

The Safeguarding of Children

A Policy of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Ireland

July 2025

Version 6.5



This policy should be read and used in conjunction with the two accompanying handbooks:

- Compliance and Record-Keeping Handbook for **Neighbourhood Activities** including children's classes, junior youth groups and study circles
- Compliance and Record-Keeping Handbook for **Projects and Residential Events**

and other supporting materials which are available at:

www.bahai.ie/childsafeguarding

Change Control

	Date	Changes from Previous Version
5.6	May 2017	Original
5.7	March 2018	Change of the Representative & Contact Details Change of Garda Vetting Officer & Contact Details Addition of Deputy Designated Liaison Person
5.8	May 2018	Change of Designated Liaison Person & Contact Details
5.9	June 2018	Addition of mandated person Reference to Safeguarding Statement added Reference to Risk Assessments added Completion of TUSLA certificate added as required training Amendment to declaration form to collect email addresses
6	June 2020	Substantial changes to policy to clearly outline roles and responsibilities of all agencies, institutions, named roles and individuals involved Changes to how procedures are documented – now underpinned by meeting criteria Addition of Child Safeguarding Officer and Teacher Registration Officer to named roles Updating of contact details for all named roles
6.1	March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes of wording throughout to represent that people are “registered to work with under 18s” in any capacity on behalf of the Bahá’í community rather than as “teachers, animators and tutors.” • Replacement of “teacher registration officer” with “registration officer” and updated email address for registration officer • Updated wording and removed sections to reflect change in reference gathering and registration process • Addition of protocols for online classes • Removal of outdated appendices to allow addition of new forms related to registration process
6.2	July 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addition of paragraph on mixed-age groupings for activities involving under and over 18s at same activity • Change in ratio required for registered adults to under-18 participants • Change of DLP • Code of conduct included as part of the appendices • Updated (combined) Garda Vetting and Registration Form in appendices
6.3	July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of requirement to attend ATTI event every two years to remain registered • Updating of guardian ratio for residential trips involving under-18s,

6.4	July 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updating of Appendix A to remove contact numbers of contact numbers in favour of online contact for Tusla and Children First information
6.5	July 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updated section on use of mobile phones and social media platforms (section 6.2)

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1 The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Ireland Policy Statement in relation to Child Safeguarding

This policy is aimed at providing a safe and secure environment for the children and youth under the age of 18 years who participate in any activities and events organised by Bahá'í institutions and all neighbourhood activities organised by individuals as part of the Bahá'í community building activities.

The guiding principle is that the safety and well-being of children is of paramount importance and takes precedence over all other considerations. In varying circumstances, different actions may be called for, but this principle should always be upheld.

Bahá'í institutions and agencies are responsible for the protection of children and youth under the age of 18 years who participate in events they organise. This includes neighbourhood activities organised by individuals as part of the Bahá'í community building activities that are held in their area of jurisdiction. These agencies and institutions must ensure that those entrusted with access to children meet the criteria outlined in this policy to work with those under 18. ***This includes all people who work with under 18s in any capacity, including those acting in roles as “teachers, animators, tutors or assistants” and those who may be further assisting with any logistics of an activity.***

For the purposes of this policy the word:

- “class” and “activity” will be used to refer to children’s classes, junior youth groups and study circles and *any activities run by the Bahá'í community or on their behalf where under 18s are present*
- “teacher” will be used for any registered adult who is serving as the teacher of a children’s class, the animator of a junior youth group or the tutor of a study circle and is the first registered person working with a group of young people.
- “assistant” will refer to the second registered person that must always be present in order for these activities to be run with those under 18 or anyone who is assisting with the logistics of an activity and has access to under 18s because of this.

- “registered” means being on the list of people held by the Designated Liaison Person of those who may work with under 18s having met the registration requirements of this policy, one part of which is to have successfully completed the process of Garda Vetting

This policy should be read and used in conjunction with:

- **The Child Safeguarding Statement of the National Spiritual Assembly and the associated Risk Assessment document**
- **The Compliance and Record-Keeping Handbook for Neighbourhood Activities** including children’s classes, junior youth groups and study circles
- **The Compliance and Record-Keeping Handbook for Projects and Residential Events**

All the materials are available on www.bahai.ie/childsafeguarding

1.1 Core Principles and Practices

The organizers of Bahá'í events, at which facilities for children and youth are provided, both local and national, must take steps to ensure that the following principles and practices are always adhered to:

1. The procedures and requirements of the Child Safeguarding Policy of the National Spiritual Assembly are followed.
2. All individuals working with under 18s, including those coming from overseas, are fully registered, having met the criteria outlined in Section 3 and 4 of this policy. These individuals should make their certificate of registration as received from the Registration Officer available to agencies and institutions when requested.
3. The list of registered people who may be involved in activities for children should be maintained by the Child Safeguarding Officer and Designated Liaison Person, with the assistance of those involved in processing Garda Vetting and Registration information.
4. All activities must have two adults aged 18 years or over who are registered with the Child Safeguarding Officer to work with under 18s and are present for the duration of the activity for up to and including 16 children. There should be an additional registered adult aged 18 years or over for each time the size of the group increases beyond a multiple of eight. Therefore, you need 3 registered adults for 17 - 24 participants. If there are more than 24, the organisers of the class should consider if the needs of the children would be better met by splitting the class.
5. If a Bahá'í Institution or its Agency becomes aware of a situation where there are concerns for a child’s protection or welfare, the

- Child and Family Agency (TUSLA) must be notified. This can be done by contacting the designated liaison person or directly by the Bahá'í institution or Agency itself.
6. In any circumstances, the institutions and agencies must co-operate fully with civil authorities, TUSLA, and, if necessary, with An Garda Síochána, in enquires into child safeguarding matters. The National Assembly should also give this advice to the members of its community.
 7. At residential events, children under the age of 18 must be in the charge of their parents or appointed guardian who are responsible for ensuring their safety outside of class times.
 - a. Where parents are requested to arrange the guardian, they guardian must be aged 25 or over except in the case where the appointed guardian is a family member in which case the guardian must be aged 21 or over. Each guardian should only be responsible for a maximum of three young people in addition to their own children.
 - b. For residential events which under-18s attend without their parents and travel to and from the event is organised by Irish institutions and/or agencies, guardians over 25 years of age must be appointed for the duration of travel, and if necessary, for the event itself. This includes events which are overseas, and includes Northern Ireland. There must be a minimum of two adults registered to work with under 18s acting as guardians accompanying the first ten under-18s travelling, and one additional registered adult for every additional group of ten after this.
 8. It is possible to have mixed-age groupings, where some of the participants of the activity are under 18, and some of them are adults of close age. ***This facilitates friendship groupings to participate in activities suitable to the targeted age group.*** Where mixed-age groupings occur, those over the age of 18 need to be made aware of and comply with the same code of conduct as those under 18. They should be made aware of their role as an adult attending an event with those under 18.
 9. The National Spiritual Assembly will take such steps as it considers necessary to ensure that anybody who has been charged with an offence against a child or who is alleged to have committed an offence against a child is prevented from contact with children at Bahá'í events. Should the allegation be made at an ongoing event or activity, the adult against whom the allegation is made will always be requested to immediately remove themselves from the venue or premises to safeguard the child. The National Spiritual Assembly

will immediately inform An Garda Síochána and, if appropriate, the Child and Family Agency of any such offence or allegation.

