



EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE IRELAND

GUIDELINE No. 09: Child Protection Policies and Procedures

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1.0 Introduction

Today, in Ireland it is a legal requirement for any voluntary organisation of any size or type, including churches, that provide services for children to adhere to 'Children First - National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children' produced by TUSLA the Child and Family Agency.

The aim of this guideline is to assist churches in their efforts to meet that requirement and to promote the safety and well-being of children. Any church that wishes to offer children's programmes must develop a 'Child Protection Policy' (CPP) in line with the National Guidelines. It is our aim to help you formulate such a policy for your church.

Please note that this is an advisory document only and EAI does not accept responsibility for any document drafted as a result of using this guideline. It is the responsibility of the leadership of each individual church to ensure that their CPP meets all their requirements and obligations

2.0 Why is a child protection policy (CPP) needed?

Apart from it being a legal requirement, developing and implementing a CPP indicates that your church is actively involved in safeguarding children and young people. In addition, the implementation of a CPP will provide protection for all staff and volunteers who are working with children and young people. Finally, the existence of a CPP gives a level of 'peace of mind' to existing members of your church and to any new member who may be considering joining you.



3.0 Preparation for writing a CPP

At the outset this may seem like a daunting task, however taking it step by step will enable you to reach your goal.

Step 1. Appoint a person or a team of people with responsibility for producing the document. There is a saying: 'A burden shared is burden halved!' and you may well find that there may be a need for more than one person working on this document.

Step 2. Familiarise yourself with the area by doing some basic research, perhaps by visiting the websites and using the documents listed in section 6.0 below

Step 3. Do an inventory of your organisation's existing programmes in which children, young people or vulnerable adults may be involved.

Step 4. Identify any existing written policies and procedures and see if they are being implemented and when they were last reviewed.

Step 5. Identify the gaps where there are no procedures or where existing procedures need updating.

You are now ready to begin drafting your own Child Protection Policy.

4.0 The essential elements of a CPP

Once you have clarified the requirements of your organisation, you need to write your policy document. If you have access to a similar document produced by another organisation this will help to give you an outline. Some links to existing policy documents and guidelines are set out in the final section of this guideline

The following is a suggested minimum list as to what to include in your policy document. Depending on your level of activities other sections may be required, e.g. sections dealing with procedures for bringing children to external events, or for sending young adults on outreach programmes.

4.1 Introduction

This short introduction should outline why a CPP document is needed.

4.2 Policy aims and objectives



In this section you need to state what you hope to achieve with your CPP and what objectives you hope to meet.

4.3 The Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Person

A Designated Person with responsibility for the continuous review and implementation of the CPP throughout the church must be appointed. This is an important role and if possible it should be given to a senior leader who is not directly involved in children's ministry. This section should set out

- The authority of the designated person
- The specific responsibilities of the designated person
- Contact details

4.4 Safe recruitment, selection and vetting procedures

This section will set out in detail your procedures for choosing / hiring staff and volunteers. Within this section you will deal with issues such as:

- Drawing up job descriptions
- Setting qualification standards for roles
- How to assess a candidate's suitability for the task.
- The process for obtaining Garda clearance.
- The process for hiring staff e.g. notice periods, trial periods etc.
- The process for dismissing staff and volunteers.
- Record keeping on all the above

4.5 Support, supervision and training recommended for staff/volunteers

This section outlines the support structures to be put in place for the people involved with children's ministry. In particular, it should set out:

- Clear lines of responsibility and supervision
- The level and type of training to be provided
- The frequency and method of performance reviews to be carried out
- Record

keeping

4.6 Procedures for handling accidents, complaints or suspected inappropriate behaviour



This section will set out in detail the procedures that must be followed if an accident occurs, if a complaint is made against a member of staff or any adult, or if suspicions arise about the behaviour of any staff member or adult.

In particular, this section should set out procedures to deal with:

- Measures to ensure child safety in the context of the issue
- Procedures to ensure the accident/complaint/suspicion is properly dealt with.
- Procedures for reporting the complaint/suspicion to the appropriate authorities (see below)
- Record keeping

4.7 Reporting procedures – internal and external

A written procedure is required which outlines the steps that need to be taken to report the suspected inappropriate behaviour both within the church and to external authorities such as the HSE and An Garda Síochána. These steps need to clearly indicate when an external body has to be informed and who should have responsibility for doing so. The procedures should set out the following:

- The role and responsibility of the designated person in regard to reporting
- The timing and form of reporting
- Record keeping, access to and storage of information
- Guidelines for sharing information with all those involved.

4.8 Procedures for the continuous review and implementation of your CPP

These are outlined below and should form part of your CPP document

5.0 Implementation of your CPP

Your CPP will be useless if it is not implemented properly and if people are not aware of it. It is the responsibility of the designated person, supported by all the leadership of the church, to ensure that the CPP is a living document that is implemented throughout the church. With that in mind the CPP should contain a section setting out the following.

- How to ensure that everyone who is involved in working with children and youth are fully aware of the CPP and all it contains



- How to ensure that everyone in the church has access to the CPP and that interested external parties also have access to it (many churches will publish their CPP on their official website).
- Procedures to ensure the regular review and updating of the CPP

6.0 Additional Resources –

6.1 Web Sites

The official website of TUSLA, The Child and Family Agency: <http://www.tusla.ie/links>

The official website of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs: <http://www.dcy.gov.ie/>

6.2 Publications

- The “Child Protection & Welfare Handbook 2011” is designed to be a companion volume to complement Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2011. It also supports policies, procedures and legislation.

http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/CF_WelfarePracticehandbook.pdf

- “Our Duty to Care 2002” is a practical guide to staff and volunteers who work with children by outlining a number of fundamental principles of good practice, highlighting the key elements of each one and discussing the issues raised.

http://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/ODTC_Full_Eng.pdf

- The “Interim Guide for the Development of a Child Protection and Welfare policy, procedures and Practices” uses reflective questions to assist those developing or reviewing child protection and welfare policies and procedures.

[http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Tusla_Interim_Guide_for_the_Development_of_Child_Protection_and_Welfare_Policy_16-04-15nt_\(2\).pdf](http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Tusla_Interim_Guide_for_the_Development_of_Child_Protection_and_Welfare_Policy_16-04-15nt_(2).pdf)

- “Child Protection Policy and Code of Behaviour for working with children/young people”
This Department of Children and Youth Affairs publication is a practical guide to the content of a Child Protection Policy



http://www.dcy.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=/documents/Child_Welfare_Protection/DCYA_Child_Protection_Policy_Jan_2011.doc

- The CPP of Christian Churches Ireland (formally known as Assemblies of God Ireland) can be found at the link below. Please note that this is a very comprehensive document designed for a group of churches and its scope may be beyond your churches reach. It is included here as a sample of best practice in the area.

<http://ccireland.ie/resources/>