




Limerick City Council

Child Safeguarding Policy & Procedure Document

Approved by: 
Director of Corporate Services

Date: 10/6/2011

Signed: 
S.E.O., Corporate Services

Date: 10/6/2011

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Introduction

This document has been developed in accordance with Government Guidelines 'Children First' National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of children.

Children, because of their dependency and immaturity, are vulnerable to abuse in various forms. Parents or guardians have primary responsibility for the care and protection of their children. However, Limerick City Council (LCC) has a responsibility to ensure the protection of children participating in any City Council activities.

This policy extends to all staff and staff who are employed by Services, which are run by LCC. All employees must be sensitive to the vulnerability of children during the course of their duties and act in a responsible manner at all times. It is recognised that most staff members do not have expertise in this area; it is important to note that the investigation of suspected child abuse is the responsibility of the statutory authorities and shall not be undertaken by the LCC's Child Safeguarding Liaison Officer(s) or other Local Authority employees.

These guidelines are directed at all those who have contact with children in the normal course of their duties, to provide guidance on appropriate behaviour around children and what to do if physical, sexual or emotional and neglect abuse is suspected.

This Policy is not a legal interpretation of the legislation.

Section 1 Child Safeguarding Policy Statement

Limerick City Council is committed to a child-centred approach to our work with children in all services and activities as operated by City Council. We undertake to provide a safe environment where the welfare of the child is paramount. We will adhere to the Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children by implementing procedures covering:

- Appropriate recruitment and selection of employees and volunteers;
- A Garda Vetting Procedure for all relevant employees and volunteers;
- Appropriate management, supervision and training of employees;
- The reporting, investigation and recording of incidents and accidents complaints made against the Council, its employees/volunteers;
- The reporting of suspected or disclosed abuse confidentiality;
- Circulation of information to employees, volunteers, parents/guardians and participants on our activities and what can be expected of the Authority in relation to those activities;
- Allegations of misconduct or abuse by employees.

This Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Definition of 'Child'

A "child" means a person under the age of 18 years, excluding a person who is or has been married.

Child Safeguarding Liaison Officer

City Council has appointed a Child Safeguarding Liaison Officer to:

- Act as a source of advice on child safeguarding matters;
- Co-ordinate action within City Council; and with any other Child Safeguarding Liaison Officers;
- Liaise with the HSE and An Garda Síochána and other agencies about suspected or actual cases of child abuse;
- Be accessible to all staff;

The Child Safeguarding Liaison Officer shall ensure that s/he is knowledgeable about child safeguarding and that s/he undertakes any training considered necessary to keep updated on new development.

The role of the Child Safeguarding Liaison Officer(s) is to:

- Establish contact with the senior member of the Health Service Executive responsible for child safeguarding in Limerick City Council's catchment area,

- Provide information and advice on child safeguarding within City Council;
- Ensure that Limerick City Council's child safeguarding policy is kept up to date, circulated to staff and published on the Intranet.
- Inform appropriate sources of relevant concerns about individual children;
- Ensure that appropriate information is available at the time of referral and that the referral is confirmed in writing under confidential cover using the HSE Standard Reporting form;
- Liaise with the Health Service Executive/An Garda Síochána and other agencies as appropriate;
- Keep relevant people within the organisation, particularly the City Manager, informed of relevant issues, whilst maintaining confidentiality;
- Ensure that an individual case record is maintained of the action taken by City Council, the liaison with other agencies and the outcome;
- Advise the organisation of child safeguarding training needs.

Contact Details:

Child Safeguarding Liaison Officer:

- John McEntee @ 407327 – jmcentee@limerickcity.ie

Deputy Child Safeguarding Liaison Officer:

- Esther Lane @ 407379 - elane@limerickcity.ie

Nominated Persons:

- Sheila Deegan @ 407421- sdeegan@limerickcity.ie
- Kathy O'Grady @ 407405 – kogrady@limerickcity.ie
- Brendan MacKernan @ 407294 – bmackernan@limerickcity.ie
- Eileen McMahan @ 407507 – emcmahan@limerickcity.ie
- Sinead Hourigan @ 457726 – shourigan@limerickcity.ie
- Fiona Ismail @ 407510 – fismail@limerickcity.ie
- Cecilia O'Flaherty @ 605411 – coflaherty@limerickcity.ie

All Employees

All employees are required to

- Follow the Council's Code of Behaviour in relation to children and
- Report concerns of child abuse detected in the course of their duties and
- Follow the Council's Policy in reporting concerns of child abuse.

Section 2 Code of Behaviour in relation to Children

Limerick City Council aims to create an environment in which children are listened to, given a sense of belonging, and kept safe; parents are supported and encouraged; and employees and volunteers who work with children and young people are supported and protected. In order to meet these aims City Council will follow a framework for good practice and a code of behaviour as set out below.

The code of Behaviour will be categorised under the following headings:

- 2.1 City Council's Child-Centred Approach
- 2.2 Good Practice Framework
- 2.3 Inappropriate Behaviour – Checklist for Employees/Volunteers
- 2.4 Considerations for the Health and Safety of Children
- 2.5 Consideration for Children with Special Needs or Disabilities
- 2.6 General Supervision
- 2.7 Dealing with Challenging or Disruptive Behaviour
- 2.8 Physical Contact

2.1 The Council's Child-Centred Approach

All City Council activities involving children shall be guided by what is best for children. Children's activities shall be conducted in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere. Standards of excellence should extend to personal conduct. Taking a child-centred approach means to:

- Treat all children equally;
- Listen to and respect children;
- Involve children as appropriate;
- Provide encouragement, support and praise (regardless of ability);
- Use appropriate language (physical and verbal);
- Have fun and encourage a positive atmosphere;
- Offer constructive criticism when needed;
- Treat all children as individuals;
- Respect a child's personal space;
- Use age-appropriate teaching aids;
- Lead by example;
- Be aware of child time limitations e.g. school/exams when scheduling activities;
- Create an atmosphere of trust;

- Respect and be aware of differences of ability, culture, religion, race and sexual orientation and membership of the Traveller Community;

Endeavour to provide equality/diversity training for employees in relation to cultural differences;

- Use all information in respect of children only for the purpose for which it is given, subject to child protection concern.