10. If you have a concern about a young person you must take one of the following actions:

- a. Report your concern to the designated liaison person within the organisation.
 - b. If the DLP or their deputy is not available, report directly to your local duty social worker in TUSLA, The Child and Family Agency. Contacts are in the appendices.
 - c. In an emergency or if a social worker is not available, contact your local An Garda Síochána.
11. This policy will be reviewed annually, or more frequently if substantial changes arise in the intervening time, by the Designated Liaison Person (DLP), in consultation with the National Spiritual Assembly and others such as the Child Safeguarding Officer as the DLP may deem necessary.

2 The roles and responsibilities of agencies, institutions and named roles

This section outlines the roles and responsibilities of the agencies, institutions and named personnel who have a role to play in ensuring those under 18 are always safeguarded. The roles and responsibilities are as outlined below.

2.1 The National Spiritual Assembly

The National Spiritual (NSA) is responsible for the creation, implementation, and review of the policy. It has an oversight role regarding any structures that are created to ensure effective implementation of the policy. It is responsible for:

- ensuring that the policy and any procedures and structures associated with it there meet any relevant statutory legal requirements as appropriate.
- for calling a consultative annual review of the policy, the child safeguarding statement and associated risk assessment. This includes reviewing the effectiveness of any structures and procedures that are in place and adjusting where necessary.
- for the appointment of the Child Safeguarding Officer, the Designated Liaison Person and their deputy, the Garda Vetting Officer and the Registration Officer.
- liaising with the relevant agencies and the DLP in accordance with the procedures where there is a concern for a child's protection or welfare, or an allegation made against an adult registered to work with under 18s as outlined in this policy.

2.2 The Local Spiritual Assembly

The Local Spiritual Assembly (LSA) is responsible for ensuring that all activities involving under 18s that take place in its jurisdiction are fully compliant with the criteria of this policy. The assembly must ensure that those entrusted with access to children, for instance as teachers, classroom assistants, animators and tutors, those assisting with supervision of those under 18 or working with under 18s in any capacity, meet the criteria outlined in this policy. This includes activities that may be provided at Feast celebrations, Holydays, reflection meetings and other such events in the Bahá'í calendar.

This involves:

- Being trained in the Child Safeguarding Policy, its criteria and procedures
- Maintaining an oversight of activities taking place in its jurisdiction by including Child Safeguarding as a standing item on its agenda
- Maintaining summary statistics of activities (e.g. number of classes, number of participants) so that they can be conveyed to the CSO if requested
- Providing training in the Child Safeguarding Policy as needed or arranging for training to be provided as needed.
- Asking those involved in activities with under 18s to provide the LSA with a copy of their Registration Certificate as they have received it from the registration officer and maintain copies of same in order to create and maintain a regularly reviewed list of those who are registered to work with under 18s in their jurisdiction.
- Providing references for those applying for Garda Vetting and Registration as requested by the individual and by the Garda Vetting Officer and Registration Officer as outlined by those procedures.
- Assisting the organisers of any activity involving under 18s to complete the compliance checklist for any activity with the organiser and forwarding it to the CSO. as outlined in the Compliance and Record-Keeping Handbook for Teachers, Animators and Tutors in Neighbourhood Activities. If assemblies require assistance in this process, they should contact the CSO.
- Assisting teachers to adhere to the record-keeping aspects of activities and ensuring these are forwarded to the National Office at an appropriate timescale.
- Assisting organisers to complete the compliance and risk assessment checklists as provided on www.bahai.ie/childsafeguarding and in the Compliance and Record-Keeping Handbook for Projects and Events for any outreach/project or residential events that occur under the auspices of the LSA. These checklists should then be forwarded to the CSO. If assemblies require assistance in this process, they should contact the CSO.

2.3 The Adib Taherzadeh Training Institute (ATTI)

The training institute is responsible for ensuring that any activities and project run and/or organised at under its auspices are fully compliant with the criteria outlined in this policy. They are also responsible for ensuring that training in the Child Safeguarding Policy, statement and risk assessment take place as part of participant's training in Book 3 for Children's Classes and Book 5 for Animators of Junior Youth. This

training should also take place for participants of Book 7 if they wish to work with under 18s.

This involves:

- Where the event is running in the jurisdiction of an LSA that the LSA is informed of the activity and arrangements are made to support the LSA in ensuring the activity is compliant as outlined in the role of the LSA.
- Where the event is running outside the jurisdiction of an LSA or under the auspices of the NSA such as summer or winter school, the training institute should nominate a person involved in organising the event to contact the CSO directly to ensure all activities are compliant with requirements.
- The training institute is responsible for ensuring that training in this policy takes place concurrently with the tutoring of Books 3 and 5. It may need to take place with Book 7 if the participants wish to work with under 18s.
- The training institute should ensure that any outreach activities that occur as part of a study circle or project meet the requirements of this policy and that the compliance checklists and risk-assessments have been completed and returned to the CSO as outlined in the Compliance and Record-Keeping Handbook for Projects and Events.

2.4 The Child Safeguarding Officer (CSO)

The Child Safeguarding Officer (CSO) is responsible for:

- giving advice and support to the community on the application of the policy
- providing training in the Child Safeguarding policy in the community, either directly or through liaising with the relevant institutions, agencies and individuals.
- ensuring LSA, ATTI and individuals are clear in their roles in relation to the procedures to be followed as outlined in this policy and supporting them in this role.
- ensuring that updates in training in the policy are provided for all teachers and happen on at least bi-annual basis for all registered teachers.
- ensuring all LSAs, the ATTI and all registered teachers received copies of the policy, statement and risk assessment when these documents are reviewed or updated on at least an annual basis.

- ensuring that all activities are fully compliant with the criteria of the policy and that records are kept as evidence of this compliance, with the assistance of LSAs, and the ATTI, as needed
- reviewing the compliance and record-keeping handbooks to ensure they are fit for purpose.
- liaising with the GVO and RO to ensure an up-to-date list of those fully registered to work with those under 18 is maintained and shared with the NSA, the DLP and the DDLP.
- liaising with the DLP, DDLP, GVO, RO and NSA about ascertaining the effectiveness of the procedures outlined in the policy and participating in the review of the policy

2.5 The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and their deputy

The National Spiritual Assembly has appointed a designated liaison person (DLP) and a deputy designated liaison person (DDLP). In their role they will:

- give advice and support to the community on matters concerning the welfare of children and young people.
- keep a record of all those eligible to serve as teachers, animators, tutors or assistants. This list contains the names of those only who can serve in these roles throughout the country.
- take responsibility for reporting allegations or suspicions of child abuse to the Child and Family Agency or An Garda Síochána. Any matter brought to their attention will be treated in strict confidence. Information will be divulged only where there is a legitimate need to know. They will make an initial assessment of the information and consult with the Child and Family Agency as appropriate.
- make a written referral on the Tusla Standard Reporting Form available on www.bahai.ie/childsafeguarding. In the event of an emergency or non-availability of the Child and Family Agency staff the report will be made to An Garda Síochána
- liaise with the Child and Family Agency and An Garda Síochána as appropriate
- keep a record of each individual case and of the actions taken in relation to the case. See the *Procedure when there are Concerns for a Child's Protection or Welfare*.

