

Suas Educational Development

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY & CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE

27/08/13

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Introduction

‘Any international NGO should have a child protection policy if its direct or indirect beneficiaries include individuals under the age of 18’ “Setting the Standard: A common approach to Child Protection for international NGOs, Standard 1 (Policy)”.]

As a national and international non-governmental organisation concerned with educational development, Suas has a moral and legal responsibility to protect children. The child protection policy attempts to ensure that effective procedures and guidelines are put in place to protect children under 18 years of age from coming to intentional or unintentional harm.

Child protection policies are important in raising awareness and to increase understanding of staff, volunteers and partners of child protection issues and are designed not only to protect children but also the organisations and individuals who work with and for them as well. Without proper policies and procedures in place, NGOs can unwittingly support an abusive environment, are vulnerable to false allegations of child abuse and risk damaging their reputation.

A child protection policy also provides a framework of principles, standards and guidelines on which to base individual and organisational practice in relation to a number of areas, including recruitment procedures and working with partner organisations.

This document also provides good practice guidelines for all who work with children and young people. It is aimed at ensuring a consistent response in dealing with children and what to do when a concern about possible abuse arises. This will not only protect children but give added support and encouragement to the volunteers who give unstintingly of their time to work with children.

Suas Child Protection Policy is reviewed annually. This policy was reviewed in August 2013 by the Suas Designated Child Protection Officer in line with **National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Bill 2012, Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2011)** and other relevant legislation including: **Our Duty to Care (Department of Health and Children, 2002)**.
(See Appendix 1 – Legislative Context of the Policy)

For a clarification of terms used in this policy document please see Appendix 2 – Definition of Terms

1. Policy Statement

Suas aims to create a safe and healthy environment for the young people with whom we work and we are committed at all times to ensuring their safety and welfare. Suas seeks to ensure that throughout its work it commits to policies, practices and procedures that are consistent with good practice and that are consistent with the best interests and the protection of the child at all times.

These Guidelines are based on the principles that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse

We will endeavour to safeguard children and young people by:

- Adopting child protection guidelines through a code of conduct for employees, interns and volunteers
- Adhering to legislation and following carefully the procedures laid down for the recruitment and selection of employees, interns and volunteers
- Providing for employees, interns, volunteers and Suas society members through, supervision, support and training
- Reporting concerns to statutory agencies who need to know and involving parents and partner organisations appropriately
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with our partner organisations and other NGOs.

This document, in its entirety, is applicable to all Suas events, projects and programmes throughout the country, and supersedes all other child and young people protection policies in Suas.

Our Approach to Working with our Partners on Child Protection Issues

Suas is an intermediary organisation working with partner organisations, who work with children in Ireland and in developing countries. Our work with our partner organisations both domestically and overseas is underpinned by the principles outlined in our policy statement. Partner organisations of Suas are expected to have their own Child Protection Policy that is appropriate to their own culture and legal system (taking into account the universal human rights standards of the Convention on the Rights of the Child).

Therefore, in relation to the work of its partners, Suas will:

- Advise its' partners on the procedures and practices of Suas' Child Protection Policy
- Create an environment where child protection issues are discussed openly in a nonthreatening, safe and supportive environment within Suas and with our partners
- Promote open lines of communication both internally and externally within and between organisations to improve awareness and to document learning from the implementation of child protection policies and procedures

- Create a framework to deal openly, consistently and fairly with allegations concerning both direct and indirect abuse where information is properly recorded, signed, dated clearly, marked as opinion or fact, whether witnessed by anyone else etc
- Support our partners to create an environment where children are better able and willing to speak out about abuse (where this is appropriate within the context of a programme of work).
- Actively raise awareness and express our concerns where appropriate in relation to behaviour and/or practice that does not support and respect a child's rights.

In many instances Suas will work collaboratively with other agencies/organisations in organising events with children/young people involved. There are many different forms that this work may take. However, where the event is being run in the name of Suas, our Child Protection guidelines will apply.

2. Code of Conduct in Child Protection and Welfare

Suas respects the rights, dignity and worth of every human being. We have a Code of Conduct for all Suas Workers to assist us achieve this. The Code outlines best practice in child protection. It offers guidance for the best possible safety of young people and the Suas Worker.

The Code is designed to remove any ambiguity and to give the Suas Worker greater confidence and freedom while carrying out their work. Everybody acting on behalf of Suas must respect the rights, privacy and dignity of those whom we assist, themselves and others. All are encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations.

The Suas Worker working with young people will act as their role model. As such, it is imperative that they act with a high degree of integrity and responsibility at all times. Listed below are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate, and minimise any risk situations for those in Suas who come into contact with children.

These good practice guidelines include a 'Do Not' section which gives explicit clarification of unacceptable forms of behaviour that will result in a formal enquiry, and which could lead to disciplinary measures being taken or criminal proceedings instituted.

It is Good Practice to:

- Always act in the very best interest of the child
- Treat all young people equally with respect and dignity
- Always work in an open environment avoiding private or unobserved situations
- Avoid placing yourself in a compromising or vulnerable position
- Be accompanied by a second adult whenever possible
- Avoid doing something that could be misinterpreted by a third party
- Immediately note the circumstances of any situation which occurs which may be subject to misinterpretation by a third party

- Wait for appropriate physical contact to be initiated by the child (e.g. holding a small child's hand)
- Ask permission from children, parents and guardians before taking photographs
- Be aware of the potential for peer abuse and bullying and address it with both individuals where possible
- Avoid placing children in high-risk peer situations (e.g. unsupervised mixing of older and younger children)
- Do not stand aside when inappropriate action is being inflicted by children on other children e.g. sexually provocative games
- Not show discrimination of race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexual persuasion or any other status
- Ensure, in so far as is reasonably possible, that buildings, facilities and equipment, used by young people, are safe
- Be aware of the location and contents of the nearest first-aid kits
- Be sensitive to risks of personal safety and the possibility of unfounded allegations that can arise
- Anticipate and control disruptive behaviour by young people by setting clear boundaries and maintaining a group contract

