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# Operating Rules and Procedures of the Irish Red Cross

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# Section I: General Assembly

## Rule 1

## Procedure

1. The General Assembly is presided over by the Chairperson of the Irish Red Cross. In the absence of the Chairperson, the General Assembly shall be presided over by the Vice Chairperson. In the absence of the Chairperson and the Vice Chairperson the General Assembly shall nominate a member to chair that meeting. Unless otherwise provided for in this Constitution, the General Assembly takes all its decisions with a quorum of one third of its overall membership and by a majority of those present and voting. If the quorum is not met the meeting should be reconvened when the quorum is achievable at most two weeks after the original date of the meeting.
2. Each of its elected members has a single vote. In the event of a tied vote the Chair of the General Assembly shall have a second, casting vote, save in the case where the vote is tied on the question of the election of the Chairperson by the General Assembly. In this latter case of a tied vote the matter shall be decided by drawing lots.

Election by the Area Committee to General Assembly shall be on the basis of the number of members at the end of the calendar year preceding General Assembly elections.

* + 1. 10-199 voting members : 1 Representative
    2. 200-499 voting members : 2 Representatives
    3. 500-999 voting members : 3 Representatives
    4. 999 or more Voting members: 4 Representatives

1. Nomination Committee to be composed of 5 persons; 3 elected from the Board of Directors and 2 elected persons from the General Assembly. The Nomination Committee may co-opt up to three external persons to serve on the Committee. Membership of the Nomination Committee is subject to review and re-election occurs on an annual basis. The Nomination Committee’s function is to propose a candidate or candidates for the position of Chairperson to the General Assembly for its consideration. A candidate may be a non-member of the Irish Red Cross however s/he must join the Irish Red Cross as a member before coming Chairperson. The Nomination Committee also proposes up to 10% of the General Assembly as co-opted members aiming to enhance its expertise. The Nomination Committee shall also assume responsibility for such other matters as may be delegated by the General Assembly or Board of Directors from time to time. Members of the Nomination Committee may only serve a maximum of 3 consecutive terms.

## Rule 2

## Duties and Responsibilities of Members of the General Assembly

* 1. To uphold and respect the Fundamental Principles of the Movement;
  2. To avoid engaging in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature while serving as a member of the General Assembly, in line with the ethos of the Movement;
  3. To seek to act in the best interests of the Irish Red Cross as a member of the General Assembly, including respecting the confidentiality of relevant aspects of its deliberations;
  4. To be qualified to be elected or nominated to the General Assembly a person shall be member of the Irish Red Cross. Where a member of the General Assembly ceases to be a member of the Irish Red Cross he or she shall be deemed to have resigned his or her position on the General Assembly;
  5. To regularly advise the Area Committee, where elected by an Area, of relevant matters pertaining to the activities of the General Assembly;
  6. To devote sufficient time to the role of General Assembly member to be effective in discharging the position, and to maintain regular attendance at formally convened General Assembly meetings. In the event of being absent, without substantive cause, from three consecutive meetings of the General Assembly, to forfeit membership of the General Assembly. In this event the nominating Area or other appropriate nominating body shall be empowered to nominate a replacement for the residue of the term on the General Assemblyof its original nominee.

# Section II: The Board of Directors

## Rule 3

## Composition

1. The General Assembly shall aim to ensure that a diverse set of candidates is presented for election to the Board of Directors at the General Assembly, including candidates with diverse backgrounds (gender, religious beliefs, political, social and professional views) in an attempt to reflect the diversity of the Irish society and the wider membership of the Irish Red Cross.
2. The Treasurer is elected by the General Assembly and shall serve as Chair of the Finance Working Group. The Secretary is elected by the General Assembly and shall serve as Chair of the Governance Committee which will include rule interpretation/arbitration in its functions. In the event of the Youth Representative elected to the General Assembly not being elected to the Board, a Board member shall be nominated to represent the youth interest.

## Rule 4

## Responsibility of Board of Directors

It is the responsibility of the Board of Directors to:

1. **Finance:**
2. Approve the annual budget presented by the Secretary General and supervise its administration; the Board of Directors act as Trustees in accordance with the relevant Irish legislation;
3. Provisionally approve the annual activity report and financial accounts presented by the Secretary General and present them to the General Assembly for its final approval;
4. Approve payments, which exceed an amount (determined by the Board in consultation with the Finance Working Group) and delegate the right to authorise payments to selected people (i.e. Chair, Treasurer, Vice Chair, Head of Finance, the Secretary General etc.) established in the financial procedures approved by the Board;
5. Promote the regular auditing of the Irish Red Cross financial administration and use of its assets and resources. The Board of Directors appoints internal and external auditors for this purpose.
6. **Irish Red Cross Structure/Membership:**
7. Approve the creation, suspension or closing of Branches, after due enquiry and where warranted;
8. Provide for the setting up and dissolution of the Branch or Area Committees;
9. Establish ad-hoc committees, advisory groups or any working groups as needed (and their composition and functioning) and approve or otherwise of the recommendations of such working groups which shall report to the Board.
10. Remove the Chairs and/or members of ad hoc committees, advisory groups or working groups if dissatisfied with their performance;
11. Convoke the electoral processes for governance bodies (General Assembly and Board) at national level and at any other level, if its respective body did not convoke it in the manner and time established by the IRC’s legal base;
12. Intervene and decide in any internal conflict or crisis at any level that may jeopardise the integrity and image of the Irish Red Cross as a whole (if the matter is affecting only a Branch or Area, it should be addressed primarily by the respective Area Committee and only be referred to the national bodies if not solved at Branch or Area level);
13. Be regularly informed and updated by the management about the membership/volunteers’ issues;
14. Establish a membership and disciplinary committee to deal with disciplinary matters affecting membership/volunteers, in accordance with the IRC’s rules.

**3. Strategic Planning:**

1. Ensure the long-term viability of the Irish Red Cross and make decisions about priorities;
2. Develop the goals of the Irish Red Cross; these shall seek to actively promote transparency, efficient functioning and effectiveness in the work of the Irish Red Cross;
3. Define the outcomes of performance and set standards arising there from.
4. Determine criteria for beneficiaries, clients and vulnerable groups;
5. Develop policies on staff and volunteers;
6. Decide about the measures and procedures needed to implement the policies and guidelines approved by the General Assembly;
7. Promote and coordinate the elaboration of the strategic plan and its evaluation;
8. Temporarily approve the strategic plan and its evaluation and present them to the General Assembly for its final approval;
9. Make any proposal needed for Irish Red Cross development to the General Assembly for consideration and approval;
10. **Management & Staff:**
11. Appoint, evaluate and, where warranted, remove the Secretary General using a transparent process established in the Irish Red Cross Constitution and operating rules and following the standards and procedures established by the labour regulations and laws of Ireland;
12. Ratify the appointment, removal or replacement of any Irish Red Cross staff proposed by the management or delegate an appropriate level of authority to the Secretary General to so do;
13. Approve operational plans presented by the management and supervise their implementation;
14. Keep a constructive and progressive perspective with regard to promoting the effectiveness of the Irish Red Cross;
15. **General:**
16. Approve the assignation of any award, prize, honorary title or medal on behalf of the Irish Red Cross, following the procedures and respecting the conditions established by the Constitution and operating rules for these cases;
17. Decide about any other matter or issue referred by the management, any regional level or a part of the membership, as established by the Irish Red Cross Constitution and operating rules;
18. Discharge other functions established by the Irish Red Cross governance bodies currently or in the future;
19. Facilitate and strengthen national and international relations as appropriate in co-ordination with the Secretary General.
20. The procedure of the Board of Directors and other procedural rules for the work and organisation of the Irish Red Cross shall be established in the Rules of Procedure for the Irish Red Cross in accordance with this Constitution.

**6. Conduct of Meetings**

The Board of Directors is presided over by the Chairperson and in his/her absence, the Vice Chairperson. In the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair the Board shall choose a Board member to chair that meeting. It takes all its decisions with a quorum of one third its members and by a majority of those present and voting. Each of its members has a single vote. In the event of an equal vote, the Chairperson has the second casting vote. Voting may be by secret ballot if a member of the Board of Directors requests. The meetings of the Board of Directors are generally held in Dublin.

**7. Best Practice in Corporate Governance:**

In the light of the growing focus on good Corporate Governance, a set of “best practice” Directors Roles and Responsibilities has also been adopted by the Society. They are set out in Appendix III and reflect best practice in Corporate Governance for an Irish Charitable society.

In the context of meeting the many regulatory and statutory obligations that arise for the Society, the Board of Directors is empowered to take whatever action it sees fit to compel individual members, branches or areas to comply with those obligations, up to and including suspension or withdrawal of individual membership or closure of Units or branches.

## Rule 5

## The Chairperson of the Society

In order to ensure the respect of the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and the policies and objectives approved by the General Assembly, s/he has the following responsibilities as an individual to:

1. Monitor and respect the application of the Irish Red Cross legal and constitutional base and the policies and decisions approved by the General Assembly, by all Irish Red Cross members/volunteers and staff at all levels starting from her/himself;
2. Represent the Irish Red Cross before the authorities and organisations at national and international level. Report to the Board about this representation activity. The Chairperson can punctually delegate this representation to another board member (usually Vice Chair) or to the Secretary General if needed;
3. Convoke, on time and form as established by the Irish Red Cross statutes and internal regulations, the General Assembly sessions on behalf of the Board, usually signing the letter informing about the meetings date, time, place and agenda. Ensure that all people concerned receive this communication. These powers may be delegated to the Secretary General;
4. Chair the General Assembly sessions and the Board meetings;
5. Make any proposal that s/he considers needed for the development of the Irish Red Cross to the Board, for its consideration and approval;
6. Assist in the Board oversight of the Secretary General’s contract, where contract specifies
7. Fulfil any other functions established by the Irish Red Cross governance bodies currently or in the future.