2.6 The Garda Vetting Officer (GVO)

The Garda Vetting Officer (GVO) is appointed by the National Spiritual Assembly. They are responsible for:

- processing Garda Vetting requests on behalf of the Irish Bahá'í community and community of interest and maintain a file of the necessary documents associated with this process
- providing guidance to individuals as to how to proceed through the Garda Vetting process
- maintaining a list of those who are Garda Vetted and sharing it with the Child Safeguarding Officer on a regular basis
- informing individuals when their Garda Vetting is about to expire, so that they may reapply in a timely fashion, so there is no period where their Garda Vetting may lapse

The GVO should also be involved in consultation relating to assessing the effectiveness of the procedures around the Garda Vetting process and in reviewing the policy as required.

2.7 The Registration Officer (RO)

The Registration Officer (RO) is appointed by the National Spiritual Assembly. They are responsible for:

- processing applications for those who wish to register to work with under 18s on behalf of the Bahá'í community and community of interest and maintaining a record of the necessary documents associated with this process, including those that verify a person's ID or provide references as to their suitability to work with under-18s
- keeping records of individuals who have met, or are in the process of meeting, the criteria outlined in this policy to register to work with under 18s on behalf of the Bahá'í community. This includes records of an individual's completion of:
 - Any training in Books 3, 5 and 7 of the Institute
 - The TUSLA online course in Child Safeguarding
 - Training in this Child Safeguarding Policy
- Maintaining a list of those individuals who meet all the criteria, have successfully completed Garda Vetting and are now deemed registered to work as a teacher, animator, tutor or assistant of those under 18 on behalf of the Designated Liaison Person and Child Safeguarding Officer
- Sending the list of those who are fully registered to the Designated Liaison Person and Child Safeguarding Officer on a regular basis
- Providing those who have successfully met all the criteria outlined in with a certificate indicating that they are now registered to work with under 18s on behalf of the Bahá'í community. This certificate should be valid for the same period of time as the individuals Garda Vetting Certificate.

The RO should be involved in consultation relating to the effectiveness of these procedures and in the review of this policy as required.

2.8 Registered individuals serving as Teachers, Animators and Tutors

“Teacher”, “Animator” or “Tutor” is used to refer to the person registered to work with under 18s that has the overall responsibility for that activity.

It is acknowledged that registered individuals who choose to work as teachers, animators and tutors are responsible for many aspects of their community building activity, including that where they develop a relationship with the parents of an individual child so that the parent may also support the child's development. Not all these important aspects are listed here, but the following pertain specifically to a teacher's responsibility as required by this policy:

- To complete a compliance checklist using the relevant Compliance and Record-Keeping Handbook prior to the starting of any activity, with the assistance of the secretary of the Local Spiritual Assembly if needed, or Child Safeguarding Officer if outside the jurisdiction of an LSA.
- To ensure that procedures relating to registration, the setting up of activities, the taking of attendance, regulations relating to health and safety and reporting as outlined in this policy are adhered to in the running of their activity.
- To create a welcoming and safe environment for those under 18
- To plan and provide, in consultation with their assistants and coordinators, a programme appropriate to the age of those involved and the goal of the activity.
- Where a child may have additional needs, the teacher and parents should work together and communicate openly to assess what works best for the child so that the child can be enabled to participate and be included in activities of the group.
- To maintain records as required and outlined in this policy and the relevant Compliance and Record-Keeping Handbook

2.9 Registered individuals serving as Assistants

“Assistant” is used to refer to the second and subsequent adult/s registered to work with under 18s present at activities.

For the purposes of this policy, and acknowledging that assistants will work and support teachers and animators in many aspects the following outlines the responsibilities of the assistant as it pertains to this policy:

- assisting the teacher in creating a welcoming and safe environment for those under 18
- supporting the teacher or animator in planning and providing a programme appropriate to the age of those involved and the goal of the activity

While it is preferable that anyone acting as a teacher, animator or tutor would have completed training in Book 3, 5 and/or 7 **anyone registered to work with under 18s may act as the teacher, animator or tutor for a group, without having completed the relevant institute training** for that activity. To do this, they must be **accompanied** by a trained teacher, animator or tutor. The person doing the accompanying does not have to be the assistant in that activity, but they will be responsible for ensuring that any activity that is carried out is compliant with the requirements of this policy. Please contact the CSO for further information if this situation arises.

3 The screening and training of volunteers working with under-18s

The purpose of this section is to outline the criteria to be met by all those wishing to work with under 18s on behalf of the Bahá'í community. This is to ensure as far as it is possible that all those serving in this capacity have received the relevant training and that there are no known reasons why the person should not work with children.

These criteria apply equally to those coming from overseas to work with under-18s at the request of Bahá'í agencies and institutions as it does to those currently residing in the country.

Before a person's name is added to the list of those registered to work with under 18s two procedures must be followed. By following these procedures, a person will have met the criteria.

- Garda Vetting as applied from through the organisation's Garda Vetting Officer by contacting gardavetting@bahai.ie
- Registration to work with under 18s as applied for through the organisation's Registration Officer by contacting registrationofficer@bahai.ie

3.1 Criteria to be met to register to work with under 18s

1. They must be aged at least 16 years old to become registered to work with under 18s.
2. Their ID must be verified. This is done as part of the Garda Vetting process. Where the person lives within the jurisdiction of an LSA this should be done by the currently serving officer of a local spiritual assembly. If they live outside the jurisdiction, it should be verified by the group secretary, if existing, or a coordinator of the training institute, a member of the training institute board, the garda vetting officer or the child safeguarding officer. Alternative arrangements for verification will have to be made if a person is not known to the community, which will involve the verification of their identity by a member of An Garda Síochána, a solicitor or a medical doctor. Contact the CSO in this instance.
3. References as to their suitability to work with under-18s must be obtained. This will be organised by the Registration Officer. Usually, a reference will come from the tutor of an individual's study circle. Where the person is not attending a study circle the reference may come from an auxiliary board member, a

coordinator of the training institute, a member of the training institute board or the child safeguarding officer. The registration officer will verbally check the reference with the referee.

4. **Alternative arrangements for the provision of references will have to be made if a person is not known to the community which may include the provision of a reference by their employer or postponement of their registration until such a time as they are more well known to members of the Bahá'í community and can be processed through the usual channels.** Contact the CSO in this instance.
5. Applicants must be Garda Vetted as applied for through the Garda Vetting Officer. Additionally, those coming from overseas must provide a copy of their country's Garda Vetting equivalent. They must still complete the Garda Vetting process.
6. They must have completed training in the Child Safeguarding Policy of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Ireland.
7. They must have completed the TUSLA online video training and sent the certificate to the Registration Officer.
8. Confirmation of registration to work with those under-18s must be received from the Registration Officer before any activities can commence. The Registration Officer will issue them with a Certificate of Registration which the individual can show to institutions and agencies as verification that they are registered to work with under 18s.
9. Their name must appear on the up to date list of those fully registered to work with under 18s as maintained by the Designated Liason Person.

