



**GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE
(GHANECare)**

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy



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**CHILD AND
VULNERABLE ADULT
PROTECTION POLICY**

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Policy and Procedures for Staff and Volunteers

Foreword

This document sets out the requirements for working with children and vulnerable adults at GHANECare in accordance with the Children First Act 2015, the Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse. It is distributed as part of the information pack for all volunteers, interns and staff. This document will also be made available to teachers, parents/guardians and other responsible adults working with children and vulnerable adults on GHANECare projects and programmes. It is also published in PDF format on the GHANECare website, www.ghanecare.org. This document makes reference to two other documents that are also available in either hard copy or electronic copy:

1. Health and Safety Policy
2. Volunteer Supervision Policy
3. Staff Terms and Conditions It is hoped that this policy will prove a practical and useful addition to best practice in working with children and young people and to help the staff, volunteers, interns, writers and artists who work with GHANECare. GHANECare welcomes feedback on this document – please send comments and suggestions to Kuunaah Richard, Executive Director, at ghanecure@gmail.com.

SECTION 1: POLICY

Introduction

We at GHANECare are committed to safeguarding the well-being of children and vulnerable adults who are participating in events run at our centres and at off-site locations.

Our aim is to create a safe, creative and enjoyable environment where children and vulnerable adults of all abilities can engage in storytelling and creative writing and where their protection and welfare is paramount. To this end, we adhere to the Children First Act 2015 and all



GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE (GHANECare)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

associated guidelines, as well as Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse: National Policy and Procedures, published by the Health Service Executive.

Everyone working with children and vulnerable adults has a responsibility for their well-being and protection, including those working as staff members or volunteers at GHANECare through the organisation's educational programmes and activities. We have a collective responsibility to ensure that the children and vulnerable adults we work with are encouraged and helped in their creative work and that this should take place in a safe and protected environment.

This document contains the GHANECares' policy and guidelines for child and vulnerable adult protection and promotes codes of behaviour so that everyone is aware of the standards of behaviour of both children and adults. All staff and volunteers are required to adhere to this code.

All staff and volunteers at GHANECare will be made aware of the policy and procedure and child/vulnerable adult protection will be covered in detail as part of the induction and training programme.

As part of their terms of employment, all staff will be required to report any concerns over behaviour or other evidence that may potentially indicate the presence of child or vulnerable adult abuse.

Policy Statement

GHANECares' child and vulnerable adult protection policy stems from the following principles:

- ✓ The safety and welfare of children and vulnerable adults is everyone's responsibility.
- ✓ The welfare of the child and vulnerable adult is paramount. This is the guiding principle underpinning all our work with children and vulnerable adults.



GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE (GHANECare)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

- ✓ Per the Child Care Act 1991, a child is defined as a person under the age of 18 years, excluding a person who is or has been married. This definition includes the term young people.
- ✓ A vulnerable person is defined as an adult who may be restricted in capacity to guard himself/herself against harm or exploitation or to report such harm or exploitation. The restriction of capacity may arise as a result of physical or intellectual impairment. Vulnerability to abuse is influenced by both context (e.g. social or personal circumstances) and individual circumstances.
- ✓ All children and vulnerable adults, regardless of age, any disability they may have, gender, race, family status, marital status, religious belief, sexual orientation, membership of the Traveller community, geographical location, or socio-economic status³ have a right to protection from abuse.
- ✓ The need to comply with current statutory requirements and guidance on the protection of children and vulnerable adults.

The primary functions of this policy are the promotion of a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults, the prevention of abuse and the protection of staff and volunteers through the application of a Code of Behaviour.

Safe and protected environment: The safety and welfare of children and vulnerable adults is paramount. The most important function of this policy is to create a safe and protected environment for children and vulnerable adults to enjoy storytelling and creative writing.

Prevention and education: This policy also aims to prevent abuse from occurring and to educate staff and volunteers on the subject and to build their capacity to pre-empt abuse.



GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE (GHANECare)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

Scope

This policy is applicable to all staff employed by Fighting Words and also applies to all volunteers, including visiting writers and artists, as well as at both centre-based programmes and external Fighting Words-sponsored events and activities. It is the responsibility of the General Manager to ensure that every new staff member and volunteer:

1. Receives a copy of the Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy
2. Understands and signs the Code of Behaviour
3. Receives training on the subject matter

All staff members and volunteers will:

1. Be provided with an adequate level of supervision, support and review of work practice
2. Be provided with child protection training at induction
3. Writers, artists and volunteers doing one-off or sessional work will be issued with an information pack and required to sign a copy of the child and vulnerable adult protection policy
4. All volunteers, including visiting writers and artists, will agree to abide by the Fighting Words Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy.