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## Rule 6

## National Convention

The Agenda for the Convention shall include:

1. A review of the past, present and future work of the Irish Red Cross at national and international level.
2. Proposals from Areas and Branches
3. Proposals from the Board of the Irish Red Cross.

The Board of Directors shall have full power to organise the convention as it thinks appropriate and to amalgamate motions of a similar content or to reject or amend motions in the best interests of the organisation.

Recommendations from the National Convention shall be considered by the Board of

Directors.

## Rule 7

## Management

The Secretary General, who will carry out his/her functions under the authority of the Board of Directors, has the following functions:

1. To implement the decisions of the General Assembly and the Board of Directors and execute the mandates assigned to him/her by other bodies of the Irish Red Cross;
2. To direct the Secretariat and be responsible for the execution of the work entrusted to it;
3. To draft strategies and long term plans, including general policy frameworks;
4. To draft budgets and financial reports and to ensure financial transparency;
5. To organise the different services provided by the staff in accordance with the decisions of the General Assembly and of the Board of Directors; appoint competent staff to the Secretariat, and when necessary, terminate the appointment of staff;
6. To disseminate and promote the Fundamental Principles of the Movement and international humanitarian law including the Geneva Conventions;
7. To facilitate close co-operation with the International Committee of the Red Cross and with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies as well as international co-operation both at the regional and the global level;
8. To act as the authorised representative of the Irish Red Cross in relation to third parties and courts of law for all transactions whatsoever, including transactions executed in notarial form relating to the acquisition, administration and expenditure of the resources of the Irish Red Cross;
9. To carry out any other function assigned to her/him by the present Constitution or entrusted to her/him by the Board of Directors or the Chairperson; and
10. To report on to the activities of the Irish Red Cross to the General Assembly and the Board of Directors.

The Secretary General shall establish the structure of the Management and Staff, the general outline of which shall be subject to the approval of the Board of Directors.

The Secretariat assists the Secretary General in the implementation of her/his task.

The procedures regarding the Management shall be laid down in the Rules of Procedure of the Irish Red Cross.

## Rule 8

## The Membership and Disciplinary Committee

Matters which may be referred to this committee include:

1. Adjudication on decisions to refuse to accept a person to membership of the Irish Red Cross;
2. Adjudication on complaints against members arising from non-compliance with the Irish Red Cross Rules or otherwise which could involve removal from membership or officer-ship;
3. Adjudication on appropriate disciplinary matters including removal of membership;
4. Appropriate to the matters submitted to it, the Membership and Disciplinary Committee shall decide:
   1. to refuse or not to refuse to admit to membership of the Irish Red Cross any applicant for membership.
   2. to remove or not to remove from membership from the Irish Red Cross any member reported to it for disciplinary considerations or to remove or suspend such member from holding any or all officer duty or active duty of any kind within the Irish Red Cross for any period the Committee specifies or to recommend any disciplinary measure or none as seems appropriate.
   3. to comment on or/and to censure as the Committee think fit matters and persons involved.
   4. to make recommendations for the avoidance of similar problems in the future.

The Committee shall be entitled to fullest details on matters submitted to it and shall be entitled to examine the records of the Irish Red Cross and to interview, consult and question any member, officer or staff of the Irish Red Cross in the course of their deliberations.

A member may appeal the decision of the Membership and Disciplinary Committee to the External Appeals Tribunal as per Article 27 of the Constitution.

In the event that the Committee decides to suspend or remove a member, and if the member appeals the decision the member must step aside from all involvement in the Society until the appeal is heard and ruled upon.

# Section III: Area Committees

## Rule 9

## Composition

An Area Committee shall be established in each Area. In order to be an independent Area with associated rights an Area must consist of at least 1 Branch. Such Branch Committees will assume the rights of an Area committee.Each Branch in the Area shall affiliate with the Area Committee. An Area Committee must ensure that 7 primary programmes/ activities from across the spectrum of the Society are carried out within its Area. The Committee will compose of 2 delegates from each of its affiliated Branches along with Co-opted members (Article 31) and Ex Officio members. Each Area shall have an Area Management Team who will meeting on regular intervals with the delegated authority to govern its district between meetings of the Area Committee.

The Area Management Team will be composed of:

* The Area Chair, Vice Chair, Honorary Treasurer and Honorary Secretary
* The Area Directors of Units, Youth and Health & Social Care
* The Area Fundraising Officer
* The Area Volunteer Support & Development Officer

## Powers and Duties of Area Committees

1. The powers and duties of the Area Committee shall be:
   1. To organise its Area in the best interests of the Irish Red Cross, establish Branches and generally manage, direct and superintend the affairs of the Irish Red Cross within the Area in accordance with the Irish Red Cross’ Rules;
   2. Deal with all issues or requests from Branch committees through the Area Hon. Secretary or Area Director who will offer a solution/ answer if possible or if not, source a solution/ answer on the branches behalf.
   3. To carry out any work in the interests of the Irish Red Cross which is remitted to it by the General Assembly or by the Board of Directors;
   4. To define the district from which each of its affiliated Branches may draw its membership, and to arrange for the transfer of members from one Branch to another; in the case of border Branches to define the district and arrange transfers by agreement with neighbouring Area Committees, or, failing such agreement, to submit the matter to the Board of Directors whose decision shall be final;
   5. To meet at least three times per year (February- Financial Meeting, May- First Meeting and at least one other ordinary meeting);
   6. To receive and consider at each meeting a report from each of its affiliated Branches regarding the progress and activities of the Irish Red Cross in each Branch district;
   7. To submit to the Board of Directors, as soon as practicable after each meeting, a brief report of the decisions made at such meeting together with a duly certified copy of the Treasurer’s Statement of Account, as adopted by the meeting;
   8. The Area Hon. Secretary will receive regular activity reports and a copy of minutes of meetings from the affiliated Branches (see report on volunteer resource page). These reports will form the Secretary’ report to the Area Committee.
   9. Minutes of Area Ordinary Meetings, Area First Meetings and Area Activity Reports are to be sent to the National Secretary in a timely manner following each meeting.
   10. Monitor and manage financial reporting to Head Office and the compliance of its Branches as defined by the National Society
   11. To suspend a Branch if such is considered advisable in the interests of the Irish Red Cross and to report forthwith such suspension to the Board of Directors. During the period of such suspension the Area Committee shall assume the duties of the Branch Committee;
   12. To set up sub-committees, standing committees, and special committees, as may be desirable, in the same manner and subject to the same conditions as provided for in the case of the General Assembly and Board of Directors.
2. Elections of General Assembly
3. The number of representatives from Areas shall be decided as per Rule 1.3 and the election shall be carried out in accordance with these rules.
4. The election shall take place at an Area Committee meeting which shall be held not earlier than 3rd February and not later than 25th February in each election year.
5. Not later than the first day of January in each election year the Area Committee shall notify each of its affiliated Branches of the date, place and time fixed for the Area Committee meeting at which the General Assembly representatives will be elected.
6. Should a Branch representative on the Area Committee be unable to attend, it shall be open to his Branch to appoint a substitute, and provided the name and address of such substitute member, together with that of the member for whom he has been substituted, is notified in writing to the Secretary of the meeting by the Branch or Branches which they represent, shall be announced to the meeting by the Chairman before the election for the General Assembly takes place.
7. Each Branch may, at its Annual General Meeting in January of each election year, nominate candidates (up to the appropriate number of positions available for that Area in accordance with Rule 1.3) for the General Assembly. Such candidates must be a member of the Society resident in the Area, provided however, as an exceptional measure, a candidate who is actively engaged in Society operations in the Area but who is not resident in such Area may be nominated. In case of a contest the voting shall be by ballot and the candidates who receive a majority of the votes cast by those present and voting shall be elected. In case of a tie, the candidates shall be chosen by lot.
8. The full name and address of the candidates nominated by the Branch shall be sent to the Area Secretary so as to reach him not later than 2nd February. The nomination shall be made on a prescribed form on which the person nominated shall signify his acceptance of the nomination.
9. Where the number of people duly nominated by Branches is less than or equal to the number of vacant representative positions for that Area, then the candidates so nominated shall be deemed to be elected as members of the General Assembly.
10. Should there be insufficient valid nominations to fill the vacant positions for the General Assembly by Branches in the Area, then the Area Committee shall appoint persons qualified as in Rule 9. 2 (e) to act as the Area Representatives on the General Assembly.
11. Should the number of valid nominations from Branches exceed the number of vacant representative positions for that Area, an election will take place as follows:
    1. At the meeting the Area Committee shall appoint three persons to act as Scrutineers from among those present. A person who is a candidate shall not act as a Scrutineer.
    2. The election of the Area Representatives shall be by ballot vote of the members present at the meeting. For that purpose the Area Secretary shall prepare beforehand, and have ready for distribution to the members, a typed or printed Ballot Paper which shall contain the name, title and address of each candidate, and the name of the Branch of which s/he is a member.
    3. When the Ballot Papers are marked, they shall be collected and given to the Scrutineers who shall count the votes and hand the result to the presiding Chairman, who shall thereupon announce the result and declare the candidates who have received the highest number of votes to be duly elected. In the case of a tie the Representatives shall be chosen by lot.
12. The Area Secretary shall forward to the Secretary General of the Society the name and address of the persons elected by the meeting so as to reach the Secretary General before the last day of February.
13. In the case of the death or resignation of an elected member, the appropriate Area Committee may appoint a person to fill the vacancy so caused, and the person thus appointed shall hold office for the residue of the term of office.
14. Notwithstanding anything contained in Article 28 the following members, if not otherwise members of the Area Committee, shall be deemed ex officio members of the Area Committee, with full voting powers, and as such need not be appointed by any Branch:
15. The Area Representative on the General Assembly.
16. An Stiúrthóir Regiuin (Regional Director).
17. An Stiúrthóir Dochtúireachta Reigiuin (Regional Medical

Director).

