

Comhaltas in Britain Safeguarding Policy 2024 Revision

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COMHALTAS
in Britain



Safeguarding Policy and Guidelines for working with Children, Youth & Vulnerable Adults

Policy as adopted by
Provincial Council of Comhaltas in Britain

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Safeguarding Policy

Comhaltas in Britain

This policy highlights the procedures and standards that Comhaltas in Britain demands of its members to ensure a safe environment for everyone.

It should be utilised for all Comhaltas in Britain activities e.g. weekly classes, events, residential activities and overseas trips.

For the purposes of this document:-

- “Cathaoirleach” - Refers to the head of each unit of Comhaltas in Britain
- “Volunteer” - Refers to a person who is involved in the running of Comhaltas in Britain
- “Staff” - Refers to a person who is employed by Comhaltas in Britain
- “Worker” - Refers to a person who is carrying out a task for Comhaltas in Britain and may be either a volunteer or member of staff
- “CCÉ” - Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann
- “Comhaltas” - Comhaltas in Britain
- “CIB” - Comhaltas in Britain



Safeguarding Policy

Comhaltas in Britain is committed to taking every appropriate step to ensure the safety and wellbeing of everyone in our organisation, regardless of class, gender, race, creed or any other characteristics.

Comhaltas in Britain have a 'Zero Tolerance' policy with regard to abuse, intimidation, bullying (physical or emotional), racism & sexist behaviour directed to anyone.

All Comhaltas in Britain volunteers and employees must be aware of this policy and it is their duty to guarantee its implementation.

Comhaltas in Britain Mission:

"Bringing a community of all ages together to learn, share, and experience the music and culture of Ireland"

"Our vision is a world where Irish music and culture is open to all, and celebrated as a valued part of Britain's cultural heritage"

The policy states:

"All children, young people and vulnerable adults should enjoy Comhaltas facilities and activities without fear of physical, emotional, sexual or any other form of abuse or neglect"

This policy has been reviewed and approved by the Provincial Council of Britain on _____ and will be reviewed each year

Safeguarding Policy

Principles of Good Practice

The following is a summary of the principles of good practice for the protection of children & vulnerable adults which all units of Comhaltas in Britain must adhere to:

1. Comhaltas in Britain strive to promote the general welfare, health and personal development of individuals and protect them from harm of all kinds.
2. Comhaltas in Britain recognise that children, young people and vulnerable adults have rights as individuals and treat them with dignity and respect.
3. Comhaltas in Britain will respond appropriately in relation to concerns, allegations, incidents and disclosures of alleged abuse.
4. Comhaltas in Britain shall stay abreast of emerging technologies and web based programs and applications to ensure that all members can enjoy all of what Comhaltas in Britain has to offer in a safe and secure environment.
5. Comhaltas shall ensure best practice with regards to photography & videography.
6. This policy should be reviewed every year and amendments are to be adopted by Provincial Council of Comhaltas in Britain where appropriate.



Roles & Responsibilities

Social Services Departments:

Social Services departments have a statutory duty to investigate any case where they receive information suggesting that a child, young person or vulnerable adult may be in need of care, protection or control unless satisfied that such inquiries are unnecessary. Their objective is to ensure the safety and welfare of the child, young person or vulnerable adult by providing support services to them where necessary. They also have a lead role in co-ordinating the work of all the appropriate agencies and professionals concerned with the individuals family.

Staff & Volunteers:

Whilst the primary responsibility for the protection of children and vulnerable adults from abuse lies with Social Services, all staff and volunteers who come in to contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults have a duty to help protect them from abuse or the risk of abuse.

When volunteers see signs which cause them concern, they may have the opportunity to talk to the individual with tact and sympathy. They should not enquire too deeply or carry out an examination. If the individual's responses do not dispel any suspicions, or if it is impossible to talk to the individual, then volunteers & staff should make their concerns known to the appropriate Designated Liaison Person(s) (DLP(s)).

