



**Early  
Childhood  
Ireland**

**Child Safeguarding  
Policies and Procedures  
2023**

# Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures

## September 2023

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Ireland is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare and well-being of all children and young people with whom our staff come into contact while carrying out their duties and we believe that everyone has a responsibility in the safety and welfare of children. Our policies give due recognition and consideration to the rights of every child that comes into contact with our Organisation. Good quality childcare practices recognise this as a core way of working with children, and certain legal mandates oblige the Organisation to adhere to such requirements. Principal among these is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This Convention is a set of minimum standards in protecting children's rights. It is a binding international treaty, to which the Irish Government has signed up to, becoming operational in Ireland in October 1992. The Convention identifies the specific rights that children have and, as a signatory to the Convention, Ireland is under a formal obligation to implement its contents.

The Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures underpin and support the Safeguarding Statement and is a guidance document for Early Childhood Ireland staff in preventing, identifying and responding to child safeguarding concerns. Early Childhood Ireland is fully committed to meeting the highest standards of child safeguarding practices and related policies and procedures. To this end, we have developed a robust child safeguarding policy in accordance with the relevant statutory and non-statutory obligations, primarily the Children First Act 2015 and Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (DCYA, 2017), which outlines the existing non-statutory obligations that operate administratively for all sectors of society. "Children First" is now a generic term used to encompass the guidance, the legislation and the implementation of both. This document is also guided by Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice (2<sup>nd</sup> edition<sup>1</sup>).

Early Childhood Ireland is committed to Children First as it relates to the recognition of child abuse and neglect, the reporting of same to Tusla, and the best practice which organisations should adhere to keep children safe when we are working with them.

## What is child safeguarding?

The term 'safeguarding' refers to protecting children from harm as well as promoting their welfare and development whilst in your care. Safeguarding is more than just reporting child protection or welfare concerns; it is also asking yourself and your organisation what you can add to the child or young person's life to assist them to fully meet their future potential. Seeking positive outcomes for children and young people is also about staying involved, remaining interested and actively participating with others to improve the child or young person's life.

This Safeguarding Statement is displayed prominently on Early Childhood Ireland's website and in the head office.

### *Purpose of Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures:*

- Ensure that Early Childhood Ireland does no harm to children
- Raise awareness about child abuse and neglect
- Ensure there is an organisational procedure to deal with child safeguarding concerns
- Ensure there is an organisational procedure to report child safeguarding concerns
- Ensure that all Early Childhood Ireland Board members, staff and volunteers are aware of what child safeguarding is and how to promote it
- Ensure that all staff are provided with relevant and regular training
- Ensure that organisational safeguarding protocols and procedures are implemented and reviewed

### **1.1 Policy Scope**

This policy applies to

- All employees
- Students on work placement
- Volunteers (including members of the Board of Directors)
- Contractors

The term 'staff' will be applied throughout this document and refers to all categories named above. The Child Safeguarding Statement and the supporting policies and procedures apply when working in the offices and while representing the Organisation at other venues.

All staff are expected to read the following documents and their accompanying appendices carefully. On induction and after each periodic review all staff will sign a Child Safeguarding Statement of Understanding (**Appendix 1**) to confirm that they understand and accept the responsibilities and actions set out within:

- 1) Child Safeguarding Statement
- 2) Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures
- 3) [Garda Vetting Policy](#)
- 4) [Child Safeguarding Code of Behaviour contained in the Employee Handbook](#)
- 5) [Recruitment and Selection Policy](#).
- 6) Accident and Incidents procedure contained in the Organisations Safety Statement
- 7) Code of behaviour for members
- 8) [Complaints Policy](#)
- 9) [Protected Disclosures Policy](#)
- 10) And all other policies contained herein

Signed forms will be stored in every personnel file for the duration of their tenure in line with Organisations Data Protection policy and procedure. Any material change to the policy or procedures will require renewed signatures from staff. The policies will be reviewed every two years or if there are any material changes in legislation, policies or procedures.

Any material change to the policy or procedures require sign-off by the Early Childhood Ireland Board of Directors.

## **1.2 Relevant Legislation**

The protection and welfare of children, and specific provisions for vulnerable persons, is governed by several key pieces of legislation:

- Child Care Act 1991
- Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998
- Criminal Justice Act 2006
- Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012
- National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012-2016
- Children First Act 2015
- Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017

Please see **Appendix 2** for a brief overview of the above-named relevant legislation.

## 2. DECLARATION OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES

**Name of Organisation:** Early Childhood Ireland

Early Childhood Ireland is a membership organisation which represents over 4,000 members who support over 100,000 children & their families through pre-school, afterschool & full day care provision nationwide. Our work includes quality enhancement, publications, advocacy, training, business support & information for a sector that employs 25,000 people today.

How we interact with children:

- Onsite visits to Early Years and School Age Care services settings (supervised)
- Commissioning research involving children
- Hosting and participating in events for children
- Advice/Support to members where Child Safeguarding issues may arise (phone, email and in person)
- Early Childhood Ireland liaises with other child focussed organisations
- On occasions children may visit/attend the Organisations work premises with their parents/caregivers
- Working with volunteers

We believe the following:

- Early Childhood Ireland is committed to implementing safeguarding procedures across the organisation to ensure where Early Years and School Age Care services engage with a member of our team, we are always following best practice and legislative requirements
- Our guiding principles reflect national policy and legislation and are underpinned by Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and current legislation such as the Children First Act 2015, Child Care Act 1991, Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 and the National Vetting Bureau Act 2012
- Early Childhood Ireland have developed clear and comprehensive child safeguarding policies and procedures which places the child at the centre. We consider the welfare of the child as paramount and are committed to child-centred practice in all our work with children, practitioners, Early Years and School Age Care services and all other stakeholders
- We are committed to upholding the rights of every child including the right to be kept safe and protected from harm, to be listened to and to be heard through our engagement with Early Years and School Age Care services, and all other stakeholders
- Our guiding principles apply to everyone in the organisation (all paid staff, volunteers, committee/ board members and students on work placement within our organisation). All committee board members, staff, volunteers and students must sign up to and abide by the policies, procedures and guidance encompassed by this policy and our child safeguarding policy and accompanying procedures.



- We will review our child safeguarding statement and accompanying child safeguarding policies and procedures every two years, or sooner if necessary, in line with service issues or changes in legislation or national policy

**Our Designated Liaison Person is: Carmel Ward**

Contact details: [cward@earlychildhoodireland.ie](mailto:cward@earlychildhoodireland.ie) Mobile: 086 1532944

**Our Deputy Designated Liaison Person is: Vivienne Murtagh**

Contact details: [vmurtagh@earlychildhoodireland.ie](mailto:vmurtagh@earlychildhoodireland.ie) Mobile: 086 1365223

### **3. KEY ROLES IN SAFEGUARDING IN Early Childhood Ireland**

#### **3.1 Named persons**

All organisations that provide services to children need to develop specific policies and procedures on how to create a safe environment. To assist with this, Early Childhood Ireland has appointed Mary Nicholson, Child Protection and Welfare Consultant, to develop our Child Safeguarding Statement and Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures and to ensure that policies and procedures are consistent with best practice and the best interests of the child.

#### **3.2 Relevant Service**

The Organisation is a relevant service as per Schedule 1.5 and 1.6 of the Children First Act 2015 defines Relevant Services as it pertains to Early Childhood Ireland as

Any work or activity which consists of the provision of—

- (a) educational, research, training, cultural, recreational, leisure, social or physical activities to children,
- (b) care or supervision of children, or
- (c) formal consultation with, or formal participation by, a child in respect of matters that affect his or her life, whether or not for commercial or any other consideration. and

Any work or activity which consists of the provision of advice or guidance services (including by means of electronic interactive communications), a necessary and regular part of which consists, mainly, of the person having access to, or contact with, children.

For a full list of relevant services please see **Appendix 3**

As a relevant service, the Organisation's statutory responsibilities are:

- Keep children **safe from harm** while they are using the service
- Carry out a **risk assessment** to identify whether a child or young person could be harmed while availing of the service
- Develop a **Child Safeguarding Statement** that outlines the policies and procedures which are in place to manage the risks that have been identified
- Appoint a relevant person to be the first point of contact in respect of the organisation's Child Safeguarding Statement.

### ***3.3 Relevant persons (under the Children First Act 2015)***

As a provider of a relevant service under the Children First Act 2015 Early Childhood Ireland is required to appoint a relevant person. The relevant person is the first point of contact in relation to the Child Safeguarding Statement; their name and contact details are to be included in the Child Safeguarding Statement.

The **Relevant Person** in Early Childhood Ireland is **Teresa Heeney, CEO**

### ***3.4 Designated Liaison Persons***

EARLY CHILDHOOD IRELAND has appointed a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Deputy DLP (DDLDP). The DLP is a resource to any worker who has a child safeguarding concern. The DLP is responsible for ensuring that the service's reporting procedures are followed correctly and promptly and they act as a liaison person with other agencies.

The role of the DLP/deputy DLP in Early Childhood Ireland :

- Be fully familiar with its responsibilities in relation to the safeguarding of children
- Have good knowledge of the Organisation's Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures
- Ensure that the organisation's reporting procedure is followed, so that child safeguarding concerns are referred promptly to Tusla.
- Receive child safeguarding concerns from staff and consider if reasonable grounds for reporting to Tusla exist
- Consult informally with a Tusla Duty Social Worker through the Dedicated Contact Point, if necessary
- Where appropriate, make a formal report of a child safeguarding concern to Tusla on behalf of the organisation, using the Tusla Web Portal or the Tusla Child Protection and Welfare Report Form

Inform the child's parents/guardians that a report is to be submitted to Tusla or An Garda Síochána, unless:

- i) Informing the parents/guardians is likely to endanger the child or young person; or
  - ii) informing the parents/guardians may place you as the reporter at risk of harm from the family
  - iii) The family's knowledge of the report could impair Tusla's ability to carry out an assessment
- Record all child safeguarding concerns, or allegations of child abuse, brought to your attention as well as any action taken in response to these concerns
  - Provide feedback to the referrer, as appropriate
  - Ensure that a secure system is in place to manage and store confidential records
  - Act as a liaison with Tusla and The Garda Síochána, as appropriate
  - Where appropriate, jointly report with a mandated person.

Designated Liaison Person and the Deputy Designated Liaison Person in Early Childhood Ireland

<p><b>Early Childhood Ireland DLP:</b></p> <p><b>Carmel Ward</b></p> <p>Contact details:</p> <p><a href="mailto:cward@earlychildhoodireland.ie">cward@earlychildhoodireland.ie</a></p> <p>Mobile: 0861532944</p>	<p><b>Early Childhood Ireland Deputy DLP:</b></p> <p><b>Vivienne Murtagh</b></p> <p>Contact details:</p> <p><a href="mailto:vmurtagh@earlychildhoodireland.ie">vmurtagh@earlychildhoodireland.ie</a></p> <p>Mobile: 0861365223</p>
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### 3.5 Mandated persons

Under the Children First Act 2015 mandated persons have a statutory obligation to report concerns which reach or exceed the legally defined threshold of harm (see the Children First Act 2015) and to cooperate with Tusla in the assessment of mandated reports, where requested to do so.

In Early Childhood Ireland a person is mandated under Schedule 2.15 (i) of the Children First Act 2015 which specifies the following class of persons as Mandated Persons for the purposes of the Act:

- (i) safeguarding officer, child protection officer or other person (howsoever described) who is employed for the purpose of performing the child welfare and protection function of religious, sporting, recreational, cultural, educational and other bodies and organisations offering services to children;
- (ii) Foster Parent

Mandated persons in Early Childhood Ireland will be made aware of their responsibilities under the legislation at commencement of their employment. These responsibilities are outlined in section 14(1) of the Children First Act 2015 and in Section 4.7 of these policies and procedures.

See **Appendix 4** for a full list of classes of persons specified as mandated persons.

#### Procedures for the Appointment of a Mandated Persons

- As a relevant service, the Organisation is required to have a procedure in place to maintain a list of any mandated persons in the service
- The Board, as the employer, is the provider of the relevant service, who is responsible for ensuring that the list of mandated persons is created and maintained
- The Board should consult Schedule 2 of the Children First Act 2015 to determine which staff are mandated persons under the Children First Act, 2015. It may, in some instances, be necessary to seek legal advice in this regard
- A list of all of the mandated persons in the service is compiled and available upon request **(Please see Appendix 5, Current List mandated persons)**
- The Board is responsible for consulting with staff to review the mandated persons list to remove persons who are not classified as mandated persons or persons who have left the service. This should be done at each Board meeting
- Those who are identified as mandated persons must be notified of such and informed of their roles and responsibilities by the Board
- Mandated persons are directed to specific provision in the service's reporting procedure which provides for reporting under Section 14 of the Children First Act 2015

- Mandated persons must also be directed to specific provision in the service's reporting procedure which provides for mandated assisting
- Relevant Training is provided for mandated persons
- Mandated persons have a responsibility to inform employers when they are fulfilling their legal responsibilities in relation to mandated reports and mandated assisting
- The procedure for maintaining a list of mandated persons must be reviewed every two years, or earlier if there is a material change to legislation and/or policy

#### **4: RESPONDING TO AND REPORTING CHILD PROTECTION OR WELFARE CONCERNS**

Early Childhood Ireland recognises that child abuse falls into four main categories as identified in the National Guidance. These are neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse.

For detailed definitions and examples of these types of abuse, please refer to **Appendix 6:**

##### ***4.1 Types of Child Abuse and Symptoms of Abuse***

###### **Neglect**

Neglect can be defined in terms of 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 and affection from adults, and/or medical care. Harm can be defined as the ill-treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child. Whether it is significant is determined by the child's health and development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a child of similar age.

###### **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a parent/carer and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's developmental needs for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms.

###### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse of a child is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction, or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents.

###### **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others.

## 4.2 Identifying reasonable grounds for concern

You should always inform your DLP/Deputy DLP when you have reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected. If you ignore what may be symptoms of abuse, it could result in ongoing harm to the child. It is not necessary for you to prove that abuse has occurred in order for the DLP/Deputy DLP to report a concern to Tusla. All that is required is that you have reasonable grounds for concern. It is Tusla's role to assess concerns that are reported to it.

If you report a concern, you can be assured that your information will be carefully considered with any other information available and a child protection assessment will be carried out where sufficient risk is identified.

Reasonable grounds for a child protection or welfare concern include:

- Evidence, for example an injury or behaviour, that is consistent with abuse and is unlikely to have been caused in any other way
- Any concern about possible sexual abuse
- Consistent signs that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect
- A child saying or indicating by other means that he or she has been abused
- Admission or indication by an adult or a child of an alleged abuse they committed
- An account from a person who saw a child being abused. Wherever appropriate, any issues should be checked with the parents/guardians when considering whether a concern exists, unless doing so may further endanger the child or the person considering making the report

Abuse is not always committed through personal contact with a child or young person, sometimes it is perpetrated through social media or the use of information and communication technology. Early childhood Ireland's policies on Child Safeguarding Digital Safety specifically outline procedures to safeguard children in this regard and this policy is available in **Appendix 7**.

Where the DLP or Deputy DLP is unsure whether there are reasonable grounds for concern, they can contact the relevant Tusla Duty Social Work Team informally for advice and guidance: <http://www.tusla.ie/get-in-touch/duty-social-work-teams/>

*\*The relevant social work team is related to the area where the child is from. If unknown, please contact organisations dedicated contact point in Dublin South Central on 087 3981713.*

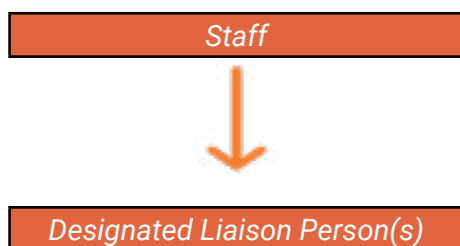
**Respond to any immediate safety needs of the child:**

**No child should be left in a situation which exposes them to harm. Where there is an immediate or serious risk, contact should be made by phone with a Tusla Duty Social Worker without delay. Where Tusla is not available, contact should be made with An Garda Síochána on 999/112**

### 4.3 Responding to Concerns and Reporting Procedures

All staff have a responsibility to safeguard children and young people and to report any concerns they may have for the protection or welfare of a child/young person. Regardless of how a concern comes to a worker/volunteer's attention (in person, in writing (post or email) or by telephone), it should be reported to the Designated Liaison Person. These procedures are also appropriate in the case of anonymous reports or reports from adults who experienced childhood abuse.

#### Early Childhood Ireland Internal Reporting Procedures



<b>Steps for Reporting an Allegation or Disclosure of Abuse to the DLP/DDLP</b>
All staff are obliged to report any allegation, concern, suspicion or disclosure of abuse or neglect to the Designated Liaison Person or Deputy Designated Liaison Person.
All concerns should be recorded on the Early Childhood Ireland Child Safeguarding Concern Form (See Appendix 9) and stored as per Early Childhood Ireland's data protection policy (See Appendix 10)
The contact details of the Designated Liaison Person or Deputy Designated Liaison Person may be given to the person alleging or disclosing abuse if they request it
Notify the DLP via Teams or a phone call that there is a concern or query in relation to child safeguarding, details should not be recorded in this notification. If needed, a conversation will be arranged to support staff members with the following procedures.
Send a written account of the concern on the Child Safeguarding Concern Form (Appendix 9) to the DLP through the dedicated and secure DLP@earlychildhoodireland.ie email address.
Where possible include the child's name, address, gender, and age/date of birth, name and contact details for parent(s)/carers, educational setting, and known professionals providing other services, e.g., social workers, etc.
The Designated Liaison Person or Deputy Designated Liaison Person, in consultation with the person who raised the concern, will decide if reasonable grounds for concern exist. If reasonable grounds for concern exist, the Designated Liaison Person will report to Tusla through either the Tusla Web Portal or relevant Dedicated Contact Point.

**\* Consultation with your DLP should not delay the reporting process where there is an immediate concern.**

### Feedback to staff member/volunteer if a report is not made

- The reasons for not reporting are to be recorded
- If any actions are taken as a result of the concern, these should be recorded
- The staff member or volunteer who raised the concern should be given a clear written explanation of the reasons why the concern is not being reported to Tusla. This can be recorded on the Child Safeguarding Concern Form (**Appendix 9**)
- The staff member or volunteer should be advised that if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free to make a report to Tusla or The Garda Síochána
- The staff member or volunteer who raised the concern should also be reassured that if they do choose to report to Tusla, they are covered by the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998

## Early Childhood Ireland External Reporting Procedures



The Designated Liaison Person or Deputy Designated Liaison Person will determine whether it is appropriate or not to make a formal report to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency.

Where the DLP or Deputy DLP is unsure whether they should report to Tusla they may contact a Tusla Duty Social Worker to informally discuss concern. This provides an opportunity to discuss the query in general and to decide whether a formal report of the concern to Tusla is appropriate at this stage.

The Designated Liaison Person or Deputy Designated Liaison Person will report to the appropriate Tusla Child and Family Agency Office using the [online portal](#) which allows professionals to securely submit Child Protection and Welfare Report Forms to Tusla. If the concern is from a member organisation, a Joint Report can be made

Where a verbal report is made, a written report must be submitted to Tusla as soon as practicable thereafter, and no later than three days using the online portal and a copy can be downloaded for EARLY CHILDHOOD IRELAND files and stored in a secure location.

In addition to a report to Tusla, if there is a criminal or suspected criminal aspect to the child protection concern, An Garda Síochána will be notified by the DLP as appropriate.



\* Given the nature of the organisation, it is unlikely that staff members will be mandated persons however where this is the case, mandated persons can make a joint mandated report with their DLP (see section 4.7: Mandated Persons Reporting). It is not necessary for the DLP or mandated staff member to prove that abuse has occurred to report a concern to Tusla – it is Tusla’s role to assess the concerns that are reported.

Please see **Appendix 8** for useful questions to ask yourself before deciding to make a report to Tusla and [4214-TUSLA Guide to Reporters Guide A4 v3.pdf](#)

### Out-of-hours social work service

A DLP/DDLP or mandated person who wishes to make a mandated report ‘out-of-hours’, should contact the out-of-hours social work service on 0818 776 315 between 6pm and 6am every night and between 9am and 5pm on Saturdays, Sundays and bank holidays. For non-mandated persons, in an emergency, they should contact The Garda Síochána on 999/112.

### Dual Reporting Responsibilities

It is important to remember to report suspected crimes to The Garda Síochána as consideration must also be given to responsibilities under the Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012, which are in addition to any reporting requirements under the Children First Act 2015 or Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children.

### Confidentiality

Staff members will not guarantee confidentiality to anyone alleging, reporting or disclosing abuse or neglect, unless by doing so, exposes a child or puts a child at risk of harm. However, Early Childhood Ireland staff will guarantee that professional confidentiality is always maintained and that identifying information shared with statutory agencies is done so in confidence.

It is essential that all information regarding concern or assessment of child abuse should be shared only on “a need-to-know basis” in the interests of the safety and welfare of the child. The number of people who are informed of the allegation/disclosure must be kept to a minimum. All notes and email correspondence relating to child protection concern and reports are kept in electronic form by the Designated Liaison Person and the Deputy Designated Liaison Person. No other persons and staff members are permitted to access this information. Early Childhood Ireland retains personal information relating to allegations/suspensions of abuse made to our staff by telephone, email, letter or in person to be able to report such information to the appropriate authorities as specified in Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011).

Any staff member who fails to uphold these operating principles may be subject to the Organisation's disciplinary processes up to and including dismissal.

#### ***4.4 Receiving a child safeguarding poor practice, concern, or allegation from a member or a person not within Early Childhood Ireland's area of responsibility***

##### ***4.4.1 If a member approaches Early Childhood Ireland staff, volunteers or students with a safeguarding concern or allegation about the welfare of any child at risk, that does not relate to Early Childhood Ireland (services or staff) the staff member must:***

- Be clear that if the concern relates to a particular child no further/ identifying details should be shared.
- Advise individual who raises the concern of their duty to care and how to make a report directly to Tusla, using the [online portal](#)
- Advise the individual to ring the Duty Social Worker who will advise whether to report to Tusla
- Notify and discuss the case with your DLP
- If the member continues to share details about a particular child or children, the DLP may need to report the concerns to Tusla via the online portal even if the member tells you they are going to report it. In this case, follow the process outlined above or below in section 4.4.2.

##### ***4.4.2 If a member approaches Early Childhood Ireland staff, volunteers or students with a safeguarding concern or allegation regarding poor practice that does not relate to Early Childhood Ireland (services or staff) but poses potential welfare risks to children the staff member must:***

- Be non-judgemental in listening to the concern.
- Report all such safeguarding poor practice, concerns or allegations to the DLP/DDLP, who may need to report to Tusla via the online portal.
- Notify the DLP via Teams or a phone call that there is a concern or query in relation to child safeguarding, details should not be recorded in this notification. If needed, a conversation will be arranged to support staff members with the following procedures.
- Send a written account of the concern on the Child Safeguarding Concern Form (Appendix 9) to the DLP through the dedicated and secure [DLP@earlychildhoodireland.ie](mailto:DLP@earlychildhoodireland.ie) email address
- A record will be maintained on the CRM to state that there was a query in relation to child safeguarding but no details will be recorded
- Once this has been sent, you must delete all record of the written account from your documents, trash, sent and deleted email items. This is an important step in the interests of confidentiality and data protection and it is your responsibility to do this

- Please remember, given the nature of these concerns the DLP may have to share this information with relevant agencies e.g. Tusla/An Garda Síochána, therefore confidentiality cannot be guaranteed
- Where it is decided to make a report to Tusla, the report will be made jointly with the DLP, using your written account and co-signed by the DLP who is responsible for coordination, writing and sending the report
- As the first named reporter, you may receive correspondence from Tusla directly. Please bring all correspondence to the DLP so that it can be filed and stored appropriately
- In addition to a report to Tusla, if there is a criminal or suspected criminal aspect to the child protection concern, An Garda Síochána will be notified by the DLP as appropriate

#### ***4.5 Observing a child safeguarding poor practice, concern, or allegation in a member organisation***

If Early Childhood Ireland becomes aware of a concern or an allegation in relation to a member organisation (and its staff), by way of direct observation by an Early Childhood Ireland staff member.

Safeguarding is a proactive duty and means protecting a children from harm or damage with an appropriate measure. It is important to be aware of poor safeguarding practice, and to be vigilant about recognising how to prevent abuse from taking place and how to respond to situations.

Poor safeguarding practice takes place if staff fail to fulfil the highest standards of safeguarding care and support for those that are most vulnerable. Poor safeguarding practice can cause harm if it is allowed to continue.

A person may not be aware that poor safeguarding practice or abuse is taking place, as they may believe that the behaviour is 'acceptable' or the 'norm'. This can take many different forms and training will support staff to identify issues. However, all staff must report poor safeguarding practice to the DLP along with any poor practice, concern, or allegation of abuse.

It is not always easy to recognise a situation where harm or abuse may occur or has already taken place. Early Childhood Ireland therefore expects you to report any concerns you may have, however minor, about the welfare of a child through liaison with your DLP or DDLP.

It can be difficult and distressing to observe a safeguarding poor practice, concern, or allegation, and to recognise signs of harm and abuse. However, it is not the role of Early Childhood Ireland staff to diagnose or investigate safeguarding poor practice, concerns, and allegations. The role of all Early Childhood Ireland staff is to report any poor practice, concerns, or allegations in accordance with our child safeguarding policies and procedures which is in the best interests of the child.

Members should be clear from the outset that any concerns will need to be reported as per our Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures and as outlined in the Working in Partnership Agreement (**Appendix 11**).

**It is important that all EARLY CHILDHOOD IRELAND staff and members are familiar with the Working in Partnership Agreement (Appendix 11) and that both parties have signed it prior to the commencement of working in partnership.**

When Early Childhood Ireland staff are working in settings, they should follow that settings' safeguarding policy and procedures alongside the Early Childhood Ireland Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. This means that safeguarding concerns must be reported to the DLP in both the setting and Early Childhood Ireland, to ensure that concerns are acted upon in a timely manner.

#### **4.6 Disclosure from a Child or Young Person**

A disclosure of abuse and/or neglect may be made to you directly by a child in a setting in which you are visiting. You should take the following steps:

- Be calm. Listen to what the child has to say and give them time to tell you in their own way. They are trusting you, and disclosure is very difficult for them
- Remember, the child or young person may initially be testing your reactions and may only fully open up over a period of time
- Listen to what the child/young person has to say. Give them the time and opportunity to tell as much as they are able and wish to
- Do not pressurise the child/young person. Allow him or her to disclose at their own pace and in their own language
- Conceal any signs of disgust, anger or disbelief
- Accept what the child or young person has to say – false disclosures are very rare
- It is important to differentiate between the person who carried out the abuse and the act of abuse itself. The child/young person quite possibly may love or strongly like the alleged abuser while also disliking what was done to them. It is important therefore to avoid expressing any judgement of, or anger towards the alleged perpetrator while talking with the child/young person
- Reassure the child/young person that they have taken the right action in talking to you.
- Tell them that you want them to be safe and that you cannot keep secrets (i.e. cannot keep their confidence) and that you will be sharing the information they give you with people that can help

- By refusing to make a commitment to secrecy to the child/young person, you do run the risk that they may not tell you everything (or, indeed, anything) there and then. However, it is better to do this than to tell a lie and ruin the child/young person's confidence in yet another adult. By being honest, it is more likely that the child/young person will return to you at another time

Please see **Appendix 12** for additional tips for responding to a disclosure

At the earliest possible opportunity:

- Record in writing, in a factual manner, what the child/young person has said, including, as far as possible, the exact words used by the child/young person utilising the Early Childhood Ireland Child safeguarding Concern Form (Appendix 9)
- Inform the DLP immediately and agree measures to protect the child/young person, e.g. report the matter directly to Tusla
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality

#### **4.7 Mandated Persons Reporting**

**Section 14(1) of the Children First Act 2015 states:** *"...where a mandated persons knows, believes or has reasonable grounds to suspect, on the basis of information that he or she has received, acquired or becomes aware of in the course of his or her employment or profession as such a mandated person, that a child— (a) has been harmed, (b) is being harmed, or (c) is at risk of being harmed, he or she shall, as soon as practicable, report that knowledge, belief or suspicion, as the case may be, to Tusla."*

The term 'harm' is used as defined in the Children First Act 2015: "'harm' means, in relation to a child—:

- (a) assault, ill-treatment or neglect of the child in a manner that seriously affects or is likely to seriously affect the child's health, development or welfare, or
- (b) sexual abuse of the child, whether caused by a single act, omission or circumstance or a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances, or otherwise".

Also, Section 14(2) of the Children First Act 2015 places obligations on mandated persons to report any disclosures made by a child: "Where a child believes that he or she—

- (a) has been harmed,
- (b) is being harmed, or
- (c) is at risk of being harmed

## **The mandated person cannot ask the DLP to make a mandated report on their behalf.**

- Mandated persons can make a joint mandated report with their DLP or another person, mandated or otherwise
- Where a mandated person has a concern that they believe does not reach the threshold of harm for a mandated report, they should consider whether the concern meets reasonable grounds for concern. If the mandated person thinks the concern does meet reasonable grounds for concern, they should report the concern to their DLP
- If the DLP does not wish to report to Tusla, the mandated person retains their right to report independently. The provisions of the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 would apply in this circumstance. 31 and discloses this belief to a mandated person during a mandated person's employment or profession as such a person, the mandated person shall, ... as soon as practicable, report that disclosure to Tusla."

### *Mandated Assisting*

The Children First Act 2015 provides that all mandated persons can be asked, by Tusla, to provide any necessary and proportionate assistance to aid Tusla in assessing the risk to a child from a mandated report. Assistance includes verbal or written information or attendance at meetings.

### **4.8 Informing Parents**

- It is best practice to inform a parent of any report you intend to make to Tusla in relation to Child Safeguarding unless doing so would further endanger the child, impair Tusla's ability to carry out a risk assessment or put the reporter at risk of harm. The DLP may seek guidance from Tusla Duty Social Work in relation to this
- Parents/guardians have a right to respect and should be consulted and involved in matters that concern their family.
- A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents/guardians and families.

*Where possible, parents/guardians should be informed if you are making a report about their child. However, given the lack of contact Early Childhood Ireland has with parents/guardians, it may not be possible to inform the parent so please document why on the reporting form.*

### **4.9 Exemptions from requirements to report**

#### Concerns developed outside of professional duties

The legal obligation to report under the Act applies **only** to information that you acquire in the course of your professional work or employment. It **does not** apply to information you acquire outside your work, or information given to you on the basis of a personal rather than a professional relationship.

#### **4.10 Reporting retrospective childhood abuse**

A retrospective disclosure is a disclosure from an adult about abuse that happened while they were a child. If any risk is deemed to exist to a child who may be in contact with an alleged abuser, the DLP must report the concern to Tusla without delay using the Retrospective Abuse Report Form:

[https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Retrospective\\_Abuse\\_Report\\_Form\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Retrospective_Abuse_Report_Form_FINAL.pdf)

Adults disclosing abuse may not choose to come forward personally to report their concerns. If you are aware that there may be an on-going risk to a child you should make a report to Tusla

#### ***Reporting concerns about an adult who may pose a risk to children***

If you are unsure about whether to report or not, consult with your DLP or the Tusla Dedicated Contact Point in your area. Reports by adults of childhood abuse will be assessed by Tusla. If there are on-going child protection concerns Tusla will take necessary actions to ensure any child who may be at risk of harm is protected

#### **4.11 Procedure for dealing with a staff member where there are allegations of abuse**

- The employer is responsible for addressing the employment issues. As Early Childhood Ireland is governed by a board of directors (the “Board”), the Board will be included in this process. If Early Childhood Ireland, as the employer, becomes aware of an allegation of abuse by an employee while executing their duties, Early Childhood Ireland will privately inform the employee of the following:
  - The fact that an allegation has been made against him/her
  - The nature of the allegation
  - The employee will be afforded the opportunity to respond, the response will be noted and passed onto Tusla with the formal report. All stages of the process will be recorded
  - An investigation may be required and will be carried out by the nominated person within Early Childhood Ireland. In some instances, independent, external parties may be called upon. Protective measures may be required while the allegation is being investigated. The principles of natural justice, the presumption of innocence and fair procedures should be adhered to. It is very important to note protective measures are intended to be precautionary and not disciplinary
- Regardless of whether the matter is being reported to Tusla, Early Childhood Ireland will always be informed of an allegation of abuse or neglect against an employee
- Early Childhood Ireland will maintain regular and close liaison with Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána and ensure that no action taken frustrates or undermines any investigation



- Further action will be guided by employment legislation, the contract of employment, the other policies and procedures of the service (including the disciplinary policy) and the advice of the investigating agencies
- Management must be alerted to the allegation by the reporter, whether mandated person or DLP
- The first priority is for the safety of the child/young person; management must make sure no child or young person is exposed to unnecessary risk
- Parents/guardians should be informed of any action planned while having regard to the rights to confidentiality of others, such as the person against whom the allegation has been made
- Tusla will follow relevant policy when assessing allegations of abuse made against workers or volunteers

#### **4.12 Protected Disclosure Policy**

To fulfil commitment to safeguarding, the Organisation has a protected disclosure policy (known more informally as whistleblowing policy), and a culture that enables issues about safeguarding and promoting welfare to be addressed through the whistleblowing policy. Early Childhood Ireland is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity, and accountability. In line with that commitment, the Organisation recognises that an important aspect of accountability and transparency is a mechanism to enable employees, volunteers and students to voice poor practice, concerns or allegations about breaches or failures in a reasonable and effective manner.

There must be an awareness of the vulnerability of children the Organisation and its members engage with and that whistleblowing (protected disclosures) applies in all contexts.

In addition, to situations where there is a perceived risk, whistleblowing may be necessary to highlight more general problems with unacceptable practice, performance, or behaviour.

Early Childhood Ireland's Protected Disclosures policy makes clear how to raise a poor practice, concern, which can be a matter about safeguarding.

The Protected Disclosures Act 2014 and the Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Act 2022 and gives workers legal protection against being dismissed or penalised because of publicly disclosing certain serious poor practice, concerns or allegations.

Any instances of poor safeguarding practice under the protected disclosures process must be reported as per the EARLY CHILDHOOD IRELAND Protected Disclosures Policy which is available in **Appendix 13**.



#### 4.13 Data Protection Policies

- All child safeguarding concerns or reports must be recorded on the Early Childhood Ireland Child Safeguarding Concern Form (Appendix 9), even if a decision is made that they do not meet the established thresholds for reporting to Tusla
- If a report is made to Tusla, details should be recorded on the relevant Tusla Form via the web portal as outlined in section 4.3 Responding to Concerns and Reporting Procedures
- Clearly document any consultations, decisions or actions taken in relation to a child safeguarding concern, including any discussions held with the child, parent or service user, Tusla or An Garda Síochána. Records should be made as soon as possible, and it is recommended that they should be completed within 24 hours
- Records should be typed where possible. If handwritten, they must be clearly legible and written in black pen only
- Every entry should be timed in the 24-hour clock (e.g. 16:00hrs) and dated
- Every entry should include a signature with full name in block capitals
- Records should be factual and include all relevant information about the child, his/her home circumstances and the grounds for concern. Note: Opinion is acceptable where there is a professional basis for it. Avoid jargon which someone from another agency may not necessarily understand. Detail what happened and where and use the adult/child's own words where relevant (for example, a disclosure of abuse)
- Identify any colleagues or other persons who may also have witnessed or may have additional information in relation to the concern and try to ensure that they also make a written report
- Refer to any other relevant information e.g. previous incidents that have caused you concern
- Caution should be exercised in accepting third-party information as fact until such information can be verified. Third-party information should be clearly identified as such
- Records may be accessed for multiple reasons over many years. Always write from the perspective that your entry could be viewed by a child, their family representatives and various professionals including legal professionals.
- Keep a record of any information shared with Tusla/An Garda Síochána
- Records will be stored as per the Early Childhood Ireland filing procedure with relevant staff access
- All information pertaining to a child safeguarding concern must be recorded and retained securely in a place which upholds the confidential nature of the information
- Child safeguarding concerns must be kept in perpetuity
- Access to records and/or sharing of information must be on a need-to-know basis only, in the best interests of the child or young person
- Records must only be used for the purpose for which they are intended

## **5: WORKING SAFELY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

### ***5.1 Recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers***

Early Childhood Ireland takes all reasonable steps to ensure that only suitable people are recruited to work for the organisation. A Recruitment Policy is in place which is committed to safer Recruitment and selection and ensures robust mechanisms are used for ensuring that individuals with the correct expertise and suitability are selected. It should be noted that these procedures do not affect the applicant's rights under the relevant employment legislation. The Recruitment Policy is available in **Appendix 14**.

### ***5.2 Garda Vetting***

Subsequent to the commencement of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 on the 29 April, 2016, the Early Childhood Ireland shall NOT permit any person to undertake relevant work or activities on behalf of the organisation unless a vetting disclosure from the National Vetting Bureau is received in respect of that person.

The Garda Vetting Unit will only vet people who carry out relevant work in organisations. This consists of any work or activity carried out by a person in which a necessary and/or regular part consists mainly of the person having access to, or contact with, children or vulnerable persons. The Garda Vetting Unit has indicated to Early Childhood Ireland their understanding that staff, Board members and volunteers do not carry out relevant work, and thus will not be Garda vetted as part of their employment or volunteer roles. Early Childhood Ireland's policy is that vetting will only be sought for staff, Board members and volunteers should their role include relevant work

Early Childhood Ireland reserves the right to revert in line with legislation and Garda Vetting units' rules. All prospective job candidates are required to consent to Garda Vetting should vetting be required. Their Garda Vetting certificate will be held on file for the duration of the staff member's employment.

Any disclosures may ultimately affect the suitability of a person to work within Early Childhood Ireland. It is recognised that there are some areas/ instances, that would automatically deem an individual unsuitable to work with the organisation.

- Has been dishonest in their application and / or Garda Vetting Form.
- Has been convicted of a crime that relates to the ill treatment or neglect of children / minors / vulnerable people.
- Has drug and/or alcohol related charges / convictions, especially where there was evidence that children were involved.
- Has charges / convictions relating to the ownership, production, possession or distribution of child pornography.

- Is known to the child protection services where this knowledge would involve concerns around the candidate's suitability to work with children.
- Has a finding of 'confirmed' child abuse or neglect by Tusla (There are three categories that the Health Service Executive can confirm abuse:
  1. through a medical examination,
  2. through an admission of guilt by the alleged perpetrator or
  3. via a ruling of a court).
- Has public disorder and/or assault related charges / convictions.
- Has damage to public property related charges / convictions, including larceny.
- Has any other offence that in the organisation's opinion deems the person unfit to work with EARLY CHILDHOOD IRELAND. (This would include crimes of deception / fraud / domestic violence / assault etc.).

The **Garda Vetting Policy** outlines the scope of Garda Vetting and any exemptions that apply in the recruitment and selection process.

### **5.3 Induction and training**

A robust induction programme is in place for all new staff. All policies and procedures are provided as part of the induction process. This includes the Organisation's Safeguarding Policies and Procedures and any supporting policies.

As part of the induction programme,

- All staff in Early Childhood Ireland must have completed Tusla's Children First eLearning programme
- Early Childhood Ireland will deliver training on Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures
- Additional training will be provided to DLP's, Deputy DLPs, mandated person and any other staff members whose role has a specific child safeguarding remit. Details are outlined in EARLY CHILDHOOD IRELAND's Induction Policy, Induction Checklist which are in **Appendix 15**.
- The DLP is responsible for ensuring that all staff receive induction training in the Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

### **Training**

- Early Childhood Ireland is responsible for ensuring that the ongoing training needs of staff around child safeguarding are fully addressed
- All training and guideline documents will be regularly reviewed and updated as appropriate and all staff, interns and volunteers will be informed of these updates

- Staff will be provided with relevant training to encourage professional development and best practice. The Designated Liaison Person and Deputy Designated Liaison person will be provided with the relevant training to ensure they have sufficient knowledge to perform their role
- Additional training will also be provided to mandated person and any other staff members whose role has a specific child safeguarding remit. Details of all training is outlined in the Training Strategy and Training Schedule in **Appendix 16**

There are three levels of child safeguarding training in EARLY CHILDHOOD IRELAND as outlined below

CHILD SAFEGUARDING TRAINING			
Level	Target Group	Content	Duration
Level 1	All new Staff via induction	Tusla E learning module (1.5 hour at induction and every 2 years thereafter)	1.5 hours
	All current staff who have not completed level 1	Early Childhood Ireland Information Session - Why and how we safeguard -Safeguarding in Early Childhood Ireland – recognising, responding, recording and reporting	3 Hours
		Annual Refresher	2 Hours
Level 2	All staff who have direct contact with children or members/members of the public	All training above plus Early Childhood Ireland Training – More in depth in terms of recognising and dealing with concerns in the context of organisation, Active Listening, Scenario/challenging behaviours/Maintaining boundaries  Tusla Children First Training	TBC
Level 3	DLP Deputy DLP Mandated Persons	As Above plus Tusla/Barnardos DLP training Tusla Mandated Persons E learning module	

## ***5.4 Code of Child Safeguarding Behaviour***

At Early Childhood Ireland we believe that all staff share responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people at risk. The Safeguarding Code of Behaviour sets out what is required from all our staff and is to be used in conjunction with the Code of Conduct and Ethics as set out in the Employee Handbook. The behaviour code is there to help us protect children and young people from abuse. The Organisation is responsible for making sure everyone taking part in our activities has seen, understood and agreed to follow the code of behaviour, and that they understand the consequences of inappropriate behaviour.

Everyone working at Early Childhood Ireland, whether in a paid or unpaid role is expected to adhere to this Code and you will be asked to sign and return it as acceptance of your commitment to it.

Please see **Appendix 17** for Employee Handbook which contains Child Safeguarding Code of Behaviour

## ***5.5 Supervision and Support of employees and Volunteers***

Providing supervision and support to employees helps to maintain best practice and the safeguarding of children. Supervision provides a regular, structured opportunity to discuss work, provide support, review practice and progress and plan for future personal development. Supervision will involve elements of skills development and reflection. Reflection is a key component of supervision. If we do not reflect on what we have learned there is the danger that we get it right but are unsure how we did it.

- Staff are supervised monthly by their line manager
- Notes are taken and recorded and signed by both parties
- Informal and Ad Hoc supervision is also available for staff
- Each staff also receives an annual appraisal

Please see **Appendix 18** for one-to-one meeting record template

## ***5.6 Safer Management of Activities***

Early Childhood Ireland Activities

- When children and young people are part of any project, event or work staff members will complete a written assessment of risk outlining measures to manage any identified risk in line with the Children First Act 2015. This will be done prior to engaging with children and young people (**Appendix 19** Early Childhood Ireland Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment Template)

- When the Organisation is involved in organising or attending events involving the participation of children, the DLP will ensure that all staff follow the procedures outlined in the EARLY CHILDHOOD IRELAND Code of Child Safeguarding Behaviour
- We ensure appropriate consent is sought, including from children, in relation to the use of digital images via the Digital Image and Photo Permission Policy (**Appendix 20**)
- We ensure the health and safety of children via the Accident and Incidents procedure contained in Safety Statement

#### Safe Internet Use, Including the Use of Photographic and Recording Devices

Early Childhood Ireland staff use Twitter, Facebook and our website to communicate with members and other stakeholders. All staff are required to follow the Child Safeguarding Digital Safety Policy (**Appendix 7**) and all policies related to the use of technology as set out in Section 2.1 -2.12 of the Employee Handbook in order to ensure children are protected and that online practices are in their best interests.

### 6: PROCEDURES FOR SHARING CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Our child safeguarding statement and policies and procedures are available to all on our website
- The child safeguarding policies and procedures are communicated to all members when they join the organisation and when there are any changes in policies and procedures
- Child Safeguarding Procedures are made available to parents if we are working directly with their child (e.g. for the purpose of research)

#### 6.1 Working with children

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) provides all children and young people with a broad range of rights, including the right to be protected from abuse and neglect. Under the UNCRC, which the Irish State ratified in 1992, children/young people have a right to express their views about matters that affect them and for those views to be heard and taken into account in all matters affecting them.

- Early Childhood Ireland seeks to empower the children we come into contact, with by making them aware of their rights in an age-appropriate manner
- We communicate to children through our words and actions that they have a right to be protected, listened to and to have their views taken into consideration
- We tell children about our Code of Child Safeguarding Behaviour for staff in an age appropriate way
- We listen to children and act upon what they communicate to us
- We actively seek children's views, including feedback regarding our services
- We give children 'space' and information to so that they can convey any concerns they might have, including our child friendly complaints/feedback procedure (**Appendix 21**)

- If we are working directly with children, we check in with children that the information you are sharing is being received and understood
- We check that children understand that they are free to approach any staff if they are worried about something
- We recognise that bullying behaviour can be displayed by children as young as 3 years old<sup>2</sup> and we are committed to ensuring the safety and welfare of all children we interact with. We have developed an Anti-Bullying Policy to prevent and respond to incidents of peer bullying (**Appendix 22**) which should be followed in conjunction with the Policy on Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work
- Early Childhood Ireland uses and shares child-friendly resources with children so that they know about their rights and can identify who can help them if they are worried, including a child friendly version of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (<https://www.unicef.org/media/60981/file/convention-rights-child-text-child-friendly-version.pdf>)

## 6.2 Working with Parents

If Early Childhood Ireland is working directly with children or parents we ensure the following

- We provide visual information on who works in the organisation via our website
- We display our Child Safeguarding Statement in our office reception and on our website
- We provide information about our online safety procedures in relation to the use of digital images
- We provide them with access to our child safeguarding policies and procedures, including our complaints procedures (**Appendix 24**)

## 6.3 Complaints Procedure

Early Childhood Ireland is committed to providing a high-quality service to everyone including children, members, partners, and all stakeholders. The Organisation is committed to ensuring that all our communications and dealings with members and other stakeholders are of the highest possible standard. Our complaints procedure outlines how individuals can comment or make a complaint and to ensure that that they receive an appropriate response in a timely manner.

We welcome positive and negative feedback, and any suggestions individuals may have for how we can improve our organisation and the services we offer. We know that sometimes issues, concerns and misunderstandings can arise and can be resolved informally at the initial point of contact. However, we recognise that from time to time there may be occasions when someone may feel that the quality or level of service provided fell short of what they could reasonably expect. We also want to know about these occasions so that we can address the problem, plan to avoid its repetition, improve our services and the overall experience of the Organisation.

<sup>2</sup> Vlachou, M., Andreou, E., Botsoglou, K., & Didakalou, E., (2011). Bully/victim problems among preschool children: a review of current research evidence Educational Psychology Review. 23(3). 329.]



## 7: IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEWING GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND CHILD SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURES

Early Childhood Ireland recognises that child safeguarding is an ongoing and changing process and as such, it is important to have mechanisms in place to make sure that the child safeguarding policies and procedures are put into practice.

This is done via the Organisation's Child Safeguarding Implementation and Review mechanisms (**Appendix 25**) which ensure that our child safeguarding policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated through on-going risk assessment and measures to address any identified risks.

This Safeguarding Policies and Procedures will be reviewed every two years against **Appendix 3** – Review checklist of [guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures](#) (86-89) to ensure that any incidents which may have occurred will inform its development and/or that it remains fit for purpose in accordance with the work we are doing.



Early  
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Ireland



## 8.APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Child Safeguarding Statement of Understanding

#### Child Safeguarding Statement of Understanding

As part of the induction programme for the role of \_\_\_\_\_ I confirm that I \_\_\_\_\_

- Have been provided with a copy of the child safeguarding policies and procedures as contained in the Employee Handbook.
- Have been given an opportunity to have any questions addressed by my line manager
- Have read and understood the child safeguarding statement I have been provided with; this includes all other policies contained within the Employee Handbook relating to Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures
- Have read and understand the Accident and Incidents process contained in the Organisations Safety Statement
- Know how to spot the signs that a child may be experiencing abuse
- Know how to respond appropriately if a child makes a disclosure about abuse
- Know what to do if they have concerns about a child's wellbeing and who to talk to in the organisation
- Will abide by the requirements of the child safeguarding policy and procedures
- Will complete the Tusla E Learning Module
- Will attend any child safeguarding training required

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

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

## **Appendix 2 – Overview of relevant legislation**

### **Child Care Act 1991**

The purpose of the act is to “up-date the law in relation to the care of children who have been assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused or who are at risk.” The main provisions of the act are:

1. The placing of a statutory duty on the H.S.E to promote the welfare of children who are not receiving adequate care and protection up to the age of 18 (Sec. 3.1)
2. The strengthening of the powers of the H.S.E to provide childcare and family support services.
3. The improvement of the procedures to facilitate immediate intervention by H.S.E and An Garda Síochana where children are in danger.
4. The revision of provisions to enable the courts to place children, who have been assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused or who are at risk, in the care of or under the supervision of H.S.E.
5. The introduction of arrangements for the supervision and inspection of pre-school services.
6. The revision of provisions in relation to the registration and inspection of residential centres for children.

### **Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998**

The main provisions of the 1998 Act are:

1. The provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports Child Abuse “reasonably and in good faith” to designated officers of Health Service Executive or any member of An Garda Síochana.
2. The provision of significant protections for employees who report Child Abuse. These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to, and including, dismissal.
3. The creation of a new offence of false reporting of Child Abuse where a person makes a report of Child Abuse to the appropriate authorities “knowing that statement to be false.” This is a new criminal offence designed to protect innocent persons from malicious reports.

## **Criminal Justice Act 2006**

Section 176 of this Act created an offence of reckless endangerment of children. This offence may be committed by a person who has authority or control over a child or abuser who intentionally or recklessly endangers a child by:

1. Causing or permitting the child to be placed or left in a situation that creates a substantial risk to the child of being a victim of serious harm or sexual abuse; or
2. Failing to take reasonable steps to protect a child from such a risk while knowing that the child is in such a situation.

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

The Act creates an offence of withholding information in relation to specified offences, including (but not limited to) murder, manslaughter, false imprisonment, rape, sexual assault and incest, committed against a child or vulnerable person. The offence arises where a person knows or believes that a specified offence has been committed against a child or vulnerable person and he or she has information which would be of material assistance in securing the apprehension, prosecution or conviction of another person for that offence and fails without reasonable excuse to disclose that information to the Gardaí.

## **National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012**

The Act provides the legislative basis for the mandatory vetting of persons who wish to undertake certain work or activities, including in a voluntary capacity, relating to children or vulnerable persons or to provide certain services to children or vulnerable persons.

- Any work or activity which is carried out by a person, a necessary and regular part of which consists mainly of the person having access to, or contact with, children or vulnerable adults.

To comply with the legislation EARLY CHILDHOOD IRELAND must vet everyone who falls into this category. Not everyone has to be or can be vetted, each position will be assessed in accordance with the Act and in line with EARLY CHILDHOOD IRELAND's Garda Vetting Policy.

## **The Children First Act 2015**

The policy intent is that the Children First Act 2015 will operate side-by-side with the existing non-statutory obligations provided for in Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017). The Children First Act 2015 put elements of the Children First National Guidance on a statutory footing and provides for a number of key child protection measures:

- A requirement on organisations providing services to children to keep children safe and for 'relevant services' to produce a Child Safeguarding Statement.
- A requirement on defined categories of persons (mandated persons) to report child protection concerns over a defined threshold to the Child and Family Agency (the Agency);
- A requirement on mandated persons to assist the Agency in the assessment of a child protection risk, if so requested to do so by the Agency;
- Provisions of the Act ensure that concerns about children are brought to the attention of the Agency without delay and improve the quality of reports made to the Agency and the quality of follow up on concerns.

## **Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017**

The Act enhances and updates laws to combat the sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, including new offences relating to child sexual grooming and new and strengthened offences to tackle child pornography. The Act also criminalises the purchase of sexual services, introduces new provisions regarding the giving of evidence by victims in sexual offence trials and introduces a new offence addressing public indecency. Other provisions include maintaining the age of consent to sexual activity at 17 years of age and for a new "proximity of age" defence as well as a statutory statement of the law as regards consent to sexual acts.

## **Appendix 3: List of Relevant Services**

Schedule 1 of the Children First Act 2015 defines Relevant Services as:

1. Any work or activity which is carried out by a person, a necessary and regular part of which consists mainly of the person having access to, or contact with, children in—
  - (a) an establishment which provides Early Years and School Age Care services within the meaning of Part VIIA of the Child Care Act 1991,
  - (b) a school or centre of education, both within the meaning of the Education Act 1998,
  - (c) any hospital, hospice, health care centre or other centre which receives, treats or otherwise provides physical or mental health services to children,

- (d) a designated centre within the meaning of section 2 of the Health Act 2007, in so far as it relates to an institution at which residential services are provided in accordance with the Child Care Act 1991 or to children with disabilities in relation to their disabilities,
- (e) a special care unit provided and maintained in accordance with section 23K of the Child Care Act 1991,
- (f) a children detention school within the meaning of section 3 of the Children Act 2001,
- (g) a reception or accommodation centre which provides residential accommodation services to applicants for asylum under contract to the Department of Justice and Equality where children may be accommodated, or
- (h) a centre which provides residential accommodation services to victims of domestic violence where children may be accommodated.

2. Any work or activity which consists of the inspection of a service provided to a child under the Child Care Act 1991, the Education Act 1998, the Children Act 2001 or the Health Act 2007.
3. Any work or activity which consists of the inspection, examination or investigation by the Office of the Ombudsman for Children under the Ombudsman for Children Act 2002.
4. Any work or activity which consists of treatment (including assessment which may lead to treatment), therapy or counselling provided to a child.
5. Any work or activity which consists of the provision of—
  - (a) educational, research, training, cultural, recreational, leisure, social or physical activities to children,
  - (b) care or supervision of children, or
  - (c) formal consultation with, or formal participation by, a child in respect of matters that affect his or her life, whether or not for commercial or any other consideration.
6. Any work or activity which consists of the provision of advice or guidance services (including by means of electronic interactive communications), a necessary and regular part of which consists, mainly, of the person having access to, or contact with, children.
7. Any work or activity as a minister or priest or any other person engaged in the advancement of any religious beliefs which would or could bring that minister, priest or other person, as the case may be, into contact with a child.
8. Any work or activity as a driver of, or as an assistant to the driver, or as a conductor, or as a supervisor of children using a vehicle which is being hired or used only for the purpose of conveying children who are unaccompanied by a parent or guardian.

9. Any work or activity which is carried out by a member of An Garda Síochána, a necessary and regular part of which consists mainly of the person having access to, or contact with, children.

#### **Appendix 4 – Mandated Persons**

Schedule 2 of the Children First Act 2015 specifies the following classes of persons as Mandated Persons for the purposes of the Act:

1. Registered medical practitioner within the meaning of section 2 of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007.
2. Registered nurse or registered midwife within the meaning of section 2(1) of the Nurses and Midwives Act 2011.
3. Physiotherapist registered in the register of members of that profession.
4. Speech and language therapist registered in the register of members of that profession.
5. Occupational therapist registered in the register of members of that profession.
6. Registered dentist within the meaning of section 2 of the Dentists Act 1985.
7. Psychologist who practises as such and who is eligible for registration in the register (if any) of members of that profession.
8. Social care worker who practises as such and who is eligible for registration in accordance with Part 4 of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 in the register of that profession.
9. Social worker who practises as such and who is eligible for registration in accordance with Part 4 of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 in the register (if any) of that profession.
10. Emergency medical technician, paramedic and advanced paramedic registered with the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council under the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (Establishment) Order 2000 (S.I. No. 109 of 2000).
11. Probation officer within the meaning of section 1 of the Criminal Justice (Community Service) Act 1983.
12. Teacher registered with the Teaching Council.
13. Member of An Garda Síochána.
14. Guardian ad litem appointed in accordance with section 26 of the Child Care Act 1991.
15. Person employed in any of the following capacities:
  - (a) manager of domestic violence shelter;
  - (b) manager of homeless provision or emergency accommodation facility;
  - (c) manager of asylum seeker accommodation (direct provision) centre;
  - (d) addiction counsellor employed by a body funded, wholly or partly, out of moneys provided by the Oireachtas;
  - (e) psychotherapist or a person providing counselling who is registered with one of the voluntary professional bodies;
  - (f) manager of a language school or other recreational school where children reside away from home;

- (g) member of the clergy (howsoever described) or pastoral care worker (howsoever described) of a church or other religious community;
- (h) director of any institution where a child is detained by an order of a court;
- (i) safeguarding officer, child protection officer or other person (howsoever described) who is employed for the purpose of performing the child welfare and protection function of religious, sporting, recreational, cultural, educational and other bodies and organisations offering services to children;
- (j) child care staff member employed in a pre-school service within the meaning of Part VIIA of the Child Care Act 1991;
- (k) person responsible for the care or management of a youth work service within the meaning of section 2 of the Youth Work Act 2001.

16. Youth worker who—

- (a) holds a professional qualification that is recognised by the National Qualifications Authority in youth work within the meaning of section 3 of the Youth Work Act 2001 or a related discipline, and
- (b) is employed in a youth work service within the meaning of section 2 of the Youth Work Act 2001.

17. Foster carer registered with the Agency.

18. A person carrying on a pre-school service within the meaning of Part VIIA of the Child Care Act 1991.

More information in relation to Mandated Persons can be found on pp19-28 of Children First 2017.

## Appendix 5: Early Childhood Ireland Current List of Mandated Persons (2023)

Manager:

Date Reviewed:

Staff Name	Relevant Qualification	Post Held	Commencement Date as Mandated Person

### *Mandated Person qualifying roles*

The Children First Act 2015, Schedule 2, provides a full list of people who are classified as mandated persons.

### Specific posts in Early Childhood Ireland

- (i) safeguarding officer, child protection officer or other person (howsoever described) who is employed for the purpose of performing the child welfare and protection function of religious, sporting, recreational, cultural, educational and other bodies and organisations offering services to children
- (ii) Foster Parent

### **List of current Designated Liaison Persons (DLPs) in Early Childhood Ireland**

Staff Name	Role	Date Training Completed
Carmel Ward	DLP	4 July 2023
Vivienne Murtagh	Deputy DLP	4 July 2023



## **Appendix 6 – Types of child abuse and how they may be recognised**

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time. Abuse and neglect can occur within the family, in the community or in an institutional setting. The abuser may be someone known to the child or a stranger, and can be an adult, or another child. In a situation where abuse is alleged to have been carried out by another child, you should consider it a child welfare and protection issue for both children and you should follow child protection procedures for both the victim and the alleged abuser.

The important factor in deciding whether the behaviour is abuse or neglect is the impact of that behaviour on the child rather than the intention of the parent / carer.

The definitions of neglect and abuse presented in this section are not legal definitions. They are intended to describe ways in which a child might experience abuse and how this abuse may be recognised.

### **Neglect**

Child neglect is the most frequently reported category of abuse, both in Ireland and internationally. Ongoing chronic neglect is recognised as being extremely harmful to the development and well-being of the child and may have serious long-term negative consequences.

Neglect occurs when a child does not receive adequate care or supervision to the extent that the child is harmed physically or developmentally. It is generally defined in terms of an omission of care, where a child's health, development or welfare is impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, medical care, intellectual stimulation or supervision and safety. Emotional neglect may also lead to the child having attachment difficulties. The extent of the damage to the child's health, development or welfare is influenced by a range of factors. These factors include the extent, if any, of positive influence in the child's life as well as the age of the child and the frequency and consistency of neglect.

Neglect is associated with poverty but not necessarily caused by it. It is strongly linked to parental substance misuse, domestic violence, and parental mental illness and disability.

A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when neglect becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer. This may become apparent where you see the child over a period of time, or the effects of neglect may be obvious based on having seen the child once.

*The following are features of child neglect:*

- Children being left alone without adequate care and supervision
- Malnourishment, lacking food, unsuitable food or erratic feeding
- Non-organic failure to thrive, i.e. a child not gaining weight due not only to malnutrition but also emotional deprivation
- Failure to provide adequate care for the child's medical and developmental needs, including intellectual stimulation
- Inadequate living conditions – unhygienic conditions, environmental issues, including lack of adequate heating and furniture
- Lack of adequate clothing
- Inattention to basic hygiene
- Lack of protection and exposure to danger, including moral danger, or lack of supervision appropriate to the child's age
- Persistent failure to attend school
- Abandonment or desertion

### **Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse is the systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment of a child as part of the overall relationship between a caregiver and a child. Once-off and occasional difficulties between a parent/carer and child are not considered emotional abuse. Abuse occurs when a child's basic need for attention, affection, approval, consistency and security are not met, due to incapacity or indifference from their parent or caregiver. Emotional abuse can also occur when adults responsible for taking care of children are unaware of and unable (for a range of reasons) to meet their children's emotional and developmental needs. Emotional abuse is not easy to recognise because the effects are not easily seen.

A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when the behaviour becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer.

*Emotional abuse may be seen in some of the following ways:*

- Rejection
- Lack of comfort and love
- Lack of attachment
- Lack of proper stimulation (e.g. fun and play)
- Lack of continuity of care (e.g. frequent moves, particularly unplanned)

- Continuous lack of praise and encouragement
- Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming of the child
- Bullying
- Conditional parenting in which care or affection of a child depends on his or her behaviours or actions
- Extreme overprotectiveness
- Inappropriate non-physical punishment (e.g. locking child in bedroom)
- Ongoing family conflicts and family violence
- Seriously inappropriate expectations of a child relative to his/her age and stage of development

There may be no physical signs of emotional abuse unless it occurs with another type of abuse. A child may show signs of emotional abuse through their actions or emotions in several ways. These include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, risk taking and aggressive behaviour.

It should be noted that no one indicator is conclusive evidence of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is more likely to impact negatively on a child where it is persistent over time and where there is a lack of other protective factors.

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is when someone deliberately hurts a child physically or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents. A reasonable concern exists where the child's health and/ or development is, may be, or has been damaged as a result of suspected physical abuse.

*Physical abuse can include the following:*

- Physical punishment
- Beating, slapping, hitting or kicking
- Pushing, shaking or throwing
- Pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling
- Use of excessive force in handling
- Deliberate poisoning
- Suffocation

- Fabricated/induced illness
- Female genital mutilation

The Children First Act 2015 includes a provision that abolishes the common law defence of reasonable chastisement in court proceedings. This defence could previously be invoked by a parent or other person in authority who physically disciplined a child. The change in the legislation now means that in prosecutions relating to assault or physical cruelty, a person who administers such punishment to a child cannot rely on the defence of reasonable chastisement in the legal proceedings. The result of this is that the protections in law relating to assault now apply to a child in the same way as they do to an adult.

## **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or arousal, or for that of others. It includes the child being involved in sexual acts (masturbation, fondling, oral or penetrative sex) or exposing the child to sexual activity directly or through pornography.

Child sexual abuse may cover a wide spectrum of abusive activities. It rarely involves just a single incident and in some instances, occurs over a number of years. Child sexual abuse most commonly happens within the family, including older siblings and extended family members.

Cases of sexual abuse mainly come to light through disclosure by the child or his or her siblings/friends, from the suspicions of an adult, and/or by physical symptoms.

*Examples of child sexual abuse include the following:*

- Any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child
- An invitation to sexual touching or intentional touching or molesting of a child's body whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification
- Masturbation in the presence of a child or the involvement of a child in an act of masturbation
- Sexual intercourse with a child, whether oral, vaginal or anal
- Sexual exploitation of a child, which includes:
  - Inviting, inducing or coercing a child to engage in prostitution or the production of child pornography [for example, exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, videotape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of an image by computer or other means]

- Inviting, coercing or inducing a child to participate in, or to observe, any sexual, indecent or obscene act
- Showing sexually explicit material to children, which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse
- Exposing a child to inappropriate or abusive material through information and communication technology
- Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person

An Garda Síochána will deal with any criminal aspects of a sexual abuse case under the relevant criminal justice legislation. The prosecution of a sexual offence against a child will be considered within the wider objective of child welfare and protection. The safety of the child is paramount and at no stage should a child's safety be compromised because of concern for the integrity of a criminal investigation.

In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that in criminal law the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years for both boys and girls. Any sexual relationship where one or both parties are under the age of 17 is illegal. However, it may not necessarily be regarded as child sexual abuse. Details on exemptions for mandated reporting of certain cases of underage consensual sexual activity can be found in Chapter 3 of [Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children](#).

#### **Appendix 7 – Child Safeguarding Digital Safety Policy In Progress**

#### **Appendix 8 - Questions to ask when deciding whether or not to report concern**

This uses the Tusla National Approach to Practice: The Signs of Safety Tusla has adopted the Signs of Safety approach as a way of working with children and their families. The Signs of Safety approach is helpful, as it gives a clear and effective way to assess risk and find solutions.

1. What are we worried about?
2. What's working well?
3. What needs to happen?
4. How worried are we on a scale of 1 to 10?

#### **What are we worried about?**

- What have I seen or heard that worries me about the child?
- If nothing changes, what am I most worried about that will happen to the child?
- What are the adults that are caring for the child doing that is bad for or harming the child?
- What has been the impact of their behaviour on the child?
- What would the child say they are most worried about?

### **What's working well?**

- Thinking about the problems I am worried about who has helped the child and family deal with this problem in the past?
- What do I like about the child/parents?
- What would the child say are the best things about their life?

### **What needs to happen?**

- What do I think needs to happen to make the situation better?
- Who do I think is best placed to help this family?
- What services do I think this family/parent/children need most?
- Who helps or supports the family and child?
- How do they help?

#### *For the family*

- Is there anyone else supporting you at the moment?
- Do you mind if I speak to them?
- Is there any other support that you feel you need at the moment?
- What would you ideally like to see happen next?
- Have you told anyone about this before?
- Has this happened before?
- Do you feel that professionals understand your concerns?

### **How worried are we on a scale of 1 to 10?**

It may not always be appropriate or necessary to ask all of these questions and you should use your professional judgement in each situation. You may not always have all this information about a family. However, you should make the report regardless. If you are concerned about a child but unsure if you should report it to Tusla, you can contact Tusla informally to discuss your concerns.

## Appendix 9: Child Safeguarding Concern Form

Child Safeguarding Concern Form	
<b>Date</b>	
<b>Staff Member</b>	
<b>Childs Name</b>	
<b>If you can include address, gender, and age/date of birth of child, name and contact details for parent(s)/carers, educational setting, and known professionals providing other services, e.g., social workers, etc.</b>	
<b>Summary of Concern</b>  - Note where full details are stored	
<b>Person who Raised the Concern &amp; Relationship to Child</b>	
<b>Action Taken and by Whom?</b>  <b>Consultation with Tusla and response?</b>	
<b>If a Concerns was reported to Tusla - date and by whom (please attached formal copy of concern reported via the portal)</b>	
<b>If a concern was not reported, please document why</b>	

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This information is adapted from The Southern Health Service Executive – Child Protection Policy 1996 and gives advice to staff 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 staff members the initial steps staff must 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 in Tusla and/or Gardaí.

- 1. Receive:** It is essential that staff 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 it is being taken seriously.
- 2. 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 staff 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. Equally important is not to make promises about confidentiality.
- 3.** 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 won’t tell anyone – this is a promise staff cannot keep, as these procedures require staff 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.
- 4. React:** Staff 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 staff need to probe the child in a non-intrusive or investigative way to ascertain exactly what it is the child wishes to say, and thereafter whether there are grounds for referring the matter further.

Such questioning of the child 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 criticise the alleged perpetrator, and that they explain what they need to do next and who you have to tell about this information.

- 5. Record:** An essential part of the disclosure process is to ensure that staff take contemporaneous notes of what the child says, in the child’s own words, and that such records are dated and signed by the staff member. Where staff members record an opinion in respect of the disclosure, they are required to identify it as such.



Staff should also be aware of the information required in the Standard Reporting Form, so as to try to ascertain as much of the needed information as possible. Lastly, in complying with this procedure, staff members that record a disclosure should record that they passed the information on to the DLP.

6. **Remember:** In order to ensure that the child safeguarding processes of EARLY CHILDHOOD IRELAND contribute to the promotion of children’s welfare, it is necessary to follow these guidelines in conjunction with those contained in Department of Children and Youth Affairs Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017).
7. **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. Therefore, staff should actively seek out support from peers and line management. Early Childhood Ireland is committed to making available such support systems as required in these situations.

### Useful Phrases When Responding to a Disclosure

What to Say	What not to say
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I want to listen to what you have to say</li> <li>✓ I am going to do my best to help you</li> <li>✓ You did the right thing by telling me, this is</li> <li>✓ what I am going to do next...</li> <li>✓ You are not to blame</li> <li>✓ Is there anything else you want to share?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Wait until I get my manager so you can tell him/her too?</li> <li>✗ I can’t do anything</li> <li>✗ This is your fault</li> <li>✗ I can’t believe it, I’m shocked</li> <li>✗ Don’t tell me anymore</li> </ul>

**Appendix 13: Protected Disclosures Policy** [Early Childhood Ireland - Protected Disclosures Policy - 2023.pdf](#)

### Early Childhood Ireland Safer Recruitment and Selection Policy

EARLY CHILDHOOD IRELAND takes all reasonable steps to ensure that only suitable people are recruited to work for the organisation. A recruitment and selection policy is in place which ensures robust mechanisms are used for ensuring that individuals with the correct expertise and suitability are selected. It should be noted that these procedures do not affect the applicant's rights under the relevant employment legislation.

- All posts in EARLY CHILDHOOD IRELAND will have a clear job description outlining all the roles, responsibilities and expectations, minimum qualifications, and a person specification of desirable attributes and skills associated with the role
- Positions may be advertised both internally and externally
- Where a post is upgraded or newly created, which does not involve an increase in the overall number of staff; the competition may be confined to suitably qualified internal staff
- Checking of qualifications, experience and references will be an important component of the selection process
- All applicants will be advised of their responsibilities in relation to child safeguarding and their assessment of suitability will include an awareness of child safeguarding and safe care practices where appropriate
- The application form will enable potential applicants to identify any relevant experiences with children, and relevant training associated with childcare where appropriate
- All applicants will be required to sign the Declaration below stating that there is no known reason or event that would render them unsuitable for the post, and declaring any past or pending criminal prosecutions against them
- All staff sign a Child Safeguarding Statement of Understanding (**Appendix 5**)
- The interview boards will be comprised of experienced and qualified personnel, with a proven ability to extract and explore the information, which the candidate has included on the application form.
- All applicants will be required to submit names of three referees who will provide a character reference, a requirement of which will include a statement as to the referees considered view on the candidate's suitability to work with children if this is a requirement of the role. Listed referees must include the applicant's most recent employer, and the application form will state how and when the references will be obtained. Each written reference is followed up by a phone call seeking verbal confirmation of the particulars of the written reference.

- All paperwork associated with the application process will be kept in an appropriate file. All references, reports, and communications in respect of the applicant should be in writing, and access to it will only be available to appropriate personnel in the Organisation. Candidates will be advised that their application and the follow-up process of recruitment will be dealt with in the strictest confidence.
- The successful applicant will only be offered a position subject to (a) suitable references, (b) proof of qualifications, (c) relevant vetting / clearance procedures (if required), and (d) positive proof of identification (Passport and birth certificate).
- All contracts makes explicit reference to EARLY CHILDHOOD IRELAND's Child Safeguarding policies and corresponding duty to report child safeguarding concerns;
- The Organisation endorses the requirement to obtain Garda Clearance. The Organisation is committed to working with the vetting Unit to ensure that best practice in relation to the administration of all vetting applications is put in place, to enhance the protection, which EARLY CHILDHOOD IRELAND can provide to children.



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## Child Safeguarding Declaration Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

DOB \_\_\_\_\_

Role: \_\_\_\_\_

I \_\_\_\_\_ hereby declare that.

1. To the best of my knowledge and belief, there is nothing in relation to my conduct, character or personal background of any nature that would adversely affect the position of trust in which I would be placed by virtue of this appointment.
2. I have not in the past been the subject of criminal charges, nor have I any present or pending criminal prosecutions.
3. To the best of my knowledge that there is no reason or event that would render me unsuitable for this position.
4. I do not currently have any injury or medical condition that may prevent or affect my ability to carry out the duties of the position for which I am applying (information is also required for reasonable accommodation purposes.)

**I understand and accept that providing false information and failure to declare pertinent details / information may result in termination of my employment with Early Childhood Ireland at any time before or during my employment.**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Witnessed By:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Position:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Child Safeguarding Induction Policy

All newly appointed staff, coming from within or from outside the agency, or newly qualified or new to the workforce receive personalised induction and support, training and appraisal with respect to their new role. Early Childhood Ireland believes that every staff member has a role in child safeguarding and to support this, a robust induction process is in place for new employees, students and volunteers. All policies and procedures are provided as part of the induction process. This includes the Organisations 's Child Safeguarding Protection Policies and Procedures.

In relation to safeguarding, the programme of induction should include

- A full explanation of their role, responsibilities and accountability and the standard of conduct and behaviour expected
- An introduction to EARLY CHILDHOOD IRELAND's child safeguarding policies and procedures
- An introduction to DLP and an explanation of their role
- Complete the Tusla eLearning module during the induction period
- Attend Early Childhood Ireland's induction training on Child Safeguarding
- Attend any additional training required to enable to carry out any child safeguarding functions that are specified in their contract of employment (e.g. DLP training/Mandated persons e learning module)
- Submit a Garda Vetting application if applicable
- Sign the Induction Agreement Form

### Child Safeguarding Training Strategy

The purpose of this training strategy is to outline Early Childhood Ireland's plan to safeguard and promote the welfare of children through the provision of child safeguarding training. It outlines how we will support our workforce to acquire the knowledge, skills and values to safeguard children, protect them from harm and promote their welfare.

The training strategy will be consistent with the organisation's vision on promoting the rights of the child, including their right to be heard, listened to, and taken seriously.

The child safeguarding training strategy is integrated with the over-arching guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures and implementation plan. This training plan is and the resources needed re incorporated into our annual budget.

The aims of this training strategy are:

- To provide good quality, evidence-based training opportunities for staff which will enable them to fulfil their roles and responsibilities under Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Children First Act 2015;
- To raise awareness and create understanding of obligations under Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Children First Act 2015;
- To develop a confident and competent workforce

An annual review of the training strategy for child safeguarding will be undertaken and the Child Safeguarding Training Schedule will be devised.

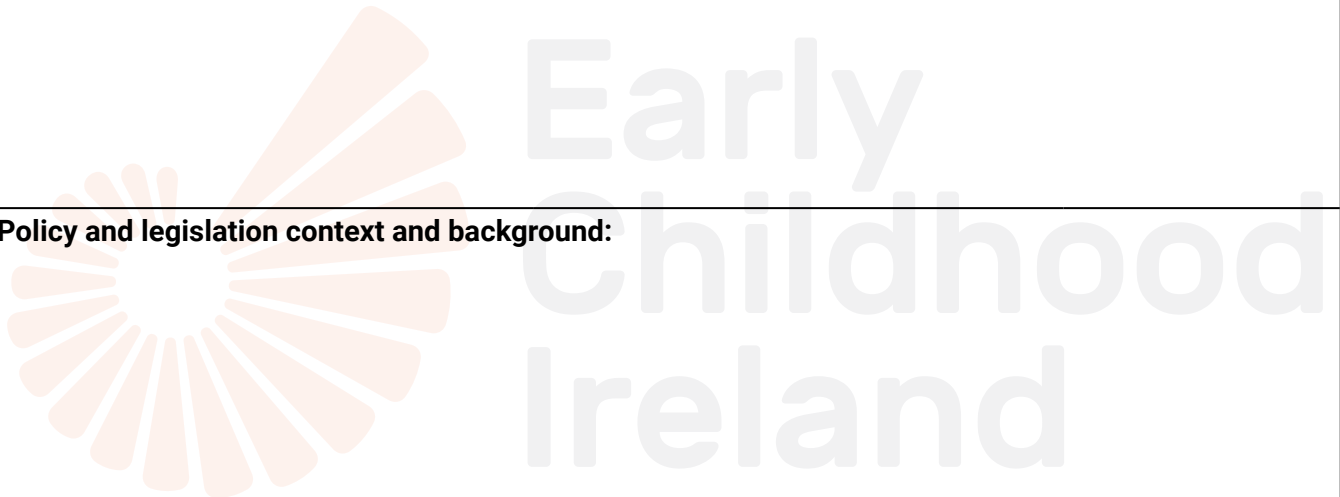
**What services do we provide that require child safeguarding responsibilities?**

**Introduction /Aims /Objectives of training strategy:**

**Policy and legislation context and background:**

**What is in place to support the strategy? e.g. documentation, committees, programmes, working groups, training departments**

**Membership of Child Safeguarding Oversight Group (roles including roles allocated):**



**Who is responsible for development and implementation of the training strategy?**

How Will	Details	Who
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Training programme(s) be coordinated:</b></li>   <li>2. <b>Training needs be identified</b></li>   <li>3. <b>Trainers be recruited/selected</b></li>   <li>4. <b>Support and information be provided to trainers</b></li>   <li>5. <b>The organisation ensure resources are available</b></li>   <li>6. <b>Regular review and evaluation be carried out</b></li>   <li>7. <b>A quality assurance strategy be implemented:</b></li>   <li>8. <b>A training register be maintained:</b></li> </ol>		

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**Current child safeguarding training needs Target audience groups – detailing numbers of staff and volunteers, level and type of contact they have with children and families, level of training needed and what is currently being provided (see training needs template below for assistance)**

**Long term (3-5 years) child safeguarding training needs – evidence of need This should be quantifiable data based on analysis of information gathered through assessing training needs in child safeguarding within the organisation.**

**Resources available to implement the strategy: short, medium and long term, training, administration, etc.**

**Additional resources required**

**What measures will you put in place to quality assure your training programme?**

**Evaluation/review mechanisms including recording systems and proposed performance indicators (how will you measure the implementation of this training strategy?)**

**Key partners to the strategy**

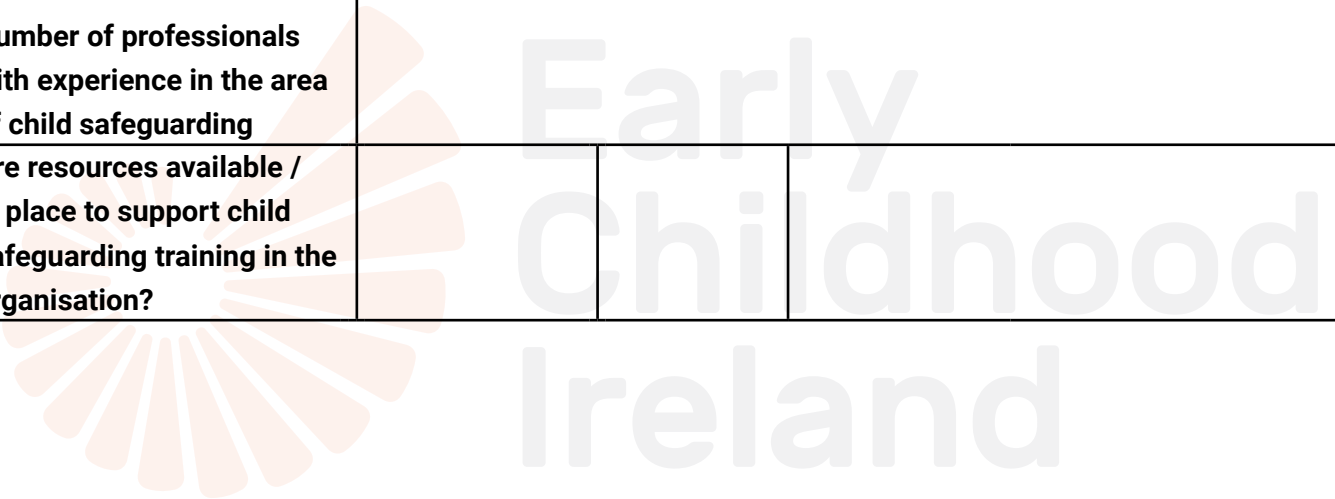
**Duration of the strategy (3-5 years)**

## Child Safeguarding Training Needs Analysis Template

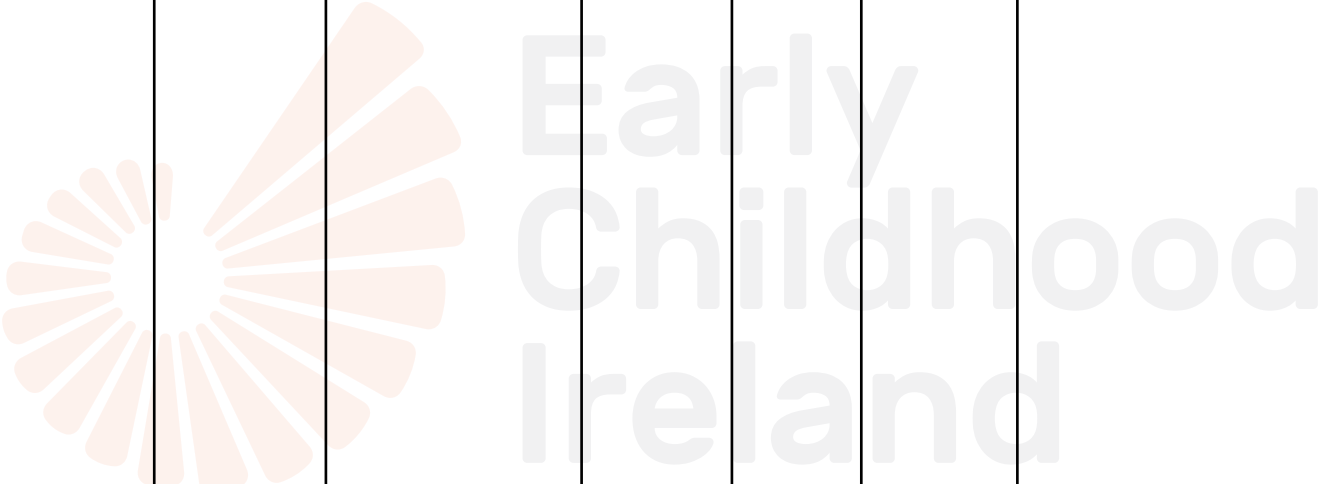
1. Services provided	Level and type of contact with children and families		
<b>Details of member organisations who are relevant services</b>			
Name of Organisation	Services Provided	Level and type of contact they have with children and families	
<b>Children First Implementation</b>			
	N/A	Yes	No
<b>Identify links established with relevant government department(s) and/or service sector(s) or umbrella bodies:</b>			
<b>Has your organisation established a Children First implementation or oversight group?</b>			

Has your organisation established and/or published a Children First implementation plan or strategy?			
<b>Guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures</b>			
	N/A	Yes	No
Are your organisation's guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures in place?			
Have the organisation's guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures been reviewed for consistency with the Children First Act 2015 and Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children?			
If Yes, what date?			
Any Outstanding Issues?			
Name of person/s responsible for development of the organisation's guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures:			
Have all relevant staff received induction training on the organisation's guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures?			
Have the guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures been shared with the recipient relevant services?			
<b>Training Resources</b>			
	N/A	Yes	No
Percentage of organisation's budget that is explicitly committed to child safeguarding training:			

<p><b>Does the organisation have a child safeguarding training strategy?</b></p>			
<p><b>Who is responsible for the implementation of the training strategy?</b></p>			
<p><b>Access to venues</b></p> <p><b>Are there trainers available for child safeguarding training</b></p> <p><b>Is there administrative support staff</b></p> <p><b>Number of professionals with experience in the area of child safeguarding</b></p>			
<p><b>Are resources available / in place to support child safeguarding training in the organisation?</b></p>			



## ECI Child Safeguarding Training Schedule 2023

Child Safeguarding Induction	Introduction to Children First (eLearning)	Organisational Specific Training	Tusla Foundation Training	DLP Training	Mandated Person Training	Refresher Training
Number of Staff training is required By						
						

## Appendix 17: Code of Child Safeguarding Behaviour

### Safeguarding Code of Behaviour

As an organisation, we believe that all staff, workers and volunteers share responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk. The Safeguarding Code of Behaviour sets out what is required from all our staff and volunteers and is to be used in conjunction with the Code of Conduct and Ethics as set out in the Staff Handbook (2022). The behaviour code is there to help us protect children and young people from abuse.

Early Childhood Ireland is responsible for making sure everyone taking part in our activities has seen, understood and agreed to follow the code of behaviour, and that they understand the consequences of inappropriate behaviour.

Everyone working at Early Childhood Ireland, whether in a paid or unpaid role is expected to adhere to this Code and you will be asked to sign and return it as acceptance of your commitment to it.

As an Early Childhood Ireland staff member, I will:

- Listen to and respect children at all times
- Ensure I treat all children equally as defined under the Equal Status Act 2000 to 2004
- Prioritising the welfare of children and young people
- Value and take children's contributions seriously, actively involving them in planning activities wherever possible
- Provide a safe environment for children and young people
- Respect a child's privacy
- If necessary, discuss boundaries on behaviour with children and young people, particularly when a representative of EARLY CHILDHOOD IRELAND is working one-to-one with a child
- Ensure that I am vigilant to the signs of abuse as defined in EARLY CHILDHOOD IRELAND's child safeguarding policies and procedures and report such concerns as well as any concerns regarding a colleague's behaviour with regard to a child or children
- In order to follow child protection procedures, I will never promise confidentiality to a child and I will explain this to the child or young person at the earliest opportunity.
- Ensure my contact with children and young people is appropriate and relevant to the nature of the activity you are involved in
- Ensure that whenever possible, there is more than one adult present during activities with children and young people. If a situation arises where I am alone with a child or young person, ensure that you are within sight or can be heard by other adults
- Follow our policies and procedures, including our policies and procedures for safeguarding, whistleblowing and online safety
- Model rights-respecting behaviours so children learn through experiencing their rights being upheld

- Report all concerns about abusive behaviour, following our child safeguarding policies and procedures, this includes inappropriate behaviour displayed by an adult or child and directed at anybody of any age.
- Ensure that at Early Childhood Ireland events and activities involving children, the appropriate staff supervision ratio is maintained
- Ensure that a parental/guardian consent form has been completed and returned for all participating children
- Ensure that at events, being organised by member organisations, in which EARLY CHILDHOOD IRELAND is participating, that those organisations have in place adequate child protection procedures to which EARLY CHILDHOOD IRELAND staff can adhere to and that EARLY CHILDHOOD IRELAND staff are made aware of their obligations to report any child protection concerns using the procedures of that organisation

As an Early Childhood Ireland staff member, I will not:

- Develop sexual, or inappropriately intimate, relationships with children
- Spend time alone with a child
- Socialise with children outside of structured EARLY CHILDHOOD IRELAND or interagency activities
- Favour one child or children over others
- Shame, humiliate or single-out a child in a degrading way
- Hit, physically chastise or verbally abuse children
- Allow concerns or allegations to go unreported
- Take unnecessary risks
- Let children and young people have my personal contact details (mobile number, email or postal address) or have contact with them via a personal social media account
- Make sarcastic, insensitive, derogatory or sexually suggestive comments or gestures to or in front of children
- Possess indecent images of children; this will always be reported to the police regardless of the explanation provided
- Carry out my duties whilst adversely affected by alcohol, solvents or drugs

If you have behaved inappropriately, you will be subject to our disciplinary procedures. Depending on the seriousness of the situation, you might be asked to leave Early Childhood Ireland . We might also make a report to statutory agencies such as the police and/or Tusla

If you become aware of any breaches of this code, you must report them to Carmel Ward, DLP.

If necessary, you should follow our whistleblowing procedure and child safeguarding policies and safeguarding procedures. See [Employee Handbook](#)

**Appendix 18:** [One to One meeting record](#)

**Appendix 19:** [Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment Template](#)

**Appendix 20:** Digital Image and Photo Permission Policy In progress.

**Appendix 21:** Child Friendly Complaints Mechanism In Progress

**Appendix 22:** Anti Bullying Policy – Peer to Peer In progress

**Appendix 24:** Complaints Policy

<https://www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/membership/membership-complaints-policy/>



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## Appendix 25: Child Safeguarding Implementation and Review

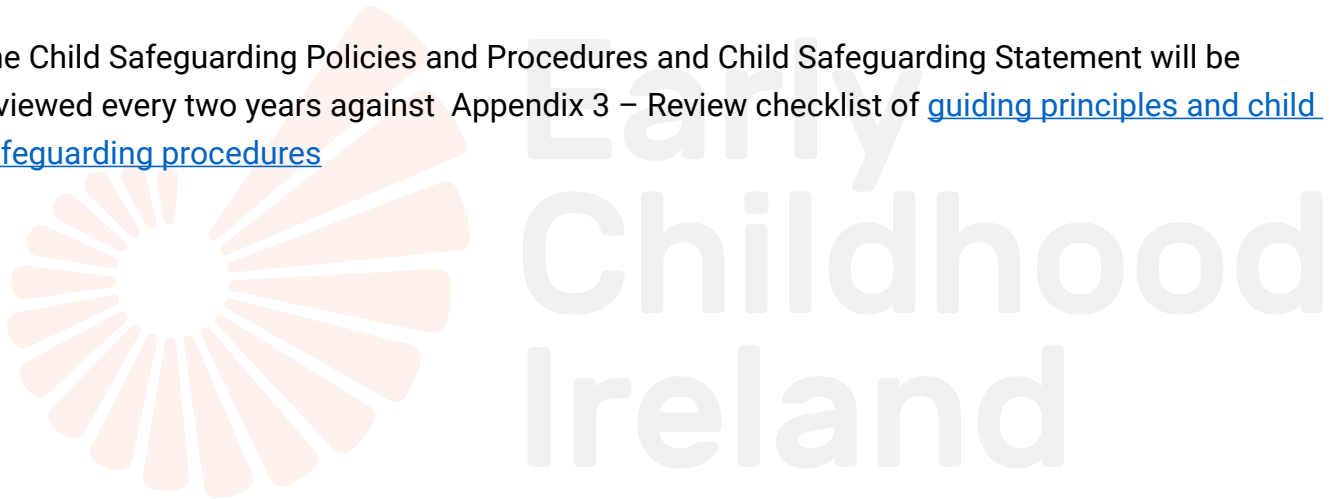
### Child Safeguarding Implementation Plan

Goal	Action	Responsibility	Status
Revise Child Safeguarding Statement	Review existing documents and best practice		
Revise Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures			
Develop, monitor and review Complaints Mechanisms			
Establish a child safeguarding oversight group			
Develop, monitor and review safer recruitment and selection safeguarding policies			
Develop, monitor and review the child safeguarding induction policy			
Develop any additional policies identified through the review process			
Disseminate revised policies to all staff			
Make all revised policies available to members and other key stakeholders			

<b>Devise a training strategy to ensure staff are aware and equipped to follow child safeguarding policies and procedures in line with their roles and responsibilities</b>			
<b>Ensure mechanisms are in place to monitor and review Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures</b>			

**Review**

The Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures and Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed every two years against Appendix 3 – Review checklist of [guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures](#)





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