1. An Stiúrthóir Ceantair (Area Director).
2. An Stiúrthóir Dochtúireachta (Area Chief Director M.O.).
3. Area Officer for Community Services
4. Area Youth Officer

## Rule 10

## Officers of Area Committees

The Officers of an Area Committee shall be Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Honorary Treasurer and Honorary Secretary. These shall be chosen at the first meeting of the Area Committee, to be held within the first fortnight of May each year, the date to be fixed by the outgoing Area Committee. The Honorary Officers of the outgoing Area Committee shall operate in the interim period until such meeting is held. Candidates for any such office must be proposed and seconded and, in the case of a contest, the election shall be decided by a ballot vote. The outgoing Chairman, or, in case he is not a member of the Area Committee, a temporary Chairman, shall preside until the new Chairman is elected but shall have no casting vote. In case of a tie the election shall be decided by lot. The newly–elected Chairman shall preside during the election of the remaining officers, and in case of a tie shall have a casting vote. Should the outgoing Secretary and/or Treasurer not be appointed as delegates to the Area Committee by their respective Branches, they shall nevertheless attend the first meeting of the Area Committee in order to hand over all books, documents, balance of funds on hand, etc., to their successors, but shall not, apart from this, be entitled to take part in the proceedings of the meetings. In line with best practice, one member should only hold one position and members of the management team should not have any family or relationship connection.

## Rule 11

## Composition of a Branch

Branches shall be established within each Area. A Branch must have a membership of more than 15 members. The two classifications of Branches are:

* Branch Type A will hold a bank account and therefore be eligible for the National Affiliation Fee and must ensure that 5 primary programmes/ activities from across the spectrum of the Society are carried out within its district.
* Branch Type B will not hold a bank account and will carry out at least 1 primary programme/ activity from across the spectrum of the Society is carried out within its district.

Each Branch in the Area shall affiliate with the Area Committee. The Committee will elect 2 delegates to the Area Committee.

## Duties of Branch

The duties of a Branch shall be:

1. To organise a meeting of its committee a minimum of 4 times a year.
2. To enrol members of the Branch, and keep records and accounts.
3. To co-operate with the Irish Red Cross in such work cognate to the objects of the Irish Red Cross as may be approved by the Board of Directors or General Assembly of the Irish Red Cross.
4. To make such preparations as may be necessary for rendering Red Cross aid in peace or war and to co-operate in the dissemination of the Geneva Conventions.
5. To promote the establishment of Red Cross Units/ Group and provide the members of such Units/ Group with uniforms and equipment and stores necessary to carry out their duties effectively.
6. To organise and maintain a service to render prompt and effective aid in times of local or national disaster.
7. To report to the Secretary General in the event of illegal use of the Red Cross symbol or of the unauthorised use of the Irish Red Cross’s uniforms, or badges or title.
8. To make recommendations in appropriate cases for the bestowal of distinctions and badges of the Irish Red Cross.
9. To foster by means of lectures, demonstrations, training sessions, meetings and discussions, an interest in the activities of the Irish Red Cross.
10. To engage in Welfare work and in the provision of invalid requisites.
11. To maintain and be responsible for the Irish Red Cross’s property under its care.
12. To raise funds for the Irish Red Cross by means of collections and the promotion of functions in aid.
13. To undertake such other work as may from time to time be prescribed or recommended by the Board of Directors.
14. In line with best practice, one member should only hold one position and members of the management team should not have any family or relationship connection.

## Officers of the Branch

The Branch Committee shall compose of members elected at its Annual General Meeting (to be held before the 2nd week in February). This shall include:

* Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Honorary Treasurer, Honorary Secretary
* And a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 7 others.

At their first meeting the following posts shall be filled by members sitting on the Committee:

* Youth and Health & Social Care Officer.

Unit/Youth/Health and Social Care Officers shall be ex officio to the committee but shall not be permitted to hold any of the above positions. If a Branch is unable to fill these roles a recruitment process shall be sought.

## Rule 12

## Branch Annual General Meeting

Each Branch shall hold in the first six weeks of each year an Annual General Meeting which all branch members’ accorded rights in accordance with the rules of the Irish Red Cross may attend. It shall be the duty of the Honorary Secretary of the Branch to give notice to the Branch members, at least seven clear days in advance, of the time and place of the meeting and the general nature of the business to be transacted. At this meeting the Branch will receive reports from the Honorary Secretary and the Honorary Treasurer concerning the affairs and the finances of the Branch for the past year ending 31st December. The Honorary Treasurer shall prepare a report of the previous year’s financial activity which he/she deems to be true and accurate.

A statement of any Resolutions adopted at the meeting shall be transmitted by the Honorary Secretary of the Branch to the Honorary Secretary of the Area Committee as soon as practicable after the conclusion of the meeting. The quorum for such Annual General Meeting of the Branch shall be seven members. A member under 18 years of age shall not be permitted to be elected to any officership of the Committee but shall hold voting rights from the age of 16 years.

## Rule 13

## Return to Area Committee

At the same time as the Yearly Return duly audited is sent to the Secretary General of the Irish Red Cross, but not later than the second week of February each year, the Branch Secretary shall send to the Secretary of the Area Committee a duplicate of the Return made to the Secretary General for the previous yearly period at the same time transmitting to the Area Secretary the proportion of the remaining amount as agreed with the Area Committee. The Area Secretary shall on receipt of same transmit to the Branch Secretary an official receipt for the amount so received, and this amount shall be known and referred to as the Affiliation Fee payable by the Branch to the Area Committee.

The Area Committee shall inform the Secretary General of the Irish Red Cross of any Branch which, after due warning, has refused or neglected to pay its affiliation fee to the Area Committee.

Each Branch Committee shall prepare a code of Rules and Bye-laws for the conduct of its business. Any Rule not in accord with the Rules of the Irish Red Cross shall be null and void. The Rules must be sanctioned by the Board of Directors before coming into operation.

# Section IV: Profile of the General Assembly and the Board of Directors

## Rule 14

## Profiles of General Assembly Members

Members of the General Assembly of the Irish Red Cross should fulfil the following profile:

1. Be members of the Irish Red Cross, as defined in the Volunteer Policy which may be redefined from time to time;
2. Be committed to the fundamental principles of the movement;
3. Have adequate levels of experience, to adequately discharge their responsibilities;
4. Have no conflicting interests between candidate's profession/or close family relations and his/her freedom to execute his/her tasks in compliance with the Fundamental Principles.

## Rule 15

## Profiles of Board of Directors Members

Members of the Board of Directors of the Irish Red Cross should fulfil the following profile:

1. Be members of the Irish Red Cross, as defined in the rules on membership of the organisation;
2. Have no conflicting interests between candidate's profession/or close family relations and his/her freedom to execute his/her tasks in compliance with the Fundamental Principles;
3. Have an adequate level of education and experience to execute their duties under this document;
4. Have a profile that adds to the diversity of the group (professional and personal background);
5. Be committed to the Fundamental Principles of the Movement.

# Appendices

## Appendix I: Irish Red Cross Statutory Provisions

* [Red Cross Act, 1954](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie:80/plweb-cgi/fastweb?state_id=1260205722&view=ag-view&numhitsfound=3&query_rule=%28%28$query3%29%29%3Alegtitle&query3=red%20cross&docid=22356&docdb=Acts&dbname=Acts&sorting=none&operator=and&TemplateName=predoc.tmpl&setCookie=1)
* [Red Cross Act, 1944](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie:80/plweb-cgi/fastweb?state_id=1260205722&view=ag-view&docrank=1&numhitsfound=3&query_rule=%28%28$query3%29%29%3Alegtitle&query3=red%20cross&docid=16199&docdb=Acts&dbname=Acts&sorting=none&operator=and&TemplateName=predoc.tmpl&setCookie=1)
* [Red Cross Act, 1938](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie:80/plweb-cgi/fastweb?state_id=1260205722&view=ag-view&docrank=2&numhitsfound=3&query_rule=%28%28$query3%29%29%3Alegtitle&query3=red%20cross&docid=13152&docdb=Acts&dbname=Acts&sorting=none&operator=and&TemplateName=predoc.tmpl&setCookie=1)
* [S.I. No. 522/2006 — Irish Red Cross Society (Directions as to Ambulance Service) (Revocation) Order 2006](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie:80/plweb-cgi/fastweb?state_id=1260205763&view=ag-view&numhitsfound=5&query_rule=%28%28$query3%29%29%3Alegtitle&query3=irish%20red%20cross&docid=28614&docdb=SIs&dbname=Acts&dbname=SIs&sorting=none&operator=and&TemplateName=predoc.tmpl&setCookie=1)
* [S.I. No. 44/1999 — Irish Red Cross Society (Amendment) Order, 1999.](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie:80/plweb-cgi/fastweb?state_id=1260205763&view=ag-view&docrank=1&numhitsfound=5&query_rule=%28%28$query3%29%29%3Alegtitle&query3=irish%20red%20cross&docid=23292&docdb=SIs&dbname=Acts&dbname=SIs&sorting=none&operator=and&TemplateName=predoc.tmpl&setCookie=1)
* [S.I. No. 251/1955 — Irish Red Cross Society (Directions As To Ambulance Service) Order, 1955.](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie:80/plweb-cgi/fastweb?state_id=1260205763&view=ag-view&docrank=2&numhitsfound=5&query_rule=%28%28$query3%29%29%3Alegtitle&query3=irish%20red%20cross&docid=7616&docdb=SIs&dbname=Acts&dbname=SIs&sorting=none&operator=and&TemplateName=predoc.tmpl&setCookie=1)
* [S.I. No. 184/1947 — Irish Red Cross Society Order, 1939 (Amendment) Order, 1947.](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie:80/plweb-cgi/fastweb?state_id=1260205763&view=ag-view&docrank=3&numhitsfound=5&query_rule=%28%28$query3%29%29%3Alegtitle&query3=irish%20red%20cross&docid=4530&docdb=SIs&dbname=Acts&dbname=SIs&sorting=none&operator=and&TemplateName=predoc.tmpl&setCookie=1)
* [S.I. No. 206/1939 — Irish Red Cross Society Order, 1939.](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie:80/plweb-cgi/fastweb?state_id=1260205763&view=ag-view&docrank=4&numhitsfound=5&query_rule=%28%28$query3%29%29%3Alegtitle&query3=irish%20red%20cross&docid=3152&docdb=SIs&dbname=Acts&dbname=SIs&sorting=none&operator=and&TemplateName=predoc.tmpl&setCookie=1)

