

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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1 – INTRODUCTION

Whilst Dublin 15 Community Broadcasting Cooperative Society t/a Phoenix FM owes a duty of care to all its staff, volunteers and interns, it also has a particular responsibility to safeguard the welfare of any individual under the age of eighteen (defined by the Child Care Act 1991 as a “child” – this excludes a person who is or has been married), provide them with the highest possible standard of care in order to promote their well-being and safeguard them from harm. This responsibility applies whether that child is a volunteer with the Station or is otherwise under the care or supervision of Phoenix FM staff, volunteers or interns, hereafter referred to collectively as Station personnel.

Children may be present on Station premises or under the supervision or direction of Station personnel in a wide number of circumstances including for example:

- Volunteers under the age of eighteen (18)
- Attending open days as potential volunteers
- Attending training
- Attending summer camps
- Using recording facilities
- Work experience placements or temporary employees
- Attending interviews for work experience placements
- Brought on site by parents during school holidays
- As contributors to programmes

Children may be accompanied by a responsible adult, e.g. a teacher or parent, but in other circumstances they may be unaccompanied.

There can be a misunderstanding as to why strict policies need to be put in place. This Policy is about good practices for children, young people, service users and adult voluntary members of Phoenix FM. It is necessary for children, young people and adult members to have clear boundaries and a good understanding of why Child Protection Policy must be in force.

Participation in Phoenix FM activities, events, training and programming offers children and young people the opportunity for formal and informal education in communications, media training, personal development, social skills and community participation.

This Child Protection Policy ensures good practice and high standards in working with children and young people throughout all our services. It is mandatory for all staff, volunteers, interns and board members to be fully familiar with this policy, its contents and the meaning of such.

2 – LEGAL BACKGROUND

The main legislation governing the care and protection of children is the Child Care Act 1991. The Domestic Violence Act, 1996, Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998, Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse Act 2000 and the Sex Offenders Act 2001 are also relevant to child protection and welfare.

Pre-employment and pre-engagement (in the case of volunteers) checking for organisations in Ireland is carried out through the Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU). Due to the small number of staff in the employment of Phoenix FM, the Station's Garda Vetting applications are handled by Fingal Volunteer Centre (FVC) who then deal directly with the GCVU. When the GCVU receives a vetting request, a check is conducted and within current disclosure policy, details of all convictions and/or prosecutions, successful or not, pending or completed, in the State or elsewhere as the case may be are disclosed to the authorised liaison person in the registered organisation.

3 – DEFINITIONS

A number of terms are used quite frequently in this document. In order to make sure that there is no misunderstanding the following are some definitions:

- “Child” or “Young Person” means a person less than 18 years excluding a person who is or has been married.
- “Children First” – the National Guidelines for the protection and welfare of children issued by the Department of Health and Children, 1999.
- “Our Duty to Care” – the National principles of good practice for the protection of children and young people issued by the Department of Health and Children, 2002.
- “The Child Protection Officer” means the person appointed to oversee the implementation and use of the policy.
- “The Act” refers to The Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998.
- “Station” refers to Dublin 15 Community Broadcasting Cooperative Society t/a Phoenix FM.
- “Station personnel” means voluntary member, employed staff, including all volunteers and temporary workers, paid employees - in fact all who, at times, share in the work of Phoenix FM.
- “Statutory Authorities” refers to the HSE which is the statutory body responsible for the safety and welfare of children and the Garda Síochána who are empowered under legislation to investigate these matters.
- “Sex Offenders Act” refers to the Sex Offenders Act 2001.

Both the terms “abuse” and “harm” are used regularly in the context of child protection. The Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse Act, 2000 (Appendix A) defines “abuse” in relation to a child as:

- the wilful, reckless or negligent infliction of physical injury on, or failure to prevent such injury to, the child,
- the use of the child by a person for sexual arousal or sexual gratification of that person or another person,
- failure to care for the child which results in serious impairment of the physical or mental health or development of the child or serious adverse effects on his or her behaviour or welfare, or
- any other act or omission towards the child which results in serious impairment of the physical or mental health or development of the child or serious adverse effects on his or her behaviour or welfare

4 – STATEMENT OF POLICY

Phoenix FM is fully committed to safeguarding the well-being of all the children and young people with whom we work. Our Policy on Child Protection is in accordance with “Children First – National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children – 1999” which was published by the Dept. of Health and Children. Phoenix FM is committed to promoting the rights of the child including the participation of children and young people in matters that affect them.