Try Not To:

- Show favouritism or spend excessive amounts of time with one child
- Encourage any inappropriate attention seeking behaviour, such as tantrums by a child
- Show discrimination of race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexuality, or political persuasion
- Allow children to engage in inappropriate or high risk games with each other
- Act in any way that intends to embarrass, shame, humiliate or degrade a child

Do Not:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse a child
- Use language that will mentally or emotionally harm a child (ie, profane or sexually explicit language)

- Suggest inappropriate behaviour or relations of any kind
- Develop a sexual relationship with a child
- Kiss, fondle or touch a child in an inappropriate or insensitive way
- Do things of a personal nature that a child could do for him/herself, including dressing and bathing
- Condone or participate in behaviour that is illegal or unsafe
- The displaying of materials (on computers, mobile phones or otherwise) that is unsuitable for them. This includes but is not limited to pornography

2. a Using Mobile Phones and Email

Anything which compromises the ability of a Suas Worker to maintain a safe environment for young people is actively discouraged. A blanket ban on mobile phones is not necessary as they may be useful in certain circumstances. However, the use of mobile phones while actively engaging in the work of Suas should be used only if necessary.

Contacting young people by phone, text or email should never be undertaken without parental/guardian consent.

A Suas worker should not contact or respond to contact with children through social networking sites such as Facebook etc.

2.b Photography and Videos

As signatories of the Dóchas Code on Images and Messages, Suas' use of images and messages is based on the paramount principles of:

- Respect for the dignity of the people concerned
- Belief in the equality of all people
- Acceptance of the need to promote fairness, solidarity and justice

Therefore, while Suas recognises that publicity and pictures of young people engaging with Suas activities are essential to promote the work of Suas, all Suas workers must abide by the following:

- Use images, messages and case studies with the full understanding, participation and permission of the subjects (or subjects' parents/guardian) (see Appendix 3 - Suas Audio Visual Materials – Release Form)
- Choose images and related messages based on values of respect equality, solidarity and justice
- Truthfully represent any image or depicted situation both in its immediate and in its wider context so as to improve public understanding of the realities and complexities of development
- Avoid images and messages that potentially stereotype, sensationalise or discriminate against people, situations or places
- Ensure those whose situation is being represented have the opportunity to communicate

- their stories themselves
- Establish and record whether the subjects wish to be named or identifiable and always act accordingly
- Conform to the highest standards in relation to human rights and protection of the vulnerable people.

3. Recruitment, Vetting and Induction Procedures

3. a Recruitment

Suas are committed to providing Equal Opportunities for all of its employees and applicants. Suas will endeavour to recruit and select employees, interns and volunteers in a transparent and equitable manner. Suas understands that a clear and proactive inclusion of child protection in recruitment of Suas workers can deter applications from individuals who may place young people at risk during their tenure. For this reason, Suas will include reference to child protection at various stages of the recruitment process, particularly for roles that are likely to include direct and indirect contact with young people. In engaging staff (long term, short term or project based) or as volunteers in Suas programmes, Suas applies the following principles which enhance the safety of recruitment:

- Applying recruitment and selection procedures as per Suas Recruitment and Selection Policy, (Appendix 4) to include a clear job description outlining roles and responsibilities
- All volunteers must complete an application form
- Judging the suitability of applicants across a broad range of criteria, through interview
- Ensuring that interviews are conducted by a minimum of two people and that at least one of those interviewing, if the position entails direct or indirect contact with children, has established competence in interviewing and selection for posts involving work with children
- Insisting on and verifying photo identification and references. All applicants must supply the names of two referees. All referees are contacted and asked to provide a written statement or asked to complete a standard form to include in their opinion whether the candidate is suitable to work with children. (See Appendix 5 - Reference Request Form)
- All Suas workers will be given a copy of Suas Child Protection Policy and code of conduct and will be asked to sign a document certifying that they have read it and agree to abide by

its contents and confirm that there is no reason why they would be considered unsuitable for working with children

- All Suas employees, interns and programme volunteers/ mentors are Garda vetted.

3. b Vetting

Garda vetting is conducted in respect of a Suas worker (full-time, part-time or voluntary working in a position relating to children or vulnerable persons.

- All Suas Office employees and interns are subject to Garda Vetting
- All other Suas workers working directly with children are subject to Garda Vetting
- Applicants with convictions against children will be excluded from employment and/or volunteering

3. c Induction

Following the recruitment of a Suas worker there are key elements of good practice which will be implemented to ensure the protection of young people

Suas Induction programme includes:

- Introductions to colleagues and briefing on programmes
- Familiarisation with the ethos of Suas
- Explanation of day-to-day processes
- Clarification of expectations
- Training in Suas' Child Protection Policy within 6 weeks of joining
- Outlining of conditions and procedures for dealing with discipline and grievances
- Familiarisation with lines of management and supervision

All new joiners sign an induction checklist to confirm that they have been briefed on all of the above.

4. Training

All staff and volunteers of Suas will receive training in child protection policies and guidelines, including information about how to respond to suspicions and allegations of child abuse. The nature

of the training will depend on the programme provided and the needs of the staff and volunteers working on the same.

5. Reporting Guidelines

It is important to remember that all those working with children within an educational organisation, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity, have a responsibility to ensure that children are protected from harm. While it is not the responsibility of any one staff or volunteer working within Suas to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place, there is a responsibility on them to act on any concerns through contact in the appropriate channels as detailed below.

As outlined in the Child Care Act 1991 and Children First guidelines 2011, it is the role of statutory agencies to make enquiries to assess whether a child is at risk of abuse and to take any necessary action to protect that child or young person.

In order to manage this Suas has an appointed Designated Liaison Person to deal with child protection concerns reported by Suas Workers/or young people.