## Appendix II: Resolution 2 of the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Geneva, 26-30 November, 2007

*Resolution 2*

*Specific nature of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in action and partnerships and the role of National Societies as auxiliaries*

*to the public authorities in the humanitarian field*

The 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent,

*acknowledging* that strong partnerships between States, the components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement) and other humanitarian actors, such as international organizations, non- governmental organizations and civil society, are essential to address effectively the needs of vulnerable people worldwide, in the spirit of the slogan of the Conference “Together for humanity”,

*acknowledging* the different mandates of the various components of the

Movement,

*recalling* the Movement’s Fundamental Principle of independence as well as Articles 2.3, 3 and 4.3 of the Statutes of the Movement whereby National Societies are recognized by all governments as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field,

*recalling* Articles 24, 26 and 27 of the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field, of 12 August 1949, Articles 24 and 25 of the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea, of 12 August 1949, as well as Article 63 of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,

*noting* the resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations (A/RES/49/2 of 27 October 1994) which recalls that National Societies are recognized by their respective governments as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field on the basis of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949,

*recalling* the Agenda for Humanitarian Action adopted at the 28th International Conference, whereby States, recognizing the importance of the independent and auxiliary role of National Societies, agreed, *inter alia*, to negotiate clearly defined roles and responsibilities with their respective National Societies in risk-reduction and disaster-management activities, as well as in public-health, development and social activities, *recalling* Resolution 1 of the 28th International Conference which welcomed the study carried out by the International Federation of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation) as Auxiliaries to the Public Authorities in the Humanitarian Field and contained the concept of the “characteristics of a balanced relationship,” and *noting* the work done by the International Federation in consultation with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) pursuant to that resolution,

*recognizing* that the cooperation and dialogue of National Societies with their respective governments includes the key role and responsibilities of National Societies in the fields of promotion, dissemination and implementation of international humanitarian law,

*recognizing* that National Societies represent reliable partners for national and local public authorities that provide service through their diverse volunteer base and their unique capacity to mobilize human and material resources at the community level,

*noting with appreciation* that the Council of Delegates, in its Resolution 3 of

2007, endorsed the concept of a toolbox for use by National Societies when concluding partnership arrangements, including those relevant to auxiliary relationships,

*reaffirming* the obligation of all the components of the Movement to act at all times in conformity with the Fundamental Principles, the Statutes of the Movement and the rules governing the use of the emblems and to take full account of the relevant Movement policies,

*acknowledging* that the autonomy of National Societies and their commitment to neutrality and impartial assistance provide the best available means to gain the confidence of all in order to have access to those in need,

*recalling Article* 2.4 of the Statutes of the Movement adopted by the

25th International Conference of the Red Cross at Geneva in 1986, as amended in 1995 and 2006, which stipulates that “the States shall at all times respect the adherence by all the components of the Movement to the Fundamental Principles”,

1. *reaffirms* that it is the primary responsibility of States and their respective public authorities to provide humanitarian assistance to vulnerable persons on their respective territories and that the primary purpose of National Societies as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field is to supplement them in the fulfilment of this responsibility;

2. *calls upon* National Societies and their respective public authorities to consolidate a balanced relationship with clear and reciprocal responsibilities, maintaining and enhancing a permanent dialogue at all levels within the agreed framework for humanitarian action;

3. *recognizes* that the public authorities and the National Societies as auxiliaries enjoy a specific and distinctive partnership, entailing mutual responsibilities and benefits, and based on international and national laws, in which the national public authorities and the National Society agree on the areas in which the National Society supplements or substitutes for public humanitarian services; the National Society must be able to deliver its humanitarian services at all times in conformity with the Fundamental Principles, in particular those of neutrality and independence, and with its other obligations under the Statutes of the Movement as agreed by States at the International Conference;

4. *emphasizes* that

a National Societies as auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field have a duty to consider seriously any request by their public authorities to carry out humanitarian activities within their mandate,

b States must refrain from requesting National Societies to perform activities which are in conflict with the Fundamental Principles or the Statutes of the Movement or its mission, that National Societies have the duty to decline any such request and *underlines* the need for the public authorities to respect such decisions by the National Societies;

5. *invites* National Societies and governments to clarify and consolidate the areas in which National Societies as auxiliaries cooperate at all levels with the public authorities;

6. *stresses* that the National Society, whilst acknowledging that its personnel and assets are provided to the medical services of the State’s armed forces in accordance with Article 26 of the First Geneva Convention of 1949 and are thus subject to military laws and regulations, must respect the Fundamental Principles, including that of neutrality, and at all times maintain its autonomy and ensure that it is clearly distinguishable from military and other governmental bodies;

7. *invites* the International Federation and the ICRC, in consultation with States and National Societies, to make available and further develop relevant information material for National Societies, the public authorities and other interested bodies, including guidelines, legal advice and best practices, in support of partnerships between National Societies and the public authorities in the humanitarian field.

## Appendix III: Board of Directors of the Irish Red Cross Statement of Directors Roles and Responsibilities

## 

The Board of Directors of the Irish Red Cross operates through the delegated authority of the Society’s General Assembly/Central Council. Its role is to direct and supervise the affairs of the Society on day to day basis, to ensure that it delivers on its goals and objectives, and to uphold the values and principles of the Red Cross Movement in every aspect of its activities.

The individual members of the Board of Directors (hereafter referred to as Directors) recognise their collective responsibility to function effectively as a Governing body. The Society is committed to achieving the highest standards of corporate governance and this statement of Directors roles and responsibilities has been adopted in support of that objective.

This statement refers to the role and responsibilities of the Board of Directors as a body.

Individual Directors acknowledge their obligation to contribute positively and constructively to the Group and to ensure that they collectively discharge these responsibilities diligently and effectively. On appointment to the Board, individual Directors will sign this statement to give expression to that obligation.

The Chairperson will run the Board and set its agenda. The agenda will take account of the issues and concerns of individual members, be forward-looking and concentrate on strategic rather than operational matters.

New Directors will be appointed by rotation in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. The Chairperson will endeavour to develop a diverse and effective Board, with a sufficiently diverse range of skills, experience and knowledge to run the organisation effectively

The Board will define the roles and responsibilities of the Chair and its Honorary Officers in writing. It will also ensure that it sets clear terms of reference for all sub-committees, standing groups or advisory panels. The Chairman will organise the various sub-committees to ensure that he makes the most effective use of the time, skills, knowledge and experience of Directors.

The Board will have a mechanism to regularly review and assess its own performance, that of individual Directors and of sub-committees, standing groups and any other bodies.

The Board will support the Secretariat and the Secretary General in every way possible and will conduct an annual review of the Secretary General’s performance in the role.

The Directors accept ultimate responsibility for overseeing and directing the affairs of the Society, ensuring it is solvent, and compliant with its own Constitution, all relevant Legislation and the requirements of any regulatory bodies.

Directors will;

* Receive the necessary induction, training and ongoing support that is needed to discharge their duties. They will ensure that they seek out and receive the advice and information that they need to make good decisions
* Conduct regular reviews of the Society’s system of Internal Controls, Performance reporting, Policies and Procedure. This will ensure that expenditures are appropriate and reasonable, funds are spent or managed in accordance with approved procedures, investments are carefully managed, and a full and accurate account is maintained of all financial transactions. An internal Audit Committee has been established to support the Board in meeting this obligation.
* Act prudently to protect the assets, property and reputation of the Society. Regular reviews will be undertaken of the risks to which the organisation is subject and actions taken to mitigate and manage them.
* Ensure that they receive sufficient, relevant and timely information to enable them to monitor and assess the Society’s financial position.
* Put clear delegated authorities in place to enable staff and volunteers to discharge their duties—with clear limits relating to budgetary and other matters. All delegated authorities will be subject to regular monitoring by the Board.
* Focus on the strategic health and direction of the organisation and ensure that it can continue to meet its goals and fulfil its mission into the future.
* Satisfy themselves that there is appropriate Strategic and Organisational planning to enable the Society to thrive and prosper and that there is appropriate financial planning to ensure that the Society will have adequate resources to deliver on its objectives.
* Support the fund-raising activities of the Society and use their position and standing to engage with potential donors and benefactors.
* Review the progress of the Society’s work programmes and ensure that its strategy is being effectively implemented. They will use these strategic reviews to evaluate the Society’s services, its alignment with a changing environment and changing needs, and to introduce appropriate change and innovation.
* Seek to ensure a positive collaborative relationship between all stakeholders within the Society, with particular emphasis on the relationship between the volunteer members and professional staff.
* Encourage appropriate engagement between the Directors and the Society’s external stakeholders and use these engagements for guidance and feedback
* Promote the good reputation and standing of the Society and support the Secretariat in its engagements with the media and any relevant public bodies.
* Be open, responsive and accountable to all stakeholders in respect of the governance of the Society.
* Be open to constructive criticism, the challenge of keeping pace with “best practice” and constantly mindful of the need to earn the trust and confidence of all its stakeholders.