5 – AIM OF POLICY

The aim of this Policy is to promote best practice in Child Protection within the Station, and to set out a procedural framework to ensure that:

- The Station protects children under its care or supervision
- To prevent the physical, sexual, emotional and neglectful abuse of children
- Station personnel are equipped to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues
- Station management and board are equipped to make appropriate decisions in the event of specific child protection concerns arising
- To endeavour to protect those who work with children from the consequences of unfounded accusations.
- The Station takes proactive steps in recruitment and in other areas to minimise risk with regard to child protection.

Phoenix FM must ensure:

Directors: Rachel Devlin (Chair), Mairead Murphy (Vice Chair), David Hughes (Secretary), Sarah Devitt (Treasurer), Jim Connell (Community Representative), Colman Duggan, Paul Hosford (Volunteer Representative), Jeff Murphy, Daniel Pitcher.
Dublin 15 Community Broadcasting Co-operative Society Ltd. Reg no. 4611R

- Allegations made or concerns reported by children or others to Phoenix FM personnel are dealt with appropriately by the station. Such allegations will be reported to the HSE and An Garda Síochána.
- All station personnel who work with children have sufficient clearance following Garda Vetting

Station personnel have a responsibility at all times to:

- Refrain from any inappropriate behaviour towards children
- Avoid situations which could give rise to allegations of abuse
- Report bullying of children
- Report disclosures of abuse or concerns they may have that a child may have been subject to abuse
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality

Any Station personnel found to have committed any act of abuse towards a child will be subject to disciplinary proceedings and that person may also be the subject of criminal proceedings as determined by An Garda Síochána /DPP.

In addition any Station personnel found by Phoenix FM to have inappropriate images of children (or inappropriate verbal or electronic communications with children) will be subject to disciplinary proceedings and the Station will inform the An Garda Síochána and other statutory agencies as appropriate. Anyone with concerns in this regard about a member of staff, volunteer, intern or board member must report the matter to the Designated Child Protection Officer (Station Manager). In the event that such a concern is related to the Child Protection Officer, it must be instead raised with the Chair of the Board of Phoenix FM.

6 – SCOPE OF POLICY

This Policy addresses all aspects of child protection within the work of Phoenix FM. For the purposes of this Policy, the term “Station personnel” is used to describe anyone at the Station who is engaged in working with children, whether as an employee, intern, volunteer or Board member. The policy applies to any Station personnel who are engaged in working with children. Where other policies exist within Phoenix FM they are applicable only in addition to this policy and do not reduce any of the safe guards which exist in this policy. Garda vetting is an integral requirement for all Station personnel.

7 – IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

7.1 Phoenix FM will ensure that this Policy and appropriate procedures are implemented, disseminated and kept under review.

7.2 The Board of Management or its delegated authority will review this Policy and related Procedures on a three-yearly basis from the time of full implementation¹, or when required by changes in law, in addition to examining the work of the Designated Child Protection Officer. The Board or its delegated authority must satisfy itself that this Policy and the Procedures are fit for purpose and that the Designated Child Protection Officer duties are being discharged satisfactorily. The Policy, Procedures and related arrangements shall be revised where necessary to facilitate the effective implementation of this Child Protection Policy and to reflect changes in Child Protection law when they occur.

7.3 Training

Station personnel will be trained appropriately in child protection procedures. The Designated Child Protection Officer will work with line management to identify specific groups of staff, students and volunteers who may require training.

8 – PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

8.1 A number of principles of good practice have been set out in Children First and Our Duty to Care.

These principles state that all voluntary organisations should:

- acknowledge the rights of children to be protected, treated with respect, listened to and have their views taken into consideration;
- adopt the safest possible practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and protect members from risk taking and leaving themselves open to accusations;
- adopt and consistently apply a safe and clearly defined method of recruiting, assessing and selecting staff and volunteers;
- provide child protection training for members. This should clarify the responsibilities of both organisations and individuals, and clearly show the procedures to be followed if child abuse is suspected;
- develop a policy of openness with parents that involves consulting them about everything that concerns their children, and encouraging them to get involved with the organisation wherever possible;
- remember that a child's age, gender and background affect the way they experience and understand what is happening to them;

¹ Full implementation occurs after a policy has been trialled over an initial six month period. A full review is carried out by the Board before the policy is fully implemented.