5. a Role of the Designated Liaison Person

The Designated Liaison Officer, with the support of the Chief Executive Officer, has responsibility for ensuring that the child protection and welfare policy of Suas is promoted and implemented. The Designated Liaison Person has a duty to notify the Chief Executive Officer if they are encountering any difficulty in implementing the policy.¹

The Designated Liaison Person will report regularly to the Board (at least once per year) on implementation and integration of the policy.

Because Suas works in Ireland and overseas it has been deemed appropriate to assign The Deputy Liaison Person as the main point of contact for overseas programmes reporting directly to Designated Liaison Person (Please see section on reporting of allegations).

The role of the Designated Liaison Person involves the following duties:

- To be familiar with “Children First”, National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children and “Our Duty to Care”, the principles of good practice for the protection of

children and young people and to have responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the child protection and welfare policy of Suas;

- To receive reports of alleged/suspected or actual child abuse and act on these in accordance with the guidelines;
- To ensure that training is provided for all new and existing employees, interns and volunteers in Suas on the child protection policy;
- To build a working relationship with the Health Executive (HSE), An Garda Síochána and other agencies as appropriate;
- To ensure that supports are put in place for the child/young person, employee or volunteer in cases of allegations being made;
- To keep up to date and undertake relevant training on child protection policy and practice, in order to ensure the relevance and appropriateness of Suas policy and procedures in this area;
- To review Suas policy and procedures on child protection on an annual basis and amend as appropriate;
- To ensure that systems are in place for recording and retaining all relevant documentation in relation to child protection issues.

Suas Designated Liaison Person
Adelaide Nic Chárthaigh,
Suas,
10-12 Hogan Place,
Dublin 2.
Phone: 087-2886354
Email: adelaide@suas.ie

Deputy Designated Liaison Person

To be appointed

5. b Definition and Recognising Child Abuse

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the sporting environment. Where a young person discloses abuse to a person working in any capacity in Suas, it is important that the situation is handled sensitively and compassionately. Child abuse, in any form, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take.

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. Definitions of the four types of abuse, how to recognise abuse and an explanation of reasonable grounds for concern” are included in Appendix 6 which is based on Children First – National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children”.

5. c Responding to a Disclosure from a Child/Young Person

In the event of a child/young person disclosing an incident of abuse it is essential that this is dealt with sensitively and professionally by the worker/volunteer involved. The following are guidelines to support the worker/volunteer in this:

- Inform the young person of your duty to report their disclosure as early as possible in the conversation. Never agree to keep the disclosure secret
- React calmly, an over-reaction may intimidate and increase any feelings of guilt
- Listen carefully and attentively; take the young person seriously; the child is taking a risk by telling you this
- Reassure the young person that they have taken the right action in talking to you
- Ask questions for clarification only. Using open-ended questions such as "Do you want to tell me about this?" Be mindful not ask leading questions such as "Did Joe Blogs do this to you?"
- Check back with the child/young person that what you have heard is correct and understood; being mindful not to make a child repeat the story unnecessarily
- Do not express any opinions about the allegation
- Record the conversation as soon as possible, in as much detail as possible. Sign and date the record

5. d Reporting Procedures in Respect of Child Abuse

The reporting procedures for different types of allegations of abuse will differ slightly, but the initial response is the same. As it is vital to protect the confidentiality of all involved outlined below are the reporting channels recommended.

5.d.i Ireland

All witnessed suspected or alleged incidents of child abuse by employees and interns of Suas should be reported directly to Suas Designated Liaison Person.

Employees/Interns → Designated Liaison Person

All witnessed, suspected or alleged incidents of child abuse by mentors of Suas should be reported directly to the Mentor Coordinator who reports to Suas Designated Liaison Person.

Mentors → Mentor Coordinator → Designated Liaison Person

An Incident Report (see Appendix 7) must be filled out by the person reporting the incident/disclosure and sent to the Designated Liaison Person.

If you have serious concerns about the immediate safety of that child and the designated people are not available contact the Designated Liaison Person directly.

5.d.ii Overseas

All witnessed suspected or alleged incidents of child abuse by employees and interns of Suas working in India or Kenya should be reported directly to the Deputy Designated Liaison Person.

Employees/Interns → Deputy Designated Liaison Person → Designated Liaison Person

All witnessed, suspected or alleged incidents of child abuse by volunteers of Suas working in India or Kenya should be reported directly to their VP Coordinator who reports to the Deputy Designated Liaison Person

Volunteers → VP Coordinator → Deputy Designated Liaison Person → Designated Liaison Person

An Incident Report (see Appendix 7) must be filled out by the person reporting the incident/disclosure and sent to the Deputy Designated Liaison Person.

If you have serious concerns about the immediate safety of that child and the designated people are not available contact a Suas Designated Liaison Person directly.

5.e Reasonable Grounds for making a Report

When the Designated Liaison Person /Deputy Designated Liaison Person receives a report about suspected or actual abuse, they will consider whether there are reasonable grounds for reporting it.

As per best practice guidance, the following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern and should be reported:

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

5.f Standard Reporting Procedure

Suas implements the following procedure where reasonable grounds exist for the reporting of suspected or actual abuse

This will mean:

- Clarifying or getting more information about the incident/disclosure
- Reporting the incident/disclosure to the partner organisation
- Affirming that the parents are informed (only if this does not place the child at risk)

- Consulting with a statutory protection agency to hear their view of the situation
- Compiling and filing a report for Suas

In Ireland, this will also mean:

- Making a formal referral to the statutory authorities
- In the event of an emergency, or the nonavailability of HSE, the report should be made to An Garda Síochána. This may be done at any Garda Station.
- Under no circumstances should a young person be left in a dangerous situation pending the intervention of the HSE.

(See Appendix 8 for HSE Standard Reporting Form)

5. g Decision not to report

A suspicion which is not supported will be recorded or noted internally by Suas as future suspicions may lead to the decision to make a report and earlier suspicions may provide important information for the Statutory Authorities.

If the Designated Person, on behalf of Suas, decides that reasonable grounds for reporting the incident or suspicion to the Statutory Authorities do not exist, the Suas worker who referred the matter will be given a clear written statement of the reasons why Suas is not taking action.

