



NERI CLINIC POLICY ON CHILD PROTECTION

INTRODUCTION

In 1992 the UN Convention on the Rights of the child was ratified by Ireland. Part of this Bill of Rights for Children is especially relevant to child protection. It stated that parties shall take appropriate action, legislative, administrative, social and educational to protect a child from any/all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse.

Neri Clinics aim to ensure that it operates best practice in terms of child protection policies and recognises the legal guidelines governing child protection in both Ireland and Zambia.

The principle functions of this policy are the prevention of child abuse and the protection of staff through the application of Code of Behaviour.

The safety and welfare of children is of prime importance. The primary function of this policy is to prevent abuse occurring. The secondary function is to educate staff on the subject and build their capacity to pre-empt abuse. Finally the protection of staff from false claims is also of prime importance and the aim of the code of behaviour is to protect staff from allegations of such claims.

A set of guidelines is attached to this policy to assist with its implementation in practice.

Section 1

1.0 Policy

Neri Clinic's child protection policy will be distributed to all home and overseas personnel and is applicable to all staff in Neri Clinic. Within this policy there are a number of procedures as follows:

- Recruitment and selection procedure
- Procedure for reporting and handling a complaint
- Code of behaviour (to be signed)

1.1 Scope

This policy is applicable to all staff employed by Neri Clinic. It is the responsibility of the clinic manager to ensure that all staff members receive a copy of the child protection policy and understand and sign the code of behaviour.

Copies of the policy and the code of behaviour will be sent out with the letter offer of employment and must be signed and returned with the contract of employment.

Neri Clinics Limited company is registered in Dublin, Ireland: Company No. 460205

Registered Office : Castlehollow, Enniscrone, County Sligo, Ireland. Charitable Tax Exemption Number CHY 18481

Directors: Dr.P.McSharry, J.Sheehan, B. Coen.

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1.1.1

This policy is also mandatory for any person carrying out work on behalf of Neri Clinic on a consultancy or voluntary basis that has or may have contact with children or young persons. It is the responsibility of any staff member requesting a third party to undertake work that may bring that person into contact with children to ensure that the third party receives a copy of the child protection policy and understands and signs the code of behaviour.

1.2 DEFINITIONS OF CHILD ABUSE AND CHILD/YOUTH

1.2.1 CHILD OR YOUTH: Neri Clinic considers a child or young person to be under the age of 18 years. Adults with mental impairment require individual consideration and may also be considered under this definition.

1.2.2 CHILD ABUSE: is considered under the following headings

1.2.3 PHYSICAL ABUSE is actual or likely physical injury to a child such as hitting, kicking or shaking whereby the action itself or the inaction to report its happening constitute child abuse

1.2.4 EMOTIONAL ABUSE refers to persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection such as degrading punishment, threats, withholding of care and affection, bullying that may have an adverse affect on a child's behaviour and or emotional development and requires intervention by an adult.

1.2.5 NEGLECT occurs when basic needs such as medical care are knowingly and unnecessarily withheld from the child or when there is a failure to protect a child exposed to likely danger.

1.2.6 SEXUAL ABUSE occurs if a child is forced or manipulated to take part in any kind of sexual activity. Sexual abuse includes incest, rape, fondling and non-contact activities such as showing pornographic images or other internet based activity such as knowingly engaging a child in chat room activity.

1.2.7 SEXUAL ACTIVITY that may occur between an individual and a youth under the age of 18 even though it may be consenting or the individual was unaware of the youth's age is not acceptable in any circumstance, irrespective of the age of consent in the residing country.

1.2.8 ACTION OR INACTION applies to all of the above cases of the abuse to the fact that a person may be responsible for the abuse and or know about abuse occurring. Both are considered as serious as the other terms of responsibility for the abuse.

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1.3 TIME CONSTRAINTS

Abuse may be current, recent or historical. There are no time constraints for reporting and taking action within each procedure.

SECTION 2

CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

2.0 RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCEDURE

1. This procedure applies to identified positions listed in section 1.1
2. This procedure applies to both internal and external applicants for these identified positions.
3. When being interviewed for applicable positions candidates will be required to answer the following questions:
 - (a) Have you ever been convicted of or charged with an offence related to children?
 - (b) May we put a similar question to your referees?
 - (c) May we obtain a police clearance form for you?
4. If the applicant declines to allow Neri Clinic to follow up on these questions, any potential offer of employment should not be made or if already made should be withdrawn.
5. Referees will be contacted when recruiting for identified positions. The applicant should be asked if they have any issue with a referee being asked specific questions in relation to a child protection.
6. The applicant should be asked if they have any issues with a police clearance form being sought
7. The child protection policy will accompany the letter of offer and form part of the contract of employment and the code of behaviour must be signed and returned along with contract of employment.
8. All staff (new and existing) are required to sign a copy of the Neri Clinic Code of Behaviour on Child Protection.

2.1 PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING & HANDLING A COMPLAINT

Neri Clinics understands and expects that any allegations/suspicion of child abuse should be reported immediately and handled objectively and fairly with regard to all parties involved. Neri Clinic will endeavour to act upon any such report swiftly.

