

July 15, 2011

**“New Guidelines and Commitments a Major Step in the Right Direction by State in Ensuring Robust and Meaningful Child Protection Systems in Ireland” says Leading Youth Organisation**

Youth Work Ireland has today welcomed the publication of new guidelines by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs “Children First 2011”. The organisation which vets thousands of staff and volunteers and works with close to 80,000 young people all around the country welcomed the statements by Minister Fitzgerald at the opening in recognising the many organisations who work hard on child protection issues at the moment and the supportive role such guidelines provide. The youth group has also welcomed commitments to speed up long term commitments on soft information and the introduction of legislation to ensure co-operation with the investigation of child protection issues.

“These guidelines reaffirm the good work that many voluntary organisations carry out in relation to Child Protection. A huge amount of time and resources have gone in to training, establishing nominated individuals and ensuring a broad understanding of child protection policies and procedures in the children’s and youth work sectors. Voluntary groups have assisted this work every step of the way and recognise the real support the state has provided in the past in this regard” Said Michael Mc Loughlin from Youth Work Ireland

“It is now also important to look to the future. We again welcome the renewed commitment to progress a system of “soft information” in a speedy fashion. In September 2008 the Joint Committee on the Referendum on Children produced a report solely on this issue. The report was unanimous. It recommended producing this legislation in the Dáil session which expired in December 2008! Any organisation engaging a large amount of staff doing frontline work with children appreciates the need to have the highest standards of protection in place. Voluntary and community organisations want these protections in place but often it has been Government inaction which has prevented it happening. The Joint Oireachtas Committee commissioned a report from child law expert Geoffrey Shannon in this area which gave a strong basis to the need for a robust system of “soft information” which respects the rights of all. This report should be the basis of such a system which could be introduced in months” Mc Loughlin added

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379 words

Notes to Editor

“Soft Information” is an extension of Garda Vetting which provides for the provision of information in a controlled and regulated way about documented concerns relating to personnel working with or with access to children, short of a criminal conviction.