The Suas worker will be advised that, if they remain concerned about the situation that they are free to consult with, or report to, the Statutory Authorities. The provisions of the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 apply once they report “reasonably and in good faith”.

6. Other Forms of Abusive Behaviour towards Young People

Apart from the above very serious forms of abuse, the following behaviours are also unacceptable among young people, employees and volunteers:

6.a Dealing with Challenging and Disruptive Behaviour

Suas workers working directly with young people will be given training and support in dealing with difficult behaviour. Suas ensures that the safety and welfare of the young people is a priority and that Suas workers will deal sensitively and professionally with any difficult issues that arise. Where instances of challenging or disruptive behaviour occur with young people, a record will be kept of this where the instance requires the intervention of a Suas worker/ volunteer or where the safety

and well being of others are at risk. Suas workers who are present at the time should complete the incident/accident report (see appendix 7)

The report of the incident should include:

- The programme or activity which was happening at the time
- Date of Incident
- A record of what happened
- Details of who was involved
- Details of where and when it happened
- A record of any significant comments
- A record of any injury to person or property
- Details of how the situation was resolved or left

6.b 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.

Examples of bullying include:

- Teasing
- Taunting
- Threatening
- Hitting
- Extortion
- Exclusion

Suas will not tolerate any bullying behaviour by children/young people or adults and will deal with any incidents immediately in accordance with Suas Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy (See Appendix 9).

7. Responding to Allegations

7. a Procedure for dealing with an allegation of suspected abuse against staff of a Partner Organisation

All witnessed, suspected or alleged incidents of child abuse against staff of a partner organisation should be immediately reported to the Designated Liaison Person (Ireland)/Deputy Designated Liaison Person (International), who will record and act on these concerns in a confidential manner.

Suas may decide to contact the senior management team or Board of the Partner Organisation requesting their official response to the situation.

While Suas understands that some of our Partners operate in different culture and legal systems, Suas may be unable to continue a partnership when it has serious doubts about the actions and behaviour of the organisation or individuals within the organisation with regard to child protection.

7.b Procedure for dealing with an allegation against a Suas employee, intern, volunteer or Suas Society member (Suas Worker)

When an allegation is received it should be assessed promptly and carefully. It will be necessary to decide whether a formal report should be made to the Statutory Authorities and this decision should be based on reasonable grounds for concern. Suas will take immediate action against any Suas Worker where it is judged that serious misconduct has occurred.

This procedure is the responsibility of the CEO and the Designated Liaison Person.

1. If there is an allegation of suspected child abuse against a Suas worker the Designated Liaison Person must be informed immediately.
2. The first priority should be to ensure that no young person is exposed to unnecessary risk. As a matter of urgency, protective measures will be agreed. These measures should be proportionate to the level of risk and should not unreasonably penalise the Suas worker financially or otherwise, unless necessary to protect young people.
3. The Designated Liaison Person will inform the CEO.
4. Any action following an allegation of abuse against a Suas worker will be taken in consultation with the Statutory Authorities. An immediate meeting will be arranged with these two agencies for this purpose.
5. The CEO will then contact the Suas worker whom the allegation has been made against, informing them of an allegation against them and allowing them to respond to the allegation.
6. This meeting will be signed and dated by both parties.

7. The CEO will maintain close contact with the accused and support will be provided as necessary. Independent counselling and support will be offered.

The CEO may, depending on the seriousness of the allegation and in consultation with the Statutory Authorities, suspend the staff member or volunteer.

1. This suspension will be recorded, dated and signed.
2. Upon completion of inquiries a further disciplinary hearing will be heard, and appropriate action taken as required.
3. This hearing will also be recorded, dated and signed.

7.c Support when dealing with the allegation of abuse

Suas assures all Suas workers that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child. Following an allegation of child abuse consideration will be given about what support may be appropriate to children, parents, members of staff, interns volunteers and society memmbers. Consideration will also be given about what support may be appropriate to the alleged perpetrator of the abuse.

If you (an adult) are accused of an abusive action:

- Make notes of all your actions/contacts with the child in question as soon as possible
- Seek access to professional and legal advice
- Ensure you are no longer working with the child/children making the allegation
- Consult Suas procedures and make sure these are followed correctly
- Avoid any discussions around the topic/ allegations with anyone outside of the proper procedures

8. Record Keeping

The Designated Liaison Person/ Deputy Designated Liaison Person are responsible for keeping the following records related to Child Protection in a locked filing cabinet and in a password protected folder on the Suas network. The Designated Liaison Person and Deputy are the only officers who have access to these records:

- Any complaints about the safety and welfare of young people while working with Suas
- Any disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse
- The follow up to any complaints, disclosure, concerns or allegations, including informal advice and informing parents/guardians
- Any bullying complaints related to Suas work with young people and the follow up action
- Signed acceptance forms of the Suas Child Protection Policy by Suas workers

Appendices

Appendix 1: Legislative Context of the Policy

This section outlines the legislation relative to child and young person protection in Ireland.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is a set of minimum standards that promotes the rights of the child worldwide. It contains many key Articles that have influenced national child care and welfare legislation including the definition of a child as a person under 18 years of age. It specifically outlines non-discrimination rights and the rights of the child to express their opinion and to be heard. The Convention is a binding international treaty and all signatories are subject to monitoring on how they implement the Convention in their own Country.

National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012

The purpose of this Act is to provide a legislative basis for the vetting of persons who seek positions of employment relating to children or vulnerable persons. Currently persons applying for such positions are vetted on a non-statutory basis. This Act makes vetting mandatory.

Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011 (Department of Children and Youth Affairs)

These National Guidelines seek to assist people in identifying and reporting child abuse and to improve professional practice in both statutory and voluntary agencies and organisations that provide services for children and families. Children First caters for all children, and not just children who are victims of any form of abuse. They also highlight the importance of consistency between policies and procedures across health services and other statutory and voluntary organisations. The Guidelines particularly emphasise that the welfare of children is of paramount importance.