Finally, Directors will adopt a Code of Conduct that addresses standards of behaviour, confidentiality, conflicts of interest and receipts of gifts or hospitality. They will uphold the principles of diversity, equality, and impartiality and ensure that the spirit of the Red Cross movement is respected in every aspect of the Society’s activities.

## Appendix IV:

## 1. Policy and Procedure for Garda Vetting

**2.** Safeguarding Policy Statement and Procedures

**Policy and Procedure for Garda Vetting**

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# Introduction

Following the introduction of Garda Vetting in the Youth Work Sector in September 2006 and the enactment of the National Vetting Bureau Act 2012-2016, the Irish Red Cross has introduced a Garda Vetting Policy and Procedures document outlining the specifics of the Garda Vetting process.

The National Safeguarding Officer is tasked with responsibility for administering the Irish Red Cross screening process, including Garda Vetting, and acting as Liaison Person on behalf of Irish Red Cross.

Garda Vetting uses a centralised system using a pre-designed form from the National Vetting Bureau. (NVB) will deal only with the liaison Person in each organisation. The NVB will not make decisions about applicants’ suitability; it is the responsibility of each organisation to carry out their own decision making following disclosures received. Disclosures of any kind will be dealt with on a case by case basis. The Garda Vetting Procedure will disclose all convictions or prosecutions successful or not, pending or completed in the State or elsewhere as the case maybe and also specified information, hereafter referred to as a Garda Vetting Disclosure.

Garda vetting is required for all volunteers and staff members of the Irish Red Cross. Garda Vetting is currently conducted in respect of personnel working in a full-time, part-time and voluntary or student placement capacity in a position in a registered organisation*.*

The National Safeguarding Committee makes recommendations relating to suitability of prospective volunteers within the Society. In dealing with disclosures, the Irish Red Cross recognises that this is a most sensitive and complex area and disclosure of any kind will be dealt with on an individual basis. The committee will operate within a clear set of guidelines in order to provide consistency and to safeguard all individuals’ rights. All disclosures are held within the strictest of confidence and in compliance with data protection requirements.

As a comportment to our internal policy and procedures to ensure protection for young and vulnerable persons, we will also ensure that in circumstances where we contract for support with outside bodies (example: aspect of event management/supervision) we may seek confirmation in advance that any such personnel have been appropriately vetted.

# Important definitions

A “child” means a person under the age of 18 years.

A “vulnerable person” means a person, other than a child, who -

(a) Is suffering from a disorder of the mind, whether as a result of mental illness or dementia,

(b) Has an intellectual disability,

(c) Is suffering from a physical impairment, whether as a result of injury, illness or age, or

(d) has a physical disability,

Which is of such a nature or degree -

(i) As to restrict the capacity of the person to guard himself or herself against harm by another person, or

(ii) That results in the person requiring assistance with the activities of daily living including dressing, eating, walking, washing and bathing

**Benefits of Garda Vetting procedures**

1. Protection of children and vulnerable persons.
2. Protection of organisation providing services to children and vulnerable persons.
3. Protection of personnel within an organisation providing services to children and vulnerable persons
4. Management of risk in respect of former offenders.
5. Strong component part of a professional Human Resource Management practice within an organisation providing services to children and vulnerable persons.
6. Partnership relationship between the NVB and Customer Organisation for Garda Vetting.
7. Widely viewed as one of the key elements in the delivery of a comprehensive and robust safeguarding system in this state.

**Position of Liaison person**

The Liaison Person (LP) is registered with the NVB for the purposes of Garda Vetting on behalf of the Irish Red Cross. Following training by the NVB, the Liaison Person is assigned a registered number and their signature is kept on a digital file at the NVB. The LP provides the NVB with a security password which is confidential to the LP and must not be disclosed to any other person.

Registration with the NVB is predicated on the understanding that the LP gives an undertaking to comply with the Code of Practice on Garda Vetting in respect of all applications received by the LP and all data received from the NVB. Registration is further predicated upon the understanding that all data received from the NVB in respect of any individual is for the sole use of Irish Red Cross and that the LP gives an undertaking to manage and protect within the statutory provisions of the Data Protection Acts and any other legislation that may be enacted in respect of data protection or Garda Vetting.

The NVB has the right to revoke registration of the LP in the event of a failure and / or neglect to observe professional standards in respect of Garda Vetting procedures and data protection. The reasons for revocation will be outlined to the organisation through the LP. The LP must adhere to the Irish Red Cross Child Safeguarding Policy at all times.

The Garda Vetting LP is the contact person for the organisation with the NVB on all matters relating to Garda Vetting.

**National Safeguarding Committee**

The General Assembly of the Irish Red Cross hereby designates the National Safeguarding Committee (NSC) to assess volunteers and staff Garda Vetting Disclosures where previous convictions or prosecutions whether successful, unsuccessful, pending or completed, have been flagged by the NVB. This committee will have responsibility to assess the information provided by the GV disclosure process, and to make a recommendation on the applicant’s suitability to work or volunteer with the Irish Red Cross. In the implementation of this policy, the committee will also convene for the purposes of assessing existing members and staff where certain previous convictions or prosecutions are flagged by the NVB. The Liaison Person will be in attendance at all meetings of the group, except where the disclosure relates to the Liaison Person.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar someone from volunteering or being employed with the Irish Red Cross - it will depend on the assessment of the risks involved. This involves the committee assessing when and where the offence took place, and the circumstances surrounding the conviction or prosecution. **The disclosure will be assessed in relation to the applicant’s intended role in the Irish Red Cross.** Disclosures of any kind will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

**Role of Board of Directors**

If any disclosure raises doubts or concerns about the volunteer’s or staff member’s suitability, it will be considered by the committee. The decision on accepting or rejecting an applicant following a disclosure will be made by the Board of Directors, taking account of the nature of the disclosure, the circumstances surrounding it (to the extent that they may be known) and an assessment of the risk factors. The committee will recommend to the Board of Directors if the applicant should be accepted with or without restriction. The committee should be provided with all available details about the relevant applicant and the disclosure.

If an applicant is accepted, subject to a restriction due to a disclosure in the course of the Garda Vetting, the Board of Directors will notify the Secretary General of the details of the restriction and the Secretary General will notify the Manager, Supervisor and/or other relevant person to whom the applicant will be reporting of the details of the restriction. A Register of restricted persons will be kept on file and disclosure of details of the restriction will be kept to a minimum to ensure that the restriction is monitored and complied with.

**Areas for national Safeguarding Committee consideration**

Information concerning convictions or prosecutions relating to the following legislation and whether from the Republic of Ireland jurisdiction and/or other jurisdictions requiring assessment by the NSC will include:

* The Child Care Act (1991)
* Domestic Violence Act (1996)
* Non-Fatal Offences against the person Act (1997)
* Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act (1998)
* Criminal Justice Act (2006)
* The Education and Welfare Act (2000)
* Children’s Act (2001)
* Sex Offenders Act (2001)
* Criminal Justice (withholding of information on offences against children and vulnerable persons) Act 2012.
* National Vetting Bureau (children and vulnerable persons) Act 2012 to 2016 Offences against the state
* Sexual Offences
* Offences related to drugs
* Serious road traffic offences such as drunk driving, dangerous driving, hit and run, no insurance and car theft.
* Offences not specifically related to children or other vulnerable persons may still give cause for concern, for example, a prosecution and successful conviction for assaulting an adult.

This list is included as an example and is not exhaustive. For the avoidance of doubt, any disclosures relating to any amendments to the aforementioned legislation and/or to any other relevant legislation enacted after the date of issue of this policy may also require assessment by the committee.

In conducting its assessment, the NSC will also take into consideration other relevant information, including:

* The seriousness of each offence for which there is a conviction or pending prosecution
* Number and frequency of convictions particularly in the last ten years
* Other available Information
* Relevant – previous volunteering
* Character reference
* Recent Legislation
* Soft Information available
* Self-Disclosures

**Thee Garda Vetting procedure for membership of the organisation**

All applicants to become a staff member or volunteer with the Irish Red Cross must undergo Garda Vetting. In accordance with section 12 of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012, no person can become a staff member or volunteer with the Irish Red Cross until Garda Vetting process is complete. All other conditions of the membership process must also be completed. Garda Vetting has been an Irish Red Cross mandatory requirement for all those working (in a paid or voluntary capacity) for a number of years. Therefore the introduction of new legislation has simply placed those IRC practices on a statutory footing. All information received is held in the strictest of confidence. The Garda Vetting process is outlined below:

**Stage 1** A potential staff member or volunteer is required to fill out a Garda Vetting Application form and return it to the Liaison Person at the Irish Red Cross. If, on the date of the Garda Vetting Application Form being signed, the person is 16 or 17 years of age, written consent from a parent or guardian will be required.

**Stage 2**  Once the Liaison Person is satisfied that all sections of the form are duly completed the form will be forwarded to the National Vetting Bureau.

**Stage 3** The National Vetting Bureau responds to the vetting request by confirming whether any previous convictions appear against the applicant or if any prosecutions are pending. All decisions in respect of the suitability of applicants are the sole responsibility of the Irish Red Cross The National Vetting Bureau has no input into any decision made in the Irish Red Cross in respect of suitability of an applicant for a position within the Irish Red Cross.

