

Rainbows Ireland: Consent for Children's Participation in Peer Support

Information Handout for Parents & Guardians

What Is Consent?

Consent means giving permission for your child to take part in a service. For children under 16, **a legal guardian must provide consent** for them to join Rainbows Ireland peer support groups.

Who Are Legal Guardians?

Under Irish law:

- **Married parents** are both legal guardians.
- **Unmarried mothers** are automatically legal guardians.
- **Unmarried fathers** may be legal guardians if:
 - Named on the birth certificate (after January 2016),
 - Have signed a **statutory declaration** with the mother,
 - Or have obtained a **court order**.

Is Consent from Both Guardians Needed?

According to HSE policy:

- **One guardian's consent is usually enough**, as long as there is **no known dispute** between guardians.
- This is based on the **Child Care Acts 1991 and 2001**, which prioritise the **child's welfare**.
- The assumption is that the service is being offered in the **child's best interests**.

Respecting the Child's Voice

Even if a child cannot legally give consent:

- Their **views should be listened to**.
- Older children may be able to **assent** (agree) to take part.

- Children should be involved in decisions in a way that suits their **age and understanding**.

What If Consent Is Unclear or Disputed?

If:

- One guardian **cannot be contacted**, or
- There is a **disagreement** between guardians,

Professionals may still proceed if:

- The service is clearly in the **child's best interests**,
- There is **no evidence of conflict** or legal restrictions,
- The child would benefit from **timely access** to support.

Summary for Parents

- **One guardian's consent** is usually sufficient.
- **Both guardians** should be involved where possible.
- **Children's voices matter** and should be respected.
- The **child's wellbeing** is always the top priority.

References

1. *National Consent Advisory Group (NCAG) Documents – HSE.ie*
2. *Microsoft Word - NCAG Consent Doc Parts One and Two*