- ensure that training, programmes, instruction and projects are age appropriate as well as managed and carried out to high quality standards;
- ensure that members observe the boundaries between working relationships and friendships with young people since the breaching of boundaries often marks the beginning of inappropriate behaviour;
- appoint a 'Designated Child Protection Officer' who will provide any necessary information to the organisation, and any member who has child protection concerns, and who will also liaise with relevant outside agencies.

8.2 Phoenix FM is obliged to ensure good practice and high standards are properly maintained. Therefore, ensuring that Station personnel are fully aware of good practice is paramount. This includes:

- Creating an environment in which children are valued, encouraged and affirmed, have their rights respected and are treated as individuals.
- Valuing Station personnel and insisting on safe practices, eliminating the need for members to take risks and providing them with support and professional training.
- Ensuring Phoenix FM, as a provider of instruction and development to children, will work, to clearly defined practices, to ensure standards of good practice and management are retained at all levels of the organisation.
- Ensuring that premises and equipment of Phoenix FM adhere to Health and Safety standards. This includes heating, ventilation, washrooms, fire precautions, access to a phone and insurance.
- Following through selection procedures when recruiting Station personnel to Phoenix FM who will have access to young people. Ensuring that members can regularly avail of supervision and opportunities to raise any questions that they may have.

9 – PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

9.1 Where the Station becomes aware of an allegation of abuse the Designated Child Protection Officer will report the allegations to the HSE and An Garda Síochána without delay.

9.2 Station personnel may be subjected to erroneous or malicious allegations. Therefore any allegation of abuse will be dealt with sensitively and support will be provided for staff including counselling where necessary. The Station acknowledges the assumption of innocent until proven guilty. However, the primary goal is to protect the child while taking care to treat the specific member of Station personnel fairly.

9.3 Reporting of a Disclosure

When abuse is disclosed to a member of Station personnel, he or she must:

- Inform whoever has made the disclosure that the information cannot be kept completely confidential as it will have to be passed on to the Designated Child Protection Officer and appropriate authorities.
- Listen carefully to what is being said and record the details in writing as soon as possible ensuring that the record is kept safe and secure
- Inform the Designated Child Protection Officer about the disclosure immediately (not more than 24 hours afterwards). The matter will be treated as an urgent priority.
- Not take any further action or discuss the matter further with anyone else unless advised otherwise.

The person who made the original disclosure will be kept informed about the post-disclosure process, so that they can be reassured about what to expect. Where an adult makes a disclosure of abuse that occurred during his or her childhood, that disclosure must also be reported to the Designated Child Protection Officer, as the alleged abuser may still pose a risk to children.

9.4 It is of utmost importance that allegations are handled in a sensitive and discreet manner and anyone responding to a child making an allegation should take the following into consideration:

- Listen carefully and attentively to the child;
- Take what the child says earnestly;
- React in a calm manner as over-reaction may intimidate the child and increase any feelings of guilt or anxiety that he/she may have;
- Reassure the child that it was right to tell someone what happened;
- Conversation should be supportive and for the purpose of clarification. Never ask leading questions, do not seek immediate details beyond those volunteered by the child. Such questions could complicate the official investigation by the HSE or Gardaí;
- Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser to the person reporting to you;
- Do not confront the abuser;
- Reassure the child, but don't promise to keep it a secret;
- Explain and make sure the child understands what needs to be done next;
- Record the discussion as carefully as possible
- Make immediate contact with the Child Protection Officer who will advise you on what measures to take, and who will report to the appropriate authorities if in its remit to do so.

The one option not available is to do nothing.

9.5 Reporting of a Concern

Where abuse is not necessarily disclosed but a member of Station personnel is otherwise concerned that a child is being abused, he or she must: (i) Inform the Designated Child Protection Officer about their concern immediately. The matter will be treated as an urgent priority

(ii) Not take any further action or discuss the matter further with anyone else unless advised otherwise.

If the Station becomes aware of an allegation of abuse of a child or children by a member of Station personnel during the execution of their duties, the accused will be privately informed of the following:

- the fact that an allegation has been made against him/her
- the nature of the allegation
- the fact that the HSE and An Garda Síochána has been informed about the allegation

The member of Station personnel remains amenable to the relevant Station Disciplinary Procedure.

The following steps will also be taken:

- The member of Station personnel will be removed from unsupervised contact with children with immediate effect and will remain so until the HSE and An Garda Síochána inform the Station that it is in order to allow normal work to resume.