GHANECare has implemented policies and procedures covering the following with regard to child and vulnerable adult protection:

1. Code of behaviour for all staff and volunteers
2. Reporting of suspected or disclosed abuse
3. Confidentiality
4. Recruitment and selection of staff
5. Management and supervision of staff and volunteers
6. Involvement of parents/carers



GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE (GHANECare)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

7. Staff allegations
8. Complaints and comments
9. Accidents

Child Safeguarding Statement: Relevant Service and Relevant Person

The Children First Act 2015 defines a ‘provider’ as “a person:

- a. who provides a relevant service, and
- b. who, in respect of the provision of such relevant service:
 - (i) employs (whether under contract of employment or otherwise) one or more than one other person to undertake any work or activity that constitutes a relevant service,
 - (ii) enters into a contract for services with one or more than one other person for the provision by the person of a relevant service, or
 - (iii) permits one or more than one other person (whether or not for commercial or other consideration and whether or not as part of a course of education or training, including an internship scheme) to undertake any work or activity, on behalf of the person, that constitutes a relevant service”.

Under the Children First Act 2015, GHANECare is a relevant service providing creative writing programmes to children and young people. As such, we will ensure, as far as practicable, that all children are safe from harm while availing of our services.

Per the Children First Act 2015, GHANECare has:

- ✓ Performed assessment of any potential for harm to a child while availing of our services;
- ✓ Prepared a written Child Safeguarding Statement specifying the service being provided and the principles and procedures to be observed to ensure as far as practicable, that a child, while availing of the service, is safe from harm for use at all GHANECare locations;



GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE (GHANECare)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

- ✓ Appointed a Relevant Person
- ✓ Displays the child safeguarding statement in a prominent place where the relevant service concerned relates or is provided, or both, as may be appropriate. Relevant Person The relevant person is the first point of contact in relation to the Child Safeguarding Statement; their name and contact details should be included in the Child Safeguarding Statement. The Relevant Person is Kuunaah Richard, Executive Director.

Section 2: CODE OF BEHAVIOUR – STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR

We expect everyone working with children and vulnerable adults in a paid or voluntary capacity for GHANECare to take every possible precaution to avoid situations that could be misinterpreted and/or a breach of the either the Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy or Health and Safety Policy. By setting out appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, this code will not only help to protect children, but also staff, interns and volunteers at GHANECare.

Our two guiding **principles** are **creativity** and **respect**. In other words, **respect** for everyone's creativity.

Do	Treat all children and vulnerable adults equally.
Do	Listen and hear – and give time to the child or vulnerable adult to say what s/he wants to say. Thoughts and words are important and they deserve respect.
Do	Promote the atmosphere of creativity, openness, acceptance and fun in the centre. Be friendly and approachable.
Do	Respect a child or vulnerable adult's right to personal privacy and personal space.
Do	Be aware of situations that present risks and manage these risks appropriately – always ask a member of staff if you are unsure.
Do	Safeguard the best interests and welfare of vulnerable adults where it is recognised that they are unable to make their own decisions and/or protect themselves, their assets or their bodily integrity and ensure appropriate and accountable protection for



GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE (GHANECare)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

	them.
Do	Use only appropriate language in working with children and vulnerable adults – no cursing or swearing.
Do	Ensure that an appropriate ratio of adults to children is in place. For primary school workshops, the ratio should be not more than 4:1. For secondary school workshops, the ratio should be not more than 6:1.
Do	Always treat children and vulnerable adults with respect - don't embarrass them. Do not ridicule, insult or make little of anyone during an activity.
Do	Recognise that caution is required, particularly sensitive moments such as dealing with a child or vulnerable adult who becomes upset or feels unwell. Always seek support from another team member, staff or a teacher/carer if required.
Do	Ensure, in so far as possible, that the building and/or facilities used for activities with children and vulnerable adults are safe and secure for the people in it. All occupied parts of the building should be monitored and parts not in use should be isolated or secured, e.g. the door to the office should be shut if not in use.
Do	Plan activities so that they involve more than one person being present or at least in sight or hearing of others. A minimum of two adults should be present at all times
Do	Carry identification when attending a school or other location on behalf of Fighting Words.
Do	Make sure that a responsible adult, e.g. a teacher, is always present for group programmes, both at the GHANECare centre, when visiting a school or conducting programmes in outside venues on behalf of GHANECare.



GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE (GHANECare)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

Avoid	Doing things of a personal nature that children and vulnerable adults can do for themselves. Staff members and volunteers are not responsible for the personal hygiene needs of children and vulnerable adults. Notify the location coordinator/supervisor if a child or vulnerable adult needs assistance.
Avoid	Avoid Allowing yourself to be drawn into inappropriate attention-seeking behaviours. Do your best to always remain calm.

Do not	Physically punish or be in any way verbally abusive to a child or vulnerable adult.
Do not	Use alcohol, tobacco or drugs in the company of children or vulnerable adults. Staff and volunteers must not attend any GHANECare programmes under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
Do not	Arrange external meetings or contact children or vulnerable adults outside the group or project. Do not offer lifts to children in you car
Do not	Permit abusive peer activities such as bullying. Bullying behaviour can be defined as repeated aggression, be it verbal, psychological or physical, which is conducted by an individual or group against others. Report any incidents or suspected incidents of bullying behaviour to the Designated Liaison Person immediately. Bullying will be addressed in accordance with the Fighting Words anti-bullying policy.
Do not	Allow or engage in suggestive remarks, gestures or touching of a kind which could be misunderstood. If you have to touch a child or vulnerable adult, ask their permission where possible. In some cases, you may not have time to ask permission, for example, preventing fingers from being caught in a door. In these cases, always explain your actions after the event. See the “Physical Contact” section below for more information.



GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE (GHANECare)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

Do not	Allow any physically rough or sexually provocative games, or inappropriate talking or touching, by anyone in any group for which you have responsibility.
Do not	Allow conversations with children or vulnerable adults that encourage personal comments or show favouritism.
Do not	Talk about the children in front of the children. If you have a question about how best to work with a particular child, excuse yourself away from the child and ask a member of staff.
Do not	Allow unsupervised access to the GHANECare wireless internet (Wi-Fi) connection and/or computer network.
Do not	Allow children or vulnerable adults to use dangerous equipment without supervision, e.g. scissors. Do not share your personal items.
Do not	Allow use of mobile phones during workshops unless absolutely necessary.
Do not	Under any circumstances attempt to deal with any problems or challenging behaviour alone. If an activity – the event itself or peer activities between children – is getting out of hand or unsafe, notify the group leader or a member of staff immediately.

Physical Contact

Physical touch should only occur when it is appropriate to the age/development of the child and in response to particular needs of the child. There will be instances when physical contact is unavoidable and in fact necessary.

Appropriate:

- ✓ Context-dependent touch within a controlled and supervised environment (e.g. demonstration of dance, positioning, supporting a lift, demonstrating a breathing technique)
- ✓ Preventing injury (e.g. catching a falling child, appropriate restraint)
- ✓ Handshake and “high fives”



GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE (GHANECare)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

- ✓ Fitting safety equipment (e.g. harness, safety restraint)

Inappropriate:

- ✓ Touch which is unnecessary, unexplained, out of context, without consent
- ✓ Any touch to breast, groin or buttocks areas
- ✓ Kissing or hugging
- ✓ Slapping/hitting (even in jest)
- ✓ Holding hands
- ✓ Sitting in lap

Young children particularly will often demonstrate affection. Staff and volunteer training and induction will include best practices and methods of how to best respond when a child tries to hug, wants to hold hands, etc.

Technology – Code of Behaviour at Fighting Words for Staff and Volunteers

- ✓ Never send/receive private calls or texts while supervising children or young people
- ✓ Never contact children or young people (e.g. by phone, text, email) without prior parental consent
- ✓ Never give your personal phone number to children or young people
- ✓ Never befriend children/young people on social networking sites
- ✓ Never take a photograph/video of a child without prior parental consent Ensure photographic/video content is appropriate
- ✓ Avoid naming the child/young person when using the photograph/video unless parental consent is confirmed



GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE (GHANECare)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

Breaches of the Code of Behaviour by Staff and Volunteers

- ✓ Any breaches of the Code of Practice will be raised with the individual concerned. In the case of staff, serious breaches of the code or policy will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure and could result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal
- ✓ In the case of volunteers, serious breaches of the code or policy will be dealt with under the Complaints Against Volunteers procedure in the Volunteer Policy and could result in disciplinary action up to and including a termination of the volunteering relationship.
- ✓ If you have a concern or complaint that is related to Code of Behaviour you can speak to the primary designated contact, the Designated Liaison Person . The Designated Liaison Person will liaise with the Executive Director and assess the situation and conduct an investigation if necessary. Any allegation will be investigated confidentially in order to safeguard the rights of the person against whom allegations have been made. Investigations will be carried out quickly to see whether a prima facie case is established. All investigations will be conducted in accordance with the principles of natural justice:
 1. The right to a fair hearing
 2. The rule against bias
- ✓ If so, the issue will be handled according to the Complaints Against Volunteers procedure or, in the case of staff, the disciplinary procedure in the Staff Terms and Conditions.
- ✓ If not, the complainant will be told the outcome of the investigation and that the matter will not be taken any further. The individual will retain the right to pursue the matter under the complaints procedure, or grievance procedure as appropriate.
- ✓ Following a complaint, the handling of the complaint will be subject to a review by an independent, external third party to ensure that all complaints are dealt with in line with best possible practice. During the course of such a review, all names and identifying details will be removed.



GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE (GHANECare)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

SECTION 3: REPORTING PROCEDURES - WHAT TO DO IF YOU THINK A CHILD MAY BE BEING ABUSED

THE ONE THING YOU MUST NOT DO IS NOTHING

All staff and volunteers (including students on placement or work experience) have a responsibility to safeguard children and young people and to report any concerns they may have for the protection or welfare of a child/young person.

Staff Responsibilities at GHANECare

Designated Liaison Person Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children refers to the role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Deputy DLP. Best practice in child safeguarding indicates that organisations working with children/young people or their families should appoint a DLP to be the resource person to any staff member or volunteer who has child protection concerns and to liaise with outside agencies. The role of the DLP is to receive child protection and welfare concerns from workers/volunteers and to report concerns which meet the threshold of ‘reasonable grounds for concern’ to Emmanuel.

At GHANECare, the Designated Liaison Person is Kuunaah Richard, the Executive Director. The Deputy Designated Liaison Person is Joseph Dery, Programme Co-ordinator.

Mandated Persons

Under the Children First Act 2015, mandated persons have a statutory obligation to report concerns which reach or exceed a legally defined threshold (see section 14 of the Children First Act 2015) and to cooperate with Emmanuel in the assessment of mandated reports, where requested to do so. Kuunaah Richard, the Executive Director, is a mandated person under the Children First Act 2015.

The term ‘harm’ is used as defined in the Children First Act 2015: ‘harm’ means, in relation to a child—: (a) assault, ill-treatment or neglect of the child in a manner that seriously affects or is likely to seriously affect the child’s health, development or welfare, or (b) sexual abuse of the



GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE (GHANECare)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

child, whether caused by a single act, omission or circumstance or a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances, or otherwise”.

Section 14 (1) of the Children First Act 2015 states: “...where a Mandated Person knows, believes or has reasonable grounds to suspect, on the basis of information that he or she has received, acquired or become aware of in the course of his or her employment or profession as such a mandated person, that a child:

- a) has been harmed,
- b) is being harmed, or
- c) is at risk of being harmed, he or she shall, as soon as practicable, report that knowledge, belief or suspicion, as the case may be, to Emmanuel.”

Also, Section 14 (2) of the Children First Act 2015 places obligations on mandated persons to report any disclosures made by a child: “Where a child believes that he or she:

- a) has been harmed,
- b) is being harmed, or
- c) is at risk of being harmed, and discloses this belief to a mandated person in the course of a mandated person’s employment or profession as such a person, the mandated person shall, ... as soon as practicable, report that disclosure to Emmanuel.

Types of Child Abuse and How They May Be Recognised

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. Abuse and neglect can occur within the family, in the community or in an institutional setting. The abuser may be someone known to the child or a stranger and can be an adult or another child.



GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE (GHANECare)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

In a situation where abuse is alleged to have been carried out by another child, you should consider it a child welfare and protection issue for both children and you should follow child protection procedures for both the victim and the alleged abuser.

