in partnership with our international partners to ensure appropriate ratios.

2.5.8 DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOUR

Should a child or young person display challenging or disruptive behaviour, it should be dealt with by more than one worker.

A record should be made describing what happened, the circumstances of the incident, who was involved, whether any injury was sustained, or property damaged, and how the situation was resolved.

In particular situations, further measures may need to be taken and parents or guardians may need to be involved.

2.5.9 HEALTH AND SAFETY

Adequate and appropriate supervision must be provided for all events and activities organised for children and young people (see above for recommended ratios of adults to young people).

Arrangements and procedures for leaving activities or centres should be explicit, so that group leaders are aware at all times of the whereabouts of each young person.

In places such as changing areas, toilets and showers, separate provision should be made for boys and girls.

There should be adequate and gender-appropriate supervision of boys and girls in such areas.

A clear policy should be agreed with parents and guardians on the **taking of photographs** and the **making of video recordings** of children or young people involved in SERVE-related activities or events. This should also cover the **generation of computer images**. In addition, the policy should address the question of where and for what purpose photographs and images may be displayed.

There should be regular health and safety reviews of facilities, procedures and practices.

2.5.10 USE OF COMPUTERS

Where a computer is used by more than one person, each person should be obliged to have a unique username and password, or where this is not possible, to maintain a signed record of the date, time and duration of their use of the computer.

Where a computer at a SERVE project can be accessed by children or young people, it should be accessible only through the use of a username and password unique to each child. Where this is not possible, the children or young people should be obliged to provide a signed record of the date, time and duration of their use of the computer.

Computers which can be accessed by children or young people should always have appropriate filtering software (e.g. Cybersitter, N2H2, Netnanny, Surfwatch, Wisechoice, etc.). Up to date information about internet filtering software can be found at <http://internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com/> In addition, the BBC Webwise site has an interactive Safety course for young people which can be accessed at www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/course/safety/childsafety/childsafety.shtml

All computers at SERVE projects and offices should be monitored regularly to ensure that they are being used in accordance with the stated policy. Where there is any suspicion or doubt, a person with specialist knowledge of computer hardware and software should be asked to assess the purposes for which the computer has been used.

2.5.11 ACTIVITIES AWAY FROM HOME

All trips, including day trips, overnight stays and holidays, need careful advance planning, including adequate provision for safety in regard to adult supervision, transport, facilities, activities and emergencies. Adequate insurance should be in place.

Written consent by a parent or guardian specifically for each trip and related activities must be obtained well in advance. A copy of the itinerary and contact telephone numbers should be made available to parents and guardians.

There must be adequate, gender-appropriate, supervision for boys and girls.

Arrangements and procedures must be put in place to ensure that rules and appropriate boundaries are maintained in the relaxed environment of trips away.

It is inappropriate for group leaders to consume alcohol or take any other mood altering substance while on Project activities or other trips away with young people.

Particular attention should be given to ensuring that the privacy of young people is respected when they are away on trips.

The provision of appropriate and adequate sleeping arrangements should be ensured in advance of the trip. Sleeping areas for boys and girls should be separate and supervised by two adults of the same sex as the group being supervised.

Where young people are sleeping in communal dormitories or large rooms, the supervising adults should sleep in an adjacent room. Under no circumstances should an adult share a bedroom with a young person.

If, in an emergency situation, an adult considers it necessary to be in a children's dormitory or bedroom without another adult being present they should (a) immediately inform another adult in a position of responsibility and (b) make a diary note of the circumstances.

2.6 CODE OF BEHAVIOUR/GROUP RULES FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Children and young people feel more secure when they know the limits of and boundaries appropriate to their own behaviour and that of others. In recognition of this, and in order to create an environment in which children will feel valued, encouraged and affirmed, it is important to develop an appropriate Code of Behaviour for each group or activity.

To maximise the sense of ownership of a Code of Behaviour, it is recommended that children and young people be consulted and included in the development of the Code for their particular group. They are then more likely to take ownership of it. Age appropriate language should be used, as it is essential that children and young people can understand what is and what is not acceptable with regard to their behaviour and that of others.

Sample Group Rules

- I will treat everybody with respect.
- I will listen when others are speaking.
- I will not leave anyone out.
- I will have respect for the building and help tidy up afterwards.
- I will not use bad language.
- I will take part in all activities to the best of my ability.
- I will not bully or join in bullying of anyone.
- I will not use drugs or alcohol.

The above is a non-exhaustive list of Group Rules that can be used as a starting point to enable a Group to discuss and develop its own Code of Behaviour or Group Rules. Such discussion will draw out, for instance, what members of the Group consider is entailed in bullying and how the Group will deal with it if it arises.

The issue of appropriate response to breaches of discipline and to disruptive behaviour, including bullying, should be covered in the Code.

It is good practice to ask all members of the Group to sign the Code. They might also want to write out the Group Rules, decorate them, and post them in the Group's meeting place.

IMPLEMENTING THE CODE

A copy of the Code should be given to all children and young people participating in activities, and to their parents or guardians.

The Code should be clearly explained to each child or young person and should be signed by them (where appropriate).

All SERVE personnel and volunteers should be fully conversant with the Code of Behaviour for Children and its application.

SECTION 3: REPORTING PROCEDURES

3.1 Introduction

It is important to remember that all those working with children within a development organisation, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity, have a responsibility to ensure that children are protected from harm. While it is not the responsibility of anyone staff or volunteer working within SERVE to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place, there is a responsibility on them to act on any concerns through contact in the appropriate channels as detailed below.

As outlined in the Child Care Act 1991 and Children First guidelines 1999, it is the role of statutory agencies to make enquiries to assess whether a child is at risk of abuse and to take any necessary action to protect that child or young person.

In order to manage this SERVE has an appointed Child Protection Officer who is the primary point of contact in the SERVE office for all reports.

Child Protection Officer: Chris O' Donoghue (Deputy: David Nolan)

Child abuse, in any form, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take.

3.2 RECOGNISING CHILD ABUSE

“The ability to recognise child abuse can depend as much on a person’s willingness to accept the possibility of its existence as it does on their knowledge and information.”
(*Children First* 2010, p.11)

We need to take time **to raise our awareness** of what child abuse involves, so that we can see it objectively and respond to it calmly and helpfully.

The first step in helping abused or neglected children is learning to **recognise** the indicators of child abuse and neglect, because actual disclosure of abuse by a child can be quite rare.

Some signs [of abuse] are more indicative than others. These include:

- Disclosure of abuse and neglect by a child or young person
- Age-inappropriate or abnormal sexual play or knowledge
- Specific injuries or patterns of injuries
- Absconding from home or a care situation
- Attempted suicide
- Under-age pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease
- Signs in one or more categories at the same time. For example, signs of developmental delay, physical injury and behavioural signs may together indicate a pattern of abuse. (*Children First* 2010, p.11)

However, there are rarely any obvious signs that a child has been sexually abused. Child abuse is very hard to ‘diagnose’, even for professionals.

Some Facts about Abuse

(Adapted from *Our Duty to Care*, Volunteer Development Agency, Belfast 2007)

The increased awareness of abuse in all its forms has prompted research, addressing questions such as: How many children suffer abuse? Who abuses children? What are the long-term effects of abuse? The facts listed below are based on research findings and challenge some widely-received myths.