9.6 The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 makes provision for the protection from civil liability of persons who have reported child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith'. This protection applies to organisations as well as individuals. It is considered therefore that, in the first instance, it is organisations that employ staff or use volunteers that should assume responsibility for reporting child abuse to the appropriate authorities. The Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 states that a person shall not be liable to damages, who in good faith and acting reasonably reports in writing or otherwise to an appropriate person an opinion that:

(a) a child has been or is being assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused

or

(b) a child's health, development or welfare has been or is being avoidably impaired or neglected.

This Act provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse in good faith. A person, who reports an opinion in bad faith, knowing that statement to be false, shall be subject to criminal sanction i.e. a fine or imprisonment or both.

9.6 Reasonable grounds for forming an opinion that a child has been/ is being abused:

- i. Specific indication from the child that s/he was abused.
- ii. An account by the person who saw the child being abused.

iii. Evidence, such as injury or behaviour, which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way.

iv. An injury or behaviour, which is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a question of abuse. An example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour.

v. Consistent indication, over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

9.7 Once an individual becomes aware of or suspects child abuse, he/she shall immediately:

(a) keep a factual, confidential record of relevant observations, discussions and actions. This record should be signed, dated and stored in a secure place and should be kept in or transferred to the standard report form

and

(b) contact the Child Protection Officer who will then advise on the appropriate action to be taken. This may include the direct reporting of the allegation to an appropriate person as defined in the 1998 Act.

The consequences of failing to report an allegation or suspicion could far outweigh the risk of being wrong and might have very serious consequences for the child concerned. It cannot be stressed enough that the welfare of the child must always be your first priority.

9.8 Phoenix FM shall report an allegation or suspicion of child abuse to the Statutory Authorities if:

- the Station has a legal interest in receiving the report:- i.e. The report relates to a member of Station personnel and concerns an activity/service of Phoenix FM.
- some act or event, which has occurred on or off Phoenix FM premises involving any member of Station personnel while carrying out a function/service of Phoenix FM.
- Phoenix FM has an obligation of duty to care for the child.
- that there is a real danger that the child would suffer abuse if it did not report. Reports will be made if Phoenix FM can reasonably, and in good faith, form an opinion that abuse may have taken place.

9.9 Guiding Principles for reporting child abuse allegations to the statutory authorities:

- The safety and wellbeing of the child or young person must take priority
- Reports should be made without delay to the HSE, or in the case of an emergency to the Garda Síochána
- While the basis for concern must be established as comprehensively as possible, children or parents should not be interviewed in detail about the suspected abuse

9.10 Concerns that a child has been harmed (or is at risk of being harmed) must be reported to the Designated Child Protection Officer even where the child is aged 16 years or older, and irrespective of whether the child has been said to have given consent.

10 – CONFIDENTIALITY AND FAMILIES OF ABUSED CHILDREN

10.1 Confidentiality is key to this process. It must be maintained in respect of all issues and people involved in concerns about child abuse. It is imperative that all information is treated in a careful and sensitive manner and should be discussed only with those who need to know (e.g. Child Protection Officer, the HSE and Garda Síochána). All written records should be filed securely. You will find that statutory child protection procedures are child centred. This means that in all investigations the welfare of the child is the paramount consideration.

A full guarantee cannot be given that information received in relation to a suspicion or concern of child abuse will be kept absolutely confidential. However, every effort will be made to preserve the identity of persons or organisations providing the information.

10.2 It is usual for the HSE to keep an individual organisation advised in relation to the progress of such cases. Where such information is not forthcoming updates from them can be sought but there is no legal obligation on the HSE to provide such updates.

11 – CONTACT WITH THE VICTIM'S FAMILY

11.1 The Child Protection Officer reporting suspected or actual child abuse to the Statutory Authorities should first inform the family of the child/young person (victim) of their intention to make such a report, unless doing so would endanger the child or undermine an investigation.

11.2 In situations where the Child Protection Officer decides that inadequate grounds exist and that it should not refer reported concerns to the Statutory Authority, the individual who raised the concern should be given a clear written statement of the reasons why the action is not being taken. The individual should be advised that, if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free to consult with, or report to, the Statutory Authority. The individual should be advised of the protection afforded to them by the 1998 Act.

12 – MEMBERS OF STATION PERSONNEL ACCUSED OF ABUSE

12.1 Any individual who has an allegation made against them has a right to be notified of the cause of concern. This is a matter which will need careful consideration and should be undertaken in consultation with the Statutory Authority who will suggest suitable actions that could be taken.

