

## CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

All schools are obliged, under statutory legislation, to adhere to NATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR PROTECTION AND WELFARE OF CHILDREN.

In Coláiste Chill Mhantáin, we believe that our school should provide a caring, positive safe and stimulating environment, which promotes the social, physical and moral development of the individual student.

*Q. What is child abuse?*

**A.** Child abuse is complicated and can take different forms, but usually consists of one or more of the following:

**Neglect:** Where a child's needs for food, warmth, shelter, nurture and safety are not provided, to the extent that the child suffers significant harm.

**Emotional Abuse:** Where a child's needs for affection, approval and security are not being met and have not been met for some time by their parent or carer.

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

**Sexual Abuse:** Where a child is used for the sexual gratification of another.

*Q. How does the school protect students?*

**A.** We recognize that the school plays a significant part in the prevention of harm to our students by providing them with good lines of communication with trusted adults, supportive friends and an ethos of protection

The school community will therefore –

- establish and maintain an ethos where students feel secure and are encouraged to talk and are listened to
- ensure that all students know there is an adult in the school whom they can approach if they are in difficulty or worried.

*Q. What action must the school take when suspicions/allegations of abuse arise?*

**A.** The matter is reported to the Designated Liaison Person (D.L.P., who is the Principal). The school does not carry out an investigation.

A confidential written report is made and placed in a secure location.

The D.L.P. must report any suspicion/allegation immediately by telephone and/or in writing to the Health Service Executive social worker on duty – it must be reported in writing within 24 hours.

In the event of an emergency or non-availability of the Health Service Executive personnel, the report should be made to An Garda Síochana.

*Q. When and by whom are the parents informed?*

**A.** The D.L.P. has the option of informing the parents before making a report to the Health Service Executive, unless doing so would put the child or any other student at risk.

*Q. What is the position regarding confidentiality?*

**A.** – All matters relating to child protection are confidential  
- information shall only be disclosed on a need to know basis to the relevant people  
- school staff cannot promise to keep secrets for a student or a person reporting an allegation/suspicion of abuse.

*Q. Can the school act on anonymous reports of suspicion/allegation of abuse?*

**A.** All reports will receive attention. However, it is very difficult to help when reports are made anonymously or through a third party.

*Q. What will the Health Service Executive Social Worker do with the information given to them?*

**A.** The Health Service Social Worker will consider your information and if s/he feels it needs to be followed up, s/he will assess the situation. That means s/he will look for more information from other sources and will contact the child and his/her parent(s). S/he will try to establish what is going on, and will act to protect the child in whatever way necessary.

*Q. What will the Gardaí be told?*

**A.** Physical abuse, sexual abuse and willful neglect are crimes and must be reported by the Health Service Executive to An Garda Síochána. Likewise, An Garda Síochána must report any child abuse that comes to their attention to the Health Service Executive. The Gardaí and the Health Board Executive will work together as sensitively as possible and take any action necessary to protect the child, or any other children from future harm.

*Q. Will the child be taken away from his/her parents?*

**A.** Very few children are removed from their parents because of child abuse. It is much more likely that the Health Service Executive, together with other services who work with children, will try to help the children and families, and attempt to

prevent the abuse happening again. They will provide advice, counselling, family support and practical help wherever they can. Children and parents are separated only as a last resort when other measures to help them have failed. Except in emergencies, this can only happen without parental consent following a court hearing.

*Q. Where can I get more information about child protection?*

**A.** The school policy document and related material are available on request from the school. A free summary of National Protection Guidelines is available from the local Health Service Executive. A full edition of the guidelines, entitled “Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children” may be purchased from Government Publications Office. The summary and the full version of the National Guidelines are also available on the Dept’s website at: [www.doh.ie](http://www.doh.ie).

Your Health Service Executive will also have information about local procedures and services which are aimed at promoting the safety and welfare of children.