Child Safeguarding:
A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice

2nd Edition

Children First

TUSLA
An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

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Acknowledgements

Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice (1st edition) was developed by a small working group following extensive consultation with internal and external stakeholders and review of national and international research and practice examples on best practice in child safeguarding. While it is not possible to list all of the organisations which contributed to the development of this Guide, Tusla would like to acknowledge the significant role that their input played in making this a practical and accessible guidance document supporting best practice in child safeguarding.

The content of Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice (2nd edition) is evidence based and evidence informed; reflects a breadth of knowledge and experience; and should support best practice in child safeguarding for organisations working with children, young people and their families. Mr Boyd Dodds led the development of the first edition of this document. This second edition reflects updates in Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, child safeguarding related legislation and Tusla, Child and Family Agency practice developments. Members of the working group for the 1st and 2nd edition were:

- Maureen Crowley – Chairperson
- Margaret Fitzgerald
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- Laura Nee
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Glossary

Child Safeguarding – ensuring safe practice and appropriate responses by workers and volunteers to concerns about the safety or welfare of children, including online concerns, should these arise. Child safeguarding is about protecting the child from harm, promoting their welfare and in doing so creating an environment which enables children and young people to grow, develop and achieve their full potential.

Guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures – previously referred to as child protection and welfare policy and procedures, the procedures an organisation has in place to safeguard children from harm and reduce the risks to children of being harmed.

Child Safeguarding Statement – defined in the *Children First Act 2015*, this is a statement which includes a written assessment of risk of harm to children while availing of the service, and the measures that will be taken to manage any identified risks.

Child or young person – a person under the age of 18 years, who is not or has not been married.

Child Protection and Welfare Report Form –form for reporting suspected or alleged abuse or welfare concerns to Tusla (available on the Tusla website, here).

Child Safeguarding Guide – this document, Child Safeguarding: A guide for policy, procedure and practice

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children – national, overarching guidance for the protection and welfare of children, published by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The current version was published in 2017.

Dedicated Contact Point - each Tusla area has a dedicated contact point that you can contact to discuss and/or report your child protection or welfare concern

Designated Liaison Person (DLP) – a resource to any staff member who has a child protection concern. DLPs are responsible for ensuring that reporting procedures are followed correctly and promptly and act as a liaison person with other agencies (see *Children First: National Guidance*).

Mandated person – as defined in the *Children First Act 2015*, mandated persons have a statutory obligation to report concerns which meet or exceed the threshold of harm, as defined in the Act, to Tusla and to cooperate with Tusla in the assessment of mandated reports, where requested to do so.

Named person – a person appointed by an organisation to lead the development of guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures and for ensuring that policies and procedures are consistent with best practice as detailed in this Guide.

Organisation – any department/sector/body/agency/organisation whether private, public or voluntary.

Provider – as defined in the *Children First Act 2015*, 'means, in relation to a relevant service, a person-
    (a) who provides a relevant service, and
    (b) who, in respect of the provision of such relevant service—

(i)   employs (whether under contract of employment or otherwise) one or more than one other person to undertake any work or activity that constitutes a relevant service,

(ii)   enters into a contract for services with one or more than one other person for the provision by the person of a relevant service, or

(iii) permits one or more than one other person (whether or not for commercial or other consideration and whether or not as part of a course of education or training, including an internship scheme) to undertake any work or activity, on behalf of the person, that constitutes a relevant service'.

Retrospective Abuse Report Form (RARF) – For reporting to Tusla cases of adults disclosing childhood abuse (available on the Tusla website, here).

Relevant person – as defined in the *Children First Act 2015*, 'means a person who is appointed by a provider of a relevant service to be the first point of contact in respect of the provider's Child Safeguarding Statement'.

Relevant service – as defined in the *Children First Act 2015*, 'means any work or activity specified in Schedule 1 [of that Act]'.

Tusla – Tusla is Ireland's Child and Family Agency, the lead, statutory organisation for safeguarding children in Ireland.

Tusla Web Portal – A web portal has been developed to allow professionals to securely submit Child Protection and Welfare Report Forms and Retrospective Abuse Report Formst to Tusla. It can be accessed from the Tusla website, here.

Worker and volunteer – *inter alia*, any staff member, volunteer, member of any board of management, or student engaged in an organisation to provide services to children or families.

Introduction

Welcome to Tusla's *Child Safeguarding: A guide for policy, procedure and practice.* This document is designed as a best practice guide to help anyone who provides a service to children and families to develop guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures to keep children and young people using their services safe from harm.

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.

Six best practice themes have been identified to assist your organisation to meet its child safeguarding responsibilities. The six sections of this document provide guidance on how to meet your organisation's responsibilities under each of these themes.

> **Remember**
> **A note on language**
>
> While the *Children First Act 2015*, the revised *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* and this Guidance document introduce some new language, the core concept of protecting children from harm remains unchanged. The term 'safeguarding' refers to protecting children from harm as well as promoting their welfare and development whilst in your care
>
> New terminology is being used to reduce ambiguity. For example, you will find reference to a 'declaration of guiding principles' in this Guide, which was formerly referred to as a 'Policy Statement'. This change in terminology is to avoid confusion with the statutory Child Safeguarding Statement which providers of relevant services under the *Children First Act 2015* are required to produce.

Status of this document

This document should be read in conjunction with *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* and, where appropriate:

- *Children First Act 2015*;
- *A Guide for the Reporting of Child Protection and Welfare Concerns*;
- *Best Practice Principles for Organisations in Developing Children First Training Programmes*;
- *Guidance on Writing a Child Safeguarding Statement*;
- *Mandated Assisting Protocol for Tusla Staff;*
- *Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook 2*.

These documents are all available on the Tusla website, here.

Who is this document for?

This Guide is for all organisations where workers or volunteers have regular contact with families or children, directly or indirectly. These organisations have a responsibility under the *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* to safeguard children and should consider the need to have guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures in place. These include:

- Organisations working with children and young people;

- Organisations/Individuals that work with adults who are members of families;
- Individuals working alone to provide a service to children.

Using this Guide will help your organisation to implement best practice in the safeguarding of children and young people. **This is something every organisation working with children, young people or their families should do.**

Remember
Providers of Relevant Services

Some organisations are defined as providers of 'relevant services' under the *Children First Act 2015*[1]. The *Children First Act 2015* requires providers of relevant services to develop a Child Safeguarding Statement. This is a written statement that specifies the service being provided and the principles and procedures to be observed in order to ensure, as far as practicable, that a child availing of the service is safe from harm. Advice on writing a Child Safeguarding Statement is provided in Tusla's *Guidance on Developing a Child Safeguarding Statement, available* [here](#).

Following this Child Safeguarding Guide will help providers of relevant services to develop the procedures necessary to support their Child Safeguarding Statement. Appendix 1, *Child Safeguarding Statements and this document,* **provides a cross-referencing of the various sections in this document with the specified procedures from the** *Children First Act 2015.* **Additionally, there are a number of notes throughout this document identifying sections that relate to a Child Safeguarding Statement.**

Tusla's Child Safeguarding Statement Compliance Unit (CSSCU) is a dedicated Tusla department set up solely to manage the requirement for providers of relevant services to have a Child Safeguarding Statement in place. More information on the CSSCU can be found on the Tusla website, [here](#).

Children First National Guidance: Key principles

There are a number of key principles of child protection and welfare that inform both policy and best practice for those working with children. These are outlined in *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* and are:

- The safety and welfare of children is everyone's responsibility.
- The best interests of the child should be paramount.
- The overall aim in all dealings with children and their families is to intervene proportionately to support families to keep children safe from harm.
- Interventions by the State should build on existing strengths and protective factors in the family.
- Early intervention is key to obtaining better outcomes. Where it is necessary for the State to intervene to keep children safe the minimum intervention necessary should be used.
- Children should only be separated from parents/guardians when alternative means of protecting them have been exhausted.

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[1] See Appendix 2, *Schedule of relevant services under the Children First Act 2015*, for the full list of relevant services under the Children First Act 2015.

- Children have a right to be heard, listened to and taken seriously. Taking account of their age and understanding, they should be consulted and involved in all matters and decisions that may affect their lives.
- 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 there is conflict, the child's welfare must come first.
- Child protection is a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary activity. Agencies and professionals must work together in the interests of children.

Structure of this Guide

This document provides a best practice guide for developing and implementing your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures. It is divided into six sections referred to as best practice themes. Each best practice theme starts with an outline of what the section covers. Each best practice theme also includes a list of actions that evidence and promote best practice which detail what you should have in place to meet your responsibilities.

Best Practice Theme 1: Guiding principles – explores what should be in a declaration of guiding principles.

Best Practice Theme 2: Key roles in safeguarding – explores the key roles related to best practice in child safeguarding.

Best Practice Theme 3: Responding to and reporting child protection or welfare concerns – provides guidance on reporting child protection or welfare concerns, as well as information on related areas such as confidentiality, responding to disclosures and record-keeping. It also provides some guidance on responding to allegations of abuse against workers or volunteers.

Best Practice Theme 4: Working safely with children and young people – discusses safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers. It also provides guidance on child safeguarding training, the safe management of activities and the safe management of staff and volunteers (including information on whistleblowing), as well as some information on dealing with accidents and incidents.

Best Practice Theme 5: Procedures for sharing your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures and involving parents/guardians, families and children and young people – looks at involving and communicating with children and young people and their parents and guardians, including information on developing complaints procedures.

Best Practice Theme 6: Implementing, monitoring and reviewing your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures – focuses on the processes involved in implementing your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures.

Throughout the document you will find samples, remember boxes, tip boxes, examples/things to consider and key practice points and notes for providers of relevant services (under the *Children First Act 2015*) to help you through the process (see figure 1, below). Links to other information sources that may assist are also given.