Our Duty to Care 2002 (Department of Health and Children)

This document is aimed at community and voluntary organisations that provide services for children. It offers guidance on the promotion of child welfare and the development of safe practices in our work with children and gives information on how to recognise signs of child abuse and the correct steps to take within organisations if it is suspected, witnessed or disclosed. It provides advice on developing safe recruitment practices and strategies on developing safe management practice and policies within organisations. It also suggests ways that organisations could raise awareness among their staff and volunteers about child abuse and how staff should respond to accidents or complaints and alleged or suspected abuse. It was adapted from the Our Duty to Care (NI) document and incorporates many of the principles, with a view to reflecting an all-island approach to child protection on behalf of community and voluntary bodies.

Children Act 2001

The Children Act 2001 replaced provisions of the Children Act, 1908 and associated legislation with a modern comprehensive statute. The 2001 Act covers three main areas of the law. Firstly, and predominantly, it provides a framework for the development of the juvenile justice system. Secondly, it re-enacts and updates provisions in the 1908 Act protecting children against persons who have the custody, charge or care of them. Thirdly, it provides for family welfare conferences and other new provisions for dealing with out-of-control, non-offending children.

Child Care Act, 1991

The purpose of the Child Care Act, 1991 is to 'update the law in relation to the care of children who have been assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused, or who are at risk'. The main provisions of the Act are:

- (i) the placing of a statutory duty on the HSE to promote the welfare of children who are not receiving adequate care and protection up to the age of 18;
- (ii) the strengthening of the powers of the HSE to provide child care and family support services;

- (iii) the improvement of the procedures to facilitate immediate intervention by the HSE and An Garda Síochána where children are in danger;
- (iv) the revision of provisions to enable the Courts to place children who have been assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused, or who are at risk, in the care of or under the supervision of the HSE;
- (v) the introduction of arrangements for the supervision and inspection of pre-school services;
- (vi) the revision of provisions in relation to the registration and inspection of residential centres for children.

Youth Work Act 2001

Youth Work is defined in the Act as " a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through voluntary participation

The principal purposes of the Youth Work Act, 2001 are:

- I. define Youth Work in a clear and concise manner;
- II. detail policy, budget, research, monitoring and assessment function of the Minister for Education;
- III. define the function of Vocational Educational Committees regarding Youth Work, particularly the procedures, planning and prioritising of funds and the reporting on the provision of Youth Work programmes and services;
- IV. establish a special Youth Work Committee in each VEC area;
- V. provide for the structure of the National Youth Work Advisory Committee;
- VI. formalise the allocation of grants for Youth Work;
- VII. establish Voluntary Youth Councils to represent the needs and demands of the voluntary sector at local level; and
- VIII. level; and
- IX. permit the appointment of a National Assessor of Youth Work to ensure that the best possible use of public money in youth work programmes and services
- X.

Criminal Justice Act 2006

Section 176 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006 introduced the criminal charge of ‘reckless endangerment of children’. It states: ‘A person, having authority or control over a child or abuser, who intentionally or recklessly endangers a child by –

- I. Causing or permitting any child to be placed or left in a situation which creates a substantial risk to the child being a victim of serious harm or sexual abuse, or
- II. Failing to take reasonable steps to protect a child from such a risk while knowing that the child is in such a situation, is guilty of an offence.’

The penalty for a person found guilty of this offence is a fine (no upper limit) and/or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years.

National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012

The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 makes vetting mandatory for anyone seeking employment relating to children or vulnerable persons.

So, anyone who is involved in ‘any work or activity which is carried out by a person , a necessary and regular part of which consists mainly of the person having access to, or contact with children’ in

- Schools
- Hospitals
- Health services
- Childcare services
- Residential services for children or vulnerable persons
- The promotion of religious beliefs
- Sporting organisations providing leisure or physical activities to children or vulnerable persons

must, by law, be vetted.

Domestic Violence Act, 1996

The Domestic Violence Act, 1996 introduced major changes in the legal remedies for domestic violence. There are two main types of remedies available:

- (i) Safety Order: This Order prohibits a person from further violence or threats of violence. It does not oblige that person to leave the family home. If the parties live apart, the Order prohibits the violent person from watching or being in the vicinity of the home.
- (ii) Barring Order: This Order requires the violent person to leave the family home.

The legislation gives the HSE the power to intervene to protect individuals and their children from violence. Section 6 of the Act empowers the HSE to apply for Orders for which a person could apply on his or her own behalf but is deterred from doing so through fear or trauma. The consent of the victim is not a prerequisite for such an application, although he or she must be consulted. Under Section 7 of the Act, the Court may, where it considers it appropriate, adjourn proceedings and direct the HSE to undertake an investigation of the dependent person's circumstances with a view to:

- (i) applying for a Care Order or a Supervision Order under the Child Care Act, 1991;
- (ii) providing services or assistance for the dependent person's family; or
- (iii) taking any other action in respect of the dependent person.

Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998

This Act came into operation on 23 January 1999. The main provisions of the Act are the:

- (i) Provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to designated officers of the HSE or to any member of An Garda Síochána;
- (ii) Provision of significant protections for employees who report child abuse. These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to, and including, dismissal;
- (iii) Creation of a new offence of false reporting of child abuse, where a person makes a report of child abuse to the appropriate authorities 'knowing that statement to be false'. This is a new criminal offence, designed to protect innocent persons from malicious reports.

A wide range of nursing, medical, paramedical and other staff has been appointed as designated officers for the purposes of this Act (*see Appendix 11 of these Children First national guidelines*). Section 6 of the Act is a saving provision, which specifies that the statutory immunity provided under the Act for persons reporting child abuse is additional to any defences already available under any other enactment or rule of law in force immediately before the passing of the Act.