- A child is never to blame for sexual abuse.
- Most abused children are abused by adults they know and trust.
- Reported cases of child abuse are just the tip of the iceberg of the cruelty, exploitation and neglect to which children in our society are subjected.
- Children with disabilities are more vulnerable to abuse; they are more dependent on intimate care and sometimes less able to tell anyone or run away from abusive situations.
- Children very seldom make false accusations that they have been abused, and in fact frequently deny the abuse or take back the accusation after they have made it.
- Children who talk about the abuse fear the consequences of telling . . . if things are bad, perhaps they may get worse
- Children and young people who are abused can be very good at hiding their unhappiness and distress.
- Abuse has serious long-term harmful effects on children and young people; if untreated, the effects of abuse can be devastating and continue into adulthood.
- Between 75% and 80% of children whose names were placed on child protection registers in Northern Ireland in the period from 2001 – 2006 were between 0 and 11 years of age; around half of these were aged 0 – 4.
- According to the SAVI Report (2002), one in five Irish women and one in six Irish men reported experiencing contact sexual abuse during childhood.
- There were 2,164 confirmed incidents of child abuse reported to the HSE during 2008. This increased from 1,978 in 2007 and 1,797 in 2006.
- Neglect has persistently been the highest category in child protection figures, followed by physical abuse.
- Child sexual abuse is equally common among all social classes, professions, cultures and ethnic groups.

- Child sexual abuse is an abuse of power – it is an abuse of the power adults have over children.
- It is not only men who sexually abuse children – women also abuse; the most commonly quoted figure is that around 10% of all child sexual abuse is by women.
- The process of investigation of alleged or suspected sexual abuse can be a positive therapeutic experience for the child concerned.
- Exact statistical data relating to the abuse of children in Asia, Africa and South America is not readily available but it is a serious problem and very common place.

DEFINITION OF A CHILD

Note that for the purposes of Child Safeguarding Guidelines in both jurisdictions in Ireland, a child means **a person under the age of 18 years**. *Children First* additionally excludes “a person who is or has been married.”

Children First (DOHC 2010), p.91; *Cooperating to Safeguard Children* (DHSSPS 2003), par 2.1

Definitions of Abuse¹

Child abuse has generally been categorized into four broad groups: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse. To these is now generally added bullying, which in its more extreme forms is increasingly regarded as a form of abuse.

- **NEGLECT** can be defined in terms of an **omission**, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, and medical care.

Neglect can also be an act of **commission**: some people **intentionally** neglect a child’s needs. Hence the charge of ‘wilful neglect’ (often combined with a child cruelty charge).

Possible indicators of this type of neglect are:

Frequent minor or serious injuries

¹ *Children First* 2010. More detail on the different forms of abuse, including examples and indicators for recognizing them, can be found in Appendix 9..

Untreated illness

Hunger, lack of nutrition

Tiredness

Inadequate and inappropriate clothing

Lack of supervision

Low self esteem

Lack of peer relationships

- **EMOTIONAL ABUSE** is normally to be found in the **relationship** between a parent/carer and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms.

Emotional abuse occurs when adults responsible for taking care of children are unable / unwilling to be aware of and meet their children's emotional and developmental needs.

Possible indicators of emotional abuse are:

Unreasonable mood and/or behavioural changes

Aggression, withdrawal or an 'I don't care attitude'

Lack of attachment

Low self esteem

Attention seeking

Depression or suicide attempts

Persistent nightmares, disturbed sleep, bedwetting, reluctance to go to bed

A fear of adults or particular individuals e.g. family member, baby-sitter or indeed excessive clinginess to parents/carers

Panic attacks

- **PHYSICAL ABUSE** is any form of non-accidental injury or injury that results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child.

Possible indicators of physical abuse are:

Frequent bruising, fractures, cuts, burns and other injuries

Torn clothing

Bite marks burns or welts

Bruises in places to mark e.g. behind ears, groin

Undue or unnecessary fear

Aggressiveness or withdrawn

Absconding frequently from home

- **SEXUAL ABUSE** occurs when a child or young person is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others.

Possible indicators of sexual abuse are:

Over affectionate or inappropriate sexual behaviour

Age inappropriate sexual knowledge given the child's age, which is often demonstrated in language play or drawings

Fondling or exposure of genital areas

Hints about sexual activity

Unusual reluctance to join in normal activities which involve undressing e.g. games and swimming

- **BULLYING** can be defined as repeated aggression – whether it be verbal, psychological or physical – that is conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating, and occurs mainly among children in social environments such as schools.

Indicators of Abuse are Not Facts

It is important to stress that no one indicator should be seen as conclusive in itself of abuse; it may indeed indicate conditions other than child abuse. A cluster or pattern of signs is likely to be more indicative of abuse. Signs must also be considered in the child's social and family context as child abuse is not restricted to any socio-economic group, gender or culture. It is important to always be open to alternative explanations for possible physical or behavioural signs of abuse.

Children who are more vulnerable

Some children are regarded as particularly vulnerable to all forms of abuse. These include:

- Children with communication difficulties
- Children with disabilities
- Children who are homeless
- Children who are separated from their families, e.g. children in care, refugees
- Children in the criminal justice system
- Children who are carers
- Children living with domestic violence
- Children from ethnic minority groups

The effects of abuse

- Children have different levels of resiliency or hardiness and different personality attributes, so different children respond differently to similarly abusive situations. That's why the lists of signs and symptoms seem so general. None of the signs and symptoms is in itself diagnostic of child abuse – i.e., the presence of any of the signs above does not prove that abuse has occurred.
- “The long-term effects of abuse in childhood can be very damaging and pervasive. Maltreated children perform less well on standardised tests, achieve poorer school marks and are at a higher risk of being bullied. In later life, children who have been physically abused have higher rates of psychiatric problems and violent/anti-social behaviour and abuse may impact on psychological and physical health for many years. In one study 50% of children who subsequently

sexually abused had been abused themselves.” (*Safeguarding Children*, N.I. Government, 2008)

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the sporting environment. All suspicious cases of child abuse should be reported following the guidelines in this document. When a child comes into contact having been subjected to child abuse outside the schooling environment, the organisation must work with the appropriate agencies where possible to ensure the child receives the required support.

3.3 RECOGNISING AND RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURES OF SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse is difficult to disclose

It appears that:

- Children seldom tell of abuse at the time it is occurring, and often do not tell at all
- If they do disclose, they are less likely to do so in a Development Country setting
- Most disclosures concerning Development workers and Church personnel are now made retrospectively by adults

Why is it so difficult to disclose sexual abuse?

- Guilt, shame, embarrassment
- No family permission to talk about sex
- Confusion about what happened – not having the words/vocabulary to tell
- Confusion about why it happened
- Confusion about why the abusive behaviour has impacted him/her so strongly
- It's too painful to talk about – easier to forget it
- Wanting to protect others – parent or close relative
- Fear of family upset, if not disbelief, particularly if perpetrator is highly regarded
- Fear of what people will think or do (retribution, abandonment)
- Fear of negative consequences (for themselves/family)
- Having no one to tell – especially if they have tried before and not been believed
- Believing people already know and don't care
- Threats (physical/verbal) from the perpetrator

Why boys/men may be particularly slow to disclose sexual abuse:

- Dominant stereotypes of masculinity: He should be strong and able to defend himself – “stand on his own two feet”

- Homophobia and confusion re sexuality: If assaulted by a man, he may worry about his sexual orientation
- Concerns he will become a perpetrator
- Lack of visible support for men

Circumstances in which Sexual Abuse might be disclosed

- Accidental disclosure (e.g. by a pre-school child)
- Wanting the abuse to end
- Sex Education in school – understanding that what has been happening is wrong and not the child or young person’s fault
- A relationship develops with a trusted adult/counsellor
- Pregnancy, or fear of pregnancy
- Wanting to protect siblings or other potential victims
- Media publicity – publication of Reports, programmes on T.V., etc.
- Others have begun to disclose abuse by same offender
- A change in circumstances (e.g. abuser leaves or dies)

(A full discussion of how children disclose sexual abuse can be found on the website of ReligiousTolerance.org).