3.2 Responsibilities of tutors in providing training in the Child Safeguarding Policy

- The training institute should ensure that training in the Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures of the National Spiritual Assembly (this document), are included as part of all Book 3 and Book 5 study circles.
- It should also be completed during Book 7, if the participants have not previously completed it.
- The tutor should ensure that all participants have read and understood the Child Safeguarding Statement and associated Risk Assessment.
- While there is no special training required to assist a group of people in becoming familiar with the policy, tutors should contact

their LSA secretary, regional/cluster coordinator or Child Safeguarding Officer in the absence of a coordinator if they require assistance in completing this aspect of the study circle.

- Those training in Books 3/5/7 should be encouraged to apply for Garda Vetting and start the registration *process* when they start their training, as they will not be able to work with young people under the age of 18 until they have been fully registered with the as described above.
- It is preferable participants in the study circle do not participate in any outreach activities, or activities involving those under 18 until they are fully registered. Please consult with the CSO before engaging in any outreach activities if all participants are not registered to work with under 18s.

3.3 Tutor responsibilities in assisting those they are training to register to work with under 18s

- The tutor should request that anyone who is interested in working with under 18s email the Garda Vetting Officer at gardavetting@bahai.ie indicating that they wish to begin the registration process.
- If requested by the Registration Officer, the tutor should provide a reference for named individuals. When considering a person's suitability, the following are some of the characteristics to be considered.
 - Responsibility
 - Maturity
 - Trustworthiness
 - Reliability
 - Self-motivation
 - Motivation of others
 - Energy

Once an individual has been registered and appears on the list maintained by the Designated Liaison Person, they are eligible to serve anywhere in Ireland i.e. they are not confined to serving in their own locality.

4 Procedure for volunteers from abroad wishing to work with under-18s

It is the policy of the National Spiritual Assembly not to accept offers from people living outside this country to come and work with children or youth.

- **Those invited from abroad must meet the same criteria as outlined in Section 3.**
- Verification of ID can be done through the post when applying for Garda Vetting. Then, when the person arrives at the project/event, the applicant must show the original ID to GVO, or if not available, to the CSO for the event. They must also show the original certificate of clearance from their country of residence to work with under-18s
- They must have signed the declaration form and returned it to the Registration Officer.
- The first reference should be obtained by the Registration Officer from the person who invited the individual looking to register to act in that role. For example, a member of the ATTI or member of the NSA could provide this form in the case of those coming to serve at summer school.
- A second reference should be obtained by the Registration Officer from the person's National Spiritual Assembly. This may be by email, but a contact phone number will also have to be supplied by that National Spiritual Assembly so that the reference can be verbally checked.

5 Safe management of those working as teachers, animators, tutors and assistants

The Child Safeguarding Officer will direct that regular gatherings will be held for those working with under 18s where learning and experiences will be shared. Those working with under-18s are encouraged to attend these sessions on an ongoing basis to share and develop their learning and understanding of working with under-18s.

In situations where those registered to work with under 18s has to deal with a child protection and welfare concern or disclosure, the Designated Liaison Person will not only ensure that the correct procedures are carried out but will also be available to consult with the individual to provide guidance and support to them in the situation.

6 Procedures for those who serve as teachers, animators and tutors of neighbourhood activities

Establishing children's classes and junior youth groups in a neighbourhood is a key factor in the community building initiatives in which the Bahá'í community is engaged and are usually established because of individual initiative. However, **child safety is of paramount importance**, and must be given full consideration **at the outset** when establishing classes or groups in a neighbourhood.

Many of these classes or groups will take place in private homes, and circumstances may differ widely, but the Core Principles and Practices as outlined in Section 1 of this document **must be adhered to**.

Additional considerations are:

- A consent form for children's classes/junior youth groups should be filled and signed by parents/guardians. This form should include consent for children to attend and relevant medical information (see *Compliance and Record-Keeping Handbook for Teachers, Animators and Tutors*)
- A copy of the Child Safeguarding Policy's Code of Conduct, as included in the *Compliance and Record Keeping Handbooks*, should be shared with the parents.
- Attendance register should be taken at every class/group/meeting.
- Every effort should be made to ensure that the classroom/facility is safe. See Section 8: *Guidelines for Venues*.
- Parent or appointed guardian (must be notified to the teacher beforehand) must collect children under the age of 11 from the class.
- Junior youth should sign in when they arrive
- Parent or appointed guardian of the child/youth must be accessible by mobile phone or landline during the class.
- Provisions for children to use the bathroom during a children's class should be agreed beforehand with the parents, but no individual should enter the bathroom with a child. In exceptional circumstances, such as if the child is ill and needs to be accompanied into the bathroom, the door of the bathroom must be left open.
- If the child is ill, the parent should be called immediately.

6.1 Record Keeping

The following records should be kept by the teacher responsible for the activity using the relevant Compliance and Record-Keeping Handbook, or a variation thereof.

- A record on each child/youth, including medical details, any special needs and emergency contact telephone numbers as recorded on consent Forms
- A record of sign-in sheets for junior youth groups
- A record of attendance at children's classes
- Accidents – complete an incident and accident report form
- Any complaints or grievances

These records should be sent back to the National Office on a regular basis, and **at least annually** to be archived in the National Office. Records for one off events and projects should also be sent back to the National Office to be archived.

Record keeping procedures relating to consent to attend the class and taking attendance at the classes also applies to classes taking place in an online environment. See section 6.3.

6.2 Use of Social Media Platforms

Social media, when used thoughtfully, can be a valuable tool for people organise, connect, learn, and express themselves. However, unchecked use can lead to significant risks.

In all cases where there is use of social media and online platforms teachers / animators and group participants should adhere to the following principles in its use:

- **Respect and empathy**
 - To be kind and respectful in communications, to celebrate success and offer encouragement to others
 - To not engage in cyber-bullying, the spreading of misinformation or gossip
- **Privacy and Data Protection:**
 - While you may ask/remind people to provide you with necessary information using a group chat facility, please ask them to email or send information directly to you only, and do not use the group chat facility for this purpose.
 - If setting up chat groups for communication with parents, such as Whatsapp, please ensure you have the permission, in advance, of parents/guardians to use their number for this

purpose, as in many platforms the person's number is shared with the entire group.

- Ensure that you have the consent of all involved before sending pictures and videos through social media channels, and being mindful of tagging and location data, and understanding the privacy settings of platforms.

Depending on the age of the children in the group social media platforms, such as Whatsapp, can be used to **organise the logistics of the group and foster positive connections**. Other platforms such as Instagram / TikTok might be used to share the activities of the group, or for creative expression and collaboration.

A teacher / animator is responsible only for the social media groups (such as a Whatapp group) which they have set with the participants for the running of the group. The person responsible for setting up the group should ensure that all communication is of a respectful nature. **Parents should be included in all such messaging groups, or at least informed that such a messaging group exists.**

Should a group of participants (such as junior youth) independently decide to set up their own messaging group or platform as an outcome of their experience of the junior youth programme, it is not the responsibility of teachers / animators to monitor these interactions. However, should the participants wish to use social media to share and/or promote the activities of the group, they should be provided with **an opportunity to discuss how it will operate** to ensure its use is for positive purposes only.