Data Protection Acts, 1988 and 2003

The Data Protection Act, 1988 applies to the processing of personal data. It gives a right to every individual, irrespective of nationality or residence, to establish the existence of personal data, to have access to any such data relating to him or her, and to have inaccurate data rectified or erased. It requires data controllers to make sure that the data they keep are collected fairly, are accurate and up-to-date, are kept for lawful purposes and are not used or disclosed in any manner incompatible with those purposes. It also requires both data controllers and data processors to protect the data they keep, and imposes on them a special duty of care in relation to the individuals about whom they keep such data.

Education Act, 1998

The Education Act, 1998 places an obligation on those concerned with its implementation to give practical effect to the constitutional rights of children as they relate to education and, as far as practicable and having regard to the resources available, to make available to pupils a level and quality of education appropriate to meeting their individual needs and abilities.

Education (Welfare) Act 2000

The Education (Welfare) Act 2000, which was fully commenced in July 2002, replaced previous school attendance legislation and provided for the creation of a single national agency, the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB), which has statutory responsibility to ensure that every child either attends school or

otherwise receives an education or participates in training. The NEWB also assists in the formulation and implementation of Government education policy.

Non-Fatal Offences against the Person Act, 1997

The two relevant provisions of this Act are:

- (i) it abolishes the rule of law under which teachers were immune from criminal liability in respect of physical chastisement of pupils;
- (ii) it describes circumstances in which the use of reasonable force may be justifiable.

Freedom of Information Act, 1997

The Freedom of Information Act, 1997 enables members of the public to obtain access, to the greatest extent possible consistent with the public interest and the right to privacy, to information in the possession of public bodies. The specific provisions of the Act include to/have:

- I. Provide for a right of access to records held by such public bodies, for necessary exceptions to that right and for assistance to persons to enable them to exercise it;
- II. Enable persons to have corrected any personal information relating to them in the possession of such bodies;
- III. Provide for independent review by an Information Commissioner both of decisions of such bodies relating that right and of the operation of the Act generally;
- IV. Provide for the publication by public bodies of guides to their functions and national guidelines, such as these, for the public. Under the Act, a person about whom a public body holds personal information has:
- V. Right of access to this information, subject to certain conditions;
- VI. The right to correct this information if it is inaccurate.

Where a public body makes a decision that affects an individual, that individual has a right to relevant reasons and findings on the part of the body reaching that decision.

The Act is also designed to protect the privacy of individuals and, in general, requires the prior consent of an individual before releasing personal information about them. Where the release of social work or medical records contains information that would be harmful to a person's well-being, the release may be made to a health professional who acts on the person's behalf. Under the Act, there are regulations and guidelines relating to access by parents to their children's records; these emphasise that the overriding concern is the best interests of the child.

The exemptions and exclusions that are relevant to child protection include the following:

- (i) Protecting records covered by legal professional privilege;
- (ii) Protecting records that would facilitate the commission of a crime;
- (i) Protecting records that would reveal a confidential source of information.

Appendix 2: Definition of Terms

This section defines key terms used within this document.

Child/Young Person

A child/young person is any person under the age of 18 years unless they are or have been married. In this document we use the term ‘young person’ to include both ‘child’ and ‘young person’ alike.

Employee

A Suas employee may be defined as a person who has a contract of employment and receives payment for the role in which they are employed to work in.

Intern

A Suas Intern works under supervision of a Suas employee to develop business skills, learn about the industry and gain exposure to the work environment. (Paid/Unpaid) (Full-time/Part-time)

Volunteer

A person, who performs or offers to perform a service voluntarily, is under no legal obligation to do so and receives no remuneration for services. Volunteers are at least 18 years of age.

Categorisation of Volunteers:

Suas Volunteer Programmes/Events	Volunteers have Supervised contact with Children	Volunteers have Unsupervised Contact with Children
Mentoring Programme	√	
VP Programme	√	√
Fundraising events	√	

** St Patricks day face-painting, assisting on training programmes, etc.

Society / Society Member

A society is an independent student-run organisation in a university. A society member is a registered student with membership of the society. Suas Societies are part of the wider Suas Educational Development network.

For the purposes of this Child Protection Policy ‘a Suas worker’ is anyone who is engaged in work or voluntary activity with children or young people, whether as a paid employee of Suas, as an Intern, a society/alumne member or as a volunteer.

Partner Organisations

Ireland: community organisations, schools and university bodies that Suas works with to deliver innovative learning programmes (Mentoring Programme and Bridge21) for marginalised children and young adults

Overseas (Kenya and India): schools and NGOs that Suas works with to deliver innovative learning programmes and additional support (Volunteer Programme) for marginalised children and young adults

Partner Organisations: Criteria for Selection	Overseas Compliance	Domestic Compliance
Child Protection Policy	√	√
Garda Vetted		√
Provides Supervision for Programmes		√
Provides Background Information	√	√
Provides Training Assistance		√
Participates in Evaluation and Feedback (formal and informal)	√	√
Reviewed and Approved on an Annual Basis by Suas	√	√
Agreed Objectives, Roles, Responsibilities	√	√

Programme

A Programme is a collection of initiatives and projects that are designed to accomplish a strategic business objective and deliver value to the organisation. Programmes deliver outcomes.

Project

A project is a temporary activity, run as part of a programme, with a starting date, specific goals and conditions, defined responsibilities, a budget, planning, a fixed end date and multiple parties involved. Projects deliver outputs.

Event

An event is an organised occasion, a planned activity, as part of a project or programme that involves several people.

Appendix 3: Audio Visual Release Form

Suas Educational Development ('Suas') is a movement dedicated to supporting high quality education in targeted under-resourced communities, with programmes in Ireland, India and Kenya.

An important part of this work is to document our programmes for promotional materials. We would be very grateful for your permission to include you in this.

I consent that Suas may take photographs or make audio visual recordings of me at Suas related events and and activities. I give Suas permission to use photographic, video, digital and audio visual recordings of me, and material written by me, collected by Suas, in all formats and all media and in all manners, including alterations and composite representations, for the purpose of marketing and promoting the aims of Suas.