Dos and Don'ts

DO:

- Stay calm, listen carefully and patiently
- Just let the person talk freely, with minimal interruption
- Try to manage and not show any anger or shock or embarrassment
- Explain that you will have to inform the Child Protection Officer and that he/she will inform the police and social services
- If at all possible, provide a safe, private place to talk

At the end of the disclosure:

- Record what they've said as soon as possible after the meeting, using their own words as far as possible
- Reassure them that it was right to tell you

- Acknowledge how difficult it must have been to speak and the courage it must have taken to name what happened
- Let them know what you are going to do next
- Immediately seek help from the Child Protection Officer

DON'T:

- Press for details, except for clarification
- Fill in words or finish sentences
- Offer an opinion
- Offer confidentiality or promise to keep secrets
- Tell them stories about other people
- Tell them that everything will be fixed straight away
- Ask leading questions (i.e. questions that suggest the answer or contain the information the questioner is looking for)
- Make judgements about the alleged abuser
- Attempt to investigate
- Tell anyone except the Child Protection Officer or Chairperson of the SERVE Board (who will, in turn, inform the Child Protection Officer)

3.4 RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE

In the event of a child/young person disclosing an incident of abuse it is essential that this is dealt with sensitively and professionally by the staff member/volunteer involved. The following are guidelines to support the worker/volunteer in this:

- Inform the young person of your duty to report their disclosure as early as possible in the conversation. Never agree to keep the disclosure secret.
- React calmly, an over-reaction may intimidate and increase any feelings of guilt.
- Listen carefully and attentively; take the young person seriously; the child is taking a risk by telling you this, you should try to ensure that the child's experience of telling is a positive one.
- Reassure the young person that they have taken the right action in talking to you;

- Ask questions for clarification only. Using open-ended questions such as "Do you want to tell me about this?" Be mindful not ask leading questions such as "Did Joe Blogs do this to you?"
- Check back with the child/young person that what you have heard is correct and understood; being mindful not to make a child repeat the story unnecessarily.
- Recognise the inherent difficulties interpreting what is said by young children or children with communication difficulties.
- Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser;
- Record the conversation as soon as possible, in as much detail as possible. Sign and date the record.
- Treat the information confidentially.
- Pass the information to the Coordinator or Child Protection Officer, and record this report
- If you have serious concerns about the immediate safety of that child and the Child Protection Officer is not available contact the alternative Child Protection Officer. (Record who you spoke to and inform designated Child Protection Officer of what you have done.)
- It is vital to protect the confidentiality of all involved the volunteers/Coordinators record and discuss their concerns only with the Coordinator or designated Child Protection Officer.

3.5 REPORTING PROCEDURES

SERVE has put in place a standard reporting procedure for dealing with disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse. The following points (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f) offer important orientation.

3.5.1 General Reporting Orientation

(a) What to do about a concern regarding abuse?

It is essential that all SERVE personnel and volunteers are clear about what to do if they have a concern about the safety of a child or young person, or about the conduct of an adult towards a child or young person (either currently or historically).

(b) Report your concern

Do not feel that **you** have to decide if it is abuse, or what type of abuse.

Your role is clear – pass on the allegation, suspicion or concern: report it to the Child Protection Officer.

(c) What should be reported?

The facts. Be clear that you are not **making** an allegation. You are **reporting** an allegation, suspicion or concern about the abuse of a child or young person.

(d) To whom should the report be made?

The **Child Protection Officer** is the person appointed by SERVE to receive concerns/allegations of child abuse.

However, if you are concerned that **a child is at immediate risk of harm**, you should contact **the civil authorities** without delay. These are the HSE or the Gardai (in the Republic of Ireland) and the PSNI or the HSC Gateway Teams (in Northern Ireland) or their overseas equivalent.

(e) The Child Protection person will report to the Civil Authorities

Where there are **reasonable grounds for concern**² that a child may have been or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse, the CPO will formally report the matter to the civil authorities. Where the CPO is uncertain as to whether or not there are reasonable grounds for reporting to the civil authorities, the CPO will discuss the matter with the social services. If a report is not made, you must be informed of this decision and the grounds for it. You are then free to report the matter to the civil authorities yourself.

(f) Remember

Sometimes it is difficult to decide what to do when something is bothering you about a child or the conduct of someone towards a child. Please feel free to consult the Child Protection Officer for advice in this instance.

² “The following examples would constitute **reasonable grounds for concern**:

- a specific indication from the child that he or she was abused;
- an account by a person who saw the child being abused;
- evidence, such as *an injury or behaviour*, that is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused in another way an example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse and/or dysfunctional behavior;
- consistent indication, over a period of time, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.”
(*Children First* 2010, p.15)

3.5.2 Child Protection Reporting Procedures for suspected incidents of child abuse while overseas in host country during Volunteer Programme

With Respect to Partner Organisations

At both the second and final pre-departure training days, the volunteer will receive a talk on SERVE Child Protection policy and procedures.

While overseas volunteers are encouraged to discuss with their SERVE Coordinator the Child protection policy and procedures and how to deal with these concerns with respect to the partner organisations in a positive and healthy manner;

There will be regular communication between Volunteer Programme personnel, Coordinators and Partners and these will be basis in which SERVE can address issues of concern and highlight our ethos of open communication.

All witnessed, suspected or alleged incidents of child abuse should be immediately reported to the SERVE Coordinator, who will record and act on these concerns in a confidential manner. The Coordinator will bring the matter to the attention of the designated CPO (Child Protection Officer) and together they will deal with the matter in accordance with the standardised process developed by SERVE and in the best interests of the child. All reports should be recorded in written form using the standard 'incident/accident report form' (Please see Appendix 8 for a copy of this form').

Once a complaint is received, the Coordinator, following consultation with the Child Protection Officer, will try to resolve, to the best of their ability, the issue promptly and fairly. If unable to do so, the Child Protection Officer will bring the matter to the attention of the Child Protection Team who will deal with the matter.