For more information on the use of messaging platforms, please refer to the document *Principles and Considerations for Text-based Messaging Technologies* issued by the National Spiritual Assembly.

6.3 Online Classes

Where teachers, animators and tutors wish to conduct their groups using an online platform some of the procedures already outlined still apply:

- There should be at least two people registered to work with under 18s present in the online session, with the same ratio maintained as in-person classes.

- Consent forms should still be completed for those under 18 to attend
- Attendance should be taken at each session
- For Child Safeguarding purposes, the class is deemed to be taking place within the jurisdiction of the Local Spiritual Assembly of the host teacher/animator/tutor.

Some additional requirements are to:

- Ensure parents are familiar with the structure of the online class so they can have any materials needed prepared in advance
- Communicate openly with parents about the expectations that they are available in the room with their child for the duration of the class and that if they choose to leave the room for the child to continue the class unsupervised by them, that this is their own decision.
- Parental supervision is especially important for classes with younger children who may find it difficult to focus or interact in the online environment and may need face-to-face adult interaction to help them regulate their behaviour. In addition, remote teachers cannot be expected to supervise children for their physical safety.
- Communicate clearly with parents about expectations for behaviour. The Code of Conduct also applies to online classes and should be shared with parents in advance. It may be necessary to mute or turn off the camera for some participants, and parents will need to be aware that this is a possibility, and that they need to be present if this occurs.
- Ensure the platform you choose has a function that allows you to ensure that two registered people are present on the online platform, before the group joins you.

6.4 Accidents or Illness

In cases of accident or illness, the parent of the child/youth should immediately be called and informed. Medical assistance should be sought, except in very minor cases. See Section 10: *Procedures for dealing with accidents and incidents*.

6.5 Concerns for a Child's Protection or Welfare

In cases where a registered adult suspects or becomes aware of a child protection or welfare concern refer to Section 12: *Procedure when there are concerns for a child's protection or welfare*.

6.6 Inviting others to work with a class/group on a one-off basis

- When a person or persons not on the DLP/CSO list of those registered to work with under-18s are brought in on a **one-off** basis to work with the class/group, the teacher/ animator/tutor ***must remain with the class/group at all times.***
- Each person visiting the class/group/study circle for this purpose should be given/emailed a copy of this Safeguarding of Children policy so that they can become familiar with it and the teacher/animator/tutor ***should retain that person's signature as a record of their understanding of the policy.*** If a copy of the policy is emailed to them, then they should be asked to **respond to the email as confirmation that they have received it.**
- If anyone would like to work with the group more regularly (more than once) then they should follow the procedures to become registered to work with under 18s.

7 Procedures for Child Safeguarding for Teacher, Animators and Tutors working at a national or residential event

7.1 Ensuring Compliance – National Events

At national events, the CSO and DLP should liaise with the organising committee at an early stage of the organisation process to ensure that all planned activities will be compliant with the requirements of the policy and that records, as required, are dealt with in a manageable and appropriate fashion. The CSO should organise training for those serving at the school and ensure that it is delivered prior to their work with under-18s. While a “safe person” may be appointed for National Events, in line with best practice and has happened previously, it is not a requirement for the event to proceed.

The CSO and the organising committee should ensure that the following are adhered to:

- A risk assessment for the event has been completed.
- All teachers are informed of the medical needs of the under-18s they are working with as relevant by the CSO for the event.
- For Children’s Classes, a parent or guardian must sign in a child to the Class and a parent or guardian (who has been notified to the teacher beforehand) must collect children under the age of 11 from the class.
- Children needing to use the bathroom should be escorted to the facility by another adult registered to work with under 18s if there is no assistant available. During the time that the class is left in the care of one teacher/assistant, the door must be left open and the teacher/assistant should stand in the doorway. The teacher/assistant who escorts the child to the bathroom should stand in the open, outer doorway of a public facility while the child uses a cubicle.
- Systems must be in place to allow the taking of an accurate attendance for junior youth, noting that junior youth are allowed to sign-in and out of a class themselves. If leaving for a short time (e.g., to visit the bathroom), junior youth should sign out and in again, noting the time on the sign in sheet.
- Systems must be in place to allow the taking of an accurate attendance for youth over 15 and under 18, especially where they may be attending different sessions.

- Parent or appointed guardian of children, junior youth and youth must be accessible by mobile phone or landline during the class/session.
- Every effort should be made to ensure that the classroom/facility is safe. See Section 8: *Guidelines for Venues*.

7.2 Record Keeping

The following records should be kept by the individual teacher or kept centrally by the person responsible overall for safeguarding at the event.

- Keep a record on each child/youth, including medical details, any special needs and emergency contact telephone numbers as recorded on Consent Forms
- Keep Records of Sign In Sheets for Junior Youth Groups
- Keep records of Attendance Children's Classes
- Accidents – Complete Incident Accident Report Form
- Any complaints or grievances

The Compliance and Record-Keeping Handbook for Events and Projects should be used for the above. When the class/group is no longer running, these records should be returned to the National Office.

8 Guidelines for Venues

Every effort should be made to ensure that venues are safe and secure i.e., clean and free from hazards such as broken or sharp material, loose or broken floor covering, open windows, toxic materials, etc. Always check the premises that you are using to highlight any obvious hazards or potential risks. Try to have anything removed that should not be there and may cause a significant risk. Areas where maintenance work is taking place should never be used and must be screened off.

Check the venue to ensure that:

- There is sufficient heating and ventilation
- Adequate toilets, shower areas and washing facilities are provided.
- Fire precautions are in place with easy routes for escape identified in case of fire
- There are adequate first-aid facilities
- There is access to a phone

Children's Classes, Junior Youth Programmes and Study Circles organised at Regional and National Events must be accessible to those with disability, with access to bathroom facilities and fire exits.

9 Procedures for residential events attended by under-18s without their parent/guardian

When a Residential Event is planned at which the parents/guardians are not present, the following matters need to be considered:

- Safety in relation to the venue, transport and activities
- That insurance is in place to cover all aspects of the trip
- Written consent is obtained from parents to include any relevant medical or dietary information. These records should be maintained and forwarded to the National Office at the end of the event/trip.
- Sleeping areas for males and females should be in separate quarters. Boys should not be permitted into the girls' dormitories and vice versa. Where single room accommodation is provided, there must be distinctly separate areas for boys and girls, and no girls should be in boys' rooms or vice versa. This applies at all times.
- Where camping is a factor, separate areas must be provided, and responsible adults appointed to monitor the areas.
- Guardians should be accommodated in the same areas as their charges.
- When organizers/committee members have to go into sleeping accommodation other than their own (for instance, in case of illness or other incident requiring intervention) at least two members must go.
- Where possible, the responsible adults should be of the same sex as the youth who occupy the accommodation. Where this is not possible, the adult of the opposite sex should stand at the (open) door, while the same sex adult goes in.
- **Adults should not enter sleeping areas alone.**
- The privacy of young people should always be respected in dormitories, changing rooms, showers and toilets. It is recommended that when present in such areas, adults do not spend time alone with young people.
- Under-18s should always be pairs or threes.