Figure 1 – Supports in this Guide

Sample
Remember

Tip box
Example/ Things to consider
Learning from inquiries
Key practice point
For providers of relevant services

Key practice point
Use of previous policies

If you already have existing child protection and welfare policies and procedures, these will be key in supporting your work on your new guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures.

If you do not have existing child protection and welfare policies and procedures, you will be guided by this document to write a declaration of guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures which will form the foundation of your policy and procedure portfolio.

When developing your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures, you should ensure you consider the age and developmental stage of the children and young people you work with.

At the end of each section you will find a review checklist to assist you in identifying procedures and best practice already in place in your organisation and any additional actions needed to fully embed each best practice theme within your organisational practice. Appendix 3 lists all the review checklists for the six best practice themes.

Learning from previous child abuse inquiries

Child abuse inquiries have informed child safeguarding best practice in Ireland. These inquiries illustrate that children are left at risk of abuse when there is a failure to adopt and implement child safeguarding guidance, policy, principles and procedures.

The guidance in this document will assist organisations to understand and implement best practice. You will find at the end of each section a summary point related to learning from the inquiries. Appendix 4 also has further information on the link between the learning from the inquiries and best practice in safeguarding children.

Working through this Guide

While many organisations may choose to work through this Guide from start to finish, others may decide there are particular best practice themes that they prefer to prioritise (see figure 2, below). It is up to you to decide how to best use this document to support the safeguarding responsibilities of your organisation.

GDPR and Data Protection

Organisations should ensure that their guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures are consistent with the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR) and with the *Data Protection Act 2018*. **Remember that the proportionate provision of information to the statutory agencies necessary for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality or data protection.**

Figure 2 – Getting Started

Best Practice Theme 1
Guiding Principles

Best Practice Theme 2
Key roles in safeguarding

Best Practice Theme 6
Implementing, monitoring and reviewing your child safeguarding principles and procedures

Best Practice Theme 5
Procedures for sharing your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures and involving parents, guardians, families, children and young people.

Best Practice Theme 3
Responding to and reporting child protection or welfare concerns

Best Practice Theme 4
Working safely with children and young people

- *What child safeguarding procedures do you already have in place?*
- *What do you need in place to write or review your guiding principles and safeguarding procedures?*
- *Which Best Practice Theme will help me?*

The first task – identifying a named person

When you begin planning how your organisation is going to tackle the task of meeting its responsibilities under Children First legislation and *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* you should consider identifying a named person who will be responsible for ensuring the work gets done. For small organisations this may be someone who is already in a key position and has an overview of the activities and people working in the organisation. It will probably be a role that they will take on as an additional responsibility to the other contributions they make to the running of the service.

For large and complex organisations it is likely that specific resources will have to be allocated to ensure that a named person is identified and dedicated to the implementation task. The work associated with implementing the requirements of Children First will only be achieved if someone is given lead responsibility and their organisation then gives sufficient priority to support their lead role.

Best Practice Theme 1: Guiding principles

This section provides guidance on developing the guiding principles for your organisation and the key points to include.

Best Practice Theme 1: Guiding principles Actions that evidence and promote best practice	
1:1	A declaration of guiding principles is in place and is communicated to all workers/volunteers and parents/guardians

Introduction

Best practice in child safeguarding starts with clearly setting out your intention to keep children safe from harm. This can be done by developing a declaration setting out guiding principles, including that your organisation will meet its commitment and responsibility to keep children safe and promote their welfare and best interests. This requires that the best interest of a child is paramount and implementing this in your organisation means you are providing services that are child-centred.

Setting out your guiding principles will reassure workers, volunteers, families, children, young people and the wider community that your organisation is dedicated to safeguarding children and young people and that the welfare and protection of children and young people in your care is always the first priority. A good way to do this is by writing a formal declaration of your guiding principles. **Providers of relevant services as listed in the *Children First Act 2015* will have included this information as part of their Child Safeguarding Statement.**

A named person should be given responsibility for the development, review and implementation of your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures.

> **Things to consider**
> **Name of your service and activities that you provide**
>
> Outlining the activities you provide will help you in writing and reviewing your guiding principles and to make sure they adequately support your organisation.
>
> You should name your organisation and outline all the various activities and services that you provide to children, young people and their families. If you are a large and complex organisation you will need to consider whether you develop an overarching set of guiding principles and consider how you will ensure that all the various services and activities you provide will be included.

Your declaration of guiding principles should include:
- The beliefs, values and codes of your organisation;
- Commitment to comply with national legislation and policy;
- Clarification regarding who the declaration is for;
- Commitment to implement and review your organisation's guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures.

1.1 Beliefs, values and codes of your organisation

The guiding principles of your organisation set out the beliefs, values and codes that the organisation wishes to uphold in relation to the protection and welfare of children and young people. Your guiding principles should reflect your commitment to protecting and promoting the rights of children and young people in your practice, including their right to be protected, treated with respect, listened to and to have their own views taken into consideration in all decisions affecting them. They should seek to ensure that no child or young person is disadvantaged or treated differently because of gender, social or ethnic background, family status, sexual orientation, religion or disability.

In considering your organisation's guiding principles you should reflect on the positive outcomes you want for the children and young people you work with.

1.2 Commitment to compliance with national legislation and policy

Your guiding principles should state your intention to comply with national policy, current legislation and guidance. Appendix 5 lists some of the legislation relevant to safeguarding children and copies of all legislation can be accessed at www.irishstatutebook.ie. Your guiding principles should include a commitment to review your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures at least every two years, or sooner if necessary due to service issues or changes in legislation or national policy (for further information and guidance on this, see Best Practice Theme 6: Implementing, Monitoring and Reviewing Your Guiding Principles and Child Safeguarding Procedures).

The *Children First Act 2015* requires providers of relevant services[2] to develop a Child Safeguarding Statement. For more information on creating a Child Safeguarding Statement for your organisation, please see Tusla's *Guidance on Developing a Child Safeguarding Statement*. The Act also places responsibilities on certain classes of professionals as mandated persons[3].

"All organisations that provide services to children should develop specific policies and procedures on how to create a safe environment" (*Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*, p.35)", regardless of whether they are defined as a relevant service or not.

1.3 Who are your guiding principles for?

Your guiding principles are in place to safeguard children and young people. They should be communicated to everyone to whom they apply, e.g. board members, all workers and volunteers, children and young people. Your declaration of guiding principles should state that everyone in your organisation will abide by their requirements and intent in respect of safeguarding children and young people.

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[2] See Appendix 2 for the full list of relevant services under the Children First Act 2015.
[3] See Appendix 6 for the full list of mandated persons under the Children First Act 2015.

1.4 Sample declaration of guiding principles

Samples of how you might present guiding principles are provided below and can be adapted and tailored for your service.

Sample 1
Declaration of Guiding Principles

Name of organisation: _____

We provide the following services/activities to children and young people:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Our organisation believes that the best interests of children and young people attending our services are paramount. We believe that all children attending our service have the right to be protected, treated with respect, listened to and to have their views taken into consideration in all decisions affecting them. Our guiding principles 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*.

Our guiding principles apply to 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 these guiding principles and our child safeguarding procedures.

We will review our guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures every two years or sooner if necessary due to service issues or changes in legislation or national policy.

Our Designated Liaison Person is _____
Contact details _____
Our Deputy Designated Liaison Person is _____
Contact details _____

Sample 2
Declaration of Guiding Principles

Here at (insert name of your organisation) we provide the following services to children/young people:
(List the services and activities you provide to children/young people)

We believe the following:
1. Our priority to ensure the welfare and safety of every child and young person who attends our service is paramount.
2. Our guiding principles and procedures to safeguard children and young people reflect national policy and legislation and we will review our guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures every two years.
3. All children and young people have an equal right to attend a service that respects them as individuals and encourages them to reach their potential, regardless of their background.
4. We are committed to upholding the rights of every child and young person who attends our service, including the rights to be kept safe and protected from harm, listened to and heard.
5. Our guiding principles apply to everyone in our organisation.
6. Workers/volunteers must conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of our organisation.

Learning from inquiries

Inquiries show that all places of work that involve children should provide for the safety, health and welfare of children. The purpose of stating the guiding principles is to communicate this intention to all volunteers, staff, children and parents.

1.5 Review checklist

Best Practice Theme 1 Guiding principles	Fully in place (working well)	Requires work (not working well)	Action required
Declaration of guiding principles is in place			
Name of organisation and the services and activities provided to children and young people are listed with your declaration of guiding principles			
Your declaration of guiding principles specifies to whom they apply.			
Your declaration of guiding principles is communicated to children, young people, parents/guardians, workers and volunteers.			

Best Practice Theme 2: Key roles in safeguarding

This section provides guidance on the role and responsibilities of key people, including:

- Named persons;
- Designated Liaison Persons;
- Mandated persons;
- Providers of a relevant service (under the *Children First Act 2015*);
- Relevant persons (under the *Children First Act 2015*).

Best Practice Theme 2: Key roles in safeguarding Actions that evidence and promote best practice	
2:1	A named person designated with lead responsibility for the development, review and implementation of the guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures is appointed.
2:2	A named Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Deputy Designated Liaison Person is appointed. The role of the DLP is understood by all and contact details are displayed.
2.3	Mandated persons' responsibilities are understood by all.

Introduction

If you are providing a service for children, young people, or their families, you need to consider what the key roles in your organisation are in relation to safeguarding children and young people and who will hold these roles.

Remember
Key roles in child safeguarding

The size and structure of your organisation will be a factor in deciding who will hold which roles. It is possible that the same person may be given responsibility for multiple roles.

