



**YTTTC**

Yoga Therapy & Training Centre

**Safeguarding  
Children & Young People  
POLICY**

## **Glossary**

### **Child:**

For the purpose of this Policy a child/young person is any person under 18 years of age.

### **Parents:**

The term `parents` is used throughout this document as a generic term to represent parents, carers and guardians.

The Yoga Therapy & Training Centre (YTTC) is recommending that the following two roles detailed below, are undertaken by the same person due to the structure of our activity and to avoid any confusion. Our reporting procedures reflect this and for the purpose of this document, this post will be referred to as the Children's Officer.

### **Children's Officers:**

Children's Officers are appointed within organisations to act as a resource for children and to represent them at Committee level.

### **Designated Person:**

This is the person who is assigned and is responsible for, reporting any allegations or concerns of child abuse to the Statutory Authorities. This person will also be responsible for dealing with any concerns about poor practice in relation to young people.

### **Statutory Authorities:**

The authorities who promote the protection and welfare of young people and who have the responsibility for the investigation and/or validation of suspected child abuse, i.e. in Northern Ireland it is the Police Service NI (PSNI) and the Social Services and in the Republic of Ireland it is An Garda Síochána and the Health Services Executive (HSE).

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

***The YTTC is committed to promoting and maintaining the highest standards of professional and personal conduct among its members.***

***YTTC teachers have as their primary aim the creation of a safe, happy and non-competitive space in which children come to enjoy and benefit from the practice of yoga.***

This Child Protection policy has been drawn up in compliance with “*Children First*”, (ROI) and Co-operating to Safeguard Children (NI), the Child Protection and Welfare Guidelines from the two jurisdictions and recommendations from the ISPCC (ROI) and the NSPCC (NI). (See page 22 for references to documentation.)

The policy seeks to promote:

1. Best Practice in child protection, which is child-centred in focus, advocating the best interests of the child as the primary underlying principle.
2. The fundamental understanding that every single person, irrespective of background, gender, ability or sexual orientation, has the inherent right to be treated with equal respect and dignity and be protected from abuse.
3. Standardisation of many of Yoga Therapy & Training Centre current practices. By formally endorsing this policy Yoga Therapy & Training Centre has agreed to specific training, selection and vetting procedures, using Access NI to assist in assessing the suitability of a teacher.
4. A positive working relationship, and clarity of roles and responsibilities, with Statutory Bodies (principally the Health Boards/Social Services, An Garda Síochána/PSNI).
5. The need for ongoing training in Child Protection at all levels of the organization, so as to ensure that the various aspects of the policy are implemented and adhered to in a consistent manner, and that the organisation is regularly updated on such matters.
6. Awareness that child protection is the responsibility of all members of Yoga Therapy & Training Centre and that any allegations or suspicions of child abuse/neglect are reported in line with “*Children First*” National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (1999) and Co–Operating to Safeguard Children (2003).
7. Awareness that it remains the responsibility of all to uphold the core principles of this policy, to be familiar with its content, and to adhere to the procedures and processes outlined in it.

The adoption of the policy on its own will not ensure that children or young people who work with Yoga Therapy & Training Centre teachers are in any way more protected than before this policy was adopted. It is the implementation of this policy, an understanding of child-centred practice and Child Protection matters, and a willingness to undertake specific training that will eventually bring Yoga Therapy & Training Centre teachers closer to ensuring all children learn yoga with them in a safe and nurturing environment.

## 2.0 POLICY STATEMENT

The fundamental principle underlying the work of the YTTC is that;

***All Children Have The Right To Enjoy Yoga Classes In A Positive Atmosphere Free From Any Form Of Abuse.***

The YTTC is committed to training yoga teachers for children to the highest possible standards, in particular with respect to Child Protection matters.

### 2.1 The Rights of Children/Young People:

This Child Protection Policy gives due recognition and consideration to both the rights of the child/young person, and to the rights of staff and members while also aiming to protect both groups in their work together.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) is a set of minimum standards designed to protect children's rights. It is a binding international treaty, which both the British and the Irish Governments have signed up to. The Convention identifies the specific rights that children have and, as signatories to the Convention, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are under a formal obligation to implement its contents.

For the purpose of the Convention "a child" refers to anyone who is under 18 years of age.

The nature of good teaching practice among Yoga Therapy & Training Centre members ensures that aspects of the Convention are implemented on an on-going basis and there is a clear relationship between what the Convention seeks, for and on behalf of children, and what Yoga Therapy & Training Centre aims to deliver.

### 2.2 Summary of the Rights of the Child

There are three main categories, which underpin the civil, political, social and cultural rights of the children, as provided for in the UN Convention. They are:

1. **Provision:** Rights to minimum standards of health, education, social security, physical care, family life, play, recreation, culture, leisure, and adequate standards of living.
2. **Protection:** Rights of children to be safe from discrimination, physical abuse, exploitation, substance abuse, injustice and conflict.
3. **Participation:** Rights of children to a name and identity, to be consulted and taken account of, access to information, freedom of speech and opinion and to challenge decisions made on their behalf.

**Good teaching practices among YTTC members should give due recognition and consideration to the Rights of the Child in all aspects of its work.**

### **2.3 Children's Officer:**

As an integral part of Yoga Therapy & Training Centre commitment to the protection of children Yoga Therapy & Training Centre will appoint a Children's Officer. To enable the Children's Officer to undertake these tasks, Yoga Therapy & Training Centre will ensure access to relevant training, and the Children's Officer will be provided with a job description outlining their roles and responsibilities in relation to the post.

The Children's Officer will:

- Ensure adherence to this policy.
- Act as a liaison with statutory services in matters relating to child protection.
- Act as a resource person to Yoga Therapy & Training Centre members, providing support and guidance in matters relating to child protection or poor practice.
- Take the lead role in the reporting and follow-up of referrals to the statutory services, while ensuring that the procedures for it are followed systematically and thoroughly.

### **2.4 Code of Conduct with Children**

**The protection of children is the responsibility of all members of the YTTC**

It is the responsibility of ALL YTTC members to protect children by:

- Being familiar with and adhering to, the YTTC Good Practice Guidelines (see page 23).
- Treating each child in the class with equal respect, dignity and sensitivity.
- Taking the time necessary to listen and get to know each child.
- Ensuring the yoga class is a safe and joyful space for children to fully relax and experience the benefits of yoga.
- Encouraging children to respect and master their own bodies.
- Being familiar with the identification of child neglect or abuse, and being able to effectively implement procedures efficiently and in a timely and professional manner.
- Always responding to any indication, suspicion or disclosure of abuse or neglect.
- Never using physical chastisement, verbally abusive language, sexually suggestive or motivated actions or language, or emotionally abusive conduct towards a child.
- Using physical contact with children only after their permission has been granted and where necessary to ensure safe yoga practice.

### 3.0 SAFE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING PRACTICES

#### Policy Statement:

***The YTTC is committed to promoting safe practice and the highest professional standards among its members.***

#### 3.1 Pre-selection Checks:

##### 3.1.1 Pre-application Information

Pre-application information sent out to interested qualified yoga teachers should contain:

- Information detailing the skills and qualifications a successful module participant will achieve by the end of the module.
- Information on appropriate qualifications or experience as a prerequisite for acceptance onto the module.
- An application form.

##### 3.1.2 Application forms

All applications for teachers wishing to take the YTTC Teaching Children Yoga Course must complete an Application Form as well as a Self-Declaration Form. These forms will require the following information:

- Name and address.
- Relevant experience, qualifications and training undertaken, especially with regard to children.
- Any relevant detail regarding criminal offenses.

##### 3.1.3 Checks

Checks will be carried out with the following organizations to ensure any teachers have received clearance from the relevant authorities to do so.

- Northern Ireland Only

The YTTC will seek the permission of applicants based in Northern Ireland to access information regarding their history through Access NI, with which YTTC is registered.

- Republic of Ireland

The YTTC is in the process of registering with the Garda and Health Board Clearance service so that applicants based in the Republic of Ireland will be able to seek clearance through the Board

- England and Wales

Clearance will be sought from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB).

- Scotland

Clearance will be sought from Disclosure Scotland.

### 3.2 Induction

All prospective teachers of yoga to children will receive an induction in which:

- Their qualifications as a Yoga Teacher are substantiated.
- They sign up to the YTT C's Good Practice Guidelines.
- They receive a personal copy of TTC Child Protection Policy.
- Child protection procedures are explained and training needs established.

### 3.3 Training

- All participants on the YTTC Teaching Children Yoga Course must complete the Child Protection Training Module before receiving their teaching Certificate.
- And in order to ensure all YTTC affiliated yoga teachers for children remain up-to-date on Child Protection matters, certification will be reviewed every three years.
- **Certificates held by YTTC teachers who *do not* attend the review will not be valid.**

## 4.0 PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

### 4.1 Discipline and Behaviour Management

#### Policy Statement:

***The YTTC recommends the use of encouragement and praise as the best type of discipline. No child should be subjected to physical, verbal or emotional abuse as a form of discipline, as they go against the very values inherent in yoga that we aspire to live.***

- A feeling of mutual respect between teacher and students and among the students should permeate the class.
- YTTC teachers should respect the dignity of each child and avoid any form of discrimination whatsoever.
- YTTC is opposed to the use of smacking, shouting or intimidating children in any way.
- YTTC teachers should actively seek out and encourage the strengths of each of the children in the class.
- All participating children should be made familiar with and understand the basic rules of acceptable behaviour in a yoga class.
- Bullying, fighting and arguing among the children should not be tolerated as this causes distress for everyone in the group.
- In extreme situations teachers may ask children to sit apart from the group until they feel ready to return and join in.

- If there is on-going difficulty, YTTC recommends discussing the matter with parents, guardians or teachers.
- Removing a child from the yoga class should be used as a last resort as this may only serve to provoke a sense of failure in the child. However a child should leave if they are unhappy and do not want to stay or if their behaviour is so disruptive it hampers the pleasure of the other children and has an adverse effect on the teacher's ability to teach.

## **4.2 Guidelines for the use of Photographic Filming Equipment in Yoga Classes and at Yoga Events.**

The YTTC is committed to providing a safe environment for children and young people. Essential to this commitment is to ensure that all necessary steps are taken to protect children/young people from the inappropriate use of their images in resource and media publications, on the internet and elsewhere. The YTTC wishes to promote positive images within the following guidelines, which should be followed if filming or photography of children is used in yoga classes and/or at yoga events.

### **4.2.1 Why be Concerned about the misuse of Images of Children?**

- Potential abusers may use information from any sources to identify, target, groom and abuse children.
- There may be restrictions on taking and using images (e.g. Children subject to proceedings under the Children (NI) Order 1995, or children may be witnesses in criminal cases).
- There may be valid reasons for a parent wishing to avoid any potential publicity about a child's whereabouts or activities (e.g. in the case of separations due to domestic violence).

### **4.2.2 Guiding Principles**

- The interests and welfare of the children taking part in yoga practice and events are paramount. As their teacher this is your ultimate priority.
- It is the right of parents and children themselves to decide whether their images are to be taken and how those images may be used. Therefore parents and young persons must provide written consent for the young person's images to be taken. (Please see page 27)

#### 4.2.3 Procedures to be Followed:

- All images of children should be securely stored.
- Ensure that no identifying details can be used to facilitate contact with a child. Avoid using children's names (first name or surname) in photograph captions. So if the child is named, avoid using his or her photograph. If the photograph is used, avoid naming the child. This is especially important in the case of images used on web-sites. For more information visit the Internet Watch Foundation at [www.iwf.org.uk](http://www.iwf.org.uk).
- Only use images of children in suitable dress to reduce the risk of inappropriate use. Images should focus on the overall activity, not on a particular child, and should avoid full face and body shots.
- Video can be a legitimate coaching aid for teachers. However, if it is used, make sure that children and their parents/carers understand that it is part of the coaching programme. Make sure that the films are then stored safely.
- If you are commissioning a professional photographer or inviting the press to an event, it is important that they understand your expectations of them in relation to child protection. You should:
  - Provide a clear brief about what is considered appropriate in terms of their behaviour and the content of the photography.
  - Issue them with identification which they must display at all times.
  - Inform the children and parents that a photographer will be present at the event and ensure they consent to filming and/or photography and to its publication.
  - Do not allow photographers unsupervised access to children or one-to-one photo sessions during the event.
  - Do not approve photo sessions outside the events or at a participants' home.

## **5.0 AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF CHILD PROTECTION**

### **5.1 Awareness of Who Abuses Children:**

All teachers should be alerted to the fact that children and young people may be at risk from abuse/neglect and as such it is important to be aware of what to look out for. As part of the training in child protection, teachers will be made aware of indicators associated with people who abuse, and how teachers can be vigilant without being overly protective.

## 5.2 Suspecting Child Abuse:

Perhaps one of the most difficult parts of dealing with child protection is having to respond appropriately to suspicions that a child may be being abused, or is at risk of harm.

Teachers may become aware of, or have suspicions of, child abuse or neglect in the following ways:

- A child may actually disclose to the YTTC teacher that they are being abused or neglected, or at risk of such harm.
- A YTTC teacher, through observations of the child, their environment or his/her behavior, may form an opinion that a child is being, or is at risk of being, abused or neglected.
- The person alleged to have abused or neglected the child may actually disclose to the YTTC teacher their actions.
- Another child, adult or YTTC teacher may confide in the teacher in relation to their observation or belief that a child is, or is at risk of being, abused or neglected.
- A third party may report concern.

It should be remembered that whilst adults perpetrate most child abuse, and the adult abuser is often someone known to the child, other children can also abuse or harm a child. As with all forms of abuse, a specific response is required in such a situation to ensure both children are protected and supported, as appropriate.

Where a child actually discloses abuse, teachers must be aware that such a step is a difficult one for the child because:

- The child may have been bribed by the abuser not to tell anyone.
- It requires the child to, in their eyes, break a secret.
- The child might be frightened of the abuser.
- The child will probably be afraid of the consequences of telling someone, believing that they will be punished or blamed.
- The child believes that any abuse that occurred was because they did something wrong i.e. that they are responsible for the abuser's actions.
- The child may have formed a dysfunctional relationship with the abuser, whereby they feel they are betraying a loved one or someone special. This often characterizes the nature of the relationship, which an abuser forms with their victim.

The recognition or disclosure of abuse rarely happens in a simple sequential way i.e. where the course of action is apparent, and the information succinct and clear. More often it stems from initial observations, suspicions or concerns raised through staff awareness.

It is therefore essential that teachers:

1. Consider the possibility that a child is being abused, or is at risk of harm. Injuries, hints, inappropriate play or actions and behaviours are all possible signals that staff members need to first be aware of, and then use their training and skills to consider the possibility.
2. Be vigilant for the signs, and optimize opportunities to talk to the child to see whether suspicions or concerns can be validated. It is important to remember that a cluster of signs is more likely to be indicative of abuse, which might have to be gathered over a period of time, though reasonable suspicions that are aroused after one event should not be ignored.
3. Record all observations, suspicions or concerns, as contemporaneously as possible.

## 6.0 RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS AND SUSPICIONS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

### 6.1 Guiding Principles

The YTTC aims to ensure that all teachers, in dealing with complaints or suspicions of child abuse, will:

- Understand their responsibilities in dealing with complaints or suspicions of child abuse or neglect.
- Understand that the welfare of the child is paramount.
- Be conversant with the child protection procedures; know who the Children's Officer is and how to contact them.

### 6.2 The 7 R's of Responding to Disclosures (from Child Protection Policy 1996, Southern Health Board):

This section gives advice to teachers on what to do if a child discloses that they are being abused, ill-treated or neglected. It should be noted that this is general advice, and is no substitute for proper training in dealing with child abuse. It outlines for teachers the initial steps to take in such a situation. It must not be seen as constituting a comprehensive assessment or investigative interview, as these are the responsibility of specialist staff within the relevant statutory bodies.

- **Receive:** It is essential that teachers listen to what the child is saying, without communicating shock or disbelief (verbally or non-verbally). The child needs to see that the staff member accepts what they are saying, and that they are being taken seriously.

- **Reassure:** Children who disclose abuse need to be reassured by the adult they are talking to, but it is essential that you reassure only as far as it is reliable to do so. This means that teachers should not make promises, no matter how well intentioned, that they cannot reasonably keep. Telling a child that “everything will be alright” might seem like an appropriate response to a child in distress, but if you cannot be certain that this is the outcome from the disclosure, it is better not to say it at all. It is important to point out that you will have to get help for the child. Equally important is not to make promises about confidentiality. Remember that child abuse survives in a climate of secrecy, so it is important not to collude with the child’s sense of having secrets, by promising that you will not tell anyone – this is a promise teachers cannot keep, as these procedures require teachers to follow a pathway of referral after a disclosure. Lastly, it is appropriate to reassure the child that the alleged abuse or neglect is not their fault. *No child is responsible for the abusive actions of adults.*
- **React:** Teachers should react to the child only as far as is necessary for them to establish whether there are grounds for reasonably believing that the child is being ill-treated, abused or neglected. This means that teachers need only to clarify with the child in a non-intrusive way what exactly it is the child wishes to say, and thereafter whether there are grounds for referring the matter further. Such clarification should not constitute an interrogation of the child, and should be conducted using “open questions” that facilitate the child to say what they need to say without having words put in their mouth by the adult. It is important that staff do not criticize the alleged perpetrator, and that they explain what they need to do next and who you have to tell about this information. It is not the role of the teacher to investigate the matter, it is the responsibility of the statutory services.
- **Record:** An essential part of the disclosure process is to ensure that teachers take contemporaneous notes of what the child says, in the child’s own words, and that such records are dated and signed by the teacher. Teachers are advised to record only observable or verifiable facts relating to the disclosure, or of the child’s demeanor. Where teachers record an opinion in respect of the disclosure, they are required to identify it as such. Teachers should also be aware of the information required in the Standard Incident Reporting Form (see page 25) so as to try to ascertain as much of the needed information as possible. Lastly, in complying with this procedure, teachers who record a disclosure should record when and to whom they passed the information on to.
- **Remember:** In order to ensure that the child protection processes of Yoga Therapy & Training Centre contribute to the promotion of children’s welfare, it is necessary to follow these guidelines in conjunction with those contained in ‘Children First’ or ‘Co-Operating to Safeguard Children’.

- **Refer:** To the Children's Officer at all times throughout the process for guidance.
- **Relax:** It is important to remember that dealing with child disclosures of neglect and abuse is stressful, and can have an impact on one's emotional well being. Bearing in mind that information should only be given to people who need to know, teachers should actively seek out support from peers and the Children's Officer.

## 7.0 CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT – ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES

### 7.1 Guiding Principles:

The primary responsibility of any YTTC teacher who suspects child abuse or neglect, or receives a disclosure of abuse, is to take the necessary steps to ensure that the information is forwarded on to the relevant personnel i.e. the Designated Officer, which in the case of YTTC is the Children's Officer, and onwards to the relevant Statutory services i.e. the HSE or the Gardaí in the Republic of Ireland and the Social Services and the PSNI in Northern Ireland. The guiding principles in relation to such are:

- That the safety and well being of the child is the foremost consideration.
- That a prompt response is required in all disclosures or suspicions of neglect or abuse.
- That the principles of natural justice apply throughout, which describes that people against whom a disclosure or suspicion of abuse has been made are (a) innocent until proven guilty, (b) entitled to know the nature of the allegations, and (c) have a right to respond to any allegation made against them. It is essential that you consult with statutory agencies before informing any individual that an allegation has been made against them.
- The principle of confidentiality will apply throughout any subsequent interventions – all sharing of information will be on a need-to-know basis, and the number of people who are informed of the allegation/disclosure must be kept to a minimum.
- That teachers are fully informed of their rights and protections in reporting suspicions or disclosures of abuse, on the basis that they have been based on reasonable grounds and are made in good faith.

### 7.2 Actions to be Taken by Staff Who Know or Suspect Child Abuse:

Any YTTC teacher who knows or suspects child abuse or has formed the opinion that a child is at risk of abuse, must convey the details in writing to the Children's Officer. (See page 28 for the appropriate Incident Report Form).

### 7.3 Roles and Responsibilities of the Children's Officer on Receipt of a Report:

It is not the role of the Children's Officer to investigate, but rather to pass on information or seek out advice from the appropriate authorities. When the Children's Officer receives a report from a teacher in relation to suspected or disclosed abuse/neglect, their first task is to ensure the child is not in immediate danger and to discuss the matter with the relevant statutory authorities. The following are examples of what might constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

- A specific indication from the child that they have been, or are being, abused or neglected.
- An account by a third party of having witnessed the child being abused.
- Specific evidence (such as an injury or behavior which is consistent with a child being abused), which are unlikely to have been caused by other means.
- Accumulative indications, observed over time, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.
- An injury or behaviour that is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation, but where there are collaborative indicators supporting the concern that it might be a case of abuse. For example, patterns of injuries, implausible or contradictory explanations.

On the basis that the above process has been undertaken, and the Children's Officer considers that reasonable grounds exist for believing abuse has or is occurring, then they have a duty to make a formal report to the relevant statutory bodies.

### 7.4 Making Judgements:

It is useful to consider the difference between *judgements* and *decisions*. A decision is a choice between alternative courses of action. Judgments are inferences drawn from data/information. It is essential that judgments are made and considered, before decisions are made. In this regard, the judgment as to whether there is a reasonable ground for believing that a child is at risk or vulnerable needs to be made on the basis of any identifiable need. The next step is to make a decision regarding the correct intervention needed to protect that child in the light of the available information.

### 7.5 Unsupported Concerns:

A suspicion, which is not supported by any objective indication of abuse or neglect, would not constitute a reasonable suspicion or grounds for concern. It is essential, however, that in these situations the following actions occur:

- All such reports from teachers should be recorded by the Children's Officer, as it is possible that other indicators might emerge that would enable a more substantive ground for believing abuse or neglect to be occurring.
- The teacher who referred the concern to the Children's Officer should be formally notified in writing of the decision not to forward a report to the authorities and a clear explanation of the grounds for that decision being made.
- Any teacher can report their concern if the Children's Officer refuses to do so.

Or

- A letter of concern can be sent to the Duty Social Worker/HSE outlining the concerns.
- In such a situation, the teacher should be informed that a letter of concern has been sent to the statutory authorities and that if they have any further concerns these should be reported.
- Where an “independent “ report is made i.e. other than through the Children’s Officer, teachers should undertake to notify the Children’s Officer that they have made such a report to the relevant statutory body.

## **7.6 What Happens Next?**

### **Northern Ireland**

Area Child Protection Committees` guidelines state:

After formal referral for child protection –

- Child to be seen within 24 hours by social services.
- Investigation and initial assessment to be completed within 15 working days. Either no further action or intervention to promote the child’s welfare.
- Initial case conference to be held within 15 working days. Either no further action or intervention to promote the child’s welfare.
- Core group meeting to be held within 10 working days of initial case conference.

### **Republic Of Ireland**

Detailed information on the steps taken in response to reported child protection concerns are outlined in ‘Children First’, the National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Chapter Eight. The HSE holds the responsibility for dealing with and acting on concerns about child abuse/neglect. The HSE may not always be able to let the reporter know exactly what the outcome is.

## **8.0 ALLEGATION OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT IS MADE AGAINST A YOGA THERAPY & TRAINING CENTRE TEACHER.**

### **8.1 Guiding Principles:**

The YTTC is committed to ensuring all reasonable effort is made to promote the welfare of children and that all reasonable effort is made to prevent the certification of members to work with children where those members pose a risk to children.

The YTTC recognizes that despite its efforts, allegations of abuse against a member may arise. The YTTC is committed to ensuring members are facilitated and encouraged, without fear of sanction, to discuss or report actions or activities of their colleagues that are suspicious or abusive.

## 8.2 Responsibilities:

Where a YTTC teacher has an allegation of abuse or neglect leveled against them, YTTC has two responsibilities:

1. Towards the child, in respect of promoting their welfare and protecting them from any immediate harm.
2. Towards the member against whom the allegation is made.

The first responsibility of the YTTC, however, must be to always make sure that appropriate protective measures are put in place for the child. These measures however must be proportionate to the level of risk and must not unreasonably penalize the teacher, unless such action is required to protect the child. When an action does penalize the teacher, it is essential that an early resolution be brought to the matter.

It is essential that both aspects of any follow up are coordinated and that the Children's Officer works on advice from the relevant statutory authorities.

## 8.3 Follow-Up:

### **Follow-up in relation to the child:**

All allegations must be referred to the Children's Officer.

Where the Children's Officer deems it appropriate to refer the matter to the statutory authorities, they must make clear that the allegation has been made against a Yoga Therapy & Training Centre teacher.

### **Follow-up in relation to a YTTC teacher:**

The statutory body notified will take all appropriate action in regard to the practice of the YTTC teacher.

The YTTC understands that there is always the possibility of allegations against members being unfounded, erroneous, or even malicious. Whereas the possibility of that happening can be reduced by adherence to good child-care practice and safe care practices, they nonetheless can still occur. YTTC trained teachers need to be aware of these possibilities, and need to be encouraged to discuss them openly within supervision and team training. Specific after-care responses to support YTTC members against whom such an allegation has been made will be put in place on a case-by-case basis.

Should a teacher or volunteer be alleged to have committed abuse, they should make sure they have the following:

- A record of lesson plans.
- Their own written statement of 'the incident'.

## 9.0 SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

### 9.1 Peer Abuse:

In some cases of abuse the alleged perpetrator may be a child. Such abusive actions by a child perpetrated on another child must be taken very seriously, and the proper procedures (such as reporting to the relevant statutory bodies) must be adhered to in all cases. In these situations the child protection procedures should be adhered to for both the victim and the alleged abuser. If there is any conflict of interest between the welfare of the alleged abuser and the victim, the victim's welfare is of paramount importance.

Special attention should be paid to the inappropriate behaviour, by a minor, towards another child. Four categories of behaviour should warrant the attention of staff:

- **Normal sexual exploration** – This includes naïve play of an explorative nature. This type of behaviour is usually accompanied by an absence of coercion on the part of one of the children involved.
- **Abuse reactive behaviour** – Abuse Reactive Behaviour is where a child, who has already been exposed to inappropriate sexual activity/ abuse, acts out what happened to them on another child.
- **Sexually obsessive behavior** – Is where the child engages in sexually obsessive behaviour/actions. Such actions do not necessarily mean that the child is or has been abused, as many children go through phases of excessive sexual exploration and experimentation. It could indicate other child welfare concerns, including neglect or emotional abuse.
- **Sexually harmful behavior by children and young people** – Behaviour that is of a sexually harmful nature will have elements of coercion, bribery, domination and force. Specific attention should be paid to the age differentiation of the two children/young people, their respective status, power or intellect.

Where "Peer Abuse" is suspected or where a child discloses such abuse, the Yoga Therapy & Training Centre teacher should contact the Children's Officer.

### 9.2 Bullying:

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression, be it verbal, psychological or physical, which is conducted by an individual or group against others. It can have a very damaging impact on the victim. Where bullying is perceived to become child abuse, particularly where it is identified that an adult is the bully, Yoga Therapy & Training Centre teachers should notify the Children's Officer in writing.

Many children are reluctant to tell adults that they are being bullied. Older children are even more reluctant. This underlines the need for constant vigilance and encouragement to report bullying.

All teachers should;

- raise awareness of bullying as an unacceptable form of behaviour.
- create an ethos which encourages children, and parents/guardians to report bullying and to use the procedures of the complaints' mechanism of the organisation to address this problem.
- provide comprehensive supervision of children at all activities.
- provide a supportive environment for victims of bullying.
- obtain the co-operation of parents/guardians to counter bullying.

### 9.3 Confidentiality:

The whole process of dealing with disclosures and concerns of child abuse and neglect must be conducted within a strict framework of confidentiality in order to safeguard the privacy of the child and their family, and to avoid prejudicing any subsequent legal proceedings. In this regard, the following principles apply:

- Information obtained throughout a child protection process can only be shared on a need-to-know basis.
- YTTC members must not give an undertaking of secrecy to any child or adult disclosing abuse or neglect.
- The giving of information to the appropriate person for the protection of children from abuse and neglect is not a breach of confidentiality.  
Staff should be aware of the protections afforded under the Protection of Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 (ROI). This law does not exist in Northern Ireland, but an individual who reports a concern in 'good faith' is not deliberately attempting to slander another person's name. In Northern Ireland there is legislation, the Criminal Law Act (NI) 1967 which places the responsibility on everybody to report offences or to forward information to the police by emphasising the *'duty of every other person, who knows or believes, a) that the offence or some other arrestable offence has been committed; and b) that he has information which is likely to secure, or to be material assistance in securing, the apprehension, prosecution or conviction of any person for that offence.'*
- YTTC teachers cannot use information that is gathered for one purpose, for another purpose, unless it is specifically used for the protection of a child i.e. without the expressed permission of the person providing the information.

#### **9.4 Record Keeping and Child Protection:**

Keeping good records throughout the process is an essential aspect in protecting children. Records of all disclosures and suspicions must be kept on all reports made.

All records need to be:

- Factual, accurate and legible.
- Dated and signed by the author, and, where necessary, counter signed by the Children's Officer deemed.
- Backed up by verifiable facts or, where given, opinions need to be stated as such.
- Up to date.
- Secured safely but accessible at all times by the Children's Officer.
- All records should include all actions taken.

#### **9.5 Working with Parents:**

It is the responsibility of the Children's Officer or individual appointed by them to formally notify the parents (where the parent or care-giver is not the perpetrator) that a suspicion, concern or disclosure of abuse has been received in respect of their child, and also to formally notify the parents when, and if, a report is made to the statutory body.

It is also important to inform parents of the roles of various statutory bodies in relation to child protection, their own legal rights, and the process that is likely to happen if a report is to be made to the authorities.

Parents who find themselves engaged in a child protection matter often exhibit powerful emotions such as anger, frustration, anxiety, shame and guilt. Further, the complexity of the child protection process can compound these feelings. Teachers need to be aware of and understand these feelings.

## REFERENCES

Children First: 1999 National guidelines for the protection and welfare of children Dept. of Health & Children 1999 ([http://www.dohc.ie/publications/children\\_first.html](http://www.dohc.ie/publications/children_first.html))

Co-operating to Safeguard Children (NI), 2003  
[http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/show\\_publications?txtid=14022](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/show_publications?txtid=14022)

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)  
<http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/pdf/crc.pdf>

Children (NI) Order 1995  
[http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si1995/uksi\\_19950755\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si1995/uksi_19950755_en_1)

*Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport*, Irish Sports Council / Sport NI, 2006. [www.sportni.net](http://www.sportni.net)

Getting It Right, DHSSPS 2004  
<http://www.volunteering-ni.org/>

Protection of Children And Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order Information Notes 1 -3  
[www.dhsspsni.gov.uk](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk)

Area Child Protection Committee – Regional Child Protection Policy 2005  
[www.dhsspsni.gov.uk](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Sincere thanks are given also to the British Wheel of Yoga for the excellent example of their comprehensive Child Protection Document and Implementation Procedures.



## GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES

***“The greatest respect we can give another human being is our full and compassionate attention”.*** Jane-Louise Kelly, founder of Yogabuddies.

### Context

YTTC trained yoga teachers should be committed to the highest standards of professional and personal conduct.

- The safety and well-being of the children is of paramount importance.
- The aim of the yoga teacher for children is to create that safe space for children where in a happy and non-competitive environment they can begin to discover the multi-layered benefits of yoga.

### Qualification

The yoga teacher for children will

- Have a recognised and appropriate yoga teacher training qualification.
- Undertake additional and ongoing training in the field of yoga.
- Maintain an active practice.
- Have up-to-date First Aid and Safe-guarding training certificates.
- Be an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking in the company of young people and adhering to the principles of yoga philosophy.
- Be the example of what he or she wishes to teach and transmit.

### Ratios

The adult child ratio depends on the age of the children and the experience of the teacher. However the YTTC recommends a maximum of eight children per adult, and encourages teachers to use their discretion, taking smaller group sizes, depending on the needs of the children.

### Discipline

All YTTC trained teachers who work with children must be familiar with the YTTC code of discipline. The YTTC recommends the use of encouragement as the best form of focus for the class, and your ability as a teacher to cultivate your own inner stillness of being.

- Smacking, shouting or intimidating children is not acceptable under any circumstances in any way as this goes against the very premise of the principles of *ahimsa* or non-violence in yoga.

## **Achievement**

YTTC teachers should facilitate the children they are working with to explore the unique way in which their individual body works and moves and to be attentive and respectful of the needs of their own body. Yoga is in its essence non-competitive and teachers should recognise the developmental needs of each child and avoid pushing anyone beyond their ability or holding them back from moving forward. Remember that the word *asana* means 'to take a comfortable seat' so no tremor or strain should take place. Yoga is a dance not a race.

## **Safety**

- YTTC teachers must ensure the premises are safe, clean, well ventilated and comfortable.
- There should be no furniture or any other objects, such as pins on the floor, which could harm the children in any way.
- Exits should be clearly marked and free from obstruction.
- The children should have good non-slip mats to practice on.
- Socks should be removed to avoid slipping.
- Parents should ensure their children go to the toilet before the start of a class but where a younger child needs to use the toilet during class teachers should ask another adult present in the room or in the building, who is known to the teacher and the child, to assist.
- Children should not be left unsupervised at any time.
- A parental/guardian`s consent form should be completed for each child and updated once a year or more often if changes occur (see page 25).
- Complaints and accidents will be reported in written form to the Children`s Officer who will deal immediately with the issue (see page 31).

## **Child Protection**

YTTC teachers must be familiar with all aspects of the YTTC Safe-guarding Policy and complete a self declaration and give their consent for vetting to be carried out by YTTC.

## **Role of Parents**

- Class times and dates should be made clear and parents should respect the importance of arriving on time at the beginning and end of class.
- Teachers should be informed on the first day of class who will be responsible for collecting children. Teachers should be informed in advance if there is a change and given the name of any person collecting on behalf of parents or guardians.
- Parents should ensure their children are coming to class on an empty stomach and that they go to the toilet before the start of class.
- Parents should ensure that their child wears comfortable clothing that does not restrict movement.
- Parents are always keen to know how their children are doing so, whenever possible, teachers are expected to interact with parents offering encouraging words of praise.
- Parents should always be made feel welcome and be facilitated to stay with their children if they so desire.
- Before the filming or taking of photographs in a class, written consent *must* be provided by parents (see page 27).

**Insurance**

Children's yoga teachers must be appropriately and specifically insured to teach yoga to children.

**Please sign your personal agreement to these guidelines below:**

**Your name in print:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



**YTTTC**  
Yoga Therapy & Training Centre

## Parental/Guardians` Consent Form

The following enrolment form is to provide the YTTTC teacher with the information necessary to meet your child's needs. It is important that if your child is suffering any illness or weakness of whatever nature that the teacher be informed, as it will be helpful to the teacher in ensuring the safety and happiness of your child. If you are unsure as to whether or not your child should practice yoga due to any health problems please consult your doctor.

YTTTC is committed to ensuring that any information gathered from YTTTC students meet the specific responsibilities as set out in the Data Protection Act 1998. This information will be stored by your YTTTC teacher for a maximum of twelve months before re-registering your child.

**Please complete and sign:**

<b>Child's Full Name:</b>	
<b>Address with postcode</b>	
<b>Home Tel No.</b>	
<b>Email address</b>	
<b>Date of Birth</b>	
<b>Emergency Tel No</b>	1. 2.
<b>If unavailable contact</b>	<b>Name:</b> <b>Tel:</b> <b>Relationship to child:</b>
<b>Details of any specific requirements, special needs, allergies, medical conditions or previous injuries.</b>	
<b>Please give details of any previous experience of yoga.</b>	
<b>How do you hope your child will benefit from yoga?</b>	

<b>What other forms of exercise does your child take (if any)?</b>	
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Please now read and sign the following:

I am aware that the YTTC has developed a safeguarding policy and is committed to ensuring the safety and happiness of my child by having:

- Good Practice Guidelines
- A clear recruitment policy which includes the vetting of all teachers
- A photography policy
- Guidelines on confidentiality

I am aware that for my child to be most comfortable and at ease for the yoga class they need:

- To be able to do yoga in their bare feet so that they do not slip on the mats.
- To be dressed in comfortable clothing that they can move easily in.
- To bring a jumper and socks to put on to keep warm in relaxation at the end of class.
- To not eat two hours prior to the class, or if necessary something light and quickly digested.
- To go to the bathroom directly before the class.
- To arrive on time.

In the event of illness, having parental responsibility for the above named child, I give permission for medical treatment to be administered where considered necessary by a nominated first aider, or by suitably qualified medical practitioners. If I cannot be contacted and my child should require emergency hospital treatment, I authorise a qualified medical practitioner to provide emergency treatment or medication.

I will inform the YTTC teacher of any important changes to my child's health, medication or needs and also of any changes to our address or phone numbers given.

I am aware that all practices, exercises and training are undertaken with parental consent and in the event of an accident or injury no claim will lie against the teacher, owner of the premises or the organiser of the classes.

I confirm that all details are correct to the best of my knowledge and I am able to give parental consent for my child to participate in the YTTC classes.

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**Signature of Parent / Guardian**

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**Print Name**

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**Date**

(This consent form will remain valid for 1 year)



**YTTTC**  
Yoga Therapy & Training Centre

## PHOTOGRAPHY CONSENT FORM

YTTTC, of which I am trained teacher, is committed to providing a safe environment for children and young people under the age of eighteen. Essential to this commitment is to ensure that all necessary steps are taken to protect children/young people from the inappropriate use of their images in resource and media publications, on the internet and elsewhere.

In accordance with our Child Protection Policy YTTTC maintains that it is the right of parents and children to decide whether their images are to be taken and how those images may be used. Therefore we will *not* permit photographs, video or other images of young people to be taken without the consent of the parents/carers and children.

Images will focus on the overall activity and not on a particular child and full face and body shots will be avoided. No identifying details will be included with the photocaption, such as the name or address of the child or location and time of the class. All photos will be made available to the parents to be seen and details will be given of where the photos are to appear.

As a YTTTC teacher I will take all the steps necessary to ensure these images are used solely for the purposes they are intended. Should you become aware that these images are being used inappropriately please contact the Director of YTTTC Roy Griffin on 028 3026 7937/087 6996306 *without delay*.

I (*parent/carer*.....) have read the above statement and consent to a designated photographer photographing or videoing (*name of child*.....) participating in the yoga class.

Date: .....

I (*insert name of child*.....) have read the above statement and consent to a designated photographer photographing or videoing (name of child..... ) my participation in the yoga class.

Date: .....

## YTTC CHILD PROTECTION INCIDENT RECORD FORM

<b>Your name:</b>	
<b>Your position:</b>	
<b>Child's name:</b>	
<b>Child's address:</b>	
<b>Parents`/carers` Names &amp; Address:</b>	
<b>Child's date of birth:</b>	
<b>Date and time of any incident:</b>	
<b>Your observations:</b>	
<b>Exactly what the child said and what you said:  (Remember, do not lead the child – record actual details. Continue on separate sheet if necessary)</b>	
<b>Action taken so far:</b>	

<b>External agencies contacted: (date and time)</b>	
<b>Police</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If yes – which: Name and contact number: Details of advice received:
<b>Social services</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If yes – which: Name and contact number: Details of advice received:
<b>Sport Governing body</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Name and contact number: Details of advice received:
<b>Local Council or Education Department</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <b>(If appropriate)</b>	If yes – which: Name and contact number: Details of advice received:
<b>Other (e.g. NSPCC)</b>	Which: Name and contact number: Details of advice received:

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Important to note:

Remember to maintain confidentiality on a *need to know* basis – to safeguard the confidentiality of ALL those involved. Do not discuss this incident with anyone other than those who need to know.

A copy of this form should be sent to social services after the telephone report and to the Governing Body Child Protection Officer for monitoring purposes.

## YTTC ACCIDENT REPORTING FORM

<b>TEACHER IN ATTENDANCE</b>	
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INJURED PARTY	
<b>Name:</b>	
<b>School/Studio:</b>	
<b>Address:</b>	

ACCIDENT DETAILS	
<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Time:</b>	
<b>Exact Location:</b>	
<b>Injury:</b>	
<b>How accident happened:</b>	
<b>Severity</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Minor <input type="checkbox"/> Considerable <input type="checkbox"/> Severe
<b>First Aid Involved?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Parents informed?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	<b>By whom:</b>
<b>Form Completed By:</b>	
<b>Refer to designated person</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Designated Person's signature</b>	
<b>Record any further action to be taken:</b>	

## **GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING ACCIDENTS**

In the event of an accident, the following procedure will be carried out:-

- Fill in two copies of the above Accident Reporting Form for **ALL** accidents.
- Make contact with parents/guardians.
- One copy of form to incident book/folder.
- Forward one copy to Designated Person for record keeping/action required.
- Contact emergency services/GP if required.
- Record in detail all facts surrounding the accident, witnesses etc. and any further action taken.

## **IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

### **YTTC Officer**

Roy Griffin (NI)

**028 3026 7937**

Roy Griffin (ROI)

**087 6996306**

### **Emergency**

Ask for your local Police Child Protection Team (NI)

**999**

Local HSE Social Worker (ROI)

**1850 24 1850**

Please note that there is no central number for out of hours contact. Board areas now have their own contact numbers.

### **EHSSB Belfast**

**028 9032 1313**

Out of hours number EHSSB

**028 9056 5444**

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Headquarters

**028 9056 5656**

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust Headquarters

**028 9266 9111**

### **NHSSB Ballymena**

**028 25311000**

Out of hours number NHSSB

**028 9446 8833**

Northern Health and Social Care Trust Headquarters

**0845 6012333**

### **SHSSB Armagh**

**028 3741 0041**

Out of hours number SHSSB

**028 3752 2381**

Southern Health and Social Care Trust Headquarters

**028 3861 3950**

### **WHSSB Londonderry**

**028 7186 0086**

Out of hours number WHSSB

**028 7134 5171**

Western Health and Social Care Trust Headquarters

**028 7134 5171**

### **NSPCC 24 Helpline**

**0808 800 5000**

**Childline (NI)**

**0800 1111**

**Childline (ROI)**

**1800 66 66 66**

[www.there4me.com](http://www.there4me.com) – a confidential advice website for teenagers

[www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)