2.1.1 Dealing with allegations and suspicion

Neri Clinic recognises that when specific allegations and or suspicion i.e. when concern is expressed about abuse that may have taken place or be in prospect of abuse are made

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against a named individual or individuals this should always be investigated and acted upon swiftly making the welfare of children paramount consideration. Any information offered in confidence should be received on the basis that it will be shared with relevant people in authority this would include members of the senior management team and if appropriate child protection personnel in statutory agencies. Parents or carers will also be informed if appropriate.

2.1.2 Reporting a Complaint

1. If there is suspicion and or evidence of abuse, it should be reported immediately. It is your duty to report any allegation or suspicion of abuse. Neri Clinic does understand that it may be difficult for you to take this step however, Neri Clinic will support anyone who raises a legitimate concern in good faith. At all stages of this procedure the matter will be dealt with confidentially as far as reasonably practicable in relation to:

- (a) the identity of the complainant
- (b) the identity of the person(s) against whom the complaint is being made
- (c) the nature of the complaint

Any complaint will necessitate sharing with the relevant members of senior management and the child's parent/carer if relevant and/or the statutory agencies if relevant in order to investigate the allegation.

2. A complaint in the first instance should be made to the director, as the primary designated contact for this policy. However if this is not possible, it should be reported to the respective Neri Clinic directors in Ireland.

3. The staff member should prepare a written account to present to the designated contact detailing the grounds for concern they have in relation to the child and observations which should include dates, times, names, locations, context and any other information that may be relevant. The written account should also include details of any disclosures, allegations, reports or concerns which have been brought to their attention by any other person.

2.1.3 Reporting a complaint

On receipt of an allegation or suspicion of abuse the designated contact will

- Investigate allegations of breaches of the code of behaviour with discretion and without undue delay. All investigations will be conducted in accordance with the principles of natural justice:
- The right to a fair hearing

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- The right against bias

If an allegation of a breach of the code of behaviour is upheld it may constitute gross misconduct and therefore immediate dismissal in accordance with Neri Clinics Disciplinary procedure.

2.2 Staff Protection procedure

As part of the policy on child protection, Neri clinics have developed a Code of behaviour and implantation guidelines. We believe that by following it children and young people will be protected from child abuse. It will also protect Neri Clinic staff and those involved with Neri Clinic from their actions being misinterpreted and perhaps leading to false allegations of child abuse.

Neri Clinic endeavours to protect staff from false allegations of child abuse through the application of this policy the code of behaviour and the implementation guidelines associated with this policy. Alleged breaches of Neri Clinics code of behaviour regarding another staff member 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 Neri Clinics Disciplinary procedure.

Staff members 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 whom the allegation was made against may make a complaint under the Neri Clinic grievance procedures.

The normal application of the rules of suspension as outlined under the Neri clinic grievance procedures will apply if required in order to carry out an investigation of a breach of the code of behaviour.

2.3 Provision of support

If an alleged incident of child abuse takes place in connection with Neri Clinics activities, Neri Clinic undertakes to provide support for the alleged victims and the alleged abuser whilst any investigation either by the statutory authorities or internally takes place. Neri Clinic will seek to ensure that any continuing support needed after the situation has been resolved is made available.

2.4 Training and awareness

1. Neri Clinic will in the first instance ensure that all staff are aware of Neri Clinics child protection policy and have signed the code of behaviour.

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2. Neri clinics expects all staff to follow the code of behaviour.
3. All managers have the responsibility to ensure that all the staff for which they are responsible have access to, are aware of and have signed the code of Behaviour.
4. All staff members have the responsibility to ensure that any events they have planned will include a provision of the need for consideration of child protection issues.

3.0 Neri Clinics code of behaviour in relation to children/youth

We expect that everyone working with children and young people for Neri Clinics will follow the guidelines below to avoid situations that could be misinterpreted or lead to false allegations of child abuse. By setting out appropriate and inappropriate behaviour this code will not only help to protect children but also staff, volunteers, consultants and any other person who is working with children for Neri Clinics.

- Respect a child's right to personal privacy
- Encourage children and adults to feel comfortable enough to point out attitudes and behaviour they do not like
- Be aware of situations which present risks and manage these
- Plan and organise any events involving children so that risks are minimised, ensure they involve more than one person being present or at least in sight or hearing range of others. Occasionally there may be no alternative. If you do need to work alone with a child remain in general view, not hidden away behind closed doors
- Where it is possible ask parents/carers and or nominated volunteers to be responsible for children particular at overnight meetings
- Recognise that caution is required in one-to-one situations even in sensitive situations such as dealing with bullying or when children are very upset
- Choose material carefully to make sure they are suitable for a youth audience
- Do not take children alone in a car even on short journeys unless this is unavoidable for safely reasons. If this is unavoidable make sure an adult carer or another member of staff is aware it is happening
- Avoid inappropriate physical or verbal contact with children
- Avoid being drawn in to inappropriate attention seeking behaviour such as tantrums or crushes

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- Avoid showing favouritism to any individual
- Do not do things of a personal nature that children could do for themselves. If you have to make sure another adult is present
- Do not permit abusive youth peer activities such as bullying
- Do not contact children outside the group or project
- Never make suggestive remarks or gestures even in fun
- Do not trivialise or exaggerate child abuse issues
- Do not rely on just good name to protect you
- Do not believe “ it could never happen to me”

I have read the above policies, procedures and code of behaviour on child protection and understand if fully, I agree to accept and apply the above policy and code of behaviour in its entirety

Signed:

Received by:

**Title :
(Block Capitals)**

Date:

Date:

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