With Respect to a SERVE Coordinator

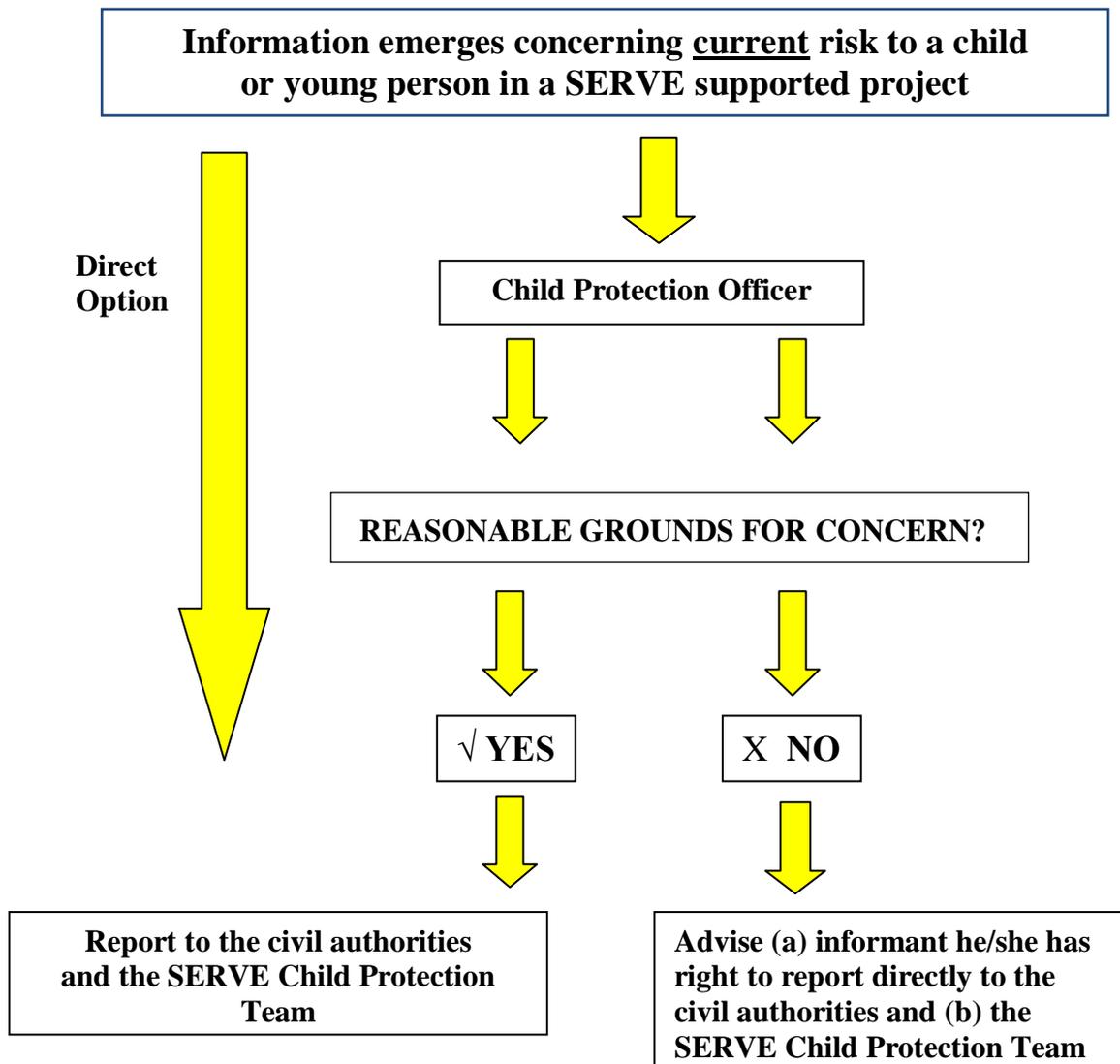
In case of a complaint being made against a SERVE Coordinator, volunteers should contact the Child Protection Officer who will record and act on these in a confidential manner in accordance with the standardised process developed by SERVE and the best interests of the child.

It is vital to protect the confidentiality of all involved that reports are made and discussed only with the designated Child Protection Officer.

With Respect to Volunteers

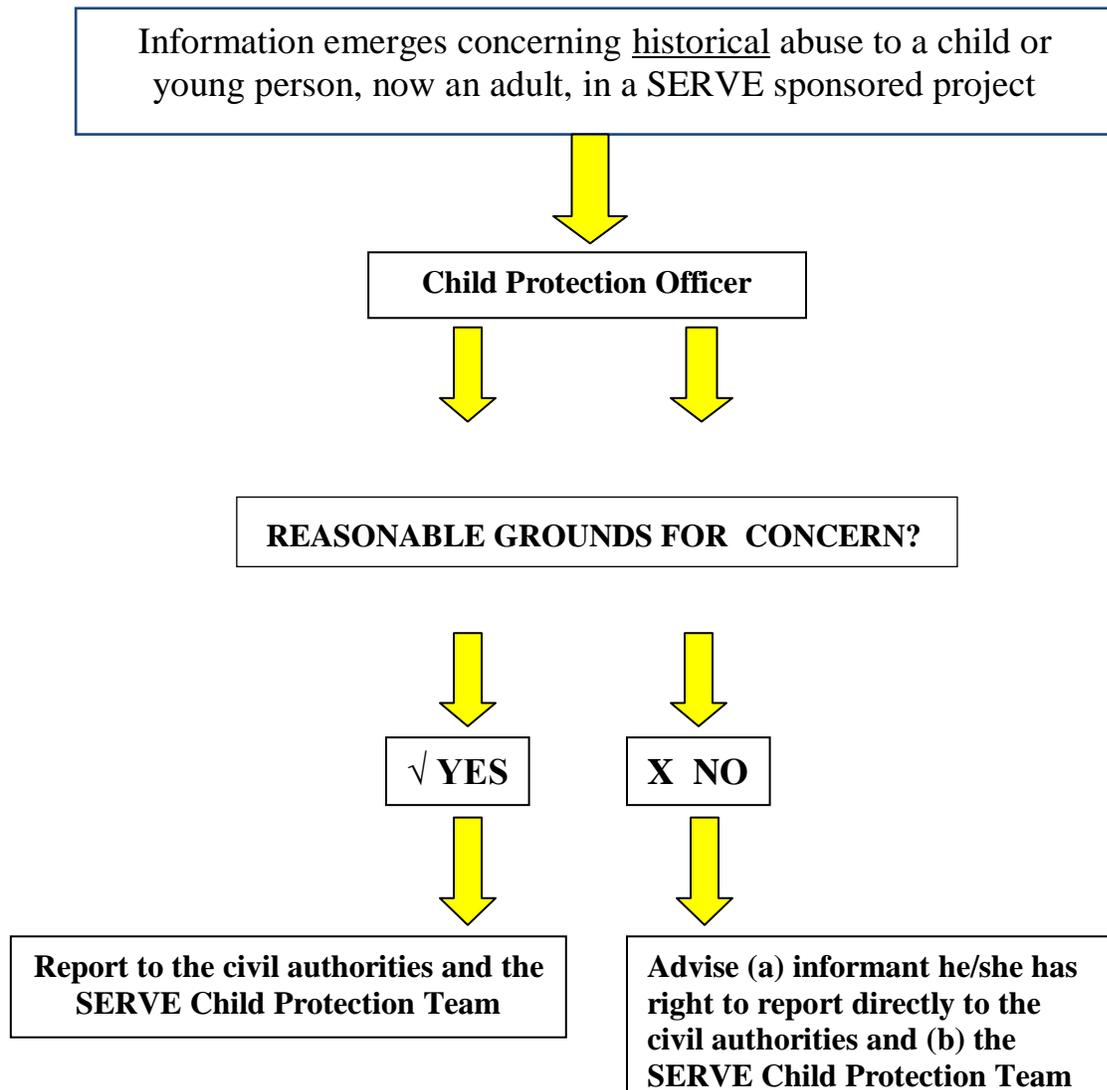
Should a partner or another volunteer/Coordinator identify a case of abuse, or suspect the behaviour or intent of a SERVE volunteer this should be reported as a matter of urgency to the SERVE Coordinator. The Coordinator will bring the matter to the attention of the Child Protection Officer and together they will deal with the matter in accordance with the standardised process developed by SERVE and in the best interests of the child. (Please see Section 4 Responding to allegations).