Organisers should use the Compliance and Record-Keeping Handbook for Events and Trips to assist them in the above points.

10 Procedures for dealing with accidents and incidents

- It is important that the teacher is aware of any medical conditions or allergies that a child or youth may have and any medications that they are currently taking. This information should be provided on the parental consent forms required for neighbourhood classes and for residential events not attended by parents or guardians. See the Compliance and Record-Keeping Handbooks for the consent forms for neighbourhood events and for residential events.
- A first aid box must be available at each venue where a class or group is being held. At Summer and Winter Schools there will also be a person trained in first aid and a person in the use of a defibrillator available.
- In the event of an accident taking place where a child is hurt during a class or event, assistance must be sought immediately if there is any suspicion of injury of a substantial nature. The parent/s should be contacted at once. If the parent/s cannot be contacted, medical assistance must be obtained. This also applies if a child is taken ill during a class or event. Medication should never be given without written consent from parents or doctors.
- At events that youth attend without their parents, a person or persons should be appointed to deal with any accidents or illnesses. Any youth involved in an accident where there is obvious or suspected injury should immediately be brought for medical treatment, even if the victim is reluctant. The responsible person should not rely on the judgment or assurances of the victim, and if there is any suspicion of injury, medical attention must be sought. Medical treatment must also be sought in cases of illness, other than very minor indisposition
- Incidents of a minor nature such as minor cuts and bruises can be dealt with by the teacher or animator.
- A report of all Accidents and Incidents must be recorded. The relevant form is contained in the Compliance and Record-Keeping Handbooks

11 Dealing with Complaints

If a young person or parent/guardian has a general complaint about the running of a class or group, the complaint should first be brought to the teacher. If the teacher is, in consultation with the Local Assembly or coordinator, unable to resolve the problem, the complaint should then be brought to the National Spiritual Assembly. The complainant should be assured that the matter will be dealt with in a prompt and appropriate manner. They will be informed as soon as possible of the decisions and the action, if any, that will be taken.

The details of the complaint should be recorded and include the date, location, nature of the Complaint and people involved. This should be done in writing and all parties kept informed. A suitable form can be found in the *Compliance and Record-Keeping Handbooks*.

12 Procedure when there are concerns for a child's protection or welfare

12.1 Definition and Recognition of Child Abuse³

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time.

Definition of “neglect”

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/or medical care.

Harm can be defined as the ill-treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child.

Whether it is significant is determined by the child's health and development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a child of similar age.

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point. The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that his or her well-being and/or development are severely affected.

Definition of “emotional abuse”

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 developmental 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 can be manifested in terms of the child's behavioural, cognitive, affective or physical functioning. Examples of these include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, and oppositional behaviour. The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/carer.

Definition of “physical abuse”

Physical abuse of a child is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction, or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents.

Definition of “sexual abuse”

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others.

Recognising child neglect or abuse

Child neglect or abuse can often be difficult to identify and may present in many forms. A list of indicators of child abuse is contained in Appendix 1 of the *Children First* document. No one indicator should be seen as conclusive in itself of abuse. It may indicate conditions other than child abuse. All signs and symptoms must be examined in the context of the child's situation and family circumstances.

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. There are commonly three stages in the identification of child neglect or abuse:

- considering the possibility;
- looking out for signs of neglect or abuse;
- recording of information

12.2 Examples of reasonable grounds for concern²

- An injury or behaviour that 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.
- Consistent indication over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.
- Admission or indication by someone of an alleged abuse.
- A specific indication from a child that he or she was abused.
- An account from a person who saw the child being abused.
- Evidence (e.g. injury or behaviour) that is consistent with abuse and unlikely to have been caused in any other way.

If you are concerned about a child's protection or welfare it is important to act. Try to gather as many facts and details as you can, without being invasive or unwise.

Do not interrogate the child or ask any leading questions. You could let them know that you are concerned about them and are willing to help them at any time if they need it.

Do not ask them direct questions, such as “Is such-and-such happening to you?” or “Is so-and-so doing something to you?” This is viewed as leading and could compromise later action that may need to be taken.

If you are unsure if a formal report should be made you can discuss your concerns with the Child and Family Agency. See **Error! Reference source not found.: Error! Reference source not found..**

12.3 Guidance on Dealing with Disclosures

If a child discloses to you that s/he has been abused, it is important to listen carefully to what the child says, without prompting or asking leading questions.

You should make eye contact with the child, and show acceptance of what s/he says, even if you find it hard to believe.

- Keep calm – don't show anger or disgust
- Don't push for information. Let the child tell you what s/he wants to tell.
- Reassure the child that s/he was right to tell you
- Explain that you will have to tell somebody else – do not promise confidentiality
- If the child is in immediate danger, make arrangements for him/her to be safe
- Tell the child what you intend to do, and keep him/her informed of what will be happening

Points to remember:

- It takes tremendous courage for a child to disclose abuse. If they tell you, it is because they trust you to help them. They don't know how to handle this, so, as an adult, you have to take charge.
- It is never the child's fault. No matter what a child has done (broken a rule, accepted sweets/money, stayed out late, taken alcohol or drugs) they are not at fault for abuse.
- If you show surprise, anger, revulsion, horror or disbelief, children may retract or modify their statement because they can't deal with your reaction. It is very important to show acceptance of what they are saying in a calm way.
- It can be very shocking and difficult to hear about child abuse. Make sure you get appropriate support yourself afterwards.

- Never assume because you know and like somebody, or because they hold a position of authority or trust, that they could not have abused a child. Do not dismiss what a child tells you because you know the person they identify.
- Do not make false promises. You can't promise anything but that you will try to help in whatever way you can

Things you could say:	Things not to do:
"You did the right thing in telling me"	Don't express disbelief
"I will help you"	Don't perform an interrogation
"What happened to you is wrong"	Don't try to tackle the abuser yourself
"It's not your fault"	Don't promise not to tell
"You've done nothing wrong"	Don't ask the child not to tell anybody else
"I'm glad you told me"	

- Write down what the child has told you as soon as possible afterwards. As much as possible, note exactly what the child said, what you said in response, and what the circumstances of the disclosure were.
- Write down dates, times, events as closely as you can remember. Keep all these notes. If you are required to give them to the Child and Family Agency or the Gardaí, make copies.
- Inform the parents that a report will be sent to the Child and Family Agency unless doing so would place the child at further risk.

12.4 Reporting Child Protection and Welfare Concerns

- If you identify a child as being at risk of harm you must act. The safety and well-being of the child must take priority
- The Child and Family Agency should always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being or is at risk of being abused or neglected.
- Child protection concerns should be supported by evidence that indicates the possibility of abuse or neglect.
- A concern about a potential risk to children posed by a specific person, even if the children are unidentifiable, should also be communicated to the Child and Family Agency.
- Any person reporting a child abuse or neglect concern should do so without delay to the Child and Family Agency. A report can be made in person, by telephone or in writing. See **Error! Reference source not found. Error! Reference source not found.** In the event of an emergency where you think a child is in immediate danger and you cannot get in contact with the Child and Family Agency, you should contact the Gardaí. This may be done through any Garda station.