**Stage 4** Once the information has been verified and confirmed it is then reviewed by the National Safeguarding Officer and classified as follows:

* + - No convictions recorded /Low Risk
    - Medium Risk
    - High Risk

The Irish Red Cross will deal with the information as outlined below:

**(a) No Convictions recorded/Low Risk**

Where no convictions**/**disclosures have been recorded, the applicant will be informed and given details of the induction process.

**(b) Medium Risk**

With regard to Medium Risk, i.e. offences which, within the absolute discretion of the Irish Red Cross, are not considered to pose any risk to children and vulnerable persons, the Irish Red Cross response is different depending on whether or not the applicant openly disclosed the offence:

1. If the offence has not been disclosed the National Safeguarding Committee will discuss and assess the potential risk of the offence and decide whether or not to proceed with their membership if deemed appropriate, the decision- makers may wish to meet with the applicant to seek an explanation for the non-disclosure

* + If a satisfactory explanation is received the membership process will proceed
  + If the explanation is found to be unsatisfactory, the offence will be deemed to be a high risk and be dealt with as outlined in section c below.

**(c) High Risk**

With regard to serious offences, i.e. offences the nature of which could potentially indicate a risk to children or vulnerable persons, the Irish Red Cross response will be different depending on whether or not the volunteer openly disclosed the offence.

If the offence has not been disclosed the National Safeguarding Committee will meet to discuss and assess the potential risk of the offence. If deemed appropriate, the decision-makers may also meet with the applicant. Other than in very exceptional circumstances, the applicant will be advised that their offence is being treated as a high risk offence.

If the offence has been disclosed the National Safeguarding Committee will meet to discuss and assess the potential risk of the offence. If necessary, the decision-makers will meet with the applicant.

* If there has been evidence of significant rehabilitation and /or evidence of appropriate behaviour modification by the applicant since the event took place, then the applicant will be advised that membership will be processed.
* If there has been no evidence of significant rehabilitation and /or evidence of appropriate behaviour modification by the applicant he/she will be advised that their offence is being treated as a high risk offence and the procedure outlined above will be followed.

**Stage 5** Completion of Garda Vetting Procedure - Applicants who have satisfactorily completed Garda Vetting (and all other conditions of the membership process) will be deemed to be members of the Irish Red Cross.

A member/volunteer may be re-vetted if information concerning suitability to work with children and/or vulnerable persons comes to the attention of the Irish Red Cross.

If the applicant has resided outside Ireland for a period of 6 months or more he/she must also furnish a foreign police certificate from the country or countries of residence. This certificate should state that the applicant has received no convictions while residing outside Ireland.

**Life cycle of Garda Vetting**

In accordance with best practice, Garda Vetting should be sought in respect of each volunteer or staff member approximately every 3 years, or at any time or times within the said 3 year period as deemed necessary by the Organisation. If a member takes a leave of absence from the Organisation, i.e. leaves the country for more than 6 months, upon their return they will be re-vetted. There is an obligation on each volunteer or staff member to inform the Society of any actual or pending conviction or prosecution since they were vetted and therefore they will be re-vetted. Failure to do so may result in the Board of Directors placing the person on administrative leave from all Irish Red Cross activities pending a satisfactory outcome. The Society may also conduct a random re-vetting of any volunteer or staff member at any point during the said period.

**Decision makers – Garda Vetting**

Where it is established that an applicant/existing member has a Garda Vetting Disclosure the following decision makers will make determinations on behalf of the Irish Red Cross.

* National Safeguarding Committee
* IRC Board of Directors

# Disclosure of criminal convictions

It is the Irish Red Cross Policy to ask all potential members and staff within the organisation, whether they previously have been convicted of a criminal offence(s), or are the subject of a pending criminal prosecution, which is of a high risk nature that would deem them unsuitable for membership of IRC.

If during the course of the recruitment process it transpires that an applicant has a criminal conviction (either by way of Garda Vetting Disclosure or by applicant disclosure) full details of the conviction will be sought and the Garda Vetting process will commence.

**Right of appeal**

A decision not to confirm membership can be appealed by the applicant to the Irish Red Cross within 14 days of issue of the decision. The appeal should be made in writing to the National Secretary.

As per the Irish Red Cross Constitution, Article 25, a final appeal facility will be provided if the decision of the Board of Directors to remove, or to refuse membership, is not accepted. An External Appeal Tribunal shall hear the appeal. This will comprise of external individuals, with suitable expertise, from one to three in number, who shall be entirely independent of the Irish Red Cross. The decision of this tribunal is finaland binding.

**Retaining of returned Garda Vetting information form**

The Office of the Data Protection Commissioner advises that: “The content of such disclosures constitute sensitive personal data. Therefore they must be held in a secure manner with access restricted to a small number of authorised personnel”.

Vetting disclosures may only be used for the purpose for which they were provided to an organisation in accordance with the consent of the vetting subject. They cannot be further processed or disclosed to other parties. In relation to retention of vetting information, personal data must be destroyed when the purpose for which it was sought has expired. The Irish Red Cross recommends that vetting disclosures should be deleted every 5 years after they received except in exceptional circumstances and also in line with best practice set out in the Life Cycle of Garda Vetting.

The Office of Data Protection Commissioner states that “the consent given by an individual for vetting is specifically linked to the disclosure of their information to a specific registered organisation to allow the organisation to make an assessment decision about allowing that individual to take on a particular role within that organisation.

# Relevant procedures

## Data Protection

When the Garda Central Vetting Unit disclose data to an organisation following a vetting application, the organisation is then responsible for that data. The Liaison Person should ensure that the rules of Data Protection are observed in respect of the data including as follows:

* Obtain and process information fairly
* Keep it only for one or more specified, explicit and lawful purposes
* Use and disclose it only in ways compatible with these purposes
* Keep it safe and secure
* Keep it accurate, complete and up-to-date
* Ensure that it is adequate, relevant and not excessive
* Retain it no longer than is necessary for the purpose or purposes
* Give a copy of his /her personal data to that individual, on request
* Keep it for how long?

Section 258 (4) (a)of the Children's Act 2001 states that “A person to whom this section applies should be treated for all purposes in law as a person who has not committed or being charged with or prosecuted for or found guilty of or dealt with for the offences which were the subject of the finding of guilt”. Therefore the Garda disclosure sheet will contain "no offence". The offence will be kept on the Garda record, but it will not be disclosed to the Irish Red Cross.

## Commitment to Fairness

All members of the committee must in all cases behave without malice, and in every event must act fairly and impartially. They are entitled to reach a decision on the basis of the information before them, but may ask the prospective volunteer or employee for additional information.

## Confidentiality

The information disclosed by a person wishing to undertake a role in Irish Red Cross must at all times remain confidential and be treated with the utmost respect.

All personal information received verbally or in writing will be treated as confidential.

It is important that the prospective volunteer or employee feels confident that the details appertaining to their convictions or prosecutions will not be disclosed to the other volunteers with whom they may be working on a regular basis.

## Further Information

Contact Details

gardavetting @redcross.ie

Irish Red Cross Head Office Telephone 01 6424600

**2. Safeguarding Policy Statement and Procedures**

## Introduction

It is the Policy of the Irish Red Cross to ensure that young people are protected and kept safe while they are in the care of staff and members of the Irish Red Cross. Core to this is mutual respect between adults and young people.

**We work towards this by:**

1. Promoting the general welfare, health and full development of young people and protecting them from harm;
2. Recognising that young people have rights as individuals and treating them with dignity and respect;
3. Applying a thorough procedure for all activities involving young people including meetings, training and events including residential and day trips;
4. Adopting and consistently applying a thorough and clearly defined method of recruiting staff and volunteers for the Irish Red Cross;
5. Training staff and volunteers so as to minimise opportunities for young people to suffer harm;
6. Using “Children First” as a base reference point;
7. Referring all suspicions of Child Abuse to the designated person within the organisation;
8. Ensuring that the designated person, in consultation with the Irish Red Cross National Safeguarding Committee will refer any suspicions of Child Abuse or an offence raised to them to the relevant Social Work Department of the Health Service Executive and/or to An Garda Siochána as appropriate;
9. Ensuring that where concerns are raised that do not meet reasonable grounds for reporting, the Irish Red Cross National Safeguarding Committee (NSC) in consultation with the National Safeguarding Officer (NSO) will make recommendations as to any action that should be taken in order to protect the safety and welfare of young people.
10. When required and to maintain the safety and welfare of young people the NSO may act without reference to the NSC and as soon as possible contact the NSC
11. This policy applies to all members and all staff of the Irish Red Cross and to any contractors engaged by the Irish Red Cross either on a voluntary or paid basis.
12. The current designated National Safeguarding Officer for the Irish Red Cross is Sandra Stanley. Contact: 087 275 3333 and email address is [nso@redcross.ie](mailto:nso@redcross.ie).

## Safeguarding within the Irish Red Cross Policy and Procedures

The Irish Red Cross is committed to the protection of the safety and welfare of all our volunteers and those with whom we come in contact with during the provision of our services. In our contact with young people, a huge amount of good work is undertaken by dedicated members with the support and assistance of staff.

The Irish Red Cross respects and promotes the principles of equality and diversity and works with all young people in a culturally sensitive way within the context of the Irish Constitution and law and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**The purpose of this Policy is:**

1. to ensure the safety and welfare of all young people with whom we come in contact with both as members and recipients of our services;
2. to support our members and staff in their work;
3. to improve current practise to safeguard young people from abuse or harm;
4. To provide all members and staff with the training, skills and knowledge to enable them to protect themselves and the young people with whom they work.