3.5.3 Current concern about a Child or Young Person on a SERVE supported project:



1. You become aware or are informed of a current or recent concern, suspicion or allegation of child abuse by a SERVE staff member or volunteer.
2. Where a child appears to be **at immediate and serious risk**, you should report immediately to the Social Services. Should the appropriate social services staff not be available, the Gardai/PSNI or overseas equivalent should be contacted to ensure that under no circumstances is a child left in a dangerous situation. You should subsequently update the Child Protection Officer, using the **Safeguarding Report Form** (Appendix 3).
3. Otherwise, where there is no immediate risk to a child or young person, you must refer the matter as soon as possible to the Child Protection Officer, who will report as appropriate to the Social Services and the Gardai/PSNI or overseas equivalent, as well as to the Child Protection Team.
4. Where the informant is an adult, you should advise him/her of their right to report the matter directly to the Gardai/PSNI or overseas equivalent. The Child Protection Officer., when informed, will also do this.

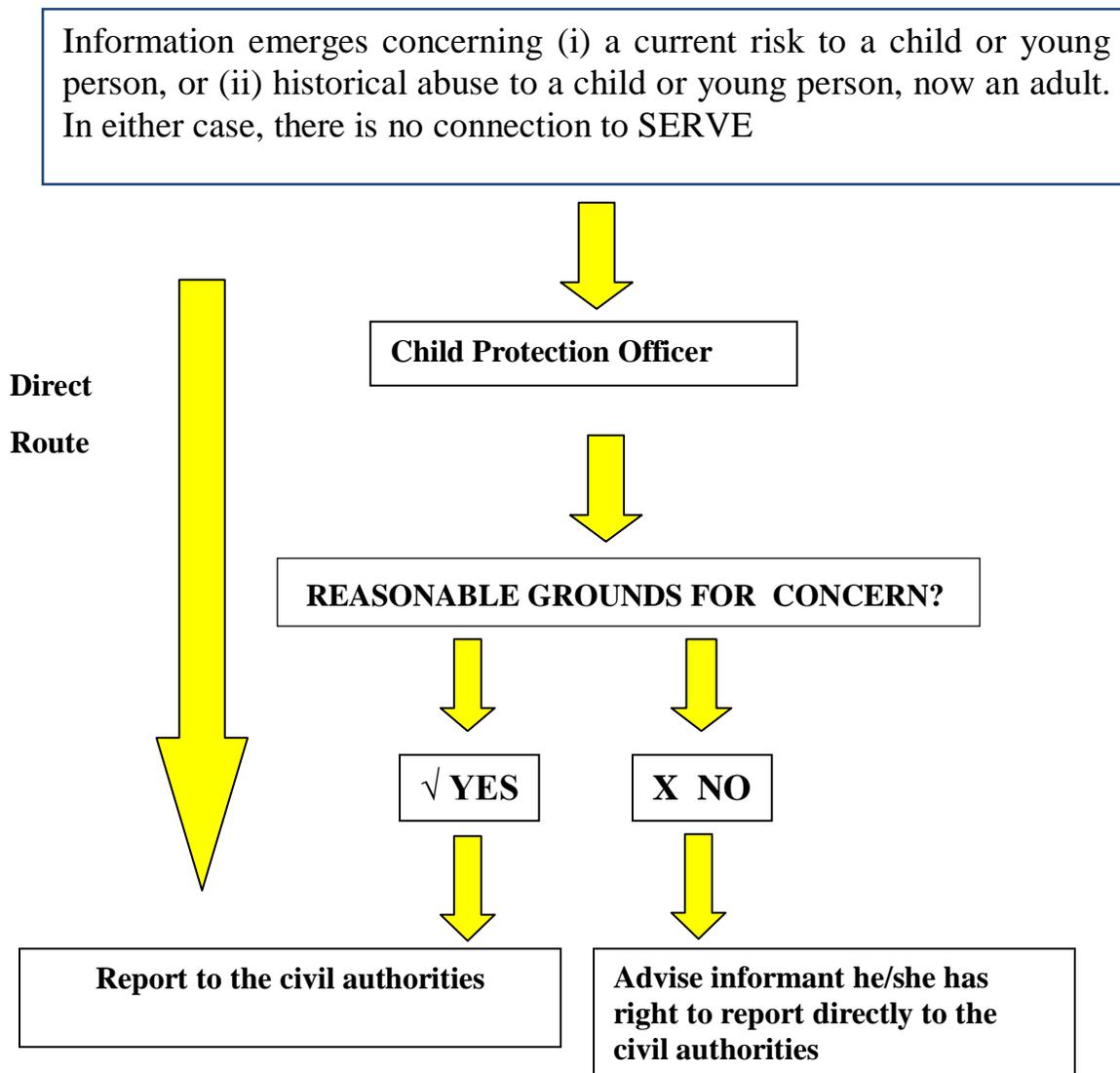
3.5.4 Historical Concern about an Adult



1. You become aware, or are informed of, an historical or retrospective allegation of child abuse by a SERVE staff member or volunteer in any context.
2. You must refer the matter as soon as possible to the Child Protection Officer., using the **Safeguarding Report Form** (Appendix 3). He will report, as appropriate, to the Social Services and the Gardai/PSNI or overseas equivalent as well as the SERVE Child Protection Team.

- Where the informant is an adult, you should advise him/her of their right to report the matter directly to the Gardai/PSNI or overseas equivalent. The Child Protection Officer when informed, will also do this.

3.5.5 Concern that has no involvement with SERVE personnel



- You become aware, or are informed, (i) of a current risk to child or young person, or (ii) of an historical/retrospective allegation of child abuse of a person who is now an adult. There is no connection to SERVE
- Where a child or young person appears to be **at immediate and serious risk**, you should report this immediately to the appropriate Social Services. Should the appropriate social

services staff not be available, the Gardai / PSNI or equivalent should be contacted to ensure that under no circumstances is a child left in a dangerous situation.

3. Otherwise, you should consult with the Child Protection Officer to decide if there are reasonable grounds to refer the matter to the civil authorities.

Where the informant is an adult, you should also encourage him/her to report the matter directly to the Gardai/PSNI or overseas equivalent.

SECTION 4: RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS

4.1 Responding to allegations against a member of staff of a partner organisation during volunteer programme

Procedure for dealing with an allegation of suspected abuse against staff of a partner organisation

1. All witnessed, suspected or alleged incidents of child abuse should be immediately reported to the SERVE Coordinator, who will record and act on these concerns in a confidential manner.
2. The coordinator will bring the matter to the attention of the Child Protection Officer and together they will deal with the matter in accordance with the standardised process developed by SERVE and in the best interests of the child.
3. Once a complaint is received, the Coordinator, following consultation with the Child Protection Officer, will try to resolve the issue promptly and fairly. If unable to do so, the Child Protection Officer will bring the matter to the attention of the Child Protection Team who will deal with the matter.
4. SERVE may decide to contact the senior management team or Board of the partner organisation requesting their official response to the situation.
5. While SERVE understands that our partners operate in different culture and legal systems, SERVE may be unable to continue a partnership when it has serious doubts about the actions and behaviour of the organisation or individuals within the organisation with regard to child protection.