- Our Designated Liaison Person is responsible for ensuring that the standard reporting procedure is followed, so that suspected cases of child neglect or abuse are referred promptly to the Child and Family Agency or in the event of an emergency and the unavailability of the Child and Family Agency, to An Garda Síochána. Please therefore inform them of the situation.

There is a standard form for reporting child welfare and protection concerns to the Child and Family Agency which be accessed using the link in [Appendix A](#).

In the case where the report is made by telephone this report should be subsequently filled in and forwarded to the Child and Family Agency. As much of the following information as known should be included in the Report

1. the name, address and age of the child (or children) for whom the report is being made;
2. the name of the child's school;
3. the name and contact details of the person reporting concerns;
4. whether the person reporting is a professional, a person working with children or a member of the public;
5. the relationship to the child of the person making the report;
6. a full account of what constitutes the grounds for concern in relation to the protection and welfare of the child or children, e.g. details of the allegation, incident, dates, description of any injuries, etc;
7. the names and addresses of the parents/carers of the child or children;
8. the names of other children in the household;
9. the name, address and details of the person allegedly causing concern in relation to the child or children;
10. the child's and/or parents/carers' own views, if known and relevant;
11. the names and addresses of other personnel or agencies involved with the child or children, e.g. GP, social worker, public health nurse, Gardaí, etc;
12. any other relevant information

12.5 Confidentiality

In the interest of the child, all information regarding concerns for the child's welfare should be shared on 'a need to know' basis (i.e. whatever information needs to be shared in order to safeguard a child) with the relevant statutory authorities.

No undertakings regarding secrecy can be given either to the child or the parents.

Information gathered for one purpose cannot be used for another without consulting the person who provided the information.

All records regarding concerns for a child's welfare will be kept by our Designated Liaison Person in a secure a locked cabinet. All digital records will be kept on a password protected computer and in an encrypted file.

13 Dealing with allegations against teacher, animators, tutors or assistants

- When an allegation of abuse is received, it should be assessed promptly and carefully by the National Spiritual Assembly in consultation with the Designated Liaison Person.
- Any action taken in reporting an allegation of child abuse against a teacher, animator, tutor or assistant should be based on an opinion formed 'reasonably and in good faith'. It will be necessary to decide whether a formal report should be made to the HSE Children and Family Services. This decision should be based on reasonable grounds for concern, as outlined in this document in Section 12.1. The first priority is to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk and the National Spiritual Assembly will take as a matter of urgency whatever protective measure it deems necessary.
- If the allegation occurs during the course of a class, activity or residential event then the adult against whom the allegation has been made will be asked to remove themselves from the venue immediately to safeguard the wellbeing of the child who has made the allegation. This is a matter of procedure and should not be seen as a judgement of the person against whom the allegation has been made.
- The Teacher, Animator or Assistant against whom the allegation has been made should be privately informed by a member of the National Spiritual Assembly (not the Designated Liaison Person) of the following:
 - i. the fact that an allegation has been made against him or her;
 - ii. the nature of the allegation.
- The person should be afforded an opportunity to respond and this response will be noted by the National Spiritual Assembly and passed on by our Designated Liaison Person if making a formal report to the HSE Children and Family Agency.
- Communication with the child and parent/guardian who made the allegation should be through the Designated Liaison Person. Communication with the teacher, animator or assistant against whom the allegation was made should be through a member of the National Spiritual Assembly.
- The National Spiritual Assembly through its Designated Liaison Person will maintain a close liaison with the statutory authorities to ensure that any actions taken by the National Spiritual Assembly do not undermine or frustrate any investigations/assessments

conducted by the HSE Children and Family Agency or An Garda Síochána.

13.1 Disciplinary Action

The National Spiritual Assembly will be responsible for deciding what if any disciplinary action will need to be taken. The report, if received from the Child and Family Agency, can be taken into account in making a decision but the final decision rests with the National Spiritual Assembly.

Appendix A Contacting Tusla when reporting concerns

- Tusla, the National Child and Family Agency, and its contact details can be accessed at their main site for child protection and welfare here:

<https://www.tusla.ie/services/child-protection-welfare/>

The screenshot shows the Tusla website's 'Services' page. The navigation menu on the left includes 'Child Protection & Welfare', 'Children First', 'Definitions of child abuse', 'Reporting Concerns', 'Resources, Publications and Forms', 'Contact a Social Worker', 'Child Safeguarding Compliance Unit (CSSCU)', 'Alternative Care', 'Family & Community Support', 'TESS', 'Domestic, Sexual & Gender Based Violence Services', 'Early Years Inspectorate - Pre-School Services', and 'Children's Services Regulation'. The main content area is titled 'Child Protection & Welfare' and contains the following text:

Child Protection & Welfare

The Child and Family Agency has a primary responsibility to promote the safety and well-being of children. An Garda Síochána also have statutory responsibilities for the safety and welfare of children.

Everyone must be alert to the possibility that children with whom they are in contact may be suffering from abuse or neglect. This responsibility is particularly relevant for professionals such as teachers, child care workers, health professionals and those working with adults with serious parenting difficulties. It is also an important responsibility for staff and people involved in sports clubs, community activities, youth clubs, religious/fair sector and other organisations catering for children.

The Agency should always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being or is at risk of being abused or neglected.

Child protection **concerns** should be supported by evidence that indicates the possibility of abuse or neglect.

A concern about a potential risk to children posed by a specific person, even if the children are unidentifiable, should also be communicated to the Agency.

The guiding principles in regard to reporting **child abuse** or neglect may be summarised as follows:

1. the safety and well-being of the child must take priority;
2. reports should be made without delay to the Agency.

- Concerns should be reported at the address shown here:

<https://www.tusla.ie/services/child-protection-welfare/concerns/>

- Guidance on Children First is available here:

<https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/>

Appendix B Contact Details for Named Roles

Designated Liaison Person:

Alison Wortley dlp@bahai.ie
0872422118

Deputy Designated Liaison Person:

Sandra Dillon-Howes deputydlp@bahai.ie
086 028 4277

Garda Vetting Officer:

Finbar Loftus gardavetting@bahai.ie
087 164 1588

Registration Officer:

Finbar Loftus registrationofficer@bahai.ie
087 164 1588

Child Safeguarding Officer:

Laura Walsh childsafeguarding@bahai.ie
085 816 5282

Appendix C Associated Policies of the National Spiritual Assembly

1. Garda Vetting Policy
2. Confidentiality Policy
3. Data Protection Policy
4. Request Access Information Policy
5. Health and Safety Statement

Appendix D Bibliography

1. Child and Family Agency, TUSLA Standard Reporting Form
2. The Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook
3. Children First 2011 Guidelines
4. Children First 2015
4. CARI

Appendix E Forms and Codes of Conduct

All the forms contained in this appendix are available on www.bahai.ie/childsafeguarding as individual documents for ease of printing. It contains:

1. Garda Vetting Form and Registration Form
2. Reference Form
3. Guidance notes for Local Assemblies in supporting the registration process
4. Codes of Conduct