12.2 If the Statutory Authority is to carry out an investigation it is recommended that the member be withdrawn from direct contact with young people or be suspended from Phoenix FM. The Child Protection

Officer will inform the Chairperson of the situation, and confirm that a report has been made to the Statutory Authority. The Board will be informed by the Chairperson. The Manager and Chairperson will then remove/suspend the accused member from Phoenix FM as appropriate. It is recommended that no immediate contact be made with members of the media/press.

12.3 During this period the member accused should make no effort to communicate with the person who made the allegation or with any child named in the allegation. Phoenix FM recognises that each member has a right in natural justice to be presumed innocent until proven guilty.

12.4 Phoenix FM also recognises that for a person innocent of any allegation made against them the whole experience can be extremely demanding personally and professionally.

12.5 If/once the Station has established that the accused member of Station personnel acted responsibly at all times within the guidelines of this Policy the Station will decide if it is appropriate for the organisation to provide for external support services to be accessible to the member accused. The Chairperson of Phoenix FM in consultation with the Manager/Child Protection Officer should take all necessary steps to ensure that activities can be carried on, with a minimum of disruption, after receiving advice and instructions from the Statutory Authorities.

13 – ROLE OF CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER

Phoenix FM has appointed a Designated Child Protection Officer (CPO). The role of the Child Protection Officer includes:

1. Seek that adequate information, training and advice on child protection is provided to the organisation and its members.
2. Being an immediate contact point for members when an allegation, complaint or suspicion of child abuse is made about a member or is related to children in the activities of Phoenix FM.
3. Advising on good practice relating to training, activities and services involving young people.
4. The Designated Child Protection Officer will ensure that all records pertaining to Child Protection matters will be kept secure, up to date and compliant with Data Protection and other legal requirements.
5. Liaising with HSE and other statutory agencies in relation to child protection issues.
6. Being kept up to date with current developments of provision, practice, support services, legal obligations, requirements and policy in relation to child protection issues.
7. Networking with voluntary/community organisations in developing child protection issues.
8. Interviewing and selecting persons willing to serve as Station personnel who will have access to children.

The Board of Management has a number of responsibilities in respect to this Policy. These include matters such as; insurance, the safety of the buildings, transport, equipment being used, and encouraging and supporting training for members who have access to children and young people.

14 – RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES

14.1 The recruitment procedure must assist us in identifying whether the applicant is suitable and competent for the task that they apply to undertake and it must also act as a means by which we can identify further training needs of any such applicant.

14.2 The information supplied by the applicant and any other information supplied on their behalf should only be seen by persons directly involved in the recruitment procedure i.e. Manager/Child Protection Officer.

14.3 Anyone wishing to work with children/young people in Phoenix FM whether in a temporary or permanent role, in a paid or voluntary capacity shall:

- (a) attend an interview conducted by the Child Protection Officer, as well as sign a declaration to the effect that he/she has not been investigated, charged or convicted of any offence (Obligated under Sex Offenders Act 2001) relating to children and that there is no reason why they would be deemed unsuitable to have access to children. And/or that he/she is not at present subject to any investigation or possible charge which would deem them unsuitable for having access to children;
- (b) give a written commitment to comply with the Phoenix FM Child Protection Policy, and shall undertake all relevant training made available to him/her;
- (c) provide adequate, relevant and satisfactory written references and documents confirming their identity (photo ID passport/drivers licence).

14.4 Anyone working with children/young people in Phoenix FM whether in a temporary, paid or voluntary capacity:

- (a) shall report to the Child Protection Officer any suspicion or misgivings he/she may have concerning inappropriate behaviour or circumstances affecting children within Phoenix FM and must co-operate in reporting the details to the appropriate statutory authorities. (In the event of the Child Protection Officer being accused the report should be made to the Chairperson);
- (b) should ensure as far as is reasonably practicable that he/she is not left alone with a child;
- (c) should not arrange to meet a child alone off Station premises in connection with Phoenix FM affairs or as a result of a relationship which was formed during work with the station without a parent, guardian or other adult being present;

(d) should never permit as far as is reasonably practicable a group to be taken off Station premises with fewer than two adults and without the knowledge/approval of their parents or guardian. In the case of residential with young people prior written consent is required from parents/guardian.

(e) shall have a basic knowledge of the nature and signs of child abuse as outlined in Section 16;

(f) should know how to respond should a child make a disclosure/allegation of abuse;

15 – PROCEDURES FOR CONTACT WITH CHILDREN/VULNERABLE ADULTS

15.1 Phoenix FM provides a number of services to young people. Most of these services involve the active participation of children and young people. The principles of good practice outlined in Section 8 must be consulted and followed at all times. The following information is provided to advise members in relation to specific services.