4.2 Responding to an allegation against a SERVE employee or volunteer that occurs in host country

SERVE will take immediate action against any staff or volunteers where it is judged that serious misconduct has occurred.

Procedure for dealing with an allegation against the volunteer/coordinator

This procedure is the responsibility of the Child Protection Officer.

1. If there is an allegation of suspected child abuse against a SERVE volunteer while they are overseas, the Coordinator must be informed immediately.
2. The Coordinator will contact the designated Child Protection Officer who will then contact the Child Protection Team. (If the allegation is against a coordinator then the Child Protection Officer must be contacted directly).
3. The Child Protection Officer will then: contact the staff member or volunteer whom the allegation has been made against, informing them of an allegation against them and allowing them to respond to the allegation.
4. Record the meeting signed and dated.
5. The CPO may, depending on the seriousness of the allegation and in consultation with the Coordinator (if appropriate), Child Protection Team and partner organisation, suspend the staff member or volunteer.
6. This suspension will be recorded, dated and signed.
7. In the case of suspension of a volunteer, they will not work on the development project until the issue has been resolved.
8. Upon completion of inquiries a further disciplinary hearing will be heard, and appropriate action taken as required.
9. This hearing will also be recorded, dated and signed.

4.3 Confidentiality

It is essential in reporting any case of alleged/suspected abuse that the principle of confidentiality applies. The information should only be shared on a 'need to know' basis and the number of people that need to be informed should be kept to a minimum.

It is the duty of the volunteer/ Coordinator reporting the incident to keep the information to a strictly confidential 'need to know' basis. Information pertaining to an incident should be kept out of the public domain and only people directly involved in the

incident, the relevant Coordinator and Child Protection Team should have access to the information.

The Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998

This Act provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to the Child Protection Officer, the HSE or An Garda Siochana.

4.4 Support to deal with the aftermath of abuse

SERVE assures all staff/volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child.

Following an allegation of child abuse consideration will be given about what support may be appropriate to children, parents and members of staff. Consideration will also be given about what support may be appropriate to the alleged perpetrator of the abuse.

If you (an adult) are accused of an abusive action

Make notes of all your actions/contacts with the child in question as soon as possible.

Seek access to professional and legal advice.

Ensure you are no longer working with the child/children making the allegation.

Consult SERVE procedures and make sure these are followed correctly.

Avoid any discussions around the topic/ allegations with anyone outside of the proper procedures

Section 5: Managing implementation of SERVE' child protection policy

5.1 Role of the child protection officer

The Child Protection Officer in the Volunteer Programme has the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the child protection and welfare policy of SERVE is promoted and implemented throughout the volunteer placement. An alternative Child Protection Officer in SERVE will take over the responsibilities of the Child Protection Officer if they are unavailable for a significant amount of time.

The role of the Child Protection Officer involves the following duties:

- To be familiar with "Children First", National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children and "Our Duty to Care", the principles of good practice for the protection of children & young people and to have responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the child protection and welfare policy of SERVE;
- To receive reports of alleged/suspected or actual child abuse and act on these in accordance with the guidelines;
- To ensure that training is provided for all new and existing staff in SERVE on the child protection policy;
- To ensure that supports are put in place for the young person, employees or volunteers in cases of allegations being made;
- To keep up to date and undertake relevant training on child protection policy and practice, in order to ensure the relevance and appropriateness of SERVE policy and procedures in this area;
- To review SERVE policy and procedures on child protection on an annual basis and amend as appropriate;
- To ensure that systems are in place for recording and retaining all relevant documentation in relation to child protection issues.

5.2 Role of the Child Protection Team

The Child Protection Team is concerned with the management of cases. The team is appointed by the SERVE board and consists of not less than four members who collectively provide the expertise, experience and impartiality necessary in the

safeguarding area. Its role is to advise and assist the Board at all stages of the investigative and management processes involved when an allegation of abuse is made against a SERVE staff member or volunteer.

The Child Protection Team may provide advice on:

- The complaint itself
- Ensuring the safety and welfare of the child(ren) remains paramount
- The appropriateness of providing help to a child/adult making an allegation and to the family of the child
- The appropriateness of the respondent (the accused person) continuing in his or her assignment, having regard to the paramount need to protect children
- How the right of the respondent to a fair trial or any criminal charge may be preserved, and his or her good name and reputation may be appropriately safeguarded
- Whether a specialist risk assessment of the respondent should be sought
- The needs of the partner where the respondent has worked
- The needs of the wider community, including the appropriateness and timing of any public statement
- The Child Protection Team will create a record of its recommendations and should note the matters upon which it has been asked to advise and the documents which it has considered. These documents should include information on any previous allegations that have been made against the individual concerned.
- No member of the Child Protection team shall act in a professional capacity to either the person making the allegation or the respondent.

5.3 The Role of the Safeguarding Committee

The role of the Safeguarding Committee is supportive and developmental. It is not related in any way to the management of individual cases of suspected or alleged abuse.

The Safeguarding Committee has responsibility for:

- Ensuring the provision of an ongoing programme of training for all SERVE personnel and volunteers
- Proposing strategies focused on creating, maintaining and monitoring a safe environment for children in all SERVE sponsored projects

5.4 Roles and responsibilities of Volunteer Programme management:

Project Leaders within the Volunteer Programme will ensure that:

- Issues relating to child protection and abuse are fully integrated into existing management processes, including recruitment and selection, induction, supervision and team meetings.
- Appropriate procedures are in place for reporting and responding to concerns and that clear links to other policies and procedures such as the disciplinary and complaints protocol are easily accessible.
- Ensure appropriate support is provided for staff and personnel who work with children on behalf of SERVE.
- Issues and processes are fully documented so that appropriate action can be taken and lessons from the experience drawn together at local, national and international levels.
- Procedures for supporting partners are developed and implemented in accordance with SERVE values and principles as set out in the policy.
- Monitoring and review systems are put in place and followed.

5.5 Roles and responsibilities of all staff:

All SERVE staff and volunteers on the volunteer programme will be expected to:

- Maintain the highest standards of professional and ethical conduct, and act with integrity at all times when working with children in their role in SERVE.
- Familiarise themselves with the Child Protection Policy and understand how it affects their role and work.
- Immediately raise issues of concern on child protection relating to staff, management, projects and partners.

- Reflect on their own experience of working in accordance with the Child Protection policy, and participate in reviews of the policy as appropriate.

5.6 Monitoring and review

Purpose of review: Annual review of the Child Protection Policy is important in order to:

- Ensure full implementation across the organisation.
- Identify practical difficulties in implementing the policy.
- Identify support needs in relation to implementation of the policy.
- Gather information and learning on how the policy works in practice.

5.7 Record Keeping

The Child Protection Officer and the alternative Child Protection Officer are responsible for keeping the following records related to Child Protection in a locked filing cabinet and in a password protected folder on the SERVE network. The Child Protection Officer, the alternative Child Protection Officer and the Child Protection Team of SERVE are the only officers who have access to these records:

- Any complaints about the safety and welfare of children/young people while working with SERVE;. Any disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse;
- The follow up to any complaints, disclosure, concerns or allegations, including informal advice and informing parents/guardians;
- Any bullying complaints related to SERVE work with children/young people and the follow up action;
- Signed acceptance forms of the SERVE Child Protection Policy by staff members, people on short term contracts, staff/volunteers from other agencies working on SERVE projects.