Best Practice Theme 2 lists the key roles and responsibilities related to child safeguarding in your organisation. Your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures are only effective if people are aware of it. The key roles discussed in this Best Practice Theme can contribute to ensuring that your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures are communicated to everyone concerned.

2.1 Named persons

All organisations that provide services to children should develop specific policies and procedures on how to create a safe environment. To assist with this, organisations should consider appointing a named person to develop their guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures.

This person is responsible for leading the development of the guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures and for ensuring that policies and procedures are consistent with best practice as detailed in this Guide. They should liaise with all key workers and volunteers who have relevant roles and responsibilities.

The named person can also assist with the review of your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures.

2.2 Designated Liaison Persons

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children advises that both public and private organisations that provide services for children/young people and families should consider appointing a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Deputy DLP. The DLP will be a resource to any staff member who has a child protection or welfare concern. DLPs are responsible for ensuring that organisational reporting procedures are followed correctly and promptly and act as a liaison person with other

agencies (see best practice theme 3 for guidance on developing your reporting procedure).

The following list outlines best practice for your organisation:

- **Appoint at least one person as a DLP**.
- **Appoint a Deputy DLP**. In the event that the DLP is not available (e.g. due to annual leave, sick leave, etc.), a Deputy DLP should be delegated responsibility.
- **Ensure that the DLP/Deputy DLP is accessible.** It is important that the DLP is accessible to staff. If activities and events are organised outside the DLP's working hours, there should be an agreed procedure on what workers are to do if they have any child protection or welfare concerns.
- **Display contact details for the DLP and Deputy DLP.**
- **Ensure that the DLP/Deputy DLP is knowledgeable about child protection** and has undertaken any training considered necessary.
- **Ensure that the DLP/Deputy DLP is aware of their responsibility** for making sure that the reporting procedure within the organisation is followed so that suspected cases of child abuse or neglect are referred promptly to Tusla or, in an emergency and the unavailability of Tusla, to The Garda Síochána.
- **Develop procedures** for liaison between the DLP/Deputy DLP and mandated persons in relation to child protection or welfare concerns which may arise for mandated persons (see also Best Practice Theme 3: Responding to and Reporting Child Protection or Welfare Concerns).

Remember
Appointment of DLP and Deputy DLP

You should consider the appropriate structural level at which DLPs/Deputy DLPs should be appointed. This may mean having a national, regional or local DLP or a combination – DLPs need to be appointed at the level that makes sense for your organisation.

Key practice point
Roles and responsibilities of DLP/Deputy DLP

- Be fully familiar with your organisation's responsibilities in relation to the safeguarding of children.
- Have good knowledge of your organisation's guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures.
- Ensure that the organisation's reporting procedure is followed, so that child protection and welfare concerns are referred promptly to Tusla.
- Receive child protection and welfare concerns from workers and volunteers 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 protection or welfare concern to Tusla on behalf of their 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 The Garda Síochána, unless:
  - Informing the parents/guardians is likely to endanger the child or young person;
  - Informing the parents/guardians may place you as the reporter at risk

of harm from the family;
- The family's knowledge of the report could impair Tusla's ability to carry out an assessment.
- Record all child protection or welfare 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.

2.3 Mandated persons

> **For providers of relevant services:**
> A procedure for maintaining a list of the persons (if any) in the relevant service who are mandated persons is a specified procedure under the *Children First Act 2015*.

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[4]. The DLP in your organisation may or may not be a mandated person under the *Children First Act 2015* (see Schedule 2 of the *Children First Act 2015*, or Appendix 6 of this document, for a list of classes of persons specified as mandated persons).

The *Children First Act 2015* requires all providers of relevant services to have a procedure in place to maintain a list of any mandated persons in their organisation.

Workers who are mandated persons should be made aware of their responsibilities under the legislation at commencement of their employment. Mandated persons may make joint reports with the DLP in their organisation, however, a mandated person cannot discharge their statutory responsibility to report by reporting to another person (e.g. by reporting to their DLP). For further guidance on reporting procedures and the responsibility of mandated persons to report child protection concerns, please see Best Practice Theme 3.

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[4] See Tusla's *Mandated Assisting Protocol for Tusla Staff* which can be accessed at on the Tusla website, here.

> **Key practice point**
> **Procedure for maintaining a list of the persons (if any) who are mandated persons**
>
> It is important that organisations are aware of which members of staff are classed as mandated persons and that mandated persons understand their responsibilities. To this end a procedure should be put in place to maintain an up-to-date list of mandated persons. Organisations should refer to Schedule 2 of the *Children First Act 2015*. You need to consider:
> • How to identify which members of staff are mandated persons
> • How to inform mandated persons of this responsibility
> • How to add staff to list and
> • How to remove staff from the list if they leave your organisation, and
> • Who is responsible for maintaining the list.

2.4 Other roles

Two additional roles are identified under the *Children First Act 2015*, in relation to the Child Safeguarding Statement:

- Provider of a relevant service;
- Relevant person.

> **Tip Box**
> **Developing a Child Safeguarding Statement**
>
> Please see Tusla's *Guidance on Developing a Child Safeguarding Statement* for information on developing Child Safeguarding Statements.

2.4.1 Provider of a relevant service
The *Children First Act 2015* (s.8) defines a 'provider' as "a person—

(a) who provides a relevant service, and
(b) who, in respect of the provision of such relevant service—
   (i) employs (whether under contract of employment or otherwise) one or more than one other person to undertake any work or activity that constitutes a relevant service,
   (ii) enters into a contract for services with one or more than one other person for the provision by the person of a relevant service, or
   (iii) permits one or more than one other person (whether or not for commercial or other consideration and whether or not as part of a course of education or training, including an internship scheme) to undertake any work or activity, on behalf of the person, that constitutes a relevant service".

Under the *Children First Act 2015* if you are a provider of a relevant service you should ensure, as far as practicable, that a child is safe from harm while availing of the service. **Since March 2018, all providers of relevant services are required to:**

- Undertake an **assessment of any potential for harm** to a child while availing of the service;

- Prepare a written **child safeguarding statement** specifying the service being provided and the principles and procedures to be observed to ensure as far as practicable, that a child, while availing of the service, is safe from harm;
- Appoint a **relevant person**;
- **Display the Child Safeguarding Statement** in a prominent place where the relevant service concerned relates or is provided, or both, as may be appropriate.

Providers, of relevant services which open after March 2018, have 3 months from the date they commence operation to develop their Child Safeguarding Statement.

You must review your Child Safeguarding Statement within 24 months or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers

2.4.2 Relevant person

For providers of relevant services:
A procedure for appointing a relevant person is a specified procedure under the *Children First Act 2015.*

If your organisation is a provider of a relevant service under the *Children First Act 2015* you are 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 should be included in the Child Safeguarding Statement.

Learning from inquiries

Confusion about roles and responsibilities has been highlighted in inquiries. Where clear responsibility was not placed on named personnel to report child protection concerns, child abuse continued unchecked and other children were placed at risk of abuse.

2.5 Review checklist

Best Practice Theme 2: Key roles in safeguarding	Fully in place (working well)	Requires work (not working well)	Action required
A named person is appointed			
The DLP and Deputy DLP are appointed			
The role and responsibilities of the DLP/Deputy DLP are outlined			
The role and responsibilities of mandated persons are outlined			
A procedure for maintaining a list of mandated persons is in place			

Best Practice Theme 3: Responding to and reporting child protection or welfare concerns

This section provides guidance on:

- Developing child protection and welfare reporting procedures, including the role of mandated persons;
- Responding to children and young people who disclose abuse;
- Responding to adult disclosures of childhood abuse;
- Developing procedures for responding to allegations of abuse against workers or volunteers;
- Confidentiality;
- Information sharing and record-keeping in relation to child protection and welfare concerns.

Best Practice Theme 3: Responding to and reporting child protection or welfare concerns	
Actions that evidence and promote best practice	
3:1	Clear procedures are in place for reporting child protection or welfare concerns.
3:2	Guidance on responding to children who disclose abuse is included in your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures.
3:3	Clear procedures are in place for responding to adult disclosures of childhood abuse
3:4	Clear procedures are in place for responding to allegations of abuse made against workers or volunteers.
3:5	Clear policy on confidentiality is in place Clear procedures are in place for information sharing and recording all child protection or welfare concerns, including those which do not meet reasonable grounds for concern.

Introduction

Best Practice Theme 3 focuses on responding to and reporting child protection and welfare concerns. It considers the various sources of child protection and welfare concerns and provides guidance on handling some of the situations that you or your organisation may come across. This includes the procedure for reporting concerns internally, within your organisation, as well as externally to the statutory authorities – Tusla and/or The Garda Síochána. Best Practice Theme 3 also looks at the related policies and procedures for responding to allegations of abuse made against workers or volunteers.

The guiding principle when a child protection or welfare report has to be made to Tusla is that the safety and wellbeing of the child takes priority over all other considerations.

Tusla has statutory responsibility for the protection and welfare of children and The Garda Síochána has responsibility for the investigation of suspected criminal offences. Any person involved with a child/young person may also be in a position to play a key role in safeguarding children.

Effective cooperation with Tusla depends on:

- Understanding and acceptance by all professionals and persons working with children, young people or their families of their responsibilities and roles in the promotion of child protection and welfare;
- Mutual trust and sharing of information within established protocols;
- Willingness of personnel to respect the contributions made by others, irrespective of status and position within agencies and organisations/groups.

The policies and procedures that you develop in Best Practice Theme 3 will help to clarify the roles and responsibilities that you and all workers/volunteers in your organisation have.

3.1 Procedures for reporting child protection or welfare concerns

> **For providers of relevant services:**
> A procedure for reporting to [Tusla] by the provider or a member of staff of the provider (whether a mandated person or otherwise) is a specified procedure under the *Children First Act 2015.*

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children requires organisations to have reporting procedures in place that are understood and followed by all workers and volunteers and any individuals undertaking work experience or internships within the organisation. **The responsibility to report child protection or welfare concerns applies to everyone working with children or family members[5].**

3.1.1 Identifying reasonable grounds for concern

There are many reasons a worker/volunteer may be concerned about the welfare or protection of a child or young person. *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* states that Tusla should always be informed when a person has **reasonable grounds for concern** that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected.

Children/young people are sometimes abused by members of their own family, by peers or by others outside the family environment such as strangers, workers or trusted adults. *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* lists the following as **reasonable grounds for concern**:

- 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. Internet and Online Safety must be considered in relation to keeping children and young people safe (please see also, Appendix 7 – *Online Safety* and Appendix 8 – *Cyberbullying*) and should be specifically accounted for in procedures to safeguard children.

3.1.2 Categories and indicators of abuse

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children defines four categories of abuse: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child/young person may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time.

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[5] This section should be read with Tusla's *A Guide for the Reporting of Child Protection and Welfare Concerns*, available from the Tusla website, here.

Please see *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* for more information.

> **Remember**
> **Definitions of abuse**
>
> All organisations should include reference to the definitions, features and examples of child abuse provided in *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* in their reporting procedures and should ensure that all staff are made aware of these through training. Definitions of abuse other than those provided in *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* and the *Children First Act 2015* should not be used.

A child/young person will sometimes confide in a worker or volunteer that they have been abused or someone may witness incidents which suggest that a child or young person is being harmed. Often it is a case of a worker/volunteer feeling worried and concerned about certain signs they are picking up on, such as poor hygiene; a child/young person always appearing hungry, listless and tired; a lack of suitable clothing; or unexplained physical injuries. Other indicators may be related to the child/young person's behaviour such as being aggressive, impulsive, or withdrawn. A cluster or pattern of signs is more likely to be indicative of neglect or abuse.

The *Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook*, p.6, defines a child welfare concern as "a problem experienced directly by a child, or the family of a child, that is seen to impact negatively on the child's health, development and welfare, and that warrants assessment and support, but may not require a child protection response".

3.1.3 Complicating factors and circumstances which may make children more vulnerable to harm

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children and the *Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook* 2 identify a number of known complicating factors and circumstances which may make children more vulnerable to harm that need to be considered when identifying, responding to and assessing child protection concerns.

Complicating factors are features of the child or young person's circumstances that are known to be associated with heightened risk to health, development and welfare.

> **Tip box**
> **Complicating factors in child protection**
>
> Complicating factors in child protection are identified in *Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* under the following five headings:
> 1. Parent or Carer Factors
> 2. Child Factors
> 3. Community Factors
> 4. Environmental Factors
> 5. Poor Motivation or Willingness of Parents/Guardians to Engage.
>
> For more information and detail, see the Tusla *Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook 2*, available on the Tusla website, here.

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children also identifies a number of circumstances which may make children and young people more

vulnerable to harm. It provides a list of issues in a child/young person's life that may place them at a greater risk of abuse. It is important to remember that identifying additional vulnerability to risk of abuse does not mean that any specific child in those circumstances or settings is being abused.

With the use of new technologies and smart phones being a feature of everyday life it is important to consider the internet and online safety in relation to safeguarding children (see also Appendix 7 – *Online Safety* and Appendix 8 – *Cyberbullying*).

3.1.4 Responding to concerns

All workers and volunteers (including students on placement or work experience) 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, it should be reported to the Designated Liaison Person or manager responsible for child safeguarding in your organisation. Figure 3, below, illustrates an internal reporting procedure. Figure 4, below, illustrates an external reporting procedures for moving concerns from an organisation to Tusla.

Figure 3 – Internal Reporting Procedure
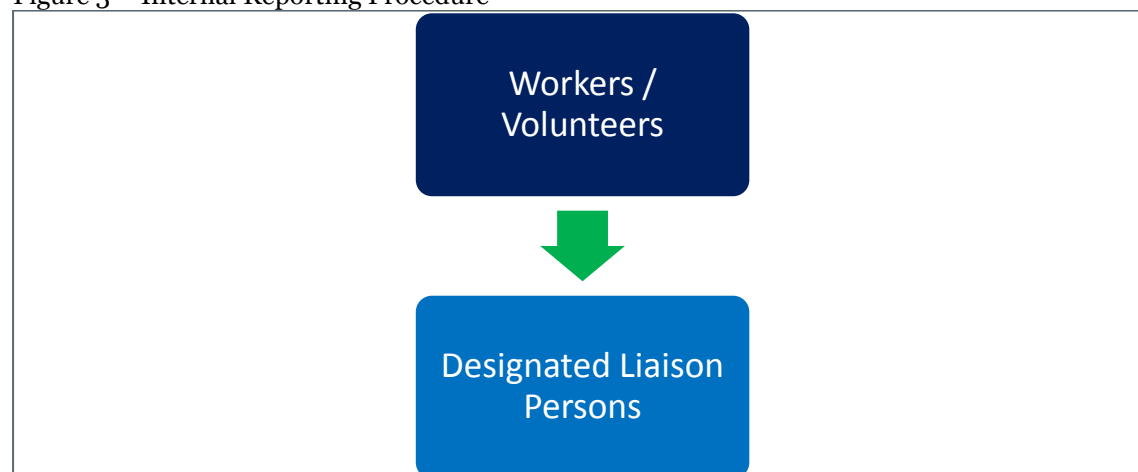
The Designated Liaison Person, in consultation with the person who raised the concern, will decide if reasonable grounds for concern exist. If reasonable grounds for concern exist, the Designated Liaison Person will report to Tusla through either the Tusla Web Portal or relevant Dedicated Contact Point. If the DLP decides not to make a report, the worker/volunteer with the reasonable concern is still entitled to make a report to Tusla under *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*, should they wish to do so. In reporting to Tusla, the individual worker has protections under the *Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998*, should they report independently.

Figure 4 – External Reporting Procedure
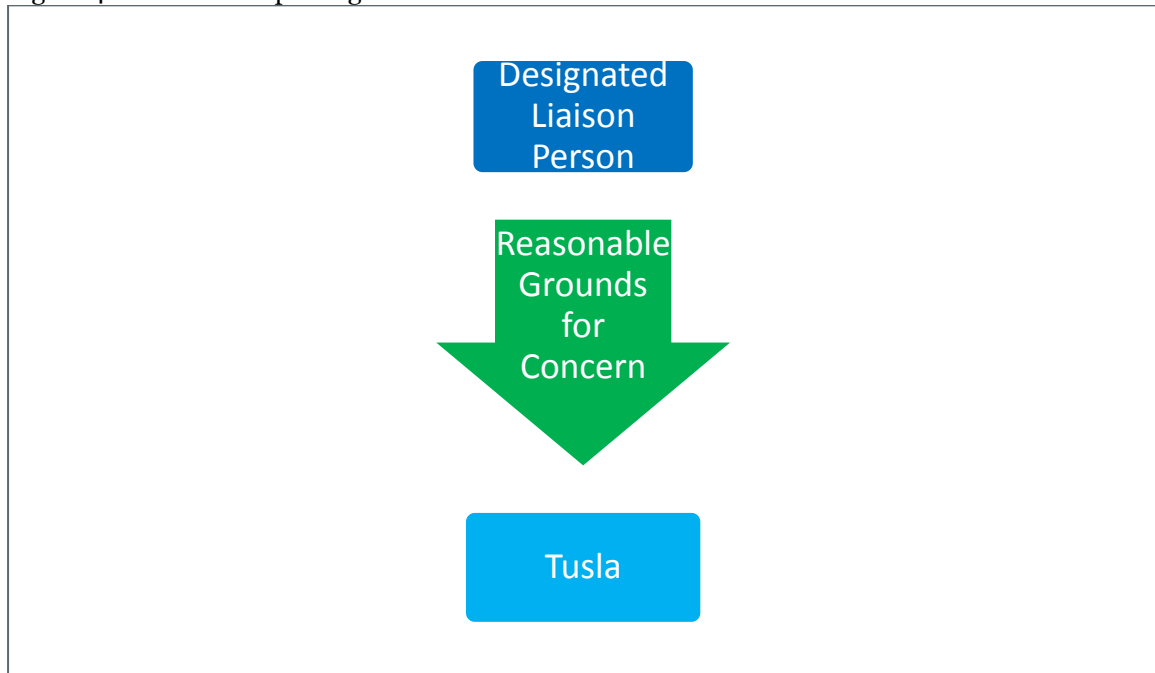
Key practice point
Feedback to worker from the DLP

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children states that if a Designated Liaison Person decides **not** to report a concern to Tusla, the following steps should be taken:

- 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 worker 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;
- The worker 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 worker 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*.

Mandated persons

Under the *Children First Act 2015*, certain classes of professionals are designated as mandated persons. The full list can be found in Schedule 2 of the Act and Appendix 6 of this document. Mandated persons have a statutory responsibility to report directly to Tusla concerns above the threshold of "harm".

Key practice point
Mandated persons' responsibility to report

It is important to note that the statutory obligation of mandated persons to report under the *Children First Act 2015* **must be discharged by the mandated person** and cannot be discharged by the DLP on their behalf.

Mandated persons can make a joint mandated report with their DLP or another person, mandated or otherwise. If, however, your organisation, or your DLP, does not wish to report to Tusla, you, as a mandated person, should proceed with making a report. The *Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998* will apply in this instance.

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. The mandated person retains their right to report independently, should the DLP choose not to report the concern. The provisions of the *Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998* would apply in this circumstance.

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,

and discloses this belief to a mandated person in the course of a mandated person's employment or profession as such a person, the mandated person shall, ... as soon as practicable, report that disclosure to [Tusla]."

Organisations should consider how the DLP will be informed of all mandated reports Two options are illustrated in Figure 5, below.

Figure 5 – Reporting Procedure for Mandated Person when Threshold of Harm is Reached
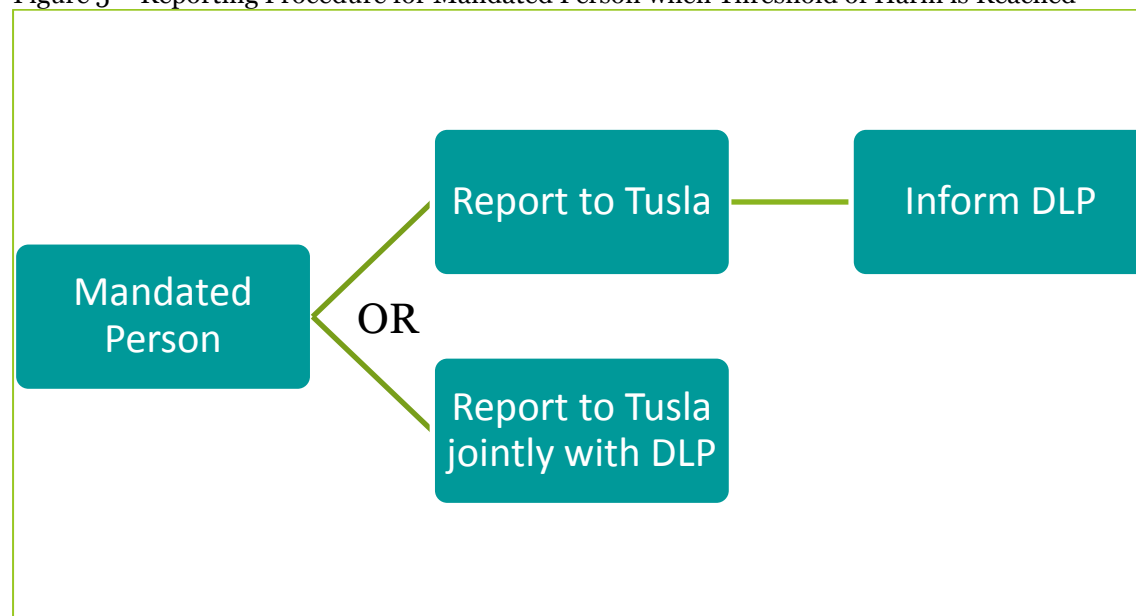
Remember
Deciding to make a mandated report

If you are in doubt about whether your concern reaches the legal definition of harm for making a mandated report, Tusla's Dedicated Contact Point can provide advice and guidance in this regard. You can find details of who to contact to discuss your concern on the Tusla website, here. If your concern does not reach the threshold of harm for mandated reporting, but you feel it is a **reasonable concern** about the welfare or protection of a child, you should report it to Tusla under *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children.*

While Tusla can provide advice, the decision to classify a report as a mandated report under the *Children First Act 2015* or a report of a reasonable concern under *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* rests with the individual mandated person.

Key practice point
Mandated assisting

Tusla's work is greatly enhanced by cooperation and information sharing between professionals in order to determine the best outcomes for children and their families. In the vast majority of cases, this cooperation is forthcoming and mandated assistance will not need to be sought. However, in some circumstances, where it is determined to be in the best interests of the child, it may be necessary for a formal request for mandated assistance to be made.

Under the *Children First Act 2015* there is a statutory requirement for mandated persons to assist Tusla in the assessment of mandated reports, where requested to do so. The *Children First Act 2015* provides protection from civil liability when assisting Tusla.

"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 arising from a mandated report. You must comply with this request, regardless of who made the report. Tusla accepts the time limitations and pressures on other professionals and will use mandated assisting only when necessary and only to the extent needed by each specific case. Mandated assistance may include a request to supply further information over the phone, produce a verbal or written report or attend a meeting" (*Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, p.27*).

There are five conditions that need to be met before Tusla can make a request for mandated assistance:
1. The legal threshold for a mandated report should have been reached, i.e. the child has suffered, is likely to or is suffering harm.
2. The request is necessary and proportionate in all the circumstances of the case.
3. The mandated person is reasonably believed to be in a position to assist having an identified and specific contribution to make to the assessment, as it may be reasonably required.
4. That not making the request for assistance may be detrimental to the best interests of the child.
5. The mandated person is not already voluntarily, as part of their normal duties, participating and assisting with the assessment.

Tusla's Mandated Assisting Protocol for Tusla Staff can be found on the Tusla website, [here](#).

Information that Tusla shares with another person in the course of carrying out an assessment must not be disclosed to a third party, unless Tusla considers it appropriate and authorises in writing that the information may be shared. Failure to comply with this provision is an offence under section 17 of the *Children First Act 2015*.

3.1.5 Reporting concerns

Your reporting procedure will need to provide clear guidance to all workers and volunteers on the actions to be taken when they are concerned about the safety or welfare of a child or young person. This will need to include guidance on **roles and responsibilities, record-keeping and processes.**

Key practice point
Developing your reporting procedures

In developing your reporting procedure, consider the following:

Who to pass the concern to – Who the worker/volunteer consults with and reports the concern to internally, i.e. the Designated Liaison Person.

Mandated persons – Need to consider whether the concern reaches or exceeds the threshold for 'harm' as defined in the Act.

Recording – Your obligation to record the details of the concern and the decisions and actions taken.

Immediate risk to the child – Action to be taken where there is thought to be an immediate risk to the child.

Allegations of abuse by a child – Where the person allegedly causing harm to a child is another child (peer abuse), reports should be made to Tusla for both children.

Talking to parent(s) – The process for discussing a concern with parents/guardians before reporting and the circumstances in which this is not advised. It is best practice to inform parents/guardians that you are reporting a concern about a child, however, they do not need to be informed that a report is being made if by doing so the child will be placed at further risk or if the family's knowledge of the report could impair Tusla's ability to carry out an assessment. Also, it is not necessary to inform the family if the person making the report reasonably believes it may place them at risk of harm from the family. Consideration should be given to who is the most appropriate person to talk to parents/guardians.

Informal consultation – The process for seeking advice and guidance from the Tusla Dedicated Contact Point in the child/young person's area when the Designated Liaison Person or worker/volunteer is unsure whether a report should be made.

Reasonable grounds for concern – The circumstances in which the requirement to report to Tusla where reasonable grounds for concern exist is triggered.

The actions to be taken by mandated persons – The organisation may require that the mandated person informs the organisation's DLP that a mandated report has been made and provide the DLP with a copy of the report. Alternatively, the organisation may state a preference that mandated reports are made jointly between the mandated person and the DLP, except where there is disagreement and the mandated person is obliged to discharge their duty to report.

Dedicated Contact Point – You should include the contact details for the Tusla Dedicated Contact Point for your area in your reporting procedure. You can find details of your local Dedicated Contact Point here.

Tusla Web Portal – A web portal has been developed to allow professionals to securely submit Child Protection and Welfare Report Forms to Tusla. To use the portal, you will need to create an account. You can print off a copy of the report you submit via the portal for your records. The web portal can be accessed to create an account or make a report through the Tusla website, here. **The Tusla Web Portal is Tusla's preferred pathway for receiving child protection or welfare concerns and retrospective abuse reports.**

Child Protection and Welfare Report Form or Retrospective Abuse Report Form – As an alternative to the Tusla Web Portal, the DLP or mandated persons can complete the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form or the Retrospective Abuse Report Form and forward it to the Tusla Duty Social Worker through the relevant Dedicated Contact Point. Where mandated persons are making a report under the *Children First Act 2015* they can make a joint report with their DLP. **Reports to Tusla should be made without delay.** The form is available on Tusla's website, [here](#).

Out of Hours Social Work Service – Mandated persons can access Tusla's emergency out-of-hours social work service. If you are a mandated person and wish to make a mandated report, 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, you should contact The Garda Síochána.

What to do if you do not report to Tusla – The organisation's process in respect of actions taken and records maintained where concerns have been raised but not reported to Tusla.

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Tip box
Talking to parents/guardians about child protection or welfare concerns

Workers/volunteers may feel uncomfortable approaching a parent about a concern. You may have to discuss a concern about the welfare or protection of a child/young person or an issue which relates to the child/young person's developmental needs. The following best practice tips may be useful:

- Make sure parents/guardians have prior awareness of your guiding principles, procedures and duties to safeguard children.
- Be straightforward and clearly explain the nature of the concern or issue, e.g. by using facts and records of observations made.
- Think about the time and place to have the conversation. Find a time when parents/guardians are not in a hurry.
- Find a place that is quiet and allows privacy.
- Consider arranging to meet parents/guardians.
- Consider with the DLP who is best placed to have the conversation with the parents/guardians.
- Use a calm and gentle tone, consider the language used.
- Start with positive comments and observations about the child/young person. Ensure that the parents/guardians know that you care about the welfare of their child and recognise their strengths.
- Refer to how the situation may be affecting the child/young person.
- Start with positive comments and observations about the parents/guardians. Most parents/guardians are trying to do their best for their children and will appreciate your acknowledgement of how challenging parenting can be at times.
- Give the parents/ guardians an opportunity to talk; ask them for an explanation and acknowledge their feelings.
- Take the approach that you are working together to address any issues in the best interests of the child/young person.
- Don't blame, don't get defensive and don't take things personally.

</div>

- Ensure that you are supportive but also address the issue.
- Refer to your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures for support.
- Offer possible solutions, where appropriate.
- Advise parents/guardians how you plan to follow up and keep them informed and involved, where appropriate. Where it is not possible to contact the parents/guardians to discuss a concern you may need to discuss the concern with the DLP or Tusla duty social worker through the Dedicated Contact Point

Remember if a report needs to be made to Tusla, do not delay.

It is best practice that parents/guardians are informed if a report is to be made to Tusla, unless doing so might further endanger the child, impair Tusla's ability to carry out an assessment or put the reporter at risk of harm (*Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*).

For further guidance on communicating and working in partnership with parents and guardians see Best Practice Theme 5.

Remember
Reporting suspected crimes to The Garda Síochána

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*.

Key practice point
Anonymous reporting and seeking anonymity

While it is possible to report a concern without giving your name, it may make it difficult for Tusla to assess your concern. All information that you provide will be dealt with in a professional manner. While Tusla cannot guarantee confidentiality, in general it will not reveal the names of members of the public who report suspected child abuse without their permission.

Remember, if you are a mandated person, you cannot submit a report of a mandated concern anonymously, as to do so will mean you are not complying with your obligations under the Act.

Remember
Impediments to reporting

There may be a tendency by workers/volunteers to deny, minimise or explain away any signs that a child/young person is being harmed. Sympathy for families in difficult circumstances can sometimes dilute personal concerns about the safety or welfare of children/young people. Workers/volunteers may be afraid of repercussions, being thought insensitive, breaking a confidence or being thought of as disloyal. **Reporting child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla is about supporting the best outcomes for children and young people.**

> **Key practice point**
> **Workers and volunteers who work with adults**
>
> Workers or volunteers working with or treating adults with mental health difficulties, intellectual disability, addiction or domestic violence issues, or working in the probation services, must consider the welfare and safety of any children in that adult's family and/or children in regular contact with that adult. If concerns meet the threshold of reasonable grounds for reporting to Tusla you should follow your organisation's reporting procedures, even if the identity of the child(ren) is unknown.
>
> Some of these staff will also be mandated persons and should follow the guidance, above, on making mandated reports if the threshold of harm has been reached or exceeded.

3.2 Responding to a child/young person who discloses abuse

A child or young person may disclose to a trusted worker or volunteer that they have been or are being harmed or abused. Children/young people will often have different ways of communicating that they are being abused. If a child or young person hints at or tells a worker or volunteer that he or she is being harmed by someone, be it a parent/carer, another adult or by another child/young person (peer abuse), it should be treated in a sensitive way.
It is important that your workers/volunteers are aware and prepared for responding to a child/young person who may disclose abuse

> **Key Practice Point**
> **Responding to a child/young person who discloses abuse**
>
> - Be as calm and natural as possible.
> - Remember that you have been approached because you are trusted and possibly liked. Do not panic.
> - Do not promise to keep secrets
> - Be aware that disclosures can be very difficult for the child/young person.
> - 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
> - It may be necessary to reassure the child/young person that your feelings towards him or her have not been affected in a negative way as a result of what they have disclosed.
> - Reassure the child/young person that they have taken the right action in

talking to you. Questions should be supportive and for the purpose of clarification only. Do not ask leading questions.
- Explain to the child/young person that this information will only be shared with people who 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.

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.
- Inform the DLP immediately and agree measures to protect the child/young person, e.g. report the matter directly to Tusla.
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality.

On-going support
Following a disclosure by a child/young person, it is important that the worker/volunteer continues in a supportive relationship with the child/young person. Disclosure is a huge step for a child/young person. Workers/volunteers should continue to offer support, particularly by:

- Maintaining a positive relationship with the child/young person;
- Keeping lines of communication open by listening carefully to the child/young person;
- Continuing to include the child/young person in the usual activities.

Any further disclosure should be treated as a first disclosure and responded to as indicated above. Where necessary, immediate action should be taken to ensure the child/young person's safety.

Tip Box	
Some useful phrases when responding to a disclosure	
Things to say	**Things not to say**
I want to listen to what you have to say	Wait until I get my manager so you can tell him/her too?
I am going to do my best to help you	I can't do anything
You did the right thing by telling me, this is what I am going to do next…	I can't believe it, I'm shocked
You are not to blame	This is your fault
Is there anything else you want to share?	Don't tell me any more

3.3 Responding to adults who disclose childhood abuse

There are an increasing number of adults disclosing abuse that took place during their childhood. Often such disclosures come to light when people attend counselling. They also sometimes arise in adult services and services which work with parents/guardians and families.

Where such a disclosure is made it is essential to establish whether there may be current risk to any child or young person who may be in contact with the person subject to an abuse allegation (PSAA) revealed in the disclosure. This is important even where the children/young people about whom there may be a concern are still to be identified.

If any risk is deemed to exist to a child/young person who may be in contact with a PSAA, follow your organisation's child protection and welfare reporting procedure; reports should be made to Tusla without delay (see *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* for further information).

Certain persons who work with adults are mandated persons and have a statutory obligation to report concerns which meet or exceed the threshold for 'harm' as defined in the *Children First Act 2015* (see *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* for further information). For mandated persons, the obligation to make a mandated report applies where you have knowledge or belief that a that a person who is currently a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being harmed . A child is as defined in the Child Care Act 1991 and cannot in any circumstances include persons over the age of 18 years.

The Tusla Web Portal is the preferred pathway to report disclosures of childhood abuse by adults. Alternatively, the Retrospective Abuse Report Form (RARF) form is available on the Tusla website, here.

3.4 Responding to allegations of abuse made against workers/volunteers

For providers of relevant services:
A procedure in respect of any member of staff who is the subject of any investigation (howsoever described) in respect of any act, omission or circumstance in respect of a child availing of the relevant service, is a specified procedure under the *Children First Act 2015*

An allegation of abuse may relate to a person who works with children who has:

- Behaved in a way that has or may have harmed a child/young person;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence in relation to a child/young person;
- Behaved towards a child/young person or children/young people in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to a child/young person;
- Behaved in a way that is contrary to the organisation's code of behaviour for workers and volunteers;
- Behaved in a way that is contrary to professional practice guidelines.

If an allegation is made against a worker/volunteer in your organisation you must ensure that everyone involved is dealt with appropriately and in accordance with the organisation's guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures, the rules of natural justice and any relevant employment law. The organisation has a dual responsibility in respect of both the child/young person and the worker/volunteer. There are two separate procedures to be followed:

- The reporting procedure to Tusla in respect of the child/young person and the alleged abuser;
- The internal personnel procedure for dealing with the worker/volunteer.

When an allegation is made against a worker/volunteer a quick resolution should be sought for the benefit of all concerned. It is recommended that the same person should not have responsibility for dealing with the child protection reporting procedure and the employment/contractual issues.

3.4.1 Reporting allegations of abuse made against workers/ volunteers to Tusla

The agreed reporting procedure should always be followed by mandated persons and/or the DLP. In addition:

- 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.

3.4.2 The Employer's internal personnel procedures for dealing with a worker/volunteer who is the subject of an allegation of abuse

The Employer's internal personnel procedures for dealing with a worker/volunteer who is the subject of an allegation of abuse needs to be clearly outlined.

The risk of harm to a child should be at the forefront of any decisions made or actions taken. As with any child protection or welfare concerns your reporting procedure must be followed, including, where appropriate, reporting to Tusla.

In addition, it is a matter of good practice for all organisations, and a legal requirement under the *Children First Act 2015* for providers of relevant services, to develop procedures to respond to allegations of child abuse against any worker/ volunteer.

Allegations of child abuse are very serious for both the child involved and the worker/volunteer concerned. Organisations should consider what processes should be put in place in regard to the worker/volunteer and should consider the need to obtain professional advice in relation to its responsibilities under employment and other law.

Key practice point
Whistleblowing – a responsibility to speak out

Workers/volunteers should be made aware of the appropriate authorities outside the organisation to whom they may report if they are inhibited, for any reason, in reporting an incident internally or where they are dissatisfied with the internal response. Information should be provided in organisations' policies on the *Protected Disclosures Act 2014.*

It is very important that everyone in the organisation knows that if they raise a concern which through Tusla's investigation is not validated, they have not in any way been wrong in their initial action.

Responsible action should be encouraged and whistle blowers enabled to feel confident of support from their organisation.

Remember
Erroneous allegations

Workers or volunteers working with children/young people may feel vulnerable to accusations of child abuse. There may be occasions when erroneous or untrue allegations have been made against workers/volunteers. This might be because of a misunderstanding of what has happened or a genuine mistake.

Any allegation of abuse against a worker/volunteer should be dealt with sensitively and support provided by the organisation for both the worker or volunteer who allegedly abused a child/young person and the worker or volunteer who reported the alleged abuse. Appropriate levels of confidentiality must be ensured.

3.5 Confidentiality

It is essential that there is a clear understanding of professional and legal responsibilities with regard to confidentiality and the exchange of information.

Your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures should include a statement on confidentiality.

> **Key practice point**
> **Confidentiality**
>
> - Where child protection and welfare concerns arise, information must be shared on a 'need to know' basis in the best interest of the child/young person with the relevant statutory authorities and with parents/guardians.
> - No undertakings regarding secrecy can be given. Those working with children/young people and families and in adult services should make this clear to parents/guardians and to the child/young person.
> - The proportionate provision of information to the statutory agencies necessary for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality or data protection.
> - Parents/guardians and children/young people have a right to know if personal information is being shared, unless doing so could put the child/young person at further risk or may put the reporter at risk.

3.5.1 Information sharing and record-keeping

Clarity in your procedures about the need for good quality information to be gathered and shared with Tusla will enable workers to be clear on their responsibility. It is important that information about concerns for the welfare or protection of a child/young person is gathered early and shared as soon as possible with the appropriate person within the organisation. This can facilitate early warning signs being picked up and interventions being put in place at the earliest opportunity.

Your organisation should have a procedure for recording certain concerns which, following consideration, do not initially meet reasonable grounds for concern. This procedure should identify where such concerns are recorded, who has access to these records and who is responsible for reviewing these records. Concerns which do not initially meet reasonable grounds for concern may, upon review, show patterns or clusters which may heighten the level of concern.

The ability of Tusla to assess and investigate suspicions or allegations of child abuse or neglect will be influenced by the amount and quality of information conveyed to it by the individual or organisation reporting the concerns. Good guidance and record-keeping procedures in an organisation will support the recording of pertinent information in a manner that is accessible and sensible. **Every organisation should have a policy regarding the proportionate sharing of records with Tusla where necessary for the protection or welfare of a child.**

Your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures should contain guidance on record-keeping.

- Records should be factual and include details of contacts, consultations and any actions taken.
- All agencies dealing with children must cooperate in the sharing of records with Tusla where a child protection or welfare issue arises. An example of this could be information needed for a Child Protection Conference or Strategy Meeting or information important for the assessment of risk to a child (see also the Key Practice Point on mandated assisting in section 3.1.4, above).
- Ensure that records on child protection concerns, allegations and disclosures are kept securely and safely within the organisation.
- Records should only be used for the purpose for which they are intended.
- Records should only be shared on a need-to-know basis in the best interests of the child/young person.
- Clearly state who within your organisation has access to particular types of records.
- State the location where records are stored. If records of child protection or welfare concerns are stored separately to a service user's 'master' file, the 'master' file must indicate that another file exists and where it can be accessed.
- Indicate how long the organisation will retain these types of records. This will be informed by your record retention policy, taking into account legislative principles such as Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts.
- Child protection and welfare records should be updated as required and reviewed regularly by the Designated Liaison Person.
- You must be aware of and abide by any regulations specific to your sector or area of work with regard to record-keeping.

Learning from inquiries

Inquiries have repeatedly shown that the failure to report concerns to the appropriate authorities without delay has led to on-going abuse of children. Haphazard and careless recording of concerns and actions has also inhibited recognition of abuse and safeguarding of children.

3.6 Review checklist

Best Practice Theme 3 Responding to and reporting child protection and welfare concerns	Fully in place (working well)	Requires work (not working well)	Action required
Guidance on reasonable grounds for concern is included in your reporting procedure.			

Definitions and features of child abuse as per *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* are included or referenced in your reporting procedure.			
Guidance on roles and responsibilities related to your reporting procedure are available			
Guidance on mandated persons' responsibility to report child protection concerns is included in your child safeguarding procedures.			
Reporting procedure that clearly outlines the steps to be followed in reporting child protection or welfare concerns is in place.			
Guidance on dealing with disclosures is included in your child safeguarding procedures.			
Guidance on dealing with adult disclosures of childhood abuse, where it is identified there may be current risk to a child/young person, is included in your child safeguarding procedures.			
Procedure to deal with any allegations of abuse against workers/volunteers/ management is included in your child safeguarding procedures.			
Guidance on confidentiality is included in your child safeguarding procedures.			
Guidance on information sharing and record-keeping is included in your child safeguarding procedures.			

Best Practice Theme 4: Working safely with children and young people

This section provides guidance on working safely with children and young people through:

- Safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers;
- Provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information;
- Procedures for safe management of activities;
- Management of workers and volunteers.

Best Practice Theme 4: Working safely with children and young people Actions that evidence and promote best practice	
4:1	A **recruitment and selection** procedure is in place with regard to a person's suitability to work with children/young people and applies to all workers and volunteers.
4:2	The organisation has a **training strategy** for child safeguarding training based on a training needs analysis. Safeguarding training provided is consistent with *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* and the *Children First Act 2015*. All workers/volunteers have attended child safeguarding training relevant to their role in the organisation.
4:3	There are policies and procedures in place to support the **safe management of activities**.
4:4	There are procedures in place for the effective **management of workers and volunteers**. There is a **code of behaviour for workers and volunteers** which specifies acceptable and unacceptable practices with regard to working with children and young people.
4:5	The responsibility for all workers/volunteers to **report concerns** that they may have **about a colleague's practice** is clearly stated in policy. The organisation's procedure details the actions to be taken.
4:6	The organisation has **disciplinary procedures** in place.

Introduction

In previous sections this Guide has focussed on the need to identify key roles in safeguarding and procedures for responding to and reporting concerns. There are a number of additional areas of procedure and practice which combine to create safer environments when working with children and young people. In addition, the implementation of your guiding principles in safeguarding will require organisations to ensure that all procedures and practice are child-centred at all times.

Child-centred practice means working in a way that puts the welfare and best interests of the child at the core of how we work. Child-centred practice supports the legal principle that the welfare of the child is of paramount importance, compliant with the *Child Care Act 1991*, the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, the *Children First Act 2015* and *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*.

To ensure that all staff and volunteers are working in ways which are compliant with your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures, you should also include clear guidance for staff and volunteers on the following areas of best practice:

- **Recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers** – to try and ensure that you have the right workers/volunteers in place to work with the children/young people and families to whom you provide services.
- **Training and provision of information on safeguarding of children/young people** – to endeavour to ensure that all workers and volunteers are clear on their responsibilities and understand the different forms of abuse and risks that children/young people they are working with may be exposed to.

- **Procedures for safe management of activities** – to provide guidance to workers and volunteers on planning and running activities in a way that focuses on the safety of children and young people.
- **Management of workers and volunteers** – to include the development and use of a code of behaviour for workers and volunteers to provide clarity regarding acceptable and unacceptable practices, as well as to give some guidance on how a code of behaviour can be used in your organisation as a tool for effective management of workers and volunteers.

Tip box
Sectorial guidance

When considering any of the key areas outlined in this Best Practice Theme please refer to your organisation's own sectorial guidance, if available (e.g. Sport Ireland's *Safeguarding Code for Children and Young People in Sport*, the Art Council's *Guidance for the Protection of Children and Young People in the Arts Sector*, the National Youth Council of Ireland's *Protecting our Children and Young People,* etc.).

Key practice point
Tailoring procedures to your particular context

Your policies and procedures **must be tailored** to the services you deliver and the activities you engage in. For example, each service should ensure that its code of behaviour reflects the individual needs of the children/young people with whom it works. *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* identifies a number of circumstances which may make children/young people more vulnerable to harm. These complicating factors and circumstances should be considered when developing your policies, procedures, practice guidelines and code of behaviour, particularly around the following areas:

- **Intimate or personal care** – how are individual care needs met and how is this decided or agreed? Organisations providing intimate or personal care should clearly outline in their code of behaviour, best practice guidance relevant to the type of care provided, i.e. changing of nappies on infants, toileting young children, dressing children with disabilities, etc.
- **Communication** – how are children/young people who have alternative communication needs catered for and included?
- **On-line safety** - how are children/young people, who have access in your service to information and communication technology, kept safe from harm?
- **Access to an advocate** – for children/young people who cannot advocate for their own rights, who speaks for them or their rights?
- **Complaints procedure** – where children/young people or their families are not happy with issues in the service, how do they raise this?
- **Inclusion** – where children/young people have specific individual needs, how does the service meet any specific identified needs?
- **Consultation and agreements with parents/guardians**– what are the procedures for consulting with families around meeting the individual needs of their children/young people?
- **Appropriate training** – how do workers/volunteers access training to give them better knowledge and understanding of individual needs and how to work in an inclusive manner?
- **One-to-one working** – what are the guidelines and protocols for carrying out one-to-one work in a safe and child-centred manner?
- **Physical contact** - where physical contact between a worker or volunteer and

4.1 Safe recruitment and selection

4.1.1 Procedures for recruiting and selecting workers and volunteers

For providers of relevant services:
A procedure for the selection or recruitment of any person as a member of staff of the provider with regard to that person's suitability to work with children, is a specified procedure under the *Children First Act 2015*.

Organisations should take all reasonable steps to ensure that only suitable people are recruited to work with children and families by adopting and consistently applying a safe and clearly defined method of recruiting staff and volunteers.

Best practice in the recruitment and management of workers and volunteers includes providing information relevant to the post, seeking information from the applicant, Garda vetting, use of a declaration form, taking up of references, good HR practices in interviewing, induction, training, probation and on-going supervision and management.

It is essential that an organisation has effective recruitment and selection procedures to ensure that suitable individuals are recruited to work with children/young people. You should have procedures covering the following:

- Recruitment and selection;
- Garda Vetting;
- Induction including induction on your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures;
- Supervision and support for workers and volunteers.

The implementation of thorough recruitment and selection procedures will help to keep children and young people safe within your organisation. Good practice in management and supervision of workers and volunteers after appointment is a further essential safeguard to help keep children/young people safe.

Key practice point
Developing recruitment and selection procedures

In developing your recruitment and selection procedure you should include:

- **Job/role descriptions** for each paid or unpaid position. Job/role descriptions should describe the range of duties required by each role, accompanied by a **person specification** that describes the type of attributes you require the post holder to have (e.g. their experience, qualifications and other requirements).
- **Advertisements** of paid/volunteer roles. Roles working with children should be circulated as widely as possible through the most appropriate method for your organisation.
- The use of an **application form** and a **declaration form**. An application form ensures all prospective workers/volunteers provide the information the organisation deems appropriate to the role they are applying for. It also makes comparing individual candidates easier and better equips the organisation to select the best candidate for the post. The application form should contain a

declaration section which allows individuals to self-declare any relevant information in relation to their suitability to work with children or young people.

- **Garda Vetting**. All prospective candidates should consent to Garda Vetting which should be processed only for successful candidates. Garda Vetting is helpful in gathering information about the preferred applicant's history to help determine suitability. Under the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016, it is a crime to employ someone in certain work or activities without undertaking Garda Vetting.
- The use of **interviews**. Ensuring workers or volunteers are interviewed by at least two representatives of the organisation helps to get a sense of the candidates' attitudes, values, knowledge and skills. This is also an opportunity to explore with applicants any gaps in their employment history or voluntary work identified on the application form.
- Gathering of **references**. A minimum of two written references should be sought for preferred applicants. References should include their last employer and all references should be followed up either by phone or in person. Referees should be asked specific questions regarding the suitability of the preferred applicant and their history of working with children and young people.
- Seeking **evidence** to verify qualifications and experience.
- Requesting **identification**. Checking that the identity of the preferred candidate is confirmed against some official documentation (such as driver's license or passports) is an essential part of ensuring a safe recruitment and selection procedure.
- **Sign-off.** For organisations governed by a Board of Management or management committee all appointments must be approved by the Board or committee, not by any individual member/s of the organisation.

Once you have selected your preferred candidate and signed the appropriate **contracts**, there are further steps to be taken to ensure you have the right person. These include:

- **Induction** for new workers/volunteers on your organisation's policies and procedures, in particular your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures.
- A **probationary/trial period** (usually six months). Every new appointee should be reviewed within an agreed period of time. The length of time will vary depending on the nature of the post. A review should be held at the end of the probationary/trial period.

4.1.2 Vetting by the National Vetting Bureau

Under the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016 all people working with children and vulnerable adults are required to undergo vetting. Your organisation must vet applicants who will be working directly with children with the National Vetting Bureau prior to appointment and commencement of work.

Your organisation is responsible for deciding on the suitability of individuals, based on the information received under a vetting application, giving due regard to the organisation's needs, client group and ethos. You should be clear on what the steps in this process are and who is involved in making the decision. While it is not possible to plan for every possible eventuality, the organisation should set out clear criteria which would rule out an applicant.

Information received about applicants should be treated as highly sensitive and confidential. It should be stored securely and be accessible only to specified individuals

within the organisation. Where information arising from a vetting application leads you to exclude a particular applicant, they must be informed of the reason for the decision and afforded an opportunity to appeal. Further information on vetting can be accessed from the National Vetting Bureau's website, https://vetting.garda.ie/.

In line with data protection legislation, information from the National Vetting Bureau should only be retained when necessary and must be stored securely with secured access. Where information is destroyed, organisations should include a note on any personnel file stating that a vetting check was carried out and that the person's conditional offer of appointment was confirmed/withdrawn as a result. You should also include criteria for re-vetting in your organisation's vetting policy.

> **Remember**
> **Workers from other jurisdictions**
>
> Workers and volunteers in some organisations may be residents of other jurisdictions. Organisations should consider cross-border vetting, when required.

4.2 Developing a child safeguarding training strategy

> **For providers of relevant services:**
> A procedure for the provision of information and, where necessary, instruction and training, to members of staff of the provider in relation to the identification of the occurrence of harm, is a specified procedure under the *Children First Act 2015*.

The aim of child safeguarding training is to provide:

- Guidance on how to recognise child abuse;
- Guidance on responding appropriately to child protection or welfare concerns;
- Information on the importance of working together to protect children/young people;
- Information on the importance of agencies developing effective child safeguarding policies, procedures and practices;
- Information on your organisation's guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures.

To effectively deliver child safeguarding training and information your organisation should develop a child safeguarding training strategy. Your organisation's child safeguarding training strategy should be informed by a review of your workers'/volunteers' training needs; this is called a training needs analysis. Management is responsible for ensuring that all workers and volunteers are trained in the recognition of the signs of abuse, understand their responsibilities to safeguard children and know the procedures to follow.

4.2.1 What should a training strategy include?

Your child safeguarding training strategy should show how child safeguarding training is accessed, delivered, monitored and evaluated within your organisation. It should include:

- The use of induction training to introduce new workers/volunteers to the organisation's guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures;
- How in-house training will be used to ensure workers and volunteers are familiar with the organisation's guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures;

- How child safeguarding training, appropriate to the specific roles and responsibilities of various staff members, will be provided or sourced;
- How mandated persons will be provided with specific training in relation to their statutory responsibilities under the *Children First Act 2015*;
- How specific training for those with additional responsibilities, such as DLPs/Deputy DLPs or members of management committees will be provided or sourced;
- How and within what timeframe the organisation will provide or source appropriate child safeguarding refresher training for all workers;
- How your training strategy will be resourced.

> **Key practice point**
> **Developing a training strategy**
>
> See Appendix 9 for a guidance note on developing a child safeguarding training strategy and template for developing a training strategy and conducting a training needs analysis.

4.2.2 Ensuring safeguarding training is consistent with Children First

All organisations should satisfy themselves that the content of any training accessed or delivered is consistent with *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*, the *Children First Act 2015* and this Guide. Tusla's *Best Practice Principles for Organisations in Developing Children First Training Programmes* (available from the Tusla website, here) may be of assistance to organisations reviewing or developing training programmes. Tusla also provides a universal Children First e-learning programme, called *An Introduction to Children First*. It covers recognising and reporting child abuse, the role of mandated persons, including mandated assisting, and the responsibilities of organisations working with children to safeguard children using their services. The e-learning programme provides a certificate on successful completion and can be accessed through the Tusla website, here.

4.2.3 Keeping training records[6]

It is essential that each organisation gathers and retains a record of training information including:

- Date and name of training programmes delivered;
- Names of worker/volunteers who attended and their position within the organisation;
- Details of workers/volunteers who did not receive training but need to complete it;
- Number of workers/volunteers trained;
- Training programmes completed by each worker/volunteer (e.g. induction into the organisation's guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures, child safeguarding training, DLP training, refresher training, etc.);
- The names of the trainers who delivered the programme and the organisation they were from.
- A signed receipt of all workers/volunteers who have been given a copy of the organisation's guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures (can be done at induction or in-house training).

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[6] See also section 3.5.1 of this document.

4.3 Safe management of activities

Part of keeping children and young people safe and reducing the likelihood of harm is having clear guidelines in place regarding how activities are organised and run. The following sections outline some of the issues you should consider when planning and running activities to minimise opportunities for accidents or harm to children/young people while in your organisation.

4.3.1 Keeping a register of children and young people
- Have criteria for membership of the organisation;
- Have a registration system for each child/young person;
- Keep a record on each child/young person, including address and family contact numbers;
- Keep medical details, any individual needs and emergency contact telephone numbers accessible.

Remember
Importance of record-keeping

Where there is an accident or incident that leads to a review of your procedures and practice by an outside authority, one of the first pieces of information they are likely to scrutinise is the integrity of your organisation's registration system.

Key practice point
Guardianship

What is guardianship?
"Guardianship means the rights and duties of parents in respect of the upbringing of their children. A guardian has the right to make all major decisions affecting the child's upbringing, including choice of school, medical treatment, religious matters, health requirements and decisions about leaving the country. Guardians are responsible for the welfare of the child. Welfare includes the moral, intellectual and physical wellbeing of the child and where there is property held on behalf of the child, it includes the proper administration of such property" (Court Service of Ireland).

Who is a guardian?
Married parents of a child are 'joint guardians' and have equal rights in relation to the child. The rights of parents to guardianship are set down in Section 6 of the *Guardianship of Infants Act 1964*.

On 18th January 2016 certain provisions of the *Children and Family Relationships Act 2015* came into effect that made a number of changes to the *Guardianship of Infants Act 1964*.

If a child is born outside of marriage, the mother is the sole guardian. The position of the unmarried father of the child is not so certain. An unmarried father will automatically be a guardian if he has lived with the child's mother for 12 consecutive months after 18th January 2016, including at least three months with the mother and child following the child's birth. Where the father does not meet these criteria he may still gain guardianship through entering into a formal agreement with the mother or by applying to the District Court.

In situations where the father has been appointed joint guardian of a child, then his

4.3.2 Maintaining good record-keeping

Organisations should keep up-to-date records of the following:

- Attendance;
- Accidents (accident records should be reviewed regularly and any unusual patterns reported to senior management);
- Incidents;
- Consent forms;
- Any complaints or grievances.

4.3.3 Health and safety responsibilities

Organisations should ensure that:

- Any buildings being used are safe and meet required standards;
- There is sufficient heating and ventilation;
- Food preparation areas, where they exist, are sanitary and meet food safety requirements;
- Toilets, shower areas and washing facilities are to standard and meet the accessibility requirements of all members;
- Fire precautions are in place;
- First aid facilities and equipment are adequate;
- There is access to a phone;
- Equipment is checked regularly;
- Insurance cover is adequate.

4.3.4 Accidents and incidents

There are a number of related policy areas which impact on the overall safety and wellbeing of children and young people in organisations. For example it is essential that organisations meet their obligation in relation to the *Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005*.

Accidents and incidents procedures will help to ensure an appropriate, open response when something occurs within the service.

Key practice point
Safety issues

Organisations should ensure that:

- Activities being undertaken are suitable for the abilities, ages and experience levels of all participants.
- Equipment and facilities meet appropriate safety and quality standards and are appropriate to the needs of the participants.
- Activities are risk assessed and that appropriate responses to identified risks are planned and implemented.
- Where protective equipment is deemed necessary, it should be used.
- Any injuries should be recorded with a note of the action taken. It is recommended that each organisation maintain an accident/incident book with a specific incident form for completion by workers/volunteers (see below). Due regard must be given

- Parents/guardians should be notified by the appropriate person of injuries/illnesses which occur while children/young people