15.2 Media training/instruction

Phoenix FM personnel providing training/instruction to children/young people must endeavour to ensure that they do not put themselves in a position which could be misconstrued. Members should always provide training/instruction to children/young people in the company of another person.

When demonstrating techniques/procedures that involve body contact, care should be taken that the young person is not put in a position that is embarrassing or difficult for them. Such techniques must never be demonstrated while alone with a child. Consent must always be obtained from the young person prior to instruction which may involve body contact.

Station personnel, while providing instruction/training at primary, post primary schools and other venues where young people are present, should also adhere to any policies developed by that school/authority. In addition, members should ensure that at all times a teacher/leader is present when instructing pupils. At no stage is it appropriate for a member to take responsibility for supervision of a classroom/youth group. Members should ensure that they are not in a position which could be misconstrued as inappropriate behaviour.

15.3 It is not recommended to have private meetings/interviews/training sessions with individual children/young persons. The use of 'engaged' signs or lights is not advisable. For instances of disruptive behaviour, which require a member's intervention, a record should be documented in a report book. The report should include:

- i) what happened and who was involved
- ii) where and when it happened
- iii) what was said if significant, and any injury to person or property
- iv) how the situation was resolved and signed by the member of Station personnel making entry

In some cases there may need to be a referral made to the HSE or Gardaí following an incident e.g. attempted suicide, talk of suicide, aggressive behaviour in which another person or young person themselves is hurt.

15.4 Private cars

Best practice would suggest avoiding transporting a child/young person on your own. Try to ensure another adult member is present with you in the vehicle or other children/young people are with you. Do not overcrowd the car, as this will invalidate the insurance. Private cars cannot be used for hire or carrying passengers for reward.

15.5 General safety

Safety is of prime importance during any activity. This is not only the responsibility of the Instructor/Trainer in charge but of every participant. Station personnel should be aware of the following guidelines.

- (a) Always have an initial look around the premises you are about to use to identify any possible dangers e.g., a stack of chairs which could topple, an electric cable which could trip etc.
- (b) Be aware of the location of fire exits and ensure that they are not obstructed. Occasional fire drills should be conducted to ensure that all young people know what evacuation procedures to follow in the event of a real fire. Know where the nearest fire extinguishers are located. In the event of a fire, evacuating the building and saving life is much more important than fighting a fire.
- (c) Know where the nearest accessible telephone is. A telephone should, where possible, be installed on the premises for safety purposes.
- (d) Ensure that there is proper first aid equipment and trained personnel present at all times.
- (e) There should be adequate supervision given by an Instructor/Trainer of certain equipment e.g. Marantz, lighting equipment, recording deck etc.
- (f) During games/group activities be aware of the risks of physical injury and guard against these.
- (g) Areas where maintenance work is taking place should be strictly out of bounds.
- (h) Know where the accident report book is kept, in which you should record details of accidents/injuries/witnesses/date.

15.6 Group contract

In every aspect of voluntary organisations, they function best where clear guidelines and structures are laid out. A good working practice with any youth group is to form a contract, which clearly states how the group will function, and establishes agreed boundaries within the group.

Such a contract will help to create a safe, secure environment and an atmosphere where children and young people will feel that they can confide in their Instructors/Trainers. The contract should be drawn up with the group participants. The following is an outline of what could be included:

- respect the authority and responsibility of the adult members/instructors;
- respect the views and feelings of other members of the group;
- respect the right of every group member to express their own view/opinion;
- respect the right of every group member to be heard/listened to;
- respect both Instructors' and other group members' privacy, property and equipment;

15.7 Physical contact

(a) As a general principle members are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with children/young people. This is particularly the case with children of secondary school age and maturing children of primary school age. Station personnel should never physically punish or be in any way verbally abusive to a young person.

(b) Physical contact, which may be misconstrued, by a child/young person, parent or other casual observer should be avoided. Such contact can include well-intentioned informal gestures such as putting a hand on the shoulder or arm, which if repeated with an individual, could be misconstrued, as well as more obvious and more intimate contact, which should never occur.

(c) There may be occasions when a distressed child/young person needs comfort and reassurance which may include physical comforting such as a caring parent would give. Station personnel should use their discretion in such cases to ensure that what is seen by others present to be, normal and natural does not become unnecessary and unjustified contact, particularly with the same child over a period of time and never when alone with a child.