Appendix 1 -'Definitions within the Policy'.

Key definitions used in this policy:

Child: A child as defined in the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* is anyone under the age of 18.

Child abuse: The World Health Organization defines "child abuse" or "maltreatment" as all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Child abuse is categorized under four main forms -physical, sexual, emotional and neglect. Child abuse takes place both within the family and outside it -for example, in institutions (the criminal justice system), at work (child labour), on the streets (street children), in war zones (child soldiers) and emergencies. Abuse can also be perpetuated by professionals or other adults employed in positions of trust who work with children. Discrimination, harassment and bullying are also abusive and can harm a child both physically and emotionally.

Physical abuse is the actual or likely physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury or suffering to a child.

Sexual abuse is the actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child or young person. Sexual abuse includes rape, incest, and all forms of sexual activity involving children including pornography.

Emotional abuse is the actual or likely adverse effect on the emotional and behavioural development of a child caused by repeatedly rejecting and humiliating them or denying their worth and rights as human beings.

Child protection is the broad term used to describe the philosophies, policies, standards, guidelines and; procedures to protect children from both intentional and unintentional harm. *Healthlink Worldwide Child: Protection Policy: and Procedures for Working with Children 2.*

The WHO definition of Child Abuse as defined by the Report of the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention WHO 1999.

Reasonable Grounds for Concern

A report must be made when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a young person may have been abused, is being abused, or is at risk of abuse. The following examples constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

- Specific indication from the young person that she/he was abused.
- An account by the person who saw the young person being abused.
- Evidence such as injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused in another way.
- Consistent indication, over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect. (It should be noted that SERVE staff, coordinators and volunteers will rarely be in an appropriate position to make informed judgements regarding this ground for concern. Any queries or concerns in this regard should be discussed and actions authorised through the Child Protection Officer.)

A suspicion, not supported by any objective indication of abuse or neglect, does not constitute a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern

Coordinator: Team leader appointed responsible for volunteers health and safety while on placement and for delivering the volunteer placement in collaboration with the schools.

Development Coordinator: Back up and support to Coordinator.

Partner organisations: The partner organisations that SERVE has agreed a Memorandum of Agreement with in Brazil, India, the Philippines, Thailand, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zambia.

Partner staff: See above. Employees of the above organisations.

Staff: Employees of SERVE in Solidarity Ireland.

Volunteer: A participant of the SERVE Volunteer Programme in the current year.

Child Protection Officer: Employee of SERVE designated to oversee any concerns or issues relating to child protection and to be primary point of contact in case of an incident.

Child Protection Team: A team appointed by the SERVE board to collectively provide the expertise, experience and impartiality necessary in the safeguarding area including the management of cases.

Safeguarding Committee: A committee appointed by the SERVE board to provide suggestions and advice on creating, maintaining and monitoring a safe environment for children in all aspects of SERVE project activity.



Appendix 2: CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR ADULTS: DECLARATION

The CODE OF BEHAVIOUR for SERVE, their employees, co-workers and volunteers working with children and young people, outlined in Section 2.4 of the Safeguarding Handbook, is a general guide. It should be read in conjunction with section 2.5 following it: BEST PRACTICE IN WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.

Although the CODE may need to be adapted for particular situations and activities, its key principles should be adhered to at all times.

The CODE OF BEHAVIOUR should be read, understood and signed by all personnel, including SERVE employees, board members and volunteers, on joining or participating in activities involving children and young people on SERVE sponsored projects.

DECLARATION

I have read, understood and agree to abide by the CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR ADULTS.

Signed:

.....Date.....

Name (in block capitals).....

Role.....

Witnessed by

Name (in block capitals)

Appendix 3: SAFEGUARDING REPORT FORM

[Adapted from *Safeguarding Children*]

1. Details of person making disclosure or raising concern

Name: _____

Tel: _____

Address _____

Relationship to alleged victim: _____

2. Details of alleged victim

Name _____

Tel _____

Address _____

Language (is interpreter/signer needed?) _____

Disability/Special needs _____

Project (*if applicable*) _____

3. About the disclosure

When was the disclosure made or concern expressed?

Date: _____ Time: _____

How was information received? (*tick one*)

Telephone Letter Email In person

Attach any letter or email to this Form.

4. Parent or Guardian details (*where appropriate*)

Name _____ Tel: _____

Address (*if different from above*)

Tel _____

Are they aware of the allegation / suspicion? [] Yes [] No *(tick one)*

5. Details of alleged perpetrator

Name _____ Tel _____

Current Address _____

Relationship to alleged victim

Address at time of alleged incident(s)

6. Brief Details of allegation or complaint

Date(s)/Times/Locations/Nature of complaint

Witnesses (if any)

Does the alleged victim know this referral is being made? [] Yes [] No *(tick one)*

7. Action taken

Has the matter been referred to the Child Protection Office [] Yes [] No *(tick one)*

If yes, please state:

Date referred _____

Time _____

8. Details of person completing the form

Name _____ Tel _____

Address

Current Position

Any other relevant information

Appendix 4: CONFIDENTIAL DECLARATION FORM FOR APPLICANTS FOR VOLUNTARY/PAID EMPLOYMENT WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Child care and safeguarding legislation in both jurisdictions in Ireland has at its core the principle that the welfare of children and young people must be the paramount consideration. SERVE therefore ask that everyone applying to work or volunteer with them, and who will have contact with children or access to their personal details, complete and sign this declaration.

Do you have any prosecutions pending or have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of a Caution or of a Bound Over Order?

YES NO (*please tick one*)

If YES, please state below the date(s) and nature of the offence(s):

Date(s) of offence(s):

Nature of offence(s):

Have you ever been the subject of disciplinary procedures or been asked to leave employment or voluntary activity because of inappropriate behaviour towards a child?

YES NO (*please tick one*)

If YES, please give details, including date(s):

Full name (print):

Any surname previously known by:

Address:

Date of birth: _____ Place of birth: _____

Declaration

I understand that if it is found that I have withheld information or included any false or misleading information above, I may be removed from my post whether paid or voluntary, without notice. I understand that the information will be kept securely by SERVE.

I hereby declare the information I have provided is accurate.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 5: SAMPLE CONFIDENTIAL REFERENCE REQUEST FORM

..... [Name] has expressed an interest in working with SERVE as[Position/Role]. If you are happy to complete this reference, any information will be treated with due confidentiality and in accordance with relevant legislation and guidance. Information will only be shared with the persons conducting the assessment of the candidate's suitability for the post. We appreciate you being extremely candid, open and honest in your evaluation.

1. For how long have you known this person?

.....

2. In what capacity?.....

3. What capacities does this person have that would make them suited to this work?

.....

.....

.....

4. Please rate this person on the following (*tick ✓ one box for each category*):

	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Responsibility					
Maturity					
Self-motivation					
Can motivate others					
Energy					
Trustworthiness					
Reliability					

This post involves substantial access to young people. SERVE are committed to the welfare and safeguarding of young people. Hence we are anxious to know: Do you have any reason at all to be concerned about this applicant being in contact with children and young people?

RESPONSE: YES [] NO [] Please tick ✓ one.

If you have answered YES we will contact you in confidence.

Signed Contact Tel No.....

Position in Organisation Date

Appendix 6: COMPLETING THE GARDA VETTING APPLICATION FORM (ROI)

THE VETTING FORM MUST BE PRINTED/COPIED AS A DOUBLE-SIDED DOCUMENT *(one page only)*.

Make sure it is **LEGIBLE** (i.e. that people other than yourself can read it with ease). The Garda Vetting Unit will return the form to the Authorised Signatory if they cannot easily decipher it. This will delay processing of the application by three to four months.

- 1) **Fill in your SURNAME, PREVIOUS NAME** if any (e.g. MAIDEN NAME) and full forename/s.
- 2) **Alias:** If you are known by any name other than that / those on your birth certificate, including a nickname you may commonly use, please insert in space provided.
- 3) **Insert your date of birth** in the format: **dd/mm/yy**.
- 4) **Fill in your place of origin** (i.e. the town or city where you were born).
- 5) **Have you ever changed your name? If Yes, please state former name:** Insert any previous surnames if applicable (e.g. in the event that you were married or that you have changed your name by deed poll, etc.)
- 6) **Please state all addresses from year of birth to present date:** it is very important that your current address and **all** previous addresses, **including all addresses abroad**, are provided. You must also insert the years that you lived at these addresses, year from and year to. **These will be checked and if there is any period of residence unaccounted for, the form will be returned to you.**
- 7) **Have you ever been convicted of an offence in the Republic of Ireland or elsewhere?** If Yes, tick 'Yes' box and then please provide details of conviction(s), i.e. Date, Court, Offence, Court Outcome.
- 8) **Declaration:** Please make certain you fill in the position you are applying for in the section marked: **"I, the undersigned have applied for a position as a....."** You must read this declaration carefully, sign and date it, and also print your name in block capitals underneath the signature. **(BLOCK CAPITALS)**.
- 9) When signing, use exactly the same Surname and Forename(s) you have put on the first page. Do not put in at this stage additional first names or initials (e.g. Thomas P.) if you haven't put Thomas Patrick on page 1. Otherwise, the

Vetting Office will send the application back to the Authorised Signatory.

Please return the completed Form to the Authorised Signatory in SERVE, Castle Road, Blackrock, Co. Cork, who will check and authorise it before forwarding to the Garda Central Vetting Unit. When the form has been processed, stamped and signed by the Gardai, it will be returned to the Authorised Signatory for filing and any necessary action. A copy will be sent to the Volunteer Programme Coordinator, who will let you know the outcome of your vetting application.

NOTE: Vetting Applications from the Republic of Ireland will be processed through Volunteering Ireland. **Vetting Applications from the North of Ireland will be processed through Access NI.**



Appendix 7: SAMPLE PARENTAL CONSENT FORM
Parental permission for persons under 18 to engage in SERVE sponsored activities

Name of Group / Activity / Event _____

Name of Young Person _____

Address _____

Date of Birth _____

Give details of any **medical condition** the young person may have. Please include details of any medication which has to be taken or any dietary requirements. This information will be held in the strictest confidence. Continue over the page if necessary.

- I understand that in the event of a medical emergency, all efforts will be made to contact me. If I am not immediately contactable, I give permission for the Group Leaders to seek any medical help that they deem necessary.
- I acknowledge and consent that photographs may be taken (for record and promotional purposes) during activities which may include my child.
- I accept that SERVE accepts no responsibility for loss, damage or injury caused by or during attendance on any SERVE organised activities except where such loss, damage or injury can be shown to result directly from the negligence of SERVE.
- I have read all the information provided concerning the programme of the above activity. I hereby give permission for my son/daughter/ward to participate in it.

Signed _____

(Parent/Guardian)

Please PRINT name: _____ Date: _____

Address

(if different from young person's address above)

Contact tel. no(s) of Parents/Guardians

Number: _____ Name

Number: _____ Name

Appendix 8
'Incident/accident report form'

Name of event/meeting where the incident/accident occurred

Date _____

Location _____

Briefly describe what happened and the event taking place:

Who was involved?

Any injury sustained?

Who dealt with the situation?

How was it resolved / dealt with?

Any follow up required?

Please attach any additional information if required

Signature: _____

Name (block letters): _____

Appendix 9

SERVE: Anti Bullying Policy when working with children/young people

SERVE does not accept any form of bullying and will attempt to intervene as appropriate to ensure the fair and equitable treatment of all young people

What is bullying?

Bullying behaviour can be defined as repeated aggression, be it verbal, psychological or physical, which is conducted by an individual or group against others.

Bullying can include:

- physical pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching etc
- name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing and emotional torment through ridicule, humiliation and the continual ignoring of individuals
- sectarian/racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- sexual comments and *lor* suggestions
- unwanted physical contact

The following principles will apply when dealing with bullying:

SERVE will:

- Respect for every child's need for, and rights to, a play environment where safety, security, praise, recognition and opportunity for taking responsibility are available.
- Ensure safety by having rules and practices carefully explained
- Bullying will not be accepted or condoned. All forms of bullying will be addressed.
- Acknowledge that everybody has the responsibility to work together to stop bullying -the child, the parent and volunteer, the care giver, the teacher etc.
- SERVE is committed to the early identification of bullying and prompt, collective action to deal with it.

- Children should be encouraged to take a role in stopping bullying.
- Policy and practice will be reviewed regularly in the light of changing needs and changes adopted by other agencies.
- Ensure that anyone who reports an incident of bullying will be listened to carefully and be supported, whether the child is bullied or the child who is bullying.
- Ensure that any reported incident of bullying will be investigated objectively and will involve listening carefully to all those involved

Following an incident of bullying SERVE staff and volunteer will endeavour to

- Talk with the bully(ies), explain the situation, and try to get the bully(ies) to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Seek an apology to the victim(s).
- Inform the bully(ies)'s parents.
- Insist on the return of 'borrowed' items and that the bully(ies) compensate the victim.
- Impose sanctions as necessary.
- Encourage and support the bully(ies) to change behaviour.
- Those who bully will be supported and encouraged to stop bullying.
- Sanctions involving long periods of isolation, or which diminish and make individuals look or feel foolish in front of others, will be avoided.

Appendix 10

Acceptance of SERVE Child Protection Policy

It is your responsibility as a volunteer to ensure you have read, reviewed and agreed to the conditions set out in this document. If you have any questions, or would like clarification of anything contained in the policy please raise this to your Coordinator.

Appendix 11

Useful Reading & Sources of Information

Useful publications

Title:

Published by:

Children's First Guidelines

Department of Health & Children

Our Duty to Care

Department of Health & Children

Website

<http://www.doh.ie>



Appendix 12

SERVE Volunteer Programme Child Protection Policy Handbook

Please read the SERVE Volunteer Programme Child Protection Policy Handbook carefully to ensure that you understand its contents before signing this document.

I hereby confirm that I have read and understood the SERVE Volunteer Programme Child Protection Policy Handbook and agree to abide by its contents for the entire duration of the 2012 SERVE Volunteer Programme.

Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date: _____

Please sign and retain a copy of this form for your records and return a copy to the SERVE Volunteer Programme Team.