2.2 Good Practice Framework

City Council aims to work within the following framework for good practice by:

- Providing training on this Policy for employees and volunteers in line with The Children First Guidelines;

Registering each child for day long or long term activities or projects (name, address, phone, special requirements, attendance, emergency contact & parental consent). It is suggested that registration forms be established for relevant service points;

It will be noted that it is not possible to cover all open or public events e.g. concerts, play day's, playgrounds, library events;

- Complying with the Council's Data Protection Policy in respect of personal and sensitive data regarding children and their parents/guardians subject to child safeguarding concerns;
- Making parents/guardians, children, visitors and facilitators aware of these child safeguarding guidelines;
- Having procedures in place for accident/injuries or emergencies as per Health & Safety and accident reporting books;
- Reporting/recording any incidents and accidents;
- Being inclusive of children with special needs;
- Reporting any concerns to the Child Safeguarding Liaison Officer and following reporting procedures;
- Encouraging children to report any bullying concerns and worries and be aware of the Dignity at Work Policy and Procedures;
- Evaluation of work practices where contact with children occurs on a regular basis;
- Reviewing and updating policies and procedures regularly;

- Keeping parents/guardians informed of any issues of concern regarding their children as appropriate to the service i.e. formal organised activities e.g. sports events;
- Ensuring appropriate, to the service, supervision (including a minimum of two adults) depending on age, abilities and activities involved;
- Ensuring that partner organisations are familiar with this Policy
- Not ignoring concerns;
- Not letting a problem get out of control;
- Ensuring that there are adequate insurance arrangements in place to cover all relevant activities;
- Not photographing or displaying images of children without the consent of the Supervisor / Teacher / guardian / parent.
- Ensure this Policy will be available on the intranet and the Website (www.limerickcity.ie)
- When a newspaper or other publishing agency wishes to process an image of a child the onus is on the newspaper/publishing agency to liaise with the parents/guardian.

2.3 Inappropriate Behaviour – Checklist for Employees/Volunteers

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children;
- Avoid taking children on journeys alone in a car where possible and **never** without the consent of the parent/guardian;
- Where possible employees should avoid being in a one to one situation with a child;
- Do not use/allow offensive or sexually suggestive physical conduct and/or verbal language;
- Do not single out a particular child (for unfair favouritism, criticism or ridicule);
- Do not hit or physically chastise children;

- Do not socialise inappropriately with children e.g. outside of structured organisational activities;
- Where physical contact is an inherent part of an activity, it is important to seek consent of child/young person in relation to physical contact (except in an emergency or a dangerous situation); avoid horseplay or inappropriate touch; check with child/young person about their level of comfort when doing touch exercises i.e. games may involve holding hands and it is about ensuring that this is done openly and within safe and comfortable limits for the child or young person;
- Not revealing personal information about children in any way, subject to child safeguarding concerns;

2.4 Considerations for the Health and Safety of Children

- Do not leave children unattended/unsupervised;
- Ensure that children are not in contact with any dangerous materials;
- Provide a safe environment and where feasible ensure another employee/volunteer is present;
- Be aware of and comply with the Council's policy on Safety, Health and Welfare at Work;
- Ensure that you are familiar with and comply with the Council's procedures in relation to accidents;
- Familiarise yourself with and where necessary comply with the emergency evacuation procedures particular to the location in which you are located and brief the children in your care on what they are to do/where they must go in an emergency;
- Be familiar with the particular risks associated with the activity and/or location at which you are based. Read and understand the Safety Statement for that location;
- When undertaking a risk assessment take account of a child's natural curiosity and include appropriate precautions to safeguard a child's potential exposure;

For any further advice in relation to health and safety issues you should contact City Council's Health & Safety Officer, Mr. John McEntee.

2.5 Consideration for Children with Special Needs or Disabilities

Adhere to national legislation including Disability Act 2005, and Equal Status Acts 2000-2007 in relation to children with disabilities or special needs to ensure access to all City Council services and activities.

2.6 General Supervision

It is vital that employees/volunteers shall endeavour to ensure that there are adequate adult/child ratios. The appropriate ratio will depend on the nature of the activity, the age of the children and any special needs of the group. A general guide may be 1:8 for under 12 years of age and 1:10 for over 12 years of age (good practice is a minimum of two or more adults). Where feasible, there shall be at least one adult of each gender with mixed parties. This ratio may not be appropriate at service points as distinct from organised activities.

- Employees/volunteers shall endeavour to avoid being left alone with children;
- If an adult needs to talk separately to a child this should be done in an open environment in view of others whilst offering the child confidentiality;
- Employees should not be left alone with children at the end of an activity;
- Times for start and finish of activities should be clearly stated;
- Late collection of children by parents/guardians presents a potentially difficult situation, and employees/volunteers shall attempt to contact the child's parent/guardian on their contact number;

Use an alternative contact name/number agreed with the child's parent/ guardian if necessary;

Wait with the child with another employee member/volunteer present where possible;

Make it clear to parents/guardians that it is not Limerick City Council's responsibility to transport children home on behalf of parents/guardians who have been delayed;

Employees/volunteers ***shall not***:

- Take the child home or to another location without permission from a parent /guardian;
- Send the child home with another person without permission from a parent/guardian;
- Leave a child unaccompanied.

2.7 Dealing with Challenging or Disruptive Behaviour

Disruptive behaviour is unacceptable, and disruptive children will be asked by employees to behave. Disruptive behaviour will be reported to parent/guardian. If a child continues to be disruptive s/he will be advised that s/he is causing a disturbance and given a warning. A warning letter may be sent to the parent/guardian stating that further disruptions may result in withdrawal of facilities or services to the child. If a child is in danger to themselves or others further action may be required i.e. parent/gardaí to be contacted.

When dealing with a disruptive child it is recommended that where possible more than one employee or volunteer be present. Instances of disruptive behaviour that require the intervention of the employee, and which put at risk the safety and well being of others, must be documented. The report shall describe:

- The programme or activity running at the time;
- What happened;
- Who was involved;
- Where and when it happened;
- What was said, if significant;
- Any injury to person or property;
- How the situation was resolved;
- An Incident Report Form shall be completed. A template is provided in *Appendix I*.

2.8 Physical contact

Where physical contact is an inherent part of an activity, it is important to seek consent of the child in relation to physical contact (except in an emergency or a dangerous situation)

Section 3 Reporting Child Safeguarding & Welfare Concerns

3.1 Recognising Child Abuse

Child abuse can often be difficult to identify and may present in many forms (see *Appendix II* for guidance on categories of child abuse). Early detection is important and individuals working with children should share their concerns about child protection or welfare with the Child Safeguarding Liaison Officer in Limerick City Council.

If a child hints at or tells you 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;
- Do not ask leading questions or details, or make suggestions;
- Do not stop the child recalling significant events, but do not make him or her repeat the story unnecessarily;
- Reassure the child, but do not promise to keep it a secret;
- Explain what needs to be done next;
- Record the discussion as carefully as possible.

The information shall then be passed on in accordance with the procedures outlined below.

The primary responsibility of the person who first suspects or is told of abuse is to report it and to ensure that their concern is taken seriously. The guiding principles in regard to reporting child abuse may be summarised as follows:

- The safety and well-being of the child must take priority;
- Reports should be made without delay;
- The principle of natural justice shall apply, as appropriate;
- A person is innocent until proven otherwise however any measures necessary to protect a child must be taken;
- The principle of confidentiality shall apply, whereby only those who need to know should be told of a suspicion/allegation/disclosure of abuse and the number that need to be kept informed shall be kept to a minimum.

3.2 Guidelines for Recognition

The ability to recognise child abuse depends as much on a person's willingness to accept the possibility of its existence as it does on their knowledge and information. There are commonly three stages in the identification of child abuse.

These are:

- considering the possibility;
- looking out for signs of abuse;
- recording of information.

The possibility of child abuse should be considered if any of the signs or symptoms referred to above are presented. Signs of abuse can be physical, behavioural, or developmental. They can exist in the relationships between children and parents/guardians or between children and other family members. A cluster or pattern of signs is likely to be more indicative of abuse. Children who are being abused may hint that they are being harmed and sometimes make direct disclosures. Disclosures should always be believed; less obvious signs could be gently explored with the child, without direct questioning. Play situations such as drawing or story telling may reveal information.

Most signs are non-specific and must be considered in the child's social and family context. It is important to always be open to alternative explanations for physical or behavioural signs of abuse.

If abuse is suspected, it is important to establish the grounds for concern (see examples from the 'Childrens First' National Child Protection Guidelines below). The HSE should always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse.

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern.

- Specific indication from the child that (s)he was abused;
- An account by a person who saw the child being abused;
- Evidence, such as an injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way;
- An injury or behaviour which is consistent both with abuse and with innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse. An example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour;
- Consistent indication, over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

Observations should be accurately recorded and should include dates, times, names, and locations.

3.3.1 Steps to be taken by an employee who knows about or suspects child abuse

- An employee/volunteer who knows or suspects that a child has been or is at risk of being harmed has a duty to convey this concern to the Child Safeguarding Liaison Officer(s) without delay;
- The Child Safeguarding Liaison Officer(s) will report the information to the Health Service Executive, who in turn, notifies An Garda Síochána;
- In an emergency, a report must be made directly to An Garda Síochána;
- If the suspected abuser is an employee/volunteer of the City Council, the matter should be brought to the immediate attention of the City Manager & S.E.O, Human Resources Dept;
- The person who first encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred. That is a task for the Health Service Executive or An Garda Síochána;
- Under no circumstances should any individual employee or volunteer attempt to intervene or deal with the problem of abuse alone.

3.3.2 Steps to be taken by the Child Safeguarding Liaison Officer

- When the designated Child Safeguarding Liaison Officer receives a report about suspected or actual child abuse, they should consider whether there are reasonable grounds for reporting it to the Health Service Executive. It may be helpful to discuss the matter with a professional, such as a social worker, who can assist in deciding whether or not to formally report concerns to the Health Service Executive.

This may involve:

- Clarifying or getting more information about the matter. Recording and treating the information as confidential
- Where there is any doubt or uncertainty, consult informally initially with a HSE Duty Social Work Department to hear its view of the situation; (See Appendix III for a list of HSE Area Social Work Contact Details);
- Making a formal referral to the Health Service Executive or An Garda Síochána.
- Informing parents about making the referral unless this would endanger the child;

A suspicion, which is not supported by any objective indication of abuse or neglect, would not constitute a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern. However, these suspicions should be recorded or noted internally as future suspicions may lead to the decision to make a report and, in those circumstances, earlier suspicions may provide important information (see Appendix VI).

3.3.3 Standard reporting procedure

Where reasonable grounds exist for the reporting of suspected or actual child abuse a report shall be made to the Health Service Executive in person, by telephone or in writing by the Child Safeguarding Liaison Officer. Reports may be made to the HSE Duty Social Worker Department or directly to the social worker. Each Health Service Executive office has a social worker on duty for a certain number of hours each day. The duty social worker is available to meet with, or talk on the telephone, to persons wishing to report child safeguarding concerns. In the event of an emergency, or the non-availability of HSE employees, the report should be made to An Garda Síochána. This may be done at any Garda Station. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending the intervention of the Health Service Executive

3.3.4 Information required when a report is being made

The ability of the Health Service Executive and/or An Garda Síochána to assess suspicions or allegations of child abuse will depend on the amount and quality of information conveyed to them by persons reporting their concerns.

The Standard Form for Reporting Child Safeguarding and/or Welfare Concerns should be used for reporting suspected child abuse to the Health Service Executive or An Garda Síochána. If a report is made by phone, this form should be forwarded subsequently to the Health Service Executive. Any employee/volunteer/Child Safeguarding Liaison Officer(s) who suspects child abuse should inform the parents/guardians if a report is to be submitted to the Health Service Executive or An Garda Síochána unless doing so is likely to endanger the child or undermine an investigation. Guidance may be obtained from the Health Service Executive or An Garda Síochána on how this might be undertaken.

Any Council employee/volunteer who suspects child abuse shall not interview the child or the child's parents/guardians in any detail about the alleged abuse.

Additional guidance on the arrangements for reporting child abuse can be found in Chapter 4 of Children First – National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children issued by the Department of Health and Children.

All actions taken and outcomes should be recorded.

These Records should be filed locally by the Child Safeguarding Officer and Human Resources Department.

3.3.5 Cases where concerns are not referred on

In those cases where the Council decides that it should not refer concerns to the Health Service Executive or An Garda Síochána, the employee/volunteer who raised the concern must be given a clear written statement, from the Child Safeguarding Liaison Officer, of the reasons why the Council is not doing so. The employee/volunteer should be advised that, if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free to consult with, or report to, the Health Service Executive or An Garda Síochána.

Malicious or vexatious allegations of child abuse made by employees/volunteers may be considered to be a disciplinary matter and dealt with accordingly, subject to 'The Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act , 1998' (see below).

3.3.6 Common Impediments to the Reporting of Child Abuse

Child abuse is a difficult and, to some people, distasteful subject. There is a common tendency to believe that it happens only to 'other people'. The identification of child abuse is frequently linked to personal experiences, values and beliefs, and there may be a reluctance to acknowledge its existence. The belief that parents or other persons in charge of children would actually hurt or neglect them is not easy to sustain. It is easy, therefore, to deny, minimise or explain away any signs that a child is being harmed, even when evidence exists. At times, it is hard to distinguish between abusive situations and those where other social problems such as unemployment, poverty, poor housing, mental illness or isolation are present. Sympathy for families in difficult circumstances can sometimes dilute personal or professional concerns about the safety and welfare of children. Reluctance to act on suspicions about child abuse can often stem from uncertainty and fear. Individuals may be afraid of repercussions, afraid of being thought insensitive, afraid of breaking confidence, or afraid of being disloyal. Knowledge and information about child abuse will help to overcome reluctance to take action.

The Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse "reasonably and in good faith" to designated officers, the HSE or any member of An Garda Síochána. This means that, even if a reported suspicion of child abuse proves unfounded, a plaintiff who took an action would have to prove that the reporter had not acted reasonably and in good faith in making the report.

Section 4 Dealing with Complaints/Allegations against the Council, Employees and Volunteers

Allegations of a general nature

Allegations of a general nature (not related to the alleged abuse or neglect of a child) which are made against Limerick City Council, its employees or volunteers must be investigated, dealt with and managed by the Council in accordance with the Council's Complaints Procedure. A copy of the Council's Complaints Procedure is available at (www.limerickcity.ie/ourservices/corporateservices/management/services/customer-care/)

Employees/volunteers are required to co-operate with investigations by or on behalf of Limerick City Council in accordance with the Complaints Procedure. The Council's Disciplinary Procedure may be invoked in circumstances where it is found that an employee/volunteer has engaged in negligent, unsafe or otherwise inappropriate behaviour in respect of the allegation.

4.1 Allegations against an Employee or Volunteer

Where an allegation of abuse of a child is made against an employee or volunteer the reporting procedure must be dealt with and managed by City Council, guided by the Council's Child Safeguarding Liaison Officer(s) as outlined under Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children. It is important to note that the investigation of suspected child abuse is the responsibility of the statutory authorities i.e. Health Service Executive/An Garda Síochána and shall not be undertaken by City Council's Child Safeguarding Liaison Officer(s) or other City Council employees. Where such an allegation is made against an employee, or volunteer contact and consultation with the Health Service Executive and An Garda Síochána will take place as soon as reasonably practical. This may be done through City Council's Child Safeguarding Liaison Officer(s). Following these consultations any action will be guided by the relevant Statutory Body. Reporting Procedures – refer back to Section 3 – Reporting Procedures, for any necessary clarification.

The Council will, as a matter of urgency, take any necessary protective measures that are proportionate to the level of risk and will balance its obligations to its employee with its obligations in respect of the best interests of children.

When an allegation is made against an employee, the following steps shall be taken:

- (i) The first priority shall be to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk. The employer should as a matter of urgency take any necessary protective measures. These measures should be proportionate to the level of risk.
- (ii) Action shall be guided by the agreed internal procedures i.e. Limerick City Council's Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures, the applicable employment contract and the rules of natural justice, where appropriate;

(See *Appendix V: Employee/Volunteer Allegation Chart*)

- (iii) The SEO H.R. & City Manager shall be informed as soon as possible;

- (iv) The follow up on an allegation of abuse against an employee shall be made in consultation with the Health Service Executive and An Garda Síochána. An immediate meeting shall be arranged with these two agencies for this purpose;
- (v) When pursuing the question of the future position of the employee, the Senior Executive Officer, H.R., shall advise the person accused of the allegation and the agreed procedures shall be followed;
- (vi) Limerick City Council shall take care to ensure actions taken by them do not undermine or frustrate any investigations being conducted by the Health Service Executive or An Garda Síochána. It is strongly recommended that employers maintain a close liaison with these authorities to achieve this.
- (vii) Employees/volunteer's may be subjected to erroneous or malicious allegations. Therefore any allegation of abuse will be dealt with sensitively and support will be offered to employees including counselling where necessary. However, the primary goal is to protect the child while taking care to treat the employee/volunteer fairly.
- (viii) Flow charts of the reporting procedures are contained in Appendix V. These cover the following scenarios:
 - A. Employee concern of child abuse
 - B. Allegations of child abuse made by an employee / volunteer of Limerick City Council
 - C. Allegation of child abuse made by a member of the public
 - D. Employee threatened of child abuse by a member of the public, including children.

Section 5 Confidentiality

All information regarding concerns of child abuse shall be shared only on "a need to know" basis in the interests of the child. No undertakings regarding secrecy can be given. Ethical and statutory codes concerned with confidentiality and data protection provide general guidance. They are not intended to limit or prevent the exchange of information between different professional employees that have a responsibility for ensuring the protection of children. Giving information to others for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality.

Anyone who receives information from colleagues about possible or actual child abuse must treat it as having been given in confidence, subject to above. Any breaches of confidential information may be regarded as a disciplinary matter, subject to above.

Records should be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act, within an agreed HR filing system and be available only to those directly involved and within the confines of the obligations and duties of the Data Protection Act, 2003.

Section 6 Recruitment and Selection

It is the policy of Limerick City Council to Garda vet all new employees and volunteers working with children/vulnerable adults prior to the individual taking up the position. This procedure has been determined as part of City Council's recruitment and selection process.

Applicants for employment will be required to make a declaration relating to previous criminal records. This Declaration will form part of the Job Application Form.

When a candidate is being considered for appointment he/she will be required to supply information in writing on the prescribed Garda Vetting Application Form. This will include personal details, past and current.

The Garda Vetting Application Form will be sent to the Garda Central Vetting Unit by the Council's Authorised Signatory as appointed under the Garda Vetting Procedure.

Volunteers may be required to supply information in writing on the prescribed Garda Vetting Application Form.

All candidates being considered for employment will be subject to reference checks. It is the policy to gain at least two recent employment references from those who have knowledge of the individual's recent career in a professional context. Each reference check will be validated by a phone call.

Section 7 Existing Employees

It is the policy of Limerick City Council to Garda vet all existing employees and volunteers working with children/vulnerable adults. (see Appendix IV)

Since July 2010 a large number of existing employees working with children/vulnerable adults have been garda vetted and this will continue on a phased & priority basis (priority determined by the frequency of interaction with children).

Section 8 Grant Funding

In circumstances where there is grant assistance to festivals or community groups under the Arts or any grant scheme, Limerick City Council should ensure that the group or festival has appropriate policies in place as regards child protection. Limerick City Council should also require confirmation that the appropriate insurance policies are in place.

Section 9 Further information

Further information on child safeguarding and welfare is available from the City Council's Child Safeguarding Liaison Officer(s) from the Health Service Executive and/or from the Department of Health and Children.

Appendix I

Incident Report Form 1

<p><i>Limerick City Council</i></p> <p>Child Safeguarding Policy</p> <p>COMPLAINT/INCIDENT REPORT FORM</p> <p>CONFIDENTIAL</p>
--

TYPE OF INCIDENT _____

OCCURRED ON: DATE / / TIME _____

REPORTED ON: DATE / / TIME _____

LOCATION: _____

EVENT / ACTIVITY: _____

Particulars of Incident

Relevant Child Details

Witness Details (if appropriate)

Name: _____	Name _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
_____	_____

Tel: _____	D OB / / _____	Tel: _____
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WERE GARDAÍ CONTACTED Yes No Date / /

WAS SECURITY CONTACTED Yes No Date / /

WERE MEDICAL PERSONNEL CONTACTED Yes No Date / /

WAS PARENT / GUARDIAN CONTACTED Yes No Date / /

No Date / /

If yes, provide brief details:

- *Please submit to the Child Safeguarding Liaison Officer*
- *Any supporting evidence or other relevant documentation should be attached to this form*

Appendix II Guidance on Categories of Child Abuse

1. Recognition of Child Abuse

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time.

2. Neglect

Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults and medical care. Harm can be defined as the ill-treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child. Whether it is significant is determined by his/her health and development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a child of similar age.

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point. The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that his or her well-being and/or development are severely affected.

3. Signs and Symptoms of Child Neglect

A distinction can be made between "wilful" neglect and "circumstantial" neglect. For instance, "wilful" neglect would generally incorporate a direct and deliberate deprivation by a parent/guardian of a child's most basic needs e.g. withdrawal of food, shelter, warmth, clothing, contact with others, whereas "circumstantial" neglect more often may be due to stress/inability to cope by parents or guardians.

Child neglect may be suspected in cases of:

- Abandonment or desertion
- Children persistently being left alone without adequate care and supervision
- Malnourishment, lacking food, inappropriate food or erratic feeding
- Lack of warmth or adequate clothing
- Lack of protection and exposure to danger including moral danger or lack of supervision appropriate to the child's age
- Persistent failure to attend school
- Non-organic failure to thrive i.e. child not gaining weight not alone due to malnutrition but also due to emotional deprivation
- Failure to provide adequate care for the child's medical problems
- Exploited, overworked

4. Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a care-giver 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:

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

The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/guardian.

5. Signs and Symptoms of Emotional Child Abuse

Emotional abuse is not easy to recognise because the effects are not easily observable. Emotional abuse can be defined in reference to the following indices. However, it should be noted that no one indicator is conclusive of emotional abuse.

- Rejection, Lack of attachment
- Lack of praise and encouragement
- Lack of comfort and love
- Lack of proper stimulation (e.g. fun and play)
- Lack of continuity of care (e.g. frequent moves)
- Serious over-protectiveness
- Inappropriate non-physical punishment (e.g. locking in bedrooms)
- Family conflicts and/or violence
- Every child who is abused sexually, physically or neglected is also emotionally abused

- Inappropriate expectations of a child's behaviour - relative to his/her age and stage of development.

6. Physical Abuse

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:

- shaking
- use of excessive force in handling
- deliberate poisoning
- suffocation
- Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy
- allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child.

7. Signs and Symptoms of Physical Abuse

Unsatisfactory explanations or varying explanations for the following events are highly suspicious:

- Bruises
- Fractures
- Swollen joints
- Burns/Scalds(see below for more detail)
- Abrasions/Lacerations
- Hemorrhages (retinal, subdural)
- Damage to body organs
- Poisonings - repeated (prescribed drugs, alcohol)
- Failure to thrive
- Coma/Unconsciousness
- Death.

8. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse 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::

- exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of the child;
- intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification;

- masturbation in the presence of the child or the involvement of the child in an act of masturbation;
- sexual intercourse with the child whether oral, vaginal, or anal;

Sexual exploitation of a child includes inciting, encouraging propositioning, requiring or permitting a child to solicit for, or to engage in, prostitution or other sexual acts. Sexual exploitation also occurs when a child is involved in the exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, video tape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of the image by computer or other means. It may also include showing sexually explicit material to children which is often a feature of the “grooming” process by perpetrators of abuse.

For the purposes of the criminal law, the age of consent to sexual intercourse 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.

9. Signs and Symptoms of Child Sexual Abuse

Guardians and professionals should be alert to the following physical and behavioural signs:

- Bleeding from the vagina/anus
- Difficulty/pain in passing urine/faeces
- An infection may occur secondary to sexual abuse, which may or may not be a definitive sexually transmitted disease. Professionals should be informed if a child has a persistent vaginal discharge or has warts/rash in genital area.
- Noticeable and uncharacteristic change of behaviour
- Hints about sexual activity
- Age - inappropriate understanding of sexual behaviour
- Inappropriate seductive behaviour
- Sexually aggressive behaviour with others
- Uncharacteristic sexual play with peers/toys
- Unusual reluctance to join in normal activities which involve undressing, e.g. games/swimming

Particular behavioural signs and emotional problems suggestive of child abuse in young children (0-10 yrs):

- Mood change, e.g. child becomes withdrawn, fearful, acting out;
- Lack of concentration (change in school performance)
- Bed wetting, soiling
- Psychosomatic complaints; pains, headaches
- Skin disorders

- Nightmares, changes in sleep patterns
- School refusal
- Separation anxiety
- Loss of appetite
- Isolation

Particular behavioural signs and emotional problems suggestive of child abuse in older children (10 yrs +):

- Mood change, e.g. depression, failure to communicate
- Running away
- Drug, alcohol, solvent abuse
- Self mutilation
- Suicide attempts
- Delinquency
- Truancy
- Eating disorders
- Isolation

Appendix III

HSE LOCAL: List of Duty Social Work Contact Details

Limerick East & West	Limerick	Roxtown Health Centre Old Clare Street Limerick	Tel: 061 483091 Fax: 061 419063
		Moyross Health Centre Moyross Limerick	Tel: 061 483790 061 326010 Fax: 061 329314
		Ballynanty Health Centre Kileely Road Ballynanty Limerick	Tel: 061 457100 Fax: 061 457101
		SW Dept. Southill Health Centre Southill Limerick City	Tel: 061 209985 Fax: 061 209998
		Limerick West SW Dept Newcastle West Health Centre Gortboy Newcastle West Co. Limerick	Tel: 069 66653 Fax: 069 62980

Children First Information and Advice Officers

Anne Murray	HSE West Limerick	87 O'Connell Street Limerick	Tel: 061 483520 Fax: 061 468902 annem.murray@hse.ie
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Appendix IV

List of areas in Limerick City Council working with children*

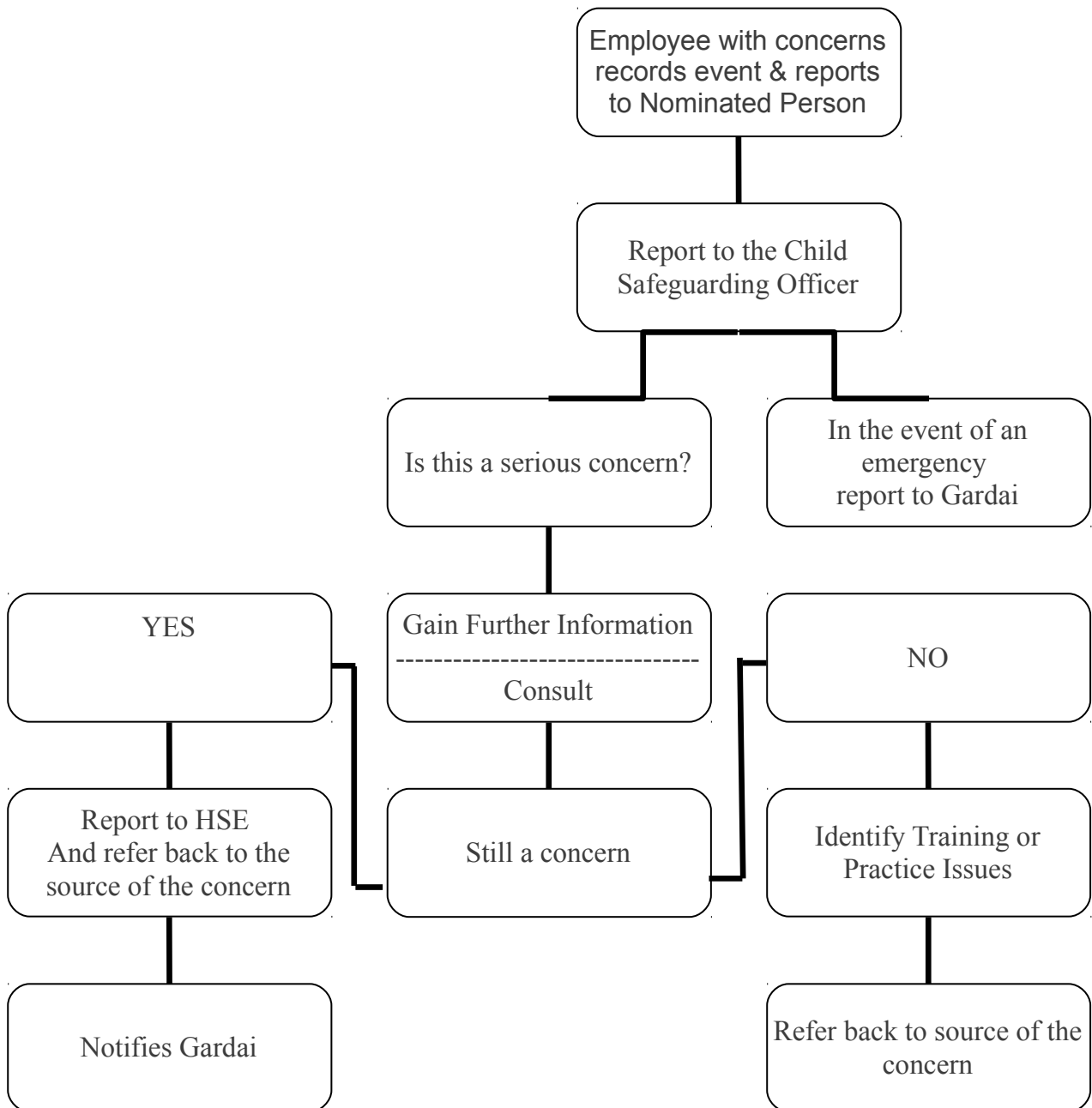
All Employees in the sections/departments listed below will be Garda vetted:

- Library Posts
- School Wardens
- Park Employees
- Housing Staff
- Social Workers
- Museum / Art Gallery
- Environmental Schools Programme
- Fire Service
- Arts Officers
- Environmental Inspectors
- Road Safety Officer
- Community & Enterprise Officers
- RAPID Co-Ordinators
- Community Liaison Officers
- Civil Defence (employees & volunteers)
- Cemetery employees
- Comhairle na nOg (employees & volunteers)
- Junior Achievement (employees & volunteers)
- Volunteers engaged in a range of activities

* Please note that list is non-exhaustive and the Council must assess each post for relevance of the Child Safeguarding Policy.

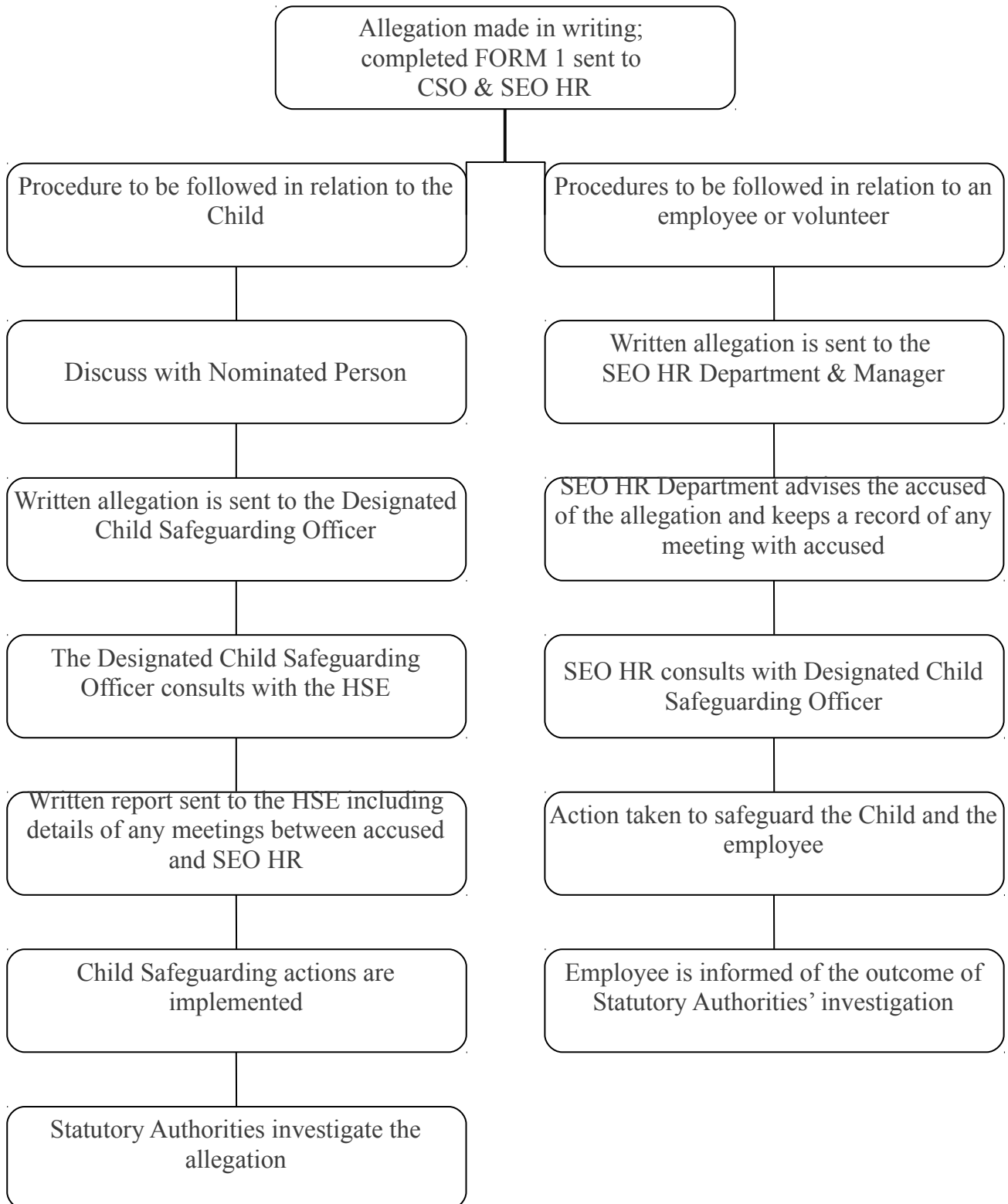
Appendix V: Reporting Procedures

A - Employee with child abuse concern



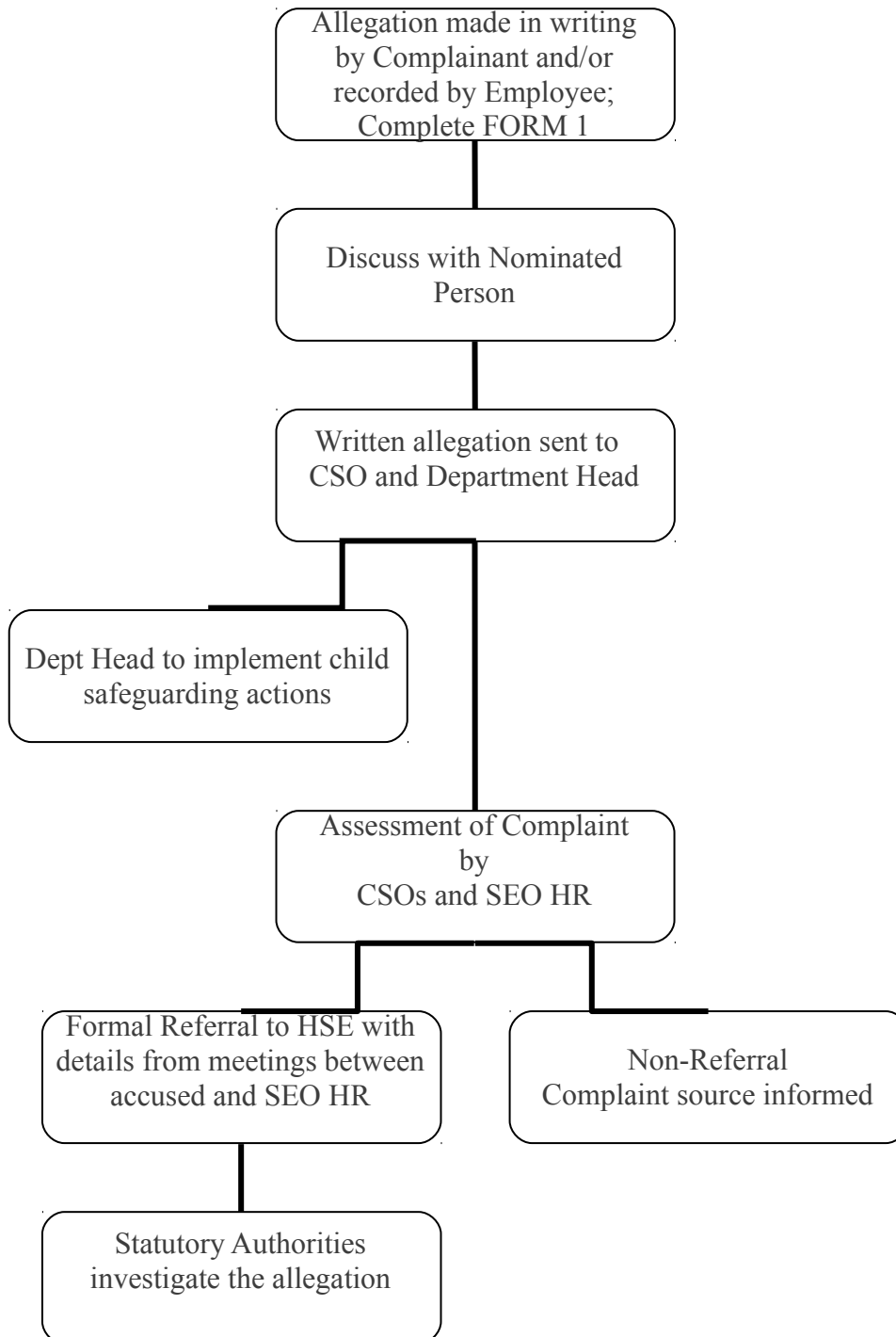
Appendix V: Reporting Procedures

B. Allegation of Child Abuse against Employees or Volunteers



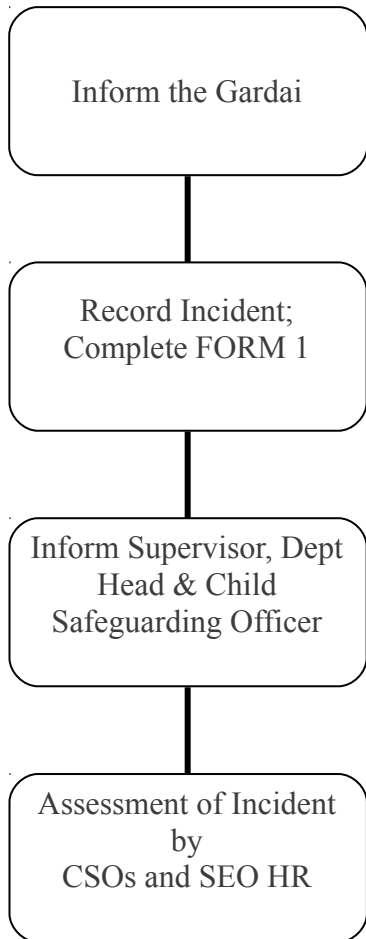
Appendix V: Reporting Procedures

C. Allegation of Child Abuse against a member of the public



Appendix V: Reporting Procedures

D. Employee threatened of child abuse by member of the public



Appendix VI

Record Sheet – Suspicion Raised

Name:

Date of Birth:

Start Date:

Class / Group

Date /Time	Incident	Physical Injury	Non Attendance	Conversation	Behaviour Causing Concern	Action Taken