(d) Some Station personnel are likely to come into physical contact with children from time to time in the course of activities, for example when demonstrating media techniques or the use of a piece of apparatus. Members should be aware of the limits within which such contact should properly take place and of the possibility of such contact being misinterpreted. Ask the child's consent and explain what you are doing with the equipment.

(e) Following any incident where a member of Station personnel feels that his/her actions have been or maybe misconstrued, a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the person to whom he/she is accountable/reports. This would apply especially in a case where a member had been obliged to restrain a child physically to prevent him/her from inflicting injury to others or themselves. Ensure that the Child Protection Officer is informed of the situation and is given a copy of the report.

15.8 Relationships and attitudes

Members should ensure that their relationships with those in their charge are appropriate, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to talk or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care, particularly when members of either sex are dealing with adolescent boys and girls.

15.9 Minimum ratios with adults and children

For **children aged under seven**, the child/adult ratio should be: up to eight children - two adults (at least one of either sex) plus one additional adult for every eight following children, i.e.

8 children: 2 adults

9-16 children: 3 adults

17-24 children: 4 adults

For **children aged seven and upwards**, the ratio should be:

Up to 10: 2 adults

One additional adult for every 12 extra children, i.e.

11-22 children: 3 adults

23-34 children: 4 adults

Special circumstances must be taken into account, and the number of adults increased as necessary.

16 – AWARENESS OF CHILD ABUSE

16.1 Good child protection practice means that members know how to recognise child abuse. This does not mean that they are responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has taken place, but they have a responsibility to be alert to behaviour by children or Station personnel, which suggests that something is wrong.

16.2 Child abuse occurs when the behaviour of someone in a position of greater power than a child causes the child harm.

Children can be abused in a number of ways. The four main categories of abuse are:

1. Physical abuse
2. Neglect
3. Emotional abuse
4. Sexual abuse

Abuse may take the form of taking away basic rights, harsh punishments or overuse of medications or physical restraints.

16.3 Station personnel should be on the alert for other forms of behaviour that may be harmful to children. The following behaviours are unacceptable for either Station personnel or children:

- Verbal abuse: this may include name calling, sarcasm, making reference to some physical characteristic, destructive criticism, derogatory remarks and gestures.

- **Bullying:** this includes repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical, which is conducted by an individual or group against others. Examples include teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting and extortion.
- **Unwelcome behaviour:** this can include favouritism, exclusion, sexual harassment and sexual innuendo, humiliating and embarrassing others.
- **Consumption of alcohol, misuse of any substance or stimulant and smoking within the confines of the group building or during group activities.** This can invalidate the insurance policy of Phoenix FM.

16.4 CATEGORIES OF CHILD ABUSE

There are four main categories of child abuse. The following information includes a definition for each category heading and some of the signs and symptoms within this category.

PHYSICAL ABUSE is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child. Examples of physical injury include the following:

- (i) shaking
- (ii) use of excessive force in handling
- (iii) deliberate poisoning
- (iv) suffocation
- (v) Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy (This is a condition where a parent, usually the mother, fabricates stories of illness about their child or causes physical signs of illness)
- (vi) Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child

Symptoms may include:

- unexplained recurrent injuries or burns
- improbable excuses or refusal to explain injuries
- self-destructive tendencies
- fear of physical contact, a shrinking back if touched

NEGLECT

This can be defined in terms of an omission, where a child suffers significant harm or impairment of his/her health or development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, medical care.

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point. For instance, a child who suffers a series of minor injuries is not having his or her needs met for

supervision and safety. A child who consistently misses school may be being deprived of intellectual stimulation.

Symptoms may include:

- constant hunger
- inadequate clothing
- constant tiredness
- poor personal hygiene

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

This is normally to be found in the relationship between a caregiver and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's 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. Examples of emotional abuse of children include:

- (i) the imposition of negative attributes on children, expressed by persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming;
- (ii) conditional parenting in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his or her behaviour or actions;
- (iii) emotional unavailability by the child's parent/carer;
- (iv) unresponsiveness, inconsistent, or inappropriate expectations of the child;
- (v) premature imposition of responsibility on a child;
- (vi) unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of the child's capacity to understand something or to behave and control himself in a certain way;
- (vii) under or over – protection of the child;
- (viii) failure to show interest in, or provide age-appropriate opportunities for, the child's cognitive and emotional development;
- (ix) use of unreasonable or over-harsh disciplinary measures;
- (x) exposure to domestic violence.