The Board of Directors has overall responsibility for the implementation and overview of the Irish Red Cross Safeguarding Policy. This is carried out through the Irish Red Cross National Safeguarding Committee which:

1. Oversees the Irish Red Cross Safeguarding Policy;
2. In consultation with the National Safeguarding Officer ensures the safety and welfare of young people in the organisation and that of the members and staff who work with them;
3. Ensures that Safeguarding Awareness training is made available to all members over 18;
4. Ensures that our policy is reviewed regularly and updated in line with changing legislation and guidelines;
5. Ensures correct procedures are followed in the event of an allegation being made.

The National Safeguarding Officer reports directly to the Secretary General who in return reports to the Board of Directors where necessary on matters concerning Safeguarding.

A staff member is appointed as National Safeguarding Officer for the Irish Red Cross. This person functions as the National Designated Person for the purposes of reporting any allegations to the statutory authorities. In the absence of the National Safeguarding Officer, any member of the National Safeguarding Committee may act as his/her deputy. A named member will be designated for each period of absence. Said designate is named in writing by the NSO to the Secretary General and each notification is held on file.

## The Role of the National Safeguarding Officer is as follows:

1. In conjunction with the NSC to provide information, training and advice on safeguarding within the Irish Red Cross;
2. Being an immediate contact point for members in relation to safeguarding concerns, which includes overseeing an out of office hours contact service;
3. Ensuring that accurate records of all Safeguarding Awareness Training carried out and of any safeguarding concerns that are raised are maintained;
4. Liaising with the Statutory Authorities and/or the Gardai Siochana regarding safeguarding issues;
5. Making referrals to the Statutory Authorities on behalf of the Irish Red Cross where reasonable grounds for concern exist;
6. In conjunction with the National Safeguarding Committee, keeping the organisation informed about current developments relating to safeguarding including legislation changes.

## Confidentiality Statement

* All information disclosed in relation to safeguarding issues should be treated in a confidential manner. Information should be shared on a “need to know” basis in the best interests of the young person. Sharing information in this regard is not a breach of confidentiality but is considered best practise.
* It is important to know that parents and young people have a right to know if personal information is being shared unless doing so could put the young person at further risk.
* All records in relation to safeguarding concerns are kept in a safe and confidential manner. Access to these records is restricted to the National Safeguarding Officer, the Secretary General of the Irish Red Cross and the National Safeguarding Committee. On written request such files will be provided to the Statutory Authorities.

## Definitions of Abuse

The **Children First Guidelines** define abuse in four categories as follows:

* Neglect
* Emotional
* Physical
* Sexual

The definitions for each of these categories are as follows:

* *Neglect*: 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 affection from adults and medical care.
* *Emotional*: when a child’s need for affection approval, consistency and security are not met. Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a care-giver and a child.
* *Physical*: any form of non-accidental injury which results from a wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child.
* Sexual: when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others.

## Other Forms of Abuse

There are other forms of behaviour that may not be defined as abuse but could cause concern to Irish Red Cross members working with young people. The abuse spectrum has been expanded in recent years to cover not just the aforementioned categories but also recognising other examples of abuse that include: Bullying, Peer Abuse, Organisational Abuse, Cyber Bullying, E-Bullying and different forms of internet abuse. While they may not be generally included in the aforementioned categories of abuse, it should be noted that in their extreme forms, they would be regarded as abuse.

## Welfare

Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children can be abused in many settings, in a family, institution or community setting, by those known to them, or more rarely a stranger. There are different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one of them. But many concerns that come to the TULSA are focused around welfare rather than abuse. Much research has shown the improved outcomes where early intervention is put in place to assist families that may be experiencing difficulties. In 2007 around half of the referrals to Social Work Services were deemed welfare concerns.

The difference between welfare and abuse is often a professional judgement made by the assessing social worker based on a number of factors, for example the level of severity or frequency of some concerns, it is useful to look at the types of concerns that have been categorised as welfare concerns.

Many of these concerns do not look at the mistreatment of a child, per se, but factors in the child’s or the family’s lives that impact of the child’s wellbeing, safety, security and/or development.

## Bullying

Increased levels of bullying amongst all age groups and in particular young people are a concern for organisations working with young people. The Irish Red Cross has become increasingly aware of the issue of bullying and the detrimental impact it may have on those involved, i.e. victims, perpetrators, families, bystanders and the Irish Red Cross in general. It is vital, therefore that all elements of the Irish Red Cross are equipped to deal with any instances of bullying and in doing so shall seek to counteract and prevent such unacceptable behaviour occurring or re-occurring.

## What is Bullying?

Bullying behaviour can be defined as repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others. The term “target” is used to describe the person or persons that are bullied.

Bullying contains seven key features:

1. An intention to be hurtful
2. The intention is carried out
3. The behaviour harms the target
4. The bully overwhelms the target with his or her power
5. There is often no justification for the action
6. The behaviour repeats itself again and again
7. The bully derives a sense of satisfaction from hurting the target

## Peer Abuse

Peer Abuse can be defined as the physical, mental, emotional or sexual mistreatment of a person by somebody else of the same peer and/or age group. Abusive behaviour perpetrated by young people must be taken seriously. Early referral and intervention is essential in all such instances.

## E-Bullying/Cyber Bullying

Action that results in deliberate tormenting, threatening and harassing.

## Good Practice Guidelines

Many young people participate in Irish Red Cross activities such as training, group work, fundraising, and for educational and recreational purposes on a regular basis. Young people also avail of first aid treatment, community service, instruction, at both primary and secondary school age and other services within the Irish Red Cross. Engaging with young people is a priority for the Irish Red Cross and this is only possible because of the commitment of volunteers.

## The following Good Practice Guidelines aim to:

1. encourage safe and good practice for those who work with young people;
2. to create a safe environment where the welfare of the young person is of paramount importance;
3. to provide those who work with young people with guidance and information to ensure that a safe environment is created for both volunteers and young people;
4. to ensure appropriate responses and procedures in the event of an allegation of abuse being made.

## Recruitment and Training of Volunteers

* A robust recruitment and training policy is important for all volunteers but particularly for those with access to young people and/or vulnerable persons.
* All members within the Irish Red Cross have the potential to have access to young people, therefore these good practice guidelines apply to all our volunteers.
* Prior to joining the organisation, all members must complete a membership application form which includes within it a declaration to the effect that there is no reason why they would be deemed unsuitable to have access to young people.
* Potential volunteers must supply the names of two referees, not relatives who will testify as to their character, suitability for the role and any other issues which may affect their ability to perform the tasks required. All references should be received in writing and may be confirmed by telephone.
* All volunteers must also complete a Garda Vetting Form in line with the current guidance and legislation, currently we vet members aged 16 or older.
* The Safeguarding Policy is available to all members, through the resource link.
* All members though their attendance at Irish Red Cross Safeguarding Awareness Training, consent to uphold and follow current IRC Safeguarding Policies and Procedures, all of which are available on the volunteer resource link.
* Volunteers should undertake Safeguarding Training at least every 5 years.

Should a volunteer be deemed unsuitable to work directly with young people in the Irish Red Cross, they will be informed of same by the Secretary General and have the right to appeal this decision. This decision can be taken when a volunteer joins initially or at any time during their membership but must be backed up by written documentation. The appeals procedure is the same as that which applies in our Garda Vetting Policy

## General Guidelines for members (Procedures)

* All members should adhere to their Branch Code of Behaviour
* Members and employees should not take one young person alone in a car on journeys unless absolutely unavoidable. If so inform a fellow leader/parent if journey is unavoidable
* While we recognise that sometimes it is appropriate for members/staff to work on a one to one basis with a child or young person, staff/ members should not spend excessive amounts of time alone with an individual child/young person. Where an adult needs to meet with a child/young person alone, the door should be left open and another adult informed of the meeting.
* There should be no unnecessary physical contact between an adult and a young person although there are times when for example, placing a hand on a distressed child/young to comfort him/her would be appropriate. Physical contact should only be in response to the needs of the child and should be appropriate to the age and the level of development of the child.
* Use of personal cameras including camera phones are not allowed unless the subject of the picture has been asked before the photo is taken. This applies to both young people and adults. Adult volunteers should never post inappropriate photos of young members on their social networking sites.
* In relation to social networking sites, adult members should not accept from, or make, friendships requests with young members under the age of 18(an exception applies where the member is also a relative).This also applies to young people they encounter in their role as an Irish Red Cross member. The above applies to personal social networking sites. The Irish Red Cross has a number of organisational social networking sites and all members are entitled to be members of these.
* Any email or mobile phone contact between adult members and young members should be for the purposes of passing information about Irish Red Cross activities and should not relate to personal issues.

## Guidelines on Enrolment for young members (Procedures)

* All young members must complete the standard Irish Red Cross membership application form.
* Parental and medical consent forms should be completed on enrolment and should be repeated annually. These cover weekly meetings.
* Additional consent forms are required for specific activities.
* New members and parents should be aware of, and sign, the Branch Code of Behaviour. This should be repeated on an annual basis.

## Ratios of adults to young people (Procedures)

* 2 adults for the first eight young people is compulsory and 1 extra adult is required for every additional 12 young people. A gender balance amongst leaders should apply where possible.
* Local circumstances, the ages of the young people, the experience of the members and staff should be taken into consideration.
* Safety, ability/disability of young people and the nature of the activities being undertaken may require that these ratios be reduced.
* When dealing with group members of mixed sex, it is important that there are sufficient adults of both sexes to properly manage all activities and areas of any premises in use.

## First Aid (Procedures)

* Treat a child in the company of another person, ideally another adult.
* If it is necessary to remove clothing the consent of the young person should be sought where possible.
* During First Aid Training, ensure that members are dressed appropriately for floor tests.
* During Casualty Simulation, ensure welfare of members is adhered to at all times.