Safeguarding Policy

Designated Liaison Persons (DLP's)

Each Branch of Comhaltas in Britain & each Region of Comhaltas in Britain should appoint 2 Designated Liaison Persons - preference being one male & one female.

The Provincial Council of Comhaltas in Britain should also appoint 2 Designated Liaison Persons - preference being one male, one female.

The Designated Liaison Persons (DLP's):

1. Will be responsible to the committee of the unit to which they have been appointed.
2. Have a key role to play in many of the practices outlined in this document.
3. Have a responsibility to the Office Bearers to encourage all units of the organisation to comply with the standards and practices outlined in this document.
4. Have a responsibility for updating information on relevant issues and monitoring (via the Cathaoirleach) the effectiveness of this policy.
5. Maintain a network of contacts within relevant authorities such as Social Services, relevant Police departments, NHS, ascertaining contact names and phone numbers.
6. Report any matters which have arisen to the Provincial Safeguarding Officer (Currently Paddy Callaghan) so that the Province are aware of any safeguarding issues which exist within the Province.



General Standards & Practice

Standard:

1. To value each individual, recognising their individuality and seek to develop their potential and maximise their contribution to the organisation and to society as a whole.
2. To help individuals develop and grow using methods appropriate to their age and stage of development.
3. To encourage young people to be involved in the management and planning of the activities in which they participate.
4. To treat individuals with respect and to encourage them to do likewise in their relationships with others.
5. To choose and train CIB volunteers whose contribution to the organisation will be positive and in keeping with the standards promoted by CIB Provincial Council.
8. To use appropriate language with individuals and encourage them to speak to each other in ways which build up dignity and mutual respect.
9. To avoid and discourage put-downs and disparaging remarks. and be respectful and mindful of how people wish to be addressed
10. To have programmes which are appropriate and planned well in advance.
11. To have adequate leadership in terms of child/adult ratios as determined by health & safety standards for activities.
12. To ensure that there are emergency contact details and relevant medical information, photographic consent, for each child, young person & vulnerable adult.
12. To be aware of parents/guardians arrangements for delivering and collecting of children and young people from CIB activities and to generally maintain good communication with parents.

Safeguarding Policy

Practice: Comhaltas in Britain Needs To

1. Keep an updated list of members in line with the CIB Data Protection policy
2. Make available copies of the Safeguarding Policy to each unit of the organisation within Britain
3. Ensure that each volunteer and member should have access to the CIB “Safeguarding Policy” and be familiar with its contents. They should know who to contact if neglect or abuse is suspected, or if a complaint is made and what basic procedures to follow.
4. Each worker must complete an appropriate application form which is to be kept on file - in line with the CIB Data Protection Policy
5. Each group needs to plan its programme with safety in mind.
6. Each group should use the appropriate permission forms for activities and outings, and complete accident reports as and when necessary adhering to the CIB Data Protection Policy



Contact with Children & Vulnerable Individuals

Standard - Volunteers & Staff must avoid:

1. Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children or vulnerable adults away from others. A worker should never be alone with a child/vulnerable individual unless they are in the sight of others.
2. Taking children/vulnerable individuals alone on car journeys, however short.
3. Taking children/vulnerable individuals to a workers home
4. Using physical force to remove a child/vulnerable individual unless:
It is for the child/vulnerable individuals safety or
you are concerned for the safety of persons or property.

When occasions arise where these situations are unavoidable, they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of the leader in charge and/or the child/vulnerable individuals parent/guardian.

Volunteers & Staff should never:

1. Engage in rough games with children or vulnerable individuals
2. Engage in sexually provocative games/contact/bahaviour/discussion.
3. Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
4. Use corporal punishment.
5. Allow any individual to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
6. Make sexually suggestive comments about or to anyone - even deemed to be in a humorous nature.
7. Allow an allegation made by a child to go unchallenged or unrecorded.
8. Sleep in a room with children without at least one other worker or adult being present.
9. Establish relationships with participants which may have sexual overtones.

Safeguarding Policy

Practice

Each group should maintain the following worker to child ratios (allowing for a minimum of 2 leaders at all times). Additional staff may be required to cope with the demands of high risk activities using the following ratios of number of leaders per children at different ages

Approximate Age Range	Number of leaders	Number of children
2-3	1	4
3-6	1	4
6-11	1	8
11-18	1	8

When a group consists of both males and females, the staffing should ideally reflect the composition of the participants.

The standards set out above must be maintained and followed at all times.

Please note the CIB management expects volunteers to act with sensitivity and self-control when working with all age groups. Those engaged in CIB Work need to recognise the issues of power and responsibility. It is CIB practice that volunteers do not misuse their role by taking advantage of participants of any age and establishing 'personal relationships'.



Appointment of Workers/Volunteers

Standard

Comhaltas in Britain branches / groups should employ an open recruitment process and all appointments should only be made based on the merits of individual applicants. For the well-being and protection of programme participants, all potential staff and volunteers must be vetted prior to their appointment or involvement in activities. Full appointment procedures should be carried out as per the guidelines recommended below and in the the appendix “Guidelines for recruitment and management of volunteers and workers”.

Practice

1. Each potential worker should be made fully aware of all duties and responsibilities pertaining to the appointment and the Comhaltas in Britain Safeguarding Policy.
2. References should be obtained and checked, including at least one from a former employer (where applicable).
3. Workers involved in regulated activity must be vetted through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in England & Wales, and Disclosure Scotland in Scotland (based on where activity takes place).
4. All appointments, probationary periods and work reviews should be sanctioned and minuted by at least one of the following: a full branch meeting / branch sub-committee for staff and volunteers / full meeting of the management committee.
5. All appointments should be confirmed in writing.
6. Potential workers should be assured of confidentiality.
7. Each worker or volunteer should serve a probationary period.
8. A training needs assessment should be undertaken before the end of the probationary period.
9. An induction process should be followed for each new worker/volunteer - arranged by the committee.
10. An inexperienced new worker may initially be required to assume an assisting role with an experienced worker.
11. Safeguarding training must be provided.

Safeguarding Policy

Suitability - All new workers/volunteers must agree to/fit within the following conditions.

1. Agreement with the aims & purposes of Comhaltas in Britain
2. Have no criminal convictions for offences likely to endanger children or vulnerable adults.
3. Previous experience of working with children & vulnerable adults is seen as favourable.
4. Commitment to treat all people as individuals with equal concern
5. Be physically able to cope with the role to which he/she will undertake.
6. Commit to undergo training.
7. Commit to work within a team environment.
8. Commit to recognise the importance of child/vulnerable individual safeguarding & the authority of line management.



Responding to Accidents / Incidents

Standard

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

Practice

1. When on outside activities, a leader trained in Emergency First Aid should be in attendance.
2. A telephone (mobile) should be accessible wherever a group meets. Every leader should know how to access this facility. Notice of the nearest telephone should be clearly displayed.
3. Emergency numbers should be displayed prominently.
4. Professional help should be sought if and when the trained First Aider cannot help or if further assistance is required when the First Aider can do no more.
5. A First Aid box should be provided at each location. Professional advice should be sought on contents.
6. The worker in charge of the group must inform the Cathaoirleach of any accidents/incidents at the earliest possible opportunity.
7. The worker in charge of the group must ensure that the child/vulnerable adult's parent/guardian is immediately notified of any accidents/incidents.
8. The worker in charge of the group must record all details of accidents in the Accident Book and also obtain witness statements within 24 hours.
9. Identify cause of the accident/incident and prevent re-occurrence.

Trips and Residential Activities

Standard:

All trips and residential activities must be thoroughly planned and documented in advance including a risk assessment with all the relevant information accessible to all parties involved.

Practice

1. Parents/guardians must be informed in writing of the arrangements for any trip to be taken outside of the normal venue.
2. The worker in charge must obtain from parents, their prior written consent to the participation of their child and a completed copy of the health form prior to departure.
3. A copy of the trip information form should be forwarded to the cathaoirleach and or secretary.
4. Copies of the consent and health forms must be forwarded to the cathaoirleach or held by an appropriate contact person.

Residential Activities

1. All trips and residential activities will be subject to all the policies and guidelines of Comhaltas in Britain including but not limited to this document at all times.
2. Each residential should have at least two leaders in charge, preferably 1 male & 1 female. There should be at least one leader to every 8 young people.
3. Leaders must ensure that males and females have different sleeping rooms. In exceptional circumstances, workers must be sensitive to the needs of individuals and monitor situations carefully.
4. Young people participating should have their privacy respected by other participants e.g. rooms, changing rooms, showers e.t.c.
5. Staff members (workers) must always use common sense and sensitivity and not leave themselves open to allegations of sexual misconduct. For example:
 - Do not enter rooms without permission.
 - Do not enter changing rooms without permission.
 - Do not enter showers without permission.
 - Always knock or call out and ask permission before entering areas where people may be changing.



Definition of Child/Vulnerable Individual Abuse

“Child / Vulnerable individual abuse is a violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by any other person or persons”

“Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal, or psychological, it may be an act of neglect or an omission to act, or it may occur when a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented, or cannot consent.”

Standard

Workers should recognise that abuse may take one of a number of forms. Whilst staff members and volunteers are not expected to be able to diagnose abuse, it is sensible to be appraised of the range and possible indicators involved.

Practice

Applying the guidelines outlined in this policy for all Comhaltas in Britain activities will ensure that no harm is brought to any individual whilst undertaking CIB activity. But it must also be noted that workers have the responsibility to recognise markers of abuse which may not have been carried out during CIB activity, but have had a negative effect on the individual in question. Offering support to a person perceived to be in this situation may appropriate.

Safeguarding Policy

Responding to Allegations, Disclosures, or Concerns of Abuse

Standard

A worker who has a concern and/or receives an allegation or disclosure of abuse must not independently investigate the incident but must immediately report the matter to the activity organiser and the cathaoirleach. Any independent investigation could well aggravate the situation or 'invalidate' any disclosure. Everyone working with children/vulnerable adults has a duty to report suspected, alleged or confirmed incidents of abuse.

Practice

1. If a child/vulnerable adult makes a disclosure or allegation to a worker or volunteer, the worker or volunteer must make it clear that someone else will need to be told. Do not promise confidentiality. Do not make any other promises. Do accept the validity of the disclosure and try to remain as objective as possible.
2. The worker must document the disclosure / allegations as soon afterwards as possible to maintain accuracy. Note any 'advice' given to the child/vulnerable adult.
3. The worker must not ask any specific questions of the child/vulnerable adult before, during or after the disclosure as this may invalidate any allegations if the questions are of a leading nature.
4. Report immediately to the worker in charge who will in turn report the incident to the DLP(s) within the branch. The DLP(s) then have a duty to pass on the information to the relevant authorities or Police.



Guidelines for avoiding false allegations

Whilst the first priority of care lies with the wellbeing of all individuals especially children and vulnerable adults, there are instances where allegations of inappropriate behaviour are made without any basis. By following these recommendations, you will minimise the potential for this to happen to you.

In the event of any injury to a child/vulnerable individual, accidental or otherwise, ensure that the incident is recorded and witnessed by another adult.

Keep records of any allegations a child/vulnerable individual makes against you. Use the incident form to record dates and times.

Have another adult witness the allegation if possible. If you are in a school or residential setting, take the individual to the leader in charge and explain what happened. A record of that meeting should be kept.

If a child/vulnerable individual touches you in an inappropriate way, record what happened and ensure that another adult is also informed. It could be a totally innocent touch, so do not make the individual feel uncomfortable. However, remember that ignoring this or allowing it to go on, may place you in an untenable situation at a later stage.

Do not place yourself in a situation where you are spending excessive amounts of time alone with one young person away from other people. If you are speaking one to one, ensure that the door to the room is kept open at all times and try to stay in eyesight of other adults.

Safeguarding Policy

If you are in a residential setting, never under any circumstances take a child/vulnerable individual in to your bedroom. It is unwise to take children/vulnerable adults in your car alone.

It is unwise to take children/vulnerable individuals to your home, as they could then describe rooms, furnishings e.t.c. which may form the basis of a future allegation regarding a time when they were not present in your home.

Never do something of a personal nature for children/vulnerable adults that they can do for themselves.

Do not extend hugs or kisses to children/vulnerable individuals. This might be particularly relevant to those working with special needs children. Though we want to give love and attention to children, this guideline is important not only for a worker's protection, but also for the individuals as well.

When taking children/vulnerable individuals on an outing, think of how you appear to the public when dealing with them.

If you are suspicious of abuse by a colleague, peer, or any other person, you must disclose this to the Cathaoirleach and the DLP(s). If there is an attempted cover-up, you could be implicated by your silence.

Always inform people of any uneasiness or fears you may experience during your work with young people/vulnerable individuals.



Information on Disclosure

If a child/vulnerable adult gives an indication that he/she may want to tell you about a problem you should:

1. Arrange a time and place where you can talk privately as soon as possible after the individual has initiated contact - remember to do this within sight of others.
2. Stay calm and reassuring
3. Explain that you cannot promise to keep what the individual tells you a secret
4. Listen to and do not dismiss what the child/vulnerable adult tells you - Explain that whatever the circumstances, he/she has support
5. Do not press for details - some cases of abuse need further and possible extensive investigation. It is better for the individual if he/she does not have to repeat details unnecessarily.
6. Ask the individual whether he/she has told anyone else
7. If the individual hasn't, ask him/her to think about who would be a good person to tell
8. Tell the individual that you will help them to tell that person
9. Explain that there are other people whom you might have to contact. Who these people are will depend on the situation and how the disclosure will fit within the overall policy
10. Do not make promises to the individual - the situation may cause you to react emotionally and cause you to make promises, which cannot, in the event, be fulfilled.
11. Tell the individual that you are pleased that he/she has decided to tell someone, and that he/she was absolutely right to tell.
12. Let the individual know that you believe them and understand how difficult it is to talk about such experiences.

A wide range of possible situations can fall into the category of a disclosure/allegation. Because it is impossible to know in advance what an individual will say, it is advisable to always follow the suggestions given above. Children will probably tell you about incidents involving bullying or bribes perhaps from peers



Whilst they may have been important enough for the child to tell you about them, they may require no further action.

In cases where the individual is at risk or the disclosure is obviously of a serious nature, you will need to follow the procedure as dictated by Comhaltas.

You are not expected to be a therapist, but because the individual has chosen to talk to you and because you have listened and believed, you have already helped the individual. Many victims of abuse state that having the first person they told to be supportive was the first step in recovering from their experience.

After you have talked with the individual, follow the procedure laid down for reporting such incidents.

In the event of disclosure, you should be:

1. Reassuring
2. Empowering
3. Advising
4. Supporting
5. Listening
6. Non-Judgemental
7. Referring
8. Affirming
9. Following up

If it is understood that a person has harmed a child or vulnerable individual, or placed them at risk or harm, refer to the reporting arrangements and if necessary a referral may be made to the DBS / Disclosure Scotland / Police.

In the case of an allegation/disclosure involving one of the Designated Liaison Persons (DLP(s)) the staff/volunteer should report this to the Provincial Council DLP or the most senior DLP available.

Contact information for referral services for further information where required:

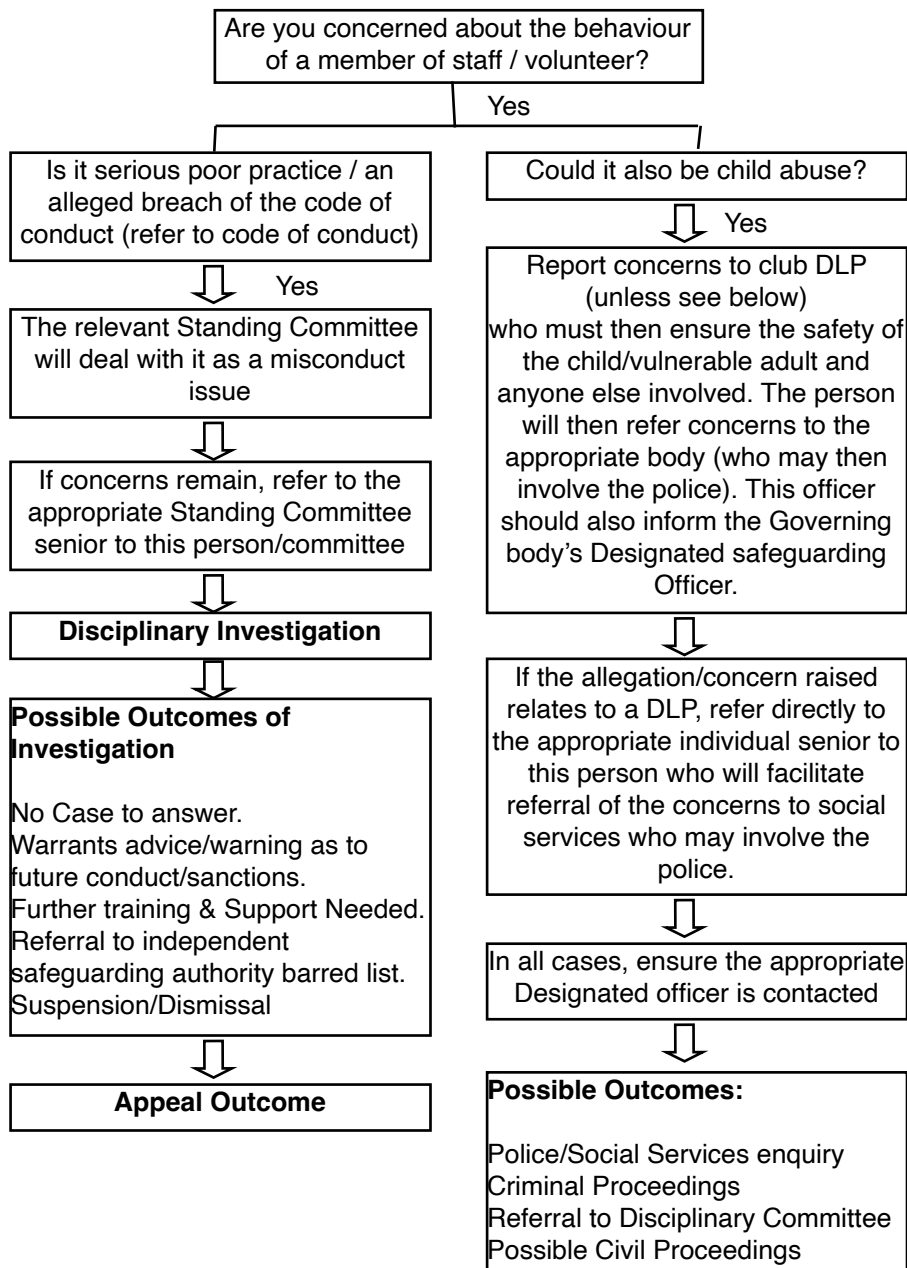
Disclosure & Barring Service (England & Wales Only)
Telephone: 03000 200 190

Disclosure Scotland (Scotland Only)
Telephone: 0870 609 6006
Mon-Fri 8am-6pm

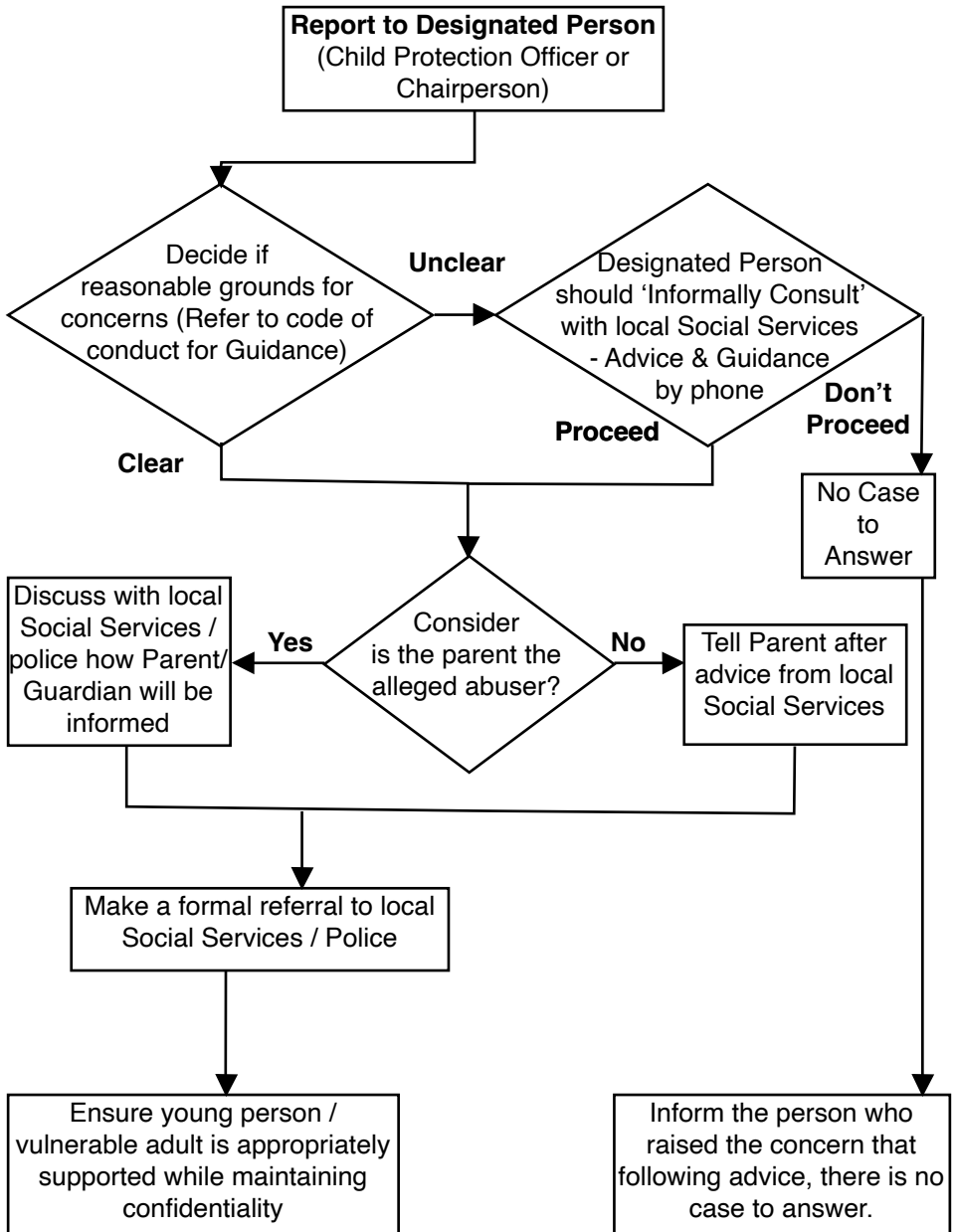


Internal Concerns Flow Chart

To be displayed at all Branch Locations

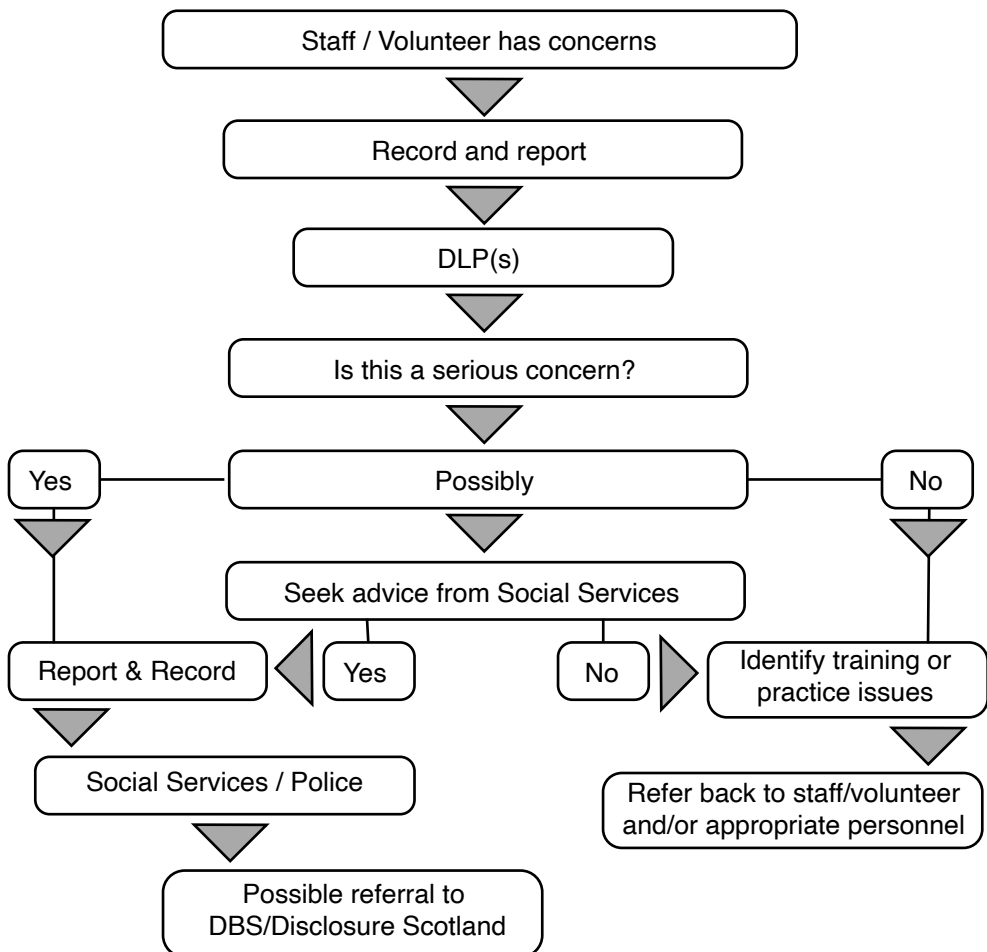


(When the concern is about possible abuse outside the organisation)



Reporting Arrangements

The first time you notice any signs or symptoms, you may be very shocked, Try not to convey this shock to the child, especially if they are telling you about the problem. Remain calm, listen to and observe the child. Trust your own judgement. When you are confronted with behaviour or development that is not within the normal range, and particularly if you suspect abuse, inform the DLP(s) within the branch who will seek professional advice



Safeguarding Policy

Guidelines for Recruitment and Management of Workers

Have your prospective staff and volunteers completed the Volunteer and Worker Application form?

Did They?

- * Indicate their interests and any other voluntary activities in which they are involved?
- * Supply names of two referees, who are not family members?
- * Sign the declaration of past convictions or cases pending?

Did You?

- * Give them a written assurance of confidentiality?
- * Check their references provided in the application form?
- * Give them a copy of the induction package for staff and volunteers? which should include:
 - * CIB Safeguarding Policy
 - * Volunteer Handbook
 - * Information on the Principals & Policies of Comhaltas
 - * Written guidelines about their specific duties
 - * Make them aware of the complaints procedure that exists within your unit?

Induction Process - Before you appoint/approve you should:

- * Approve and minute all appointments at a unit meeting.
- * Obtain clearance from DBS/Disclosure Scotland if necessary
- * Confirm the appointment in writing.
- * Organise for supervision and support assistance for all staff and volunteers. This should be followed up with a review.
- * Have in place a system to monitor concerns/complaints when they are brought to your attention.
- * Ensure they have attended child/vulnerable adult training within the last 3 years
- * Convene a training needs assessment during the probationary period of each appointment.



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