Symptoms may include:

- delays in physical, mental and emotional development

- continual belittling of oneself
- over-reaction to mistakes
- extreme fear of any new situation
- inappropriate response to pain
- neurotic behaviour

SEXUAL ABUSE

This occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others. Examples of child sexual abuse include the following:

- (i) exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child;
- (ii) intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification;
- (iii) sexual intercourse with a child;
- (iv) sexual exploitation of a child;
- (v) consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person. In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that, for the purposes of the criminal law, the age of consent is 17 years. This means, for example, that sexual intercourse between a 16 year-old girl and her 17 year-old boyfriend is illegal, although it might not be regarded as constituting child sexual abuse.

Symptoms may include:

- detailed or age-inappropriate understanding of sexual behaviour, including drawing sexually explicit pictures, sexual play with peers or toys or use of sexually explicit language;
- being overly affectionate in a sexual way towards peers, older children or adults;
- excessive fear of adults or displaying apprehension or withdrawn behaviour or conversely very aggressive behaviour;
- regression to younger behaviour patterns, e.g. thumb sucking, or displaying disturbed patterns of behaviour, onset of nightmares, bedwetting, loss of appetite or compulsive eating;
- unusual reluctance to join in normal activities involving the removal of clothing, e.g. swimming;
- self-mutilation, eating disorders, suicide attempts, running away.

16.5 It is very important to recognise that many of the symptoms listed under each type of abuse could have explanations other than that of abuse. If, however, a child/young person exhibits a number of the

symptoms listed and/or if certain patterns of behaviour emerge, then there may be good reason for suspecting abuse. Where there is a suspicion, you should follow the guidelines contained in this document.

Recognising child abuse is not easy and should therefore be left to those with the necessary skills and training, i.e. HSE child protection and welfare professionals. It is the function of the Statutory Authorities to carry out a comprehensive report.

All investigations of accusations and child protection concerns must be left to the Statutory Authorities.

17 – WHY ADULTS ABUSE CHILDREN

17.1 Nobody really knows what causes people to abuse children and young people. It can be a wide range of different reasons - stress, problems, unhappy circumstances, the feeling of having no power in adult relationships, and perhaps having been abused as a child.

17.2 Children in certain situations are especially vulnerable to abuse. These include children who, for short or long periods, are separated from parents or other family members and depend on other adults for their care and protection. Children with disabilities may also be more at risk as the nature of their disability sometimes limits communication between themselves and others. Some adults may convince themselves that there is nothing wrong with their behaviour, or that it is for the child's own good. But whatever the reason abuse is always wrong, and it is never the child's fault (Our Duty to Care).

18 – PREVENTING ABUSE

18.1 Children, who may be dependent and vulnerable, could be more susceptible to abuse in its various forms. The Station is committed to ensuring good practice, and high standards exist in its work and care with all children and young people. Therefore in order to prevent abuse, the following are of priority:

- Exclusion of known abusers
- Training of all members in Child Protection Policy
- Following the Model of Good Practice
- Reporting any suspicious person or known offender attempting to make contact with children to the statutory authorities.

18.2 In the event of an accident or the occurrence of child abuse in the course of Station activities and services it is reasonable in the current climate to assume that litigation may follow and that the Station may be liable for damages. It is therefore best practice for the Station to maintain good practices and high standards and demonstrate that 'reasonable care in all the circumstances' was taken. The Station is committed to ensuring that its work in this area is managed and supervised in accordance with the principles set out in this Policy.

18.3 Any suspicion that abuse has occurred within Phoenix FM activities must be conveyed to the Duty Social Worker in the Community Care area of the Health Board. The Child Protection Officer is the contact person for this procedure. All allegations or suspicions of abuse must be taken seriously and responded to according to the procedures outlined in this Policy having regarded the need to protect children and to safeguard those who work with children from the consequences of unfounded accusations.

19 – SUMMARY OF THE REFERRAL PROCEDURE

1. Allegation/suspicion/concern noted.
2. Immediately inform the Child Protection Officer who will assess the allegation.

The Child Protection Officer is:

Station Manager, Denis McEvoy Phone 01 822 7222

3. The Child Protection Officer if appropriate, reports to the Statutory Authorities. If reporting is to proceed then the Child Protection Officer will strive to first inform the family of the child/young person (victim) of their intention to make such a report, unless doing so would endanger the child or undermine an investigation.
4. The Child Protection Officer will follow the advice given by the duty social worker/Garda Síochána.

PLEASE NOTE: the task of deciding whether or not abuse has occurred rests with the statutory authorities.