I acknowledge that Suas will treat my image/ material with respect and dignity and in keeping with the organisations principles of fairness, equality and justice.

Suas does not need to seek my permission each time it wishes to use the imagery or written material but I understand that I may change my mind and withdraw permission to use by contacting Suas at any time in the future.

I understand that I am providing the material free of charge and I undertake not to seek any payment from Suas for use of the material.

Section 1:

Please tick box if you DO NOT want us to use your name alongside your the image/ audiovisual material.

Section 2:

Please fill this out out if you are over 18 years of age. Please print.

Name	
Address	
Email	
Date	

Please sign here: _____

Section 3:

If you are under 18 years of age, please have a parent or guardian fill in the section below

Name	
Address	
Email	
Date	

Please sign here: _____

Section 4:

For the photographer/ interviewer only

Name	
Email	
Date	
Photo reference number: (eg. Stills reference)	
Notes on image:	

For further information please see www.suas.ie, or contact info@suas.ie

Suas is a signatory to the Dochas Code of Conduct on use of Images and Messages

Suas Educational Development is a charity (CHY 14931) and a limited company, registered in Ireland (Registration Number 362631). The registered office is 10-12 Hogan Place, Dublin 2, Ireland.

Appendix 4: Recruitment and Selection Policy

Introduction

This policy is designed to ensure that the best possible people are selected and promoted by following what is acknowledged to be the best industry practice in matters relating to Recruitment and Selection. All those involved in this activity must:

1. adhere to the standards laid down in this policy, and;
2. comply with the principles of equality of opportunity for all job applicants and potential job applicants.
- 3.

Scope

The provisions of this Policy will normally apply to the filling of all vacancies in Suas Educational Development (Suas). Where it is deemed necessary to adopt other practices to filling vacancies (or to set aside any provisions of this Policy), e.g. to fulfil an urgent contractual commitment, the Chief Executive Officer must give prior approval.

Equal Opportunity Policy

Suas are committed to providing Equal Opportunities for all of its employees and applicants. For full details, please refer to the Equal Opportunity Policy

Selection Criteria

The importance of proper systematic analysis of the requirements of the job to be filled is recognised. Selection criteria must always be drawn up and agreed before the recruitment and selection process commences. All selection criteria must be based on genuine occupational requirements that are capable of justification, appropriate to the job, objective and in line with the Company Equal Opportunity Policy.

It is particularly important to ensure that selection criteria do not discriminate against disabled people so that any health or physical fitness requirement can be justified in each individual case where it is imposed.

Recruitment Methods

(i) Internal Recruitment

Suas is committed to equality and fairness at work and to the principle of providing career enhancement and opportunities for its staff. Accordingly relevant vacancies advertised internally will normally be open to all permanent, temporary, part-time and fixed-term employees.

Advertisements will contain information relating to the job, selection criteria and closing date that will be normally two weeks from the date of the issue of the circular.

(ii) External Recruitment

Where external recruitment is deemed appropriate, Suas will ensure that as many eligible and suitably qualified persons as practicable are made aware of the vacancy in question and encouraged to put

themselves forward for consideration. The commitment to providing equality of opportunity will be emphasised in all advertisements.

(iii) Application.

A Curriculum Vita must be supplied with a covering letter. This should detail the candidate's experience to date, education, skills and any other relevant information.

(iv) Acknowledgement of Applications

Receipt of applications will not be acknowledged as a matter of course; rather all applicants will be contacted as soon as practicable within a reasonable period after the closing date. Where an undue delay occurs, applicants will be advised of the situation.

(v) Confidentiality

All applications received will be treated as confidential. The identity and details of applicants will only be made available to those involved in the Recruitment and Selection process. Disclosure of documentation may also be required by statutory bodies in the course of formal complaints, litigation etc. This will comply with the Suas's Data Protection Policy.

(vi) Short-listing

As soon as is practicable, a shortlist will be drawn up. Where a large number of applicants satisfy the minimum requirements, short-listing will take place on the basis of a consistent application of the predetermined essential and/or desirable criteria. Where applicants do not satisfy the minimum standard, they cannot be short-listed.

Selection panels will only use information supplied as part of an application when short-listing. Decisions in formulating the shortlist should be recorded. In the event of disagreement the matter will be referred to the Chief Executive for resolution. Applicants not short-listed will be advised in writing.

(vii) Testing

A range of appropriate instruments may be used enhance the objectivity of the selection process depending on the position being filled e.g. Personality Questionnaires, Aptitude Tests, etc. These may be provided by an external agency.

In all cases where tests are to be used applicants/potential applicants will be advised. Candidates to be tested will also be advised of the nature and duration of the tests, the role to be played by the tests in the process and will be given at least three days notice.

Prior to interview

Candidates short-listed for interview will be advised by email or on the phone of the date, time and venue. A minimum of three days notice will be given in all reasonable circumstances. Where a candidate is unable to attend for a satisfactory reason, the interview may be rearranged where practicable.

Where appropriate, and depending on the level being recruited for, an interview panel will be used and should comprise of at least two members. The Chief Executive, in consultation with the Board, will determine when a panel interview is appropriate.

Interviewers must meet prior to the interview in order to determine the areas to be covered during the interview and if required the weighting to be given to criteria. The interviewers must use weightings consistently for each candidate. Any core questions agreed at this meeting should be objective and relevant to the requirements of the job. A written record of this meeting should be made and retained.

The Interview

All interviewers participating in this process will be properly prepared so that interviews are conducted in a professional manner with a consistent approach, content and structure. Panel members operate independently and each member is responsible for his/her own conclusions that will be documented, signed and retained. A standardised interview rating form is to be used – however any written notes should also be retained. The Chief Executive will ensure that the process is followed in an effective, fair and professional manner.

Following Interview

All candidates interviewed will be advised of the outcome of their application as soon as possible following interview. External candidates, if appropriate, will be required to supply suitable reference(s), and all information received will be treated in confidence subject to statutory requirements.

