



Bodywhys Child Protection Policy

Bodywhys has a responsibility and duty of care to protect any child (anyone under the age of 18 years) that may be at risk, who comes to the attention of the organisation. With this in mind, with an ethos of openness and honesty Bodywhys endeavours to protect anyone under the age of 18 years who is at risk and comes to our attention. In every aspect of our work it is expected that both employees and volunteers will treat every person with respect and positive regard. Respect for the individuality and uniqueness of every person who comes in contact with the organisation is paramount. We aim to constantly listen and respect the feelings, opinions and ideas of children and young people. Recognition for the wealth of knowledge and experience children and young people possess is also vital.

Purpose:

This policy has been produced in order to ensure clear policy and procedures in dealing with concerns for the wellbeing of people under 18 years of age who contact Bodywhys, and also Bodywhys personnel.

The purpose of the policy is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of anyone aged under 18 years who comes in contact with the organisation through any of our services. This policy endeavours to ensure clear policies and procedures in dealing with allegations of child abuse both within the organisation and externally, as well of employees and volunteers.

This policy applies:

- To anyone under the age of 18 who comes in contact with the Bodywhys organisation and who is deemed currently at risk of neglect, physical, emotional or sexual abuse.
- Where the organisation has identifiable information (see appendix 2.) for the person aged under 18 years deemed at risk. The organisation recognises a duty of care for that person and must ensure that information is passed on to the relevant authorities to help protect that person.
- It is the responsibility of **everyone** within the organisation to be aware of and implement the child protection policy. As such, the policy is also there to protect Bodywhys staff and volunteers by giving clear guidance on procedures to follow and responsibilities that their position incurs.

Bodywhys child protection policy is a support policy: as an organisation we have a supportive role rather than an investigative role.

Practicalities:

1. What information concerning a person under 18 years should be passed on to the organisation's designated person (see appendix 1. for explanation of who is and role of designated person)?

- a. **Neglect:** Where the child's needs for food, warmth, shelter, nurturance and safety are not provided, to the extent that the child suffers significant harm.
- b. **Emotional Abuse:** Where a child's needs for affection, approval and security are not being met and have not been met for some time by their parent or carer.
- c. **Sexual Abuse:** Where a child is used for the sexual gratification of an adult.

- d. **Physical Abuse:** Where a child is assaulted or injured in some way that is deliberate.

2. What are reasonable grounds for concern?

- a. **Direct disclosure:** Specific indication from the person under 18 years that (s)he was abused.
- b. **Witness account:** An account by a person who saw the person under 18 years being abused. (See section on policy for dealing with people aged over 18 years also.)
- c. **Evidence**, such as illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused in another way.
- d. An injury or behaviour which is consistent both with abuse and an innocent explanation but where there are **corroborative indicators** supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse.
- e. **Consistent indication**, over a period of time, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

3. What happens when information is passed on to the designated person (DP)?

(Usually) the DP will make the referral with the staff/volunteer to the HSE and/or Garda Síochána. The HSE social worker will consider the information and will assess the situation. If they feel it needs to be followed up they may look for more information from other sources and may contact the person under 18 years and their parent/s. They will try to establish what is going on, and will act to protect the child whatever way is necessary. Physical abuse, sexual abuse and wilful neglect are crimes and must be reported by the HSE to An Garda Síochána. Likewise, An Garda Síochána must report any child abuse that comes to their attention to the HSE. The gardaí and the HSE will work together as

sensitively as possible and take any action necessary to protect the child, or any other children from future harm.

Appendix 1. Designated Person

- The designated person (DP) is responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of children that arise within any area of the organisation's work.
- **In Bodywhys, the designated person is the Services Coordinator**, (currently, Harriet Parsons, email: helpline@bodywhys.ie, Ph: 01-2122834 / 0871335417 or in emergency if not answered, personal mobile 0877839511). If a situation arises that the services coordinator is not available, the responsibility for the role of designated person passes to the CEO (Jacinta Hastings, email: ceo@bodywhys.ie, Ph: 01-2834963 / 0872244001).
- The DP role is to
 - Establish contact with relevant authority where necessary e.g. child care manager, principal social worker, garda síochána.
 - Provide information and advice on child protection within the organisation
 - Ensure the organisation's child protection policies and procedures are implemented and followed

- Keep relevant people within the organisation informed
- Ensure written records of concerns / cases are kept
- Advise the organisation of child protection training needs

Appendix 2: What is identifiable information?

The following details are deemed identifiable information:

- The **first name and address of a perpetrator** i.e. Sally, No 1 Cow lane, D.4.
- The **full name of a perpetrator** i.e. Sally Dunne.
- The **surname and address of a perpetrator** i.e. Dunne, No 1 Cow Lane, D.4
- The **first name and telephone number of a perpetrator** i.e. Sally 01 123456
- The **name and relationship with the caller** i.e. an aunt, granny, uncle, etc.
- The **email address** of the person under 18 years.