## Safe Management of Activities (Procedures)

For the safe management of all activities it should be ensured that:

* emergency numbers are displayed in the venue being used;
* at least one adult leader must be a designated and trained first-aider (first aid certificates must be current);
* a properly stocked first aid kit must be available at all times, both while in a fixed premises and on outings and trips;
* an incident/accident book should be maintained
* an up to date contact list should be kept for all young members, leaders and parents;
* a check should be made with head office to ensure that insurance is in place for all activities.

## Trips away from home -General guidelines (Procedures)

* Adequate and safe transport arrangements will be made.
* There must be adequate insurance cover for the activities being undertaken.
* Parent/guardian consent will be obtained for each participant, prior to the trip.
* Parents/guardians will be fully informed of the programme or timetable for the event and will receive a copy of the programme.
* Parents will be given full contact details of the centre/hotel/accommodation and also of the staff/ member in charge of the event.
* Accommodation will be provided in single sex rooms, and dormitories will not be shared with non-group members. Those aged 18 years and over should not sleep in the same rooms as those under 18
* A pre-visit is recommended.
* All staff and volunteers of the Irish Red Cross, who participate on a residential event with young people, must have undergone Garda vetting.
* Expectations and Roles of Leaders and young people should be clear in advance of the trip.
* The Irish Red Cross have a system in place for recording any accidents or incidents.

## Dealing with challenging or disruptive behaviour

Members and staff who deal directly with young people will be given guidance and support in dealing with difficult behaviour. 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 volunteer or worker or where the safety and well-being of others are at risk. In an incident of such behaviour, two adults should be present in dealing with the situation and should complete the incident/accident report form

## Reporting Procedures in respect of Child Abuse

The Irish Red Cross has put in place a standard reporting procedure for dealing with disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse.

## Responsibility to Report Child Abuse

Everyone must be alert to the possibility that young people with whom they are in contact may be experiencing abuse or have been abused in the past. This is an important responsibility for volunteers and staff when working with young people.

## The guiding principles in regard to reporting child abuse are summarised as follows:

* the safety and well-being of the young person must take priority;
* Reports should be made without delay to the National Safeguarding Officer who will make a report to TULSA /Gardaí where there is reasonable grounds for concern
* While the basis for concern must be established as comprehensively as possible, the role of the Irish Red Cross is not to investigate.

## The reporting procedure for dealing with disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse is outlined in the following steps:

* The volunteer/staff member who has received a disclosure of child abuse or who has concerns about abuse should bring it to the attention of the National Safeguarding Officer immediately. They should document their concerns.
* The National Safeguarding Officer will assess and review the information that has been provided. The National Safeguarding Officer will consult with the National Safeguarding Committee within a maximum period of two weeks. The National Safeguarding Officer may contact the Health Service Executive for informal advice relating to the allegation, concern or disclosure;

## After consultation with the National Safeguarding Committee and the National Safeguarding Officer will then take one of two options:

1. Report the allegation, concern or disclosure to TUSLA /Gardaí

2. Not make a formal report to the HSE/Gardaí but keep a record of the concerns on file. The reasons for not reporting the allegation, concern or disclosure will be clearly recorded. The volunteer/employee who made the initial report will be informed, in writing, if a formal report is not being made to the HSE and it is open to him/her to make a formal report themselves directly to the relevant authority if they feel this is necessary.

### In an emergency, a report should be made directly to An Garda Síochána. If this is done directly by the volunteer, the National Safeguarding Officer should be informed immediately (an emergency is defined as a situation where there is a real and genuine belief that the young person is at risk of immediate harm).

In making a report on suspected or actual child abuse, the individual must ensure that the first priority is always for the safety and welfare of the young person and that no young person is ever left in an un-safe situation.

Parents/guardians of the young person will be informed of the allegation, concern or disclosure unless doing so is likely to endanger the young person. This must always be done in consultation with the National Safeguarding Officer.

## Information required when making a report

The volunteer/staff members should give as much information as possible to the National Safeguarding Officer. The National Safeguarding Officer, in conjunction with the NSC may gather further information as necessary to decide if there are reasonable grounds for concern. If reasonable grounds for concern exist, the National Safeguarding Officer will complete the Standard Reporting Form to TUSLA

## Confidentiality

In matters of child abuse, a volunteer/staff member should never promise to keep secret, any information which is divulged. It should be explained to the young person that this information cannot be kept secret but only those who need to know, will be told.

It is essential in reporting any case of alleged/suspected abuse that the principle of confidentiality applies. The information should only be shared on a ‘need to know’ basis and the number of people that need to be informed should be kept to a minimum.

It is vital to remember the safeguarding Concerns should be reported directly to the National Safeguarding Officer. Confidentiality means that the volunteer does not disclose any information to other members of the Irish Red Cross.

## The Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998

This Act provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse ‘reasonably and in good faith’ to the Safeguarding Officer, to TUSLA or An Garda Síochána

## Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012

This Act provides that a person commits and offence if he or she knows that a serious offence has been committed against a child and has information which he or she knows or believes might materially assist in securing the apprehension and prosecution or conviction of the offender for that offence and fails without reasonable excuse to disclose that information as soon as practicable to a member of the Gardai Siochana

Retrospective Disclosures by Adults (Procedures)

In recent years there have been increasing numbers of disclosures by adults of abuse which took place during their childhood. These revelations often come to light in the context of the adults attending counselling. In these situations it is essential that consideration is given to the current risk to any child who may be in contact with the alleged abuser.

If a retrospective disclosure is made to any member of the Irish Red Cross, they should deal with it in the same manner as any other disclosure, that is, report it to the NSO within the Irish Red Cross who will assess if any current risk is deemed to exist. Support and advice may be given to the person who made the disclosure even if a current risk is not deemed to exist.

## Action to be taken when an allegation is made against a member or staff member (Procedures)

Where an allegation pertaining to a safeguarding concern is made against a member of the Irish Red Cross, there are two procedures that the Irish Red Cross will put in place:

1. The reporting procedure in respect of the child
2. The procedure for dealing with the volunteer

**If an allegation is made against a volunteer of the Irish Red Cross the following steps will be taken:**

* The allegation will be assessed by the National Safeguarding Officer to establish if there are reasonable grounds for concern and whether a formal report will be made to the statutory authorities, at this point. The National Safeguarding Officer will consult with the National Safeguarding Committee and may wish to contact TULSA for advice on the issue.
* Depending on the nature of the allegation, it may be necessary to refer to the Garda Vetting Policy and for the Authorised Signatory to request that the volunteer/staff member complete a new Garda Vetting form.
* The safety of the child is the first priority of the Irish Red Cross and all necessary measures will be taken to ensure that the child is safe. The measures taken will be proportionate to the level of risk.
* The Irish Red Cross will ensure that no other young people are at risk during this period and will inform other relevant agencies or parents/carers as appropriate.
* The measures which can be taken to ensure the safety of young people can include the following: suspension of duties of the person accused, re-assignment of duties where the accused will not have contact with young people, working under increased supervision during the period of the investigation or other measures as deemed appropriate. Any such measure will be taken by the relevant officer/leader of the Irish Red Cross under advice from the National Safeguarding Officer, however the Board of Directors reserve the right to place the person on Administrative Leave from all Irish Red Cross activities pending a satisfactory outcome. The responsibility for safeguarding lies with the National Safeguarding Officer, should an officer/leader fail to follow the advice of the National Safeguarding Officer, they are then deemed to assume that responsibility.
* The National Safeguarding Officer will notify the volunteer in writing that an allegation has been made and what the nature of the allegation is. The volunteer has a right to respond to this and this response should be documented and retained.
* The Irish Red Cross will ensure that the principle of ‘natural justice’ will apply whereby a person is considered innocent until proven otherwise.
* The person against whom the allegation is made will need support during this period and the Irish Red Cross will provide advice on how to access the relevant support services. Peer support will be offered to both the young person involved and the person against whom the allegation has been made. The same person will not support both parties. Support for the person against whom the allegation has been made will be external to the organisation.

## Allegations against an Employee (Procedures)

Where an allegation is made against an employee of the Irish Red Cross the above procedures will apply with the following amendments. The Secretary General will be responsible for implementing any procedural actions required in relation to the employee under advice from the National Safeguarding Officer.

If there is an allegation or suspicion in relation to the Secretary General, the Chairman of the Irish Red Cross, under advice from the National Safeguarding Officer, will deal with all procedural aspects relating to the Secretary General.

If there is an allegation or suspicion in relation to the National Safeguarding Officer, the Secretary General will deal with all aspects of the case, including the reporting procedure. The Secretary General will seek advice from the National Safeguarding Committee.

## Communicating Our Policy

* The Irish Red Cross will keep parents and guardians informed of all aspects of the programmes that their child is involved in.
* A copy of our Safeguarding Policy is available on our website or on request.
* The Irish Red Cross Safeguarding Policy Statement should be displayed in all premises where our activities take place.
* It is our practice to inform parents/guardians in the event of a child disclosing an incident of abuse, before referring to the statutory authorities, unless this could put the child in danger.
* Young people will be given a fact sheet about our Safeguarding Policy and our complaints procedure with their membership cards. This will also be available on our website and the Irish Red Cross Youth Facebook page.
* Consultation will take place with young people on a national level at the bi-annual National Youth Forum.
* When communicating about our Safeguarding Policy we will use alternative methods of communication where the audience has communication difficulties.

## Complaints Procedure in relation to Child Safety and Protection

The IRC is committed to ensuring the safety and welfare of all young people with whom we work. The IRC has put in place a complaints procedure to cover any situations which may arise, when young people or their parents/guardians are not happy with the way the young people were treated by the IRC. Complaints regarding the safety and welfare of young people should be directed to the National Safeguarding Officer in the Irish Red Cross. Other complaints should be directed to the person with whom the young person dealt with or the relevant senior volunteer/staff member