The important factor in deciding whether the behaviour is abuse or neglect is the impact of that behaviour on the child rather than the intention of the parent/carer.

A child/young person will sometimes confide in a staff member or volunteer that they have been abused or someone may witness incidents which suggest that a child/young person is being harmed. Often it is a case of a staff member/volunteer feeling worried and concerned about certain signs they are picking up on, such as poor hygiene; a child/young person always appearing hungry, listless and tired; a lack of suitable clothing; or unexplained physical injuries. Other indicators may be related to the child/young person's behaviour, such as being aggressive, impulsive or withdrawn. A cluster or pattern of signs is more likely to be indicative of neglect or abuse.

SECTION 4: SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS

Per the Health Service Executive's Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse: National Policy and Procedures, a vulnerable person is defined as: "an adult who is restricted in capacity to guard himself/herself against harm or exploitation or to report such harm or exploitation. This may arise as a result of physical or intellectual impairment and risk of abuse may be influenced by both context and individual circumstances."

Abuse of vulnerable adults can constitute the physical, psychological, emotional, financial or sexual maltreatment or neglect of a vulnerable adult by another person. The abuse may be a single act or repeated over a period of time and it may take one form or a multiple of forms. The lack of appropriate action can also be a form of abuse.



GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE (GHANECare)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

Key Principles in Vulnerable Adult Protection and Welfare

Citizenship confers a status on an individual whereby their fundamental right to dignity and respect and other basic human rights as well as their rights to participation in society are upheld and supported by the Constitution, by Ireland's human rights treaty commitments and by the laws of the State.

Person-centredness: that principle which places the person as an individual at the heart and centre of any exchange requiring the provision or delivery of a service. Services are organised around what is important to the person from her/his perspective.

Empowerment is that principle which recognises the right of the individual to lead as independent a life as possible and that supports the individual in every practical way to realise that right.

Self-directedness recognises the right of the individual to self-determination to the greatest extent possible, including where this entails risk. Abiding by this principle means ensuring that risks are recognised, understood and minimised as far as possible, while supporting the person to pursue their goals and preferences.

In accordance with the principles set out in this policy, it is recognised that adults have the right to self-determination and to make decisions, even if this means that they remain at risk. Where there are concerns regarding diminished capacity, consideration should be given to requesting a specialist assessment of the person's decision-making capacity in the context of the abuse allegations and the risk posed to the person.

Equity should be applied in relation to transactions with and services to vulnerable adults. Resources and services should be provided to vulnerable people on the basis of need, using the principle of proportionality.



GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE (GHANECare)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

Safeguarding best interest recognises the vulnerability of individuals where they are unable to make their own decisions and/or protect themselves, their assets or their bodily integrity and ensures appropriate and accountable protection for them.

Responding to and Reporting Vulnerable Adult Protection Concerns

If you are concerned about the protection or welfare of a vulnerable adult, contact the Designated Liaison Person. When the Designated Liaison Person receives a report about suspected or actual abuse, s/he will consider the wishes of the vulnerable adult and if there are reasonable grounds for reporting to the statutory authorities. This will mean:

- ✓ Clarifying or getting more information about the matter
- ✓ Consulting with the vulnerable adult to her/his wishes, etc.
- ✓ Where there is any doubt or uncertainty, consulting the statutory authorities to obtain their advice about the situation
- ✓ Where there are concerns about the diminished capacity of the vulnerable adult, considering assessment of decision-making capacity in the context of the abuse allegations and the risk posed to the person
- ✓ Making a formal referral to the statutory authorities

A suspicion that is not supported by any objective indication of abuse or neglect would not constitute a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern. These suspicions, however, will be recorded or noted internally by the Designated Liaison Person as future suspicions may lead to the decision to make a report and earlier suspicions may provide important information for the statutory authorities. A full written record of all decisions will be maintained by the Designated Liaison Person.



GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE (GHANECare)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

Confidentiality

All information concerned with the identification and reporting of vulnerable adult abuse is subject to best practice guidance on confidentiality. Where a vulnerable adult has capacity, their consent should be sought prior to disclosing information to other parties or the statutory authorities.

Mandatory Reporting

All citizens should be aware that it is a legal requirement throughout Ireland for any person who knows or believes that a serious offence has been committed, including an offence relating to rape, sexual assault or false imprisonment, to report such information to **An Garda Síochána** and it is an offence not to do so where that failure cannot be reasonably excused.

Consent

The consent of the vulnerable adult should be sought prior to reporting any matter to the statutory authorities and on to family and care service providers. Sometimes adults do not want civil authorities to take action to investigate or protect them from harm. If upon receipt of the concern, where the vulnerable adult does not give consent to reporting, and it not clear that a criminal act has taken place, and where the Designated Liaison Person believes that others may also be at risk of harm, consultation should take place with civil authorities as to the best course of action in the absence of consent.

In considering the capacity of the vulnerable adult to give consent, the following factors should be taken into account:

- ✓ The adult has capacity to understand what is being asked of him or her
- ✓ Sufficient information is given, in a way that the person understands, to enable him/her to make an informed decision
- ✓ Consent is not received through any form of coercion



GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE (GHANECare)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

If the vulnerable adult is unable to give informed consent, discussions should take place with their carer/guardian/close family member about reporting concerns/allegations and, where appropriate, discussions should also take place with any medical or social work personnel. There may need to be a determination as to who can give consent on behalf of the vulnerable adult. In some cases, there may already be provision in place; consultation may be required with legal advisers and statutory authorities.

SECTION 6: RECRUITMENT OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Fighting Words will seek to check very thoroughly the background and suitability of all staff and volunteers. The procedure will involve a number of checks and safeguards, and no provisional offer of employment will be confirmed, nor employment or volunteering will commence, until all checks have been satisfied. No candidate who is deemed to be a risk to children or vulnerable adults will be employed or confirmed as a volunteer following the completion of the recruitment procedures.

It is important therefore to ensure that this recruitment process is thorough and no stage is omitted without agreement of the General Manager and/or Executive Director.

Recruitment Processes for Paid Staff and Volunteers

Applicants will be informed, via the details sent out and/or advertised as part of the recruitment process (e.g. on the application form), that Fighting Words will require personal disclosure that nothing in an applicant's background may preclude her or him from working with children and vulnerable adults so that applicants can make an informed choice as to whether to apply for the post. The details will also cover what checks will take place if they choose to apply. These checks will include:

Application Form

Applicants for paid positions will be asked to give a full account of their employment history alongside any voluntary experience on their application form, giving details of posts, names,



GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE (GHANECare)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

addresses and contact numbers and reasons for leaving. Applicants for voluntary positions will be asked to give an account of relevant experience. The form must be marked and dated confirming that the information is true, that the candidate gives permission for Fighting Words to approach previous employers, and that there is nothing in the applicant's personal or professional background that would preclude her or him from working with children and vulnerable adults. While electronic applications are accepted by the organisation, candidates must be able to produce signed copies at interview.

Disclosure of Criminal Convictions/Prosecutions

Applicants will be asked to declare all convictions/prosecutions whether spent or otherwise in the application form. Any disclosures should be treated in strict confidence. The information disclosed will not necessarily disqualify the application. The General Manager will make a decision as to whether the information disclosed is relevant to the post. Applicants will have the opportunity to speak to the Executive Director, in confidence, about this aspect of the recruitment process should they wish to do so.

Interview

Selected candidates for paid roles will be interviewed by a panel in accordance with the usual recruitment procedures. Selected candidates for voluntary roles will be interviewed by the General Manager. Applicants will be asked to account for any gaps on their application forms and to give details of what they were doing if not in employment or volunteering.

Vetting

All staff members and volunteers over the age of 16 years at Fighting Words are legally required to be Garda vetted as the organisation provides assistance including the coaching, mentoring, counselling, teaching or training of children and vulnerable adults, per the National Vetting Bureau Act (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012-2016. Vetting disclosures obtained by



GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE (GHANECare)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

Fighting Words shall be deemed to apply to staff members and volunteers regardless of programme location.

Newly appointed staff are subject to Garda vetting in line with GHANECare' probation policy. See the Staff Terms and Conditions for full details of the organisation's six-month probation period. All volunteer tutors at Fighting Words over the age of 16 years are subject to Garda vetting¹⁶. The volunteer must complete the requisite form for processing by the National Vetting Bureau (Form NVB1) and supply two forms of identification, one confirming proof of address, to be held on file at GHANECare. Volunteers between the ages of 16 and 18 years are required to submit the parental consent form for vetting, Form NVB3, as well.

Once the volunteer/staff member's information has been submitted to the National Vetting Bureau, s/he will receive an email with the online vetting form, which should be completed within 30 days of receipt.

At time of writing, the processing time for vetting forms once the vetting subject has returned the form is approximately 5-10 working days.

A processed Garda Vetting Form application will indicate one or more of the following:

1. No previous convictions against the applicant
2. Convictions against the applicant
3. Prosecutions pending involving the applicant

Every applicant will be treated with care, respect and ultimately confidentiality in line with the Fighting Words Data Protection Policy. GHANECare may accept and/or employ applicants who return convictions or prosecutions that are not considered to be related to child protection or violence and abuse of adults, vulnerable or otherwise. Each disclosure shall be dealt with on its own merit (s).



GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE (GHANECare)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

Verification of Identity

Applicants must be able to produce two documents at interview that can confirm his/her full name, date of birth, proof of address and signature. These documents are also required for vetting. Candidates for paid roles also need to be able to produce a document that confirms their right to work in Ireland as part of our normal recruitment checks.

References

When a provisional offer of employment is made, references will be taken up, at least one of which must be the applicant's present or last employer.

NB: Recruitment of volunteers

Volunteers will go through all the same background checking procedures as paid staff. Volunteers will be told when interviewed that the volunteer position being recruited for will involve work with children and the checks in Fighting Words' Child Protection and Vulnerable Policy will be followed.

Referees for volunteers may be colleagues, past employers, family friends – anyone who is not a relative and can confirm the volunteer's good character.

Responsibility for the Policy:

The Designated Liaison Person GHANECare' Designated Liaison Person is Kuunaah Richard, Executive Director. The primary responsibilities of the Designated Liaison Person are:

- ✓ Ensuring that the standard reporting procedure is followed so that suspected cases of child neglect and abuse and vulnerable adult neglect and abuse are referred promptly to the designated person in the Emmanuel, the Child and Family Agency or, in the event of an emergency and the unavailability of the Emmanuel, the Child and Family Agency.
- ✓ Ensuring that they are knowledgeable about child protection and undertake any training considered necessary to keep themselves updated on new developments.



GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE (GHANECare)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

Role of the Designated Liaison Person:

- ✓ To be the first internal point of contact in the case of a report about the Code of Practice being breached. The Designated Liaison Person then has an obligation to report breaches to the Executive Director.
- ✓ To make arrangements for the conduct of inquiries when there has been a breach of the Code of Behaviour.
- ✓ Record keeping. Records should be kept in compliance with the Data Protection Act requirements.
- ✓ Report suspicions and allegations of child abuse to the statutory authorities.
- ✓ Liaise between GHANECare staff, children and the statutory authorities where necessary.
- ✓ Create and maintain links with the statutory authorities and other relevant agencies and resources groups.
- ✓ Facilitate the provision of support to any victim, volunteer, or employee making a referral and provide support also to the person against whom the allegation has been made.
- ✓ Advise the organisation, members, or staff on individual cases as necessary and appropriate.
- ✓ Advise on good practice.
- ✓ Organise and/or facilitate training and workshops on guidelines in child protection.
- ✓ Keep up-to-date on current developments regarding provision, practice, support services, legal obligations/requirements and policy.

SECTION 7 – STAFF AND VOLUNTEER PROTECTION PROCEDURE

The Code of Behaviour

As part of the policy on child and vulnerable adult protection, GHANECare has developed a Code of Behaviour, which forms part of this policy document. We believe that by following it, children and vulnerable adults will be protected from abuse. It will also protect staff, volunteers and those involved with Fighting Words from their actions being misinterpreted.



GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE (GHANECare)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

Alleged breaches of the Code of Behaviour regarding a staff member or volunteer should be made under the procedure outlined above. If a breach of Code of Behaviour is founded following an investigation, action will be taken under the organisation's disciplinary procedure or volunteer policy, as appropriate.

Members of staff and volunteers are protected in making allegations of breaches of the Code of Behaviour against another staff member provided the allegations are made reasonably and in good faith. If an allegation of a breach of the Code of Behaviour is found to be made unreasonably and not in good faith, the staff member or volunteer whom the allegation was made against may make a complaint under the Fighting Words grievance procedure. If such a complaint is upheld, action may be taken against the complainant under the organisation's disciplinary procedures or volunteer supervision policy, as appropriate.

In the case of staff members, the normal application of the rules of suspension as outlined under GHANECare' discipline and grievance procedures will apply if required in order to carry out an investigation of a breach of the Code of Behaviour.

Provision of Support If an alleged incident of abuse takes place in connection with GHANECare activities, the organisation undertakes to provide support for the alleged victims and the person against whom the allegation has been made while any investigation, either by the statutory authorities or internally, GHANECare will seek to ensure that any continuing support needed after a situation has been resolved is made available.

Training and Support

- ✓ GHANECare will in the first instance ensure that all staff are aware of the Child Protection Policy and have signed the Code of Behaviour.
- ✓ Fighting Words requires all staff and volunteers to follow the Code of Behaviour.



GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE (GHANECare)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

- ✓ All managers have the responsibility to ensure that the staff for which they are responsible have access to, are aware of and have signed the Code of Behaviour.
- ✓ All staff members have a responsibility to ensure that any events they have planned will include a provision of the need for consideration of child/vulnerable adult protection issues.
- ✓ Training will be provided for those in designated jobs on how to maintain exemplary standards in safeguarding children and vulnerable adults as required.

SECTION 7: CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

At GHANECare, we are committed to ensuring everyone's right to confidentiality. The effective protection of a child often depends of the willingness of staff in statutory and voluntary organisations involved with children to share and exchange relevant information. It is therefore critical that there is a clear understanding of professional and legal responsibilities with regard to confidentiality and the exchange of information.

In relation to child protection and welfare, however, we undertake that:

- ✓ Information will only be given on a "need to know" basis in order to safeguard the child or vulnerable adult.
- ✓ Giving such information to others for the protection of a child or vulnerable adult is not a breach of confidentiality or data protection.
- ✓ We cannot guarantee total confidentiality where the best interests of the child or vulnerable adult are at risk.
- ✓ Information gathered for one purpose will not be used for another purpose without consulting the person who provided that information.
- ✓ Parents/carers/responsible adults, as well as children and vulnerable adults, have a right to know if personal information is being shared and/or a report, the Child and Family Agency



GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE (GHANECare)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

(or other statutory authority) is being made, unless doing so could put the child or vulnerable adult at risk.

- ✓ Images of children will not be used for any reason without the consent of the parent/carer (we cannot, however, guarantee that cameras/videos will not be used at public sessions).
- ✓ Procedures are in place on the use of images of children.
- ✓ Procedures are in place for the safe and confidential storage of personal information and records in line with our confidentiality policy and Data Protection Act obligations.
- ✓ Personnel records for staff and volunteers are stored in a locked filing cabinet and in an encrypted SSL-protected database. Kuunaah Richard, Executive Director, has access to staff records.

SECTION 8: COMPLAINTS AND COMMENTS PROCEDURE

For issues in relation to children, primary carers and staff:

- ✓ Written complaints and comments will be acknowledged as soon as possible and responded to in writing within three weeks of receipt.
- ✓ Verbal complaints will be logged and responded to in writing within three weeks of receipt.
- ✓ The Designated Liaison Person, i.e. the Executive Director, will have responsibility for directing complaints and comments to the appropriate person. The Designated Liaison Person is Kuunaah Richard – +2553136279 or ghanecure@gmail.com
- ✓ The Designated Liaison Person will investigate complaints as necessary and respond and respond within the time frame outlined above.



GLOBAL HANDS ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL CARE (GHANECare)

Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

SECTION 10: ACCIDENTS PROCEDURE

- ✓ The First Aid box is available, clearly labelled and regularly re-stocked at the GHANECare. It is located in the office, by the coffee maker.
- ✓ Incident books are clearly labelled and easily available and all incidents recorded.
- ✓ GHANECare staff trained in Occupational First Aid are Kuunaah Richard, Executive Director, Emmanuel and Joseph Dery.
- ✓ Availability of first aid will be in accordance with health and safety legislation at the Fighting Words centre. Where volunteers and staff are involved in a FW programme or event off site, e.g. at a school/library/other organisation, we endeavour to ensure that availability of first aid will be in accordance with health and safety legislation.
- ✓ GHANECare has public liability insurance in place to cover accidents on the premises.
- ✓ Children and young people will be advised of risks of any dangerous materials.
- ✓ Details of risky equipment used will be recorded and steps taken to minimise risk.
- ✓ Outside organisations hosting Fighting Words events will be required to provide proof that they have public liability insurance.
- ✓ No running in the centre by anyone at any time.