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF IRELAND GARDA VETTING AND REGISTRATION FORM																												
SECTION 1: PERSONAL INFORMATION																												
UNDER SEC 26 (B) OF THE NATIONAL VETTING BUREAU (CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE PERONS) ACT 2012, IT IS AN OFFENCE TO MAKE A FALSE STATEMENT FOR THE PURPOSE OF OBTAINING A VETTING DISCLOSURE.																												
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Please tick the box on the right to indicate that: <div style="float: right; border: 2px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin-top: 10px;"></div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have provided documentation to validate my identity as required and I consent to making this application in accordance with Section 13 (4)(e) National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable persons) Act 2012 I am aware that an invitation to the online vetting website will issue to my email address and that I must act on it within 30 days. 																												
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I completed online TUSLA training on (please insert date below) <div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 100%;"></div>												I completed training in the Child Safeguarding Training policy on (please complete date) <div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 100%;"></div>										Please tick if you have completed: <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> Ruhi 3 <input type="checkbox"/> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> Ruhi 5 <input type="checkbox"/> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> Ruhi 7 <input type="checkbox"/> </div> </div>						
SECTION 4: REFEREE																												
Name of Referee																												
Position																												
Email address																												
SECTION 5: ID DOCUMENT VERIFICATION / LSA OFFICER OR GROUP SECRETARY																												
LSA / CLUSTER*																												
Signature of LSA officer/group secretary																												
Name of LSA officer/group secretary (please print)																												
Date																												

*If you live outside of an LSA area, the Garda Vetting Officer will sign off on your identification documents.

****If you need assistance please contact:** gardavetting@bahai.ie or 00 353 87 1641588

Reference Form for Person Applying to Work with Under 18s and Vulnerable Adults

When completing this form please bear in mind the qualities of trustworthiness, responsibility, maturity, reliability, energy, self-motivation, and ability to motivate others that are necessary to fulfil the role required.

Applicants Name: _____

We would appreciate your help in providing us with a reference for the individual named above who wishes to register to work with under 18s and vulnerable adults on behalf of the National Spiritual Assembly in any capacity. This includes serving as a Children's Class teacher, Junior Youth Animator or tutor of those under 18.

Name of Referee		
Address		
Mobile		Date: DD/MM/YY
Email Address		

Would you recommend this person to work with children or young people under the age of 18 as a Tutor, Teacher, Junior Youth Animator, or assistant?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Please tick one box

If you have answered no, we will contact you in confidence.

I confirm that the details I have provided are accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Signature: _____ **Date:** DD/MM/YYYY

Reference completed while acting as (please tick one):

- ☐ Auxiliary Board member
- ☐ Regional Coordinator
- ☐ Cluster Coordinator
- ☐ Training Institute Board member
- ☐ National Spiritual Assembly member

This form is to be submitted to the Registration Officer. Please send to: Finbar Loftus, 55 Thorndale, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal F92K49K or email to registrationofficer@bahai.ie

Guidance Notes for Local Assemblies for the Registration Process

To work with Under 18s and Vulnerable Adults on behalf of the National Spiritual Assembly an individual must:

1. Apply for Garda Vetting

- The applicant **must** contact the Garda Vetting Officer, at gardavetting@bahai.ie for the Inviter Form and guidance notes for Garda Vetting.
- The applicant prints a copy of the **Inviter Form** and completes it as outlined in the guidance notes (see copy attached below).
- **One of the officers of the Local Spiritual Assembly should:**
 - **verify the two forms of ID that the applicant has provided, initial and date these copies**
 - **sign off on the Inviter Form**
- The applicant should then post the Inviter Form and the signed copy of the IDs to the Garda Vetting Officer

2. Apply to be Registered

- Once Garda Vetting has been received, the applicant must then contact the Registration Officer, by email at registrationofficer@bahai.ie. They will receive a copy of the registration form and the guidance notes for registration.
- The applicant prints a copy of the **Registration Form** and completes as outlined in the guidance note (see copy attached below)
- The applicant **posts** the Registration Form, along with their TUSLA certificate to the registration officer.

3. References

- On receipt of the Registration Form the Registrar contacts the referee(s) provided by the applicant to request a reference.

4. Registration Certificate

- The registration officer will issue the applicant with a CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION. This Certificate is proof that they are registered to work with Under 18s and Vulnerable Adults on behalf of the National Spiritual Assembly in whatever capacity is needed.
- **For Local Spiritual Assemblies:**
 - **This certificate should be requested from any individual who is asked to or is working with under 18s or vulnerable adults as proof that the individual is registered to work with under 18s and vulnerable adults.**
 - **The assembly should keep a copy of that certificate only. No other documentation is required to be kept as proof.**

- **Garda Vetting and Registration are valid for 3 years only from date of issue.**
- **If the certificate expires, the individual is no longer allowed to work with under 18s and vulnerable adults.**

National Spiritual Assembly of Ireland
Code of Conduct for Child Safeguarding
Policy Version 6.5 – July 2025

Code of Conduct for those working with children and young people under 18

Teachers, animators, tutors and all involved in working with children and young people under 18 should observe the following in relation to their interactions with them:

- Make every effort to create an environment where all children feel welcomed, valued and respected.
- Demonstrate respect for spiritual, moral and cultural values, for diversity, social justice, freedom and the environment amongst others.
- Show empathy in practice, using restorative techniques in situations where children may need to be disciplined.
- Be sensitive to the risks involved in participating in contact sports or other activities.
- Be aware that while physical contact is a valid way of comforting, reassuring and showing concern for children, it should only take place when it is acceptable to all persons concerned.
- Never physically punish or be in any way verbally abusive to a child, nor should they even tell jokes of a sexual nature in the presence of children.
- Be sensitive to the possibility of developing favouritism, or of becoming over involved or spending a great deal of time with any one child.
- *It is not recommended that Teachers/Animators/Tutors or Assistants give lifts in their cars to individual young people, especially for long journeys.*
- The personal space, safety and privacy of individuals must be respected.

Code of Conduct for Children and Young People who are under 18

- Children should demonstrate and have respect for their fellow class/group members.
- Children should support each other in the activities undertaken by the class/group.
- The personal space, safety and privacy of individuals must be respected.
- Children should be encouraged to report cases of bullying to either their Teachers/Animators/Tutors or Assistants. These situations will need to be addressed in the class or group.
- The following behaviour will not be accepted in the class or group:
 - the consumption of alcohol, the use of drugs and smoking during the activities of the class or group whether within the confines of the building or otherwise.
 - the physical abuse of other members, teachers, animators or assistants
 - the verbal abuse including “put-downs” of other, members, teachers, animators or assistants either directly or electronically e.g. by using mobile phones, social media etc.
 - the destruction or damage of property or equipment.

Should a situation arise where a child's behaviour severely disrupts the proceedings of the class/group, to the detriment of other children involved, then a parent will be called to come and collect them. In a case where the parent cannot collect the child, the teacher, animator, tutor or assistant may remove the child from the class but stay with the child. The parent will be called immediately and informed of the situation. Consultation will then take place between the teacher/animator and the child's parents to resolve the situation in a positive manner.