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**Summary of**

**Youth Assembly Safeguarding Guidance for Northern Ireland**

**Assembly Commission staff**

This document is a summary of the Youth Assembly Safeguarding Guidance for Northern Ireland Assembly Commission staff. It gives an overview of the Youth Assembly’s safeguarding procedures. A copy of the full guidance may be obtained by emailing [youthassembly@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:youthassembly@niassembly.gov.uk).

**Statement of commitment**

Staff involved with the Northern Ireland Youth Assembly are committed to practice which

promotes the welfare of young people and protects them from harm. We wish to ensure that all young people can participate in an enjoyable and safe environment in which they can have fun and feel valued.

Staff accept and recognise our responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which

cause harm to young people, and to establish and maintain a safe environment for them.

Those young people who indicate that they have additional support needs, will receive this

support and staff will ensure that all young people with whom we work will have the same

protection.

We are committed to reviewing our safeguarding guidance and procedures at regular intervals, at least every two years.

**Who we work with and how**

Youth Assembly staff have regular contact with Youth Assembly Members (YAMs). There are

90 young people in this group aged 12-16 at the time of recruitment. Youth Assembly Members come from all over Northern Ireland and are a diverse group selected

anonymously to ensure a representation in terms of Section 75 categories including gender,

religious background, race, care experience and disability.

Contact with YAMs involves regular online meetings such as committee meetings and

training sessions with both Assembly Commission staff and external organisations. In addition, there are less frequent in-person meetings in Parliament Buildings and other

venues.

Communication between staff and YAMs takes place regularly via email and SMS text

messages. There is a dedicated Youth Assembly email address and Youth Assembly mobile

phone. Staff will not use personal mobile phones or personal email addresses to contact

YAMs. Youth Assembly activity often involves meetings and events online and in-person

which take place in the evenings and at the weekend.

Youth Assembly staff also have contact with the large number of young people who applied

for a place on the Youth Assembly but were not placed. They are called the ‘Youth Assembly

Consultation Forum.’ Contact is via email from the dedicated Youth Assembly email address

and, by exception, via phone from the Youth Assembly mobile phone number.

In addition, former Youth Assembly Members from previous terms are occasionally involved

with the operation of the Youth Assembly. They may attend online or in-person events in

order to support new Members.

**Training and Access NI**

The Youth Assembly is committed to ensuring that each staff member receives adequate

training around safeguarding issues.

This shall take place in the following ways:

* All Youth Assembly staff are required to undertake an Access NI Enhanced Disclosure check.[[1]](#footnote-1)
* As part of their induction, each member of the Youth Assembly team will receive the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission policy entitled ‘Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy’ and the ‘Youth Assembly Safeguarding Guidance for Northern Ireland Assembly Commission staff.’
* Youth Assembly staff will attend ongoing safeguarding training in line with the Assembly’s ‘Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.’

**Youth Assembly staff will endeavour to safeguard young people by:**

* Adhering to the Assembly’s ‘Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.’
* Following Youth Assembly safeguarding guidelines.
* Following the procedures for the recruitment and selection of staff.
* Attending regular safeguarding training.
* Attending Assembly Safeguarding Officer (ASO) training as appropriate.
* Conducting and documenting safeguarding awareness sessions for young people as part of new Youth Assembly Members’ induction.
* Ensuring health and safety procedures are adhered to.
* Sharing the ‘Youth Assembly Safeguarding Guidance for Northern Ireland
* Assembly Commission staff’ with YAMs, parents/ guardians, and Assembly Commission staff.
* Ensuring compliance with data protection policies when collecting and processing

personal data including application forms, photographs, and permission forms.

**Working online**

The Youth Assembly Members (YAMs) meet in person and online to deliver their duties. All staff must exercise the same discretion and maintain the same professional distance in any electronic contact with young people as they would in in-person interactions. Electronic contact includes telephone communications (including texting) and online environments such as online meetings and use of social media.

General guidance:

* Staff must neither initiate nor accept ‘friendship requests’ on social media from YAMs. Staff are advised to ensure that their online privacy settings are at the highest level to ensure that YAMs cannot access their personal information.
* Staff must avoid all situations with YAMs which involve the exchange of personal information.
* If a young person makes a disclosure to a member of staff electronically then the process outlined in the Assembly’s ‘*Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy’* must be followed.

**In-person events**

Youth Assembly Members will attend events and meetings in Parliament Buildings and in other venues. The following procedures must be followed:

* All YAMs will be sent an invite via email to make them aware of each event and their parents/guardians will be copied into the email.
* Parents/guardians should organise transport for their young person.
* Parent/guardians will be instructed when to drop off their young person and when to pick them up.
* Upon entry to Parliament Buildings, young people will be directed and accompanied by Youth Assembly staff.
* YAMs must follow the *Visitor Conduct and Behaviour Policy*.[[2]](#footnote-2)
* YAMs must follow the *Youth Assembly Code of Conduct*.
* No young person should wander off on their own. Young people will be informed of where they can go within the building.
* Youth Assembly staff will use separate toilets at in-person events in Parliament Buildings or external venues, preferably on different floors.
* At least one trained first aider will attend in-person events.
* During the plenary in Parliament Buildings, Youth Assembly staff will be positioned at the doors of the Assembly Chamber and will be on hand to provide support.
* If a parent/ guardian does not arrive on time to collect their young person, two members of staff should stay with the young person in a public area of Parliament Buildings such as the Great Hall and attempts should be made to contact the parent/ guardian. If they are not reachable, other contacts on the permission form should be contacted.
* Wait with the young person until the parent/guardian arrives.
* Staff will contact Health and Safety branch in the event of an accident/illness which requires completion of an accident form.

**Additional and medical needs**

* Youth Assembly staff will contact parents/ guardians of YAMs with additional needs in order to put in place appropriate support.
* A list of YAMs with additional and medical needs will be made available for relevant staff.
* Those with additional and medical needs may be assigned a member of Youth Assembly staff on the day.
* If required, a parent/guardian may attend with a young person in order to meet their additional needs.

**Outside organisations**

* If an outside organisation facilitates a session or training in Parliament Buildings, Youth Assembly staff must accompany them.
* Youth Assembly staff must preview all resources from outside organisations before a training session is delivered to ensure its suitability and assess risks.

**Events outside Parliament Buildings**

When planning an event outside Parliament Buildings, e.g. a team building day, the following steps will be taken prior to the event:

* Detailed information will be sent in advance to the young person and their parents/ guardians.
* The parental/guardian permission form must be signed and returned if appropriate.
* A list will be created of all contact details for each young people which should include at least two emergency contacts per young person.
* A list will be created of those with medical conditions and additional needs.
* For those using medication on the day, such as an asthmatic or diabetic, this may be stored in individual bags with names clearly marked on the outside.
* At least one first aider will attend and there will be access to a First aid kit.
* A risk assessment form will be completed and stored in the Youth Assembly shared drive.
* An events checklist will be completed and stored in the Youth Assembly shared drive.

**Ratios**

When working with groups of young people there must be enough adults to provide the appropriate level of supervision. Staffing and supervision ratios can sometimes be difficult to judge. As recommended by NSPCC, Youth Assembly staff ratio is one adult to 10 young people which is reasonable for young people aged 12-17 years old.[[3]](#footnote-3)

If there are young people with additional needs and/or disabilities, Youth Assembly staff will assess this on a case-by-case basis and include more staff to assist if needed.

**Reporting a disclosure**

A young person may make a disclosure at any time, online or face-to-face. Youth Assembly staff will follow the guidance below.

Figure 1 Reporting a Disclosure

**If an allegation of abuse is made**

**If a young person discloses abuse**

**If you see or suspect abuse**

*A purple arrow pointing down

AI-generated content may be incorrect.*

**1. REASSURE** the young person and if necessary, clarify/confirm what they have told you.

**4**. The ASOwill **REPORT** the matter to a Senior ASO and provide them with the completed Issue Report Form (and any other information available).

**2. CONFIRM** that you will need to share the information with an Assembly Safeguarding Officer (ASO). **CONTACT** **an ASO immediately.**

**3**. The ASO should immediately **RECORD** the disclosure, using young person’s own words of possible, by completing the Issue Report Form.

**Further Information**

If you require further information about the *Youth Assembly Safeguarding Guidance for Northern Ireland Assembly Commission staff* or the Assembly’s *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy,*  please email [youthassembly@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:youthassembly@niassembly.gov.uk).

1. [Types of AccessNI checks | nidirect](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/types-accessni-checks) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/visit-and-learning/planning-your-visit/security-policy-conduct-and-behaviour-of-visitors-in-parliament-buildings/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/briefings/recommended-adult-child-ratios-working-with-children> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)