Where appropriate, all appointments will be subject to receipt of a satisfactory medical report. Suas will observe the requirements of legislation relating to access to medical records and ensure that information received is treated confidentially.

Appeals

Unsuccessful candidates may appeal any aspect of the recruitment decision. All appeals will be dealt with in compliance with the relevant statutory legislation.

Monitoring

Clear records of all aspects of the selection process, including all relevant documentation, will be retained for at least one year as laid out in the Data Protection policy.

Responsibility

Whilst individual interviewers are responsible for all aspects of the decision making process, the Chief Executive is responsible ensuring that this policy is adhered to.

Review

The Chief Executive is responsible for the ongoing review of this policy.

What are his/her strong points?
What are his/her weak points?
Were there any performance issues/disciplinary issues?
If given the opportunity, would you re-employ this person?
Any additional comments:

Appendix 6: Definitions of Abuse

This section outlines the principal types of child and young person abuse. More detailed information is available in Appendix 1.

Child abuse may 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.

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, medical care.

Emotional abuse is normally 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.

In relation to children exposure to Discriminatory and Domestic Abuse, as described below, is defined as emotional abuse. Children exposed to Domestic Abuse are also at higher risk of physical and sexual abuse.

Discriminatory abuse such as that based on race or sexuality or a person's disability and other forms of harassment or slurs.

Domestic abuse refers to the use of physical or emotional force or threat of physical force, including sexual violence in close adult relationships. This includes violence perpetrated by a spouse, partner, son or daughter or any other person who has a close or blood relationship with the victim. The term 'domestic violence' goes beyond actual physical violence. It can also involve emotional abuse; the destruction of property; isolation from friends, family and other potential sources of support; threats to others including children; stalking; and control over access to money, personal items, food, transportation and the telephone.

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful behaviour to protect a child.

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others.

Appendix 7: Incident Report Form

**Required*

Your Name *

Name of the person completing the form

Name (s) of affected/injured party *

Please note if more than one person was directly affected it may be required to complete separate incident reports

Date of Incident *

If this is an ongoing issue or one that unfolded over a period of time, then please write "ongoing" or "developing" below. Otherwise please give the exact date of the incident. Format (dd:mm:yy).

Time of Incident

If this is an ongoing issue or one that unfolded over a period of time, then please write "ongoing" or "developing" below. Otherwise please give the exact time of the incident. (24 hour format).

Initial Categorisation of Incident *

- Minor - Some professional support needed, relatively small concerns.
- Medium - Professional support needed, reoccurring smaller incidents, substantial concerns.
- Major – Serious incident, long term injury to volunteer(s), large disruption to volunteer(s) service to Partner.

Type of Incident *

- Partner Related - impacts on volunteers service to the Partner.
- Child Protection - incident related to concerns regarding Volunteer/Coordinator/Partners in relation to child protection.
- Security - Incidents related to volunteers security on placement. (Could be placement specific or city/country wide)
- Medical Health - Health related issues.
- Medical psychological - Concerns re volunteer ability to cope
- Disciplinary - Volunteer conduct related.

Exact Location of Incident *

Description of Incident *

Factual, please include any factors that led to the incident, what the affected party was doing when the incident occurred, any unsafe behaviour or conditions, any substances involved.

Witnesses to the Incident / Other People Involved

Please list any other people that witnessed the incident or involved in the incident

Impact on Individual *

Please give details of injuries, emotional or any other affect this incident has had on the affected party

Impact on Team and Wider Programme

Please give details of the wider affect on the team, Partner, City team and programme overall of this incident

Describe Medical Care / Emergency Care Provided (if Applicable)

Name of person(s), doctor(s), hospital(s) providing care, days spent in hospital, treatment given

Level of Satisfaction with Health Care *

- Excellent
- Good
- Adequate
- Poor
- Very Poor
- Not Applicable

Action taken in Response to the Incident

Days missed from Placement as a Result of the Incident (if applicable)

Recommendations for the rest of the Programme / Future Programmes

Please include specific behavioural changes if appropriate

Appendix 8: HSE Standard Reporting Form

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

STANDARD FORM FOR REPORTING CHILD PROTECTION AND/OR WELFARE CONCERNS

In case of Emergency or outside Health Board hours, contact should be made with An Garda Siochana

A. To Social Worker Team Leader:

1. Details of Child:

Name: _____

Male:

Female:

Address: _____

Age/D.O.B.: _____

School: _____

1a. Name of Mother: _____ **Name of Father:** _____

Address of Mother if different to Child:

Address of Father if different to Child:

Telephone Number: _____ **Telephone Number:** _____

1b. Care and Custody arrangements regarding child, if known: _____

1c. Household Composition:

Name	Relationship to	Date of	Additional Information
------	-----------------	---------	------------------------

	Child	Birth	e.g. School/Occupation

Note: A separate report form must be completed in respect of each child being reported.

2. **Details of concern(s), allegation(s) or incident(s) dates, times, who was present, description of any observed injuries, parent’s view(s), child’s view(s) if known).**

3. **Details of person(s) allegedly causing concern in relation to the child:**

Name: _____ **Age:** _____ **Male:** **Female:**

Address:

Relationship to Child:

Occupation: _____

4. Name and Address of other personnel or agencies involved with this child:

Social Workers: _____

School:

Public Health Nurse: _____

Gardai:

G.P.: _____

Pre-School/Crèche/Youth

Club Club _____

Hospital: _____

**Other, Specify e.g. Youth
Groups, After**

School Clubs:

5. Are Parents/Legal Guardians aware of this referral to the Social Work Department?

Yes No

If Yes, what is their attitude?

6. Details of Person reporting concerns: (Please see Guidance Notes re. Limitations of confidentiality)

Name: _____

Occupation:

Address:

—

Telephone Number: _____

Nature and extent of contact with Child/Family:

7. Details of Person completing form:

Name: _____

Date:

Occupation: _____

Signed: _____

Anti Bullying and Harassment Policy

Appendix 9: Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy