

Parents and carers have a right and a responsibility to ensure that children are safe at all times

Many activities are supported by volunteers who generously give their time to provide regular activities for your child.

Now, more than ever, to ensure the safety of children, groups will be requesting the involvement of parents to assist them.

GET INVOLVED

Organisations have a responsibility not to discriminate, to be open and welcoming and to share information about themselves and their activities. Whether workers are paid or unpaid you should expect good standards from all organisations in relation to the safety and welfare of children.



For further information and training in relation to safe practices with children, please contact:

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Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive



Keeping Children Safe

Helping parents and carers choose safe services and activities for children



There are growing numbers of services and groups providing activities for children. Crèches and pre-school services are notified to the Health Services Executive. However, all services and groups have a duty of care when working with children.

It is important that parents know that their children are safe and will be treated positively when they are involved in services and activities.



Children have a right to have fun and be safe

What should you check out?

A good organisation will welcome questions about their activities and the policies and practices they have with children.

All organisations should have a child protection policy, in line with *Children First National Guidelines for the protection and welfare of children*, which includes statements on, and guidelines about, keeping children safe. The policy should cover the following areas.

Are the Staff and Volunteers suitable to work with children?

All staff and volunteers should go through a proper recruitment procedure which includes interviews, references, and where possible, Garda vetting. (Guidance in relation to this is outlined in Our Duty to Care, The Principles of Good Practice For The Protection of Children And Young People).

Is there a written code of behaviour?

A written code of behaviour should ensure that children will be treated positively and would outline that children should not be verbally abused or demeaned. It should advise staff and volunteers to work in open environments with children.

How does the organisation manage staff and volunteers?

There should always be someone in charge who supervises staff and volunteers and makes sure that they know what their role and responsibilities are.

Do they offer regular training to staff and volunteers?

Apart from skills training, all workers should have training in child protection.

How can children and their parents or carers voice concerns?

Organisations should have a complaints procedure in place. If you have concerns:

- Speak to the person in charge.
- If you are unhappy with the response make a formal written complaint to the head of the organisation or group.

Does the organisation know how to refer concerns to the HSE about children's welfare?

Each group/organisation is being asked to have a designated person and procedure for responding to Child Protection and Welfare Concerns. The designated person is responsible for seeking advice from the HSE if they have concerns about a child's safety or welfare.

How does the organisation provide for intimate care needs? In the case of very young children, or those with a disability, there should be agreed arrangements with parents and children around their personal care needs.

What are the arrangements when children go on outings? You should be informed of all arrangements, including transport, for every outing, and your consent should be requested.

Does the organisation have Insurance Cover?

All groups should have insurance cover for all activities which they are undertaking which will outline appropriate adult to children ratios.

Does the organisation promote ongoing consultation with parents and young people? All organisations should provide activities that openly encourage parental involvement.

WHAT SHOULD YOU BE WARY OF?

- Activities where parents are discouraged from staying to watch or becoming involved.
- Behaviour that encourages rough play, humiliating punishments or bullying.
- Individuals who take charge and operate independently of organisational guidelines.
- Individuals who show favouritism or personally reward specific children.
- Encouragement of inappropriate physical contact.
- Poor communication and lack of parental involvement, leaving you feeling uneasy.
- Children who drop out or stop going to activities for no apparent reason.
- Invitations for children to spend time alone with staff or volunteers.

REMEMBER:

Listen to your children and ask questions about the activities they take part in.