

RE-DRESS, THE BETTER FASHION INITIATIVE

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

2014/15

Overview

Re-dress, The Better Fashion Initiative adopts the *Children First: National Guidance 2011*, as our reference document, and a practical handbook to key actions for members and employees of the organisation whose work will bring them in contact with children.

Re-dress through our outreach and educational work with youth organisations and schools must recognise our responsibility to be aware of the signs, symptoms and possibilities of neglect and abuse and in cases where such abuse is suspected we accept the need to share those concerns with the organisation's Children First designated person who shall seek advice from the HSE and if deemed necessary, make a formal report and cooperate in whatever way possible, in order to share information and contribute to good decision-making. In an emergency situation, the Gardaí should be informed of children at risk.

Re-dress, The Better Fashion Initiative must:

- Acknowledge the rights of children to be protected, treated with respect, listened to and have their own views taken into consideration;
- Recognise that the welfare of children must always come first, regardless of all other considerations;
- Develop a child protection policy that raises awareness about the possibility of child abuse occurring and outlines the steps to be taken if it is suspected;
- Adopt the safest possible practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and to protect workers from the necessity to take risks and leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or neglect;
- Adopt and consistently apply clearly defined methods of recruiting staff and volunteers
- Develop procedures for responding to accidents and complaints
- Remember that early intervention with children who are vulnerable or at risk may prevent serious harm from happening to them at a later stage
- Remember that a child's age, gender and background affect the way they experience and understand what is happening to them
- Provide child protection training for workers.
- Co-operate with any other child care and protection agencies and professionals by sharing information when necessary and working together towards the best possible outcome for the children concerned;
- Make links with other relevant organisations in order to promote child protection and welfare policies and practices

Key Operational Policy

Consistent with the principles of *Children First*, Re-dress The Better Fashion Initiative will;

- (i) ensure best practice in the recruitment of staff or volunteers is adhered to.
- (ii) ensure that staff members or volunteers are aware of how to recognise signs of child abuse or neglect;
- (iii) develop guidance and procedures for staff and/or volunteers who may have reasonable grounds for concern about the safety and welfare of children involved with the organisation.
- (iv) identify a designated person to act as a liaison with outside agencies and a resource person to any staff member or volunteer who has child protection concerns. The designated person is responsible for reporting allegations or suspicions of child abuse to the HSE Children and Family Services or to An Garda Síochána.

(i) Recruitment

Re-dress adopts the following recruiting policy for any employees or volunteers whose duties will bring them in contact with children

(i) Re-dress will supply a clear definition of the role of employees or volunteers including clarifying and agreeing expectations including identifying the minimum level of personal qualities and skills required to fill the post.

(ii) An application form, with a clear job description and information about the organisation will be supplied and retained. The form should be designed, as far as possible, to collect all relevant information about the applicant, including past experience of working with children.

(iii) An applicant should be expected to supply the names of two referees (not family members) who will testify as to their character, their suitability to the role of employee/volunteer, or any other issues which may affect their ability to perform the tasks required of them. At least one referee should have first-hand knowledge of the applicant's previous work or contact with children. An acceptable reference will indicate that the person is known to the referee and is considered suitable by them to work with young people. All references should be received in writing and later confirmed by telephone, letter or personal visit.

(iv) All applicants must be Garda vetted.

(v) Re-dress will ensure that the identity of the applicant is confirmed against some documentation (ID card, driving licence or passport) which gives his or her full name, address together with a signature or photograph. This should be compared with the written application.

(ii) Recognising Child Abuse / Neglect

Any employee of Re-dress whose duties include contact with children will be provided with a copy of and required to familiarise themselves with *Our Duty to Care: The principles of good practice for the protection of children and young people. (2002)*.

Any member or employee whose duties will include contact with children will be sent for training in child protection practices as provided by Barnardos. This training should take place no longer than 3 months after the date of their engagement with Re-dress.

(iii) Guidance Procedures where there is cause for concern

If a child hints at or tells a worker that he or she is being abused, it must be handled very sensitively, and in the following way:

- Stay calm and listen – give the child time to say what she or he wants
- Don't ask leading questions or details, or make suggestions
- Don't stop the child recalling significant events, but don't make him or her repeat the story unnecessarily
- Reassure the child, but don't promise to keep it a secret
- Explain what needs to be done next
- Record the discussion as carefully as possible
- This information should then be passed on according to the Children First Person as identified in the below.

(iv) Designated Children First Person

The designated Children First Person will ensure the implementation of Re-dress' child protection policy and ensure that all members, volunteers and employees are trained in and familiar with our policy.

Re-dress will ensure the appointed Designated Children First Person will undergo specific training in this role through training offered by Barnardos.

Role & Responsibilities

- To be the designated person to whom child protection concerns can be reported.
- To ensure any employee whose duties within the organisation will bring them in contact with children have been vetted and have full Garda Clearance.
- To forward forms to the GCVU and assess any confidential disclosures returned by the GCVU
- To take specific guidance from *Our Duty to Care: The principles of good practice for the protection of children and young people, (2002)* on the steps to be taken if child abuse is suspected, witnessed or disclosed.
- To ensure safe recruitment procedures for all staff of the organisation whose duties will bring them into contact with children.
- To be familiar with both government publications *Children First (2011)* and *Our Duty to Care: The principles of good practice for the protection of children and young people. (2002)*. on which the Re-dress child protection policy is based.

While it is important for workers to be alert to signs of child abuse, it is also important not to create an environment of intense anxiety where everyone is suspicious all the time. The actual decision about whether abuse is likely to have happened must be left to professionals. Experts who work in the child protection field will know the proper procedures to follow. You must always remember that workers in organisations like yours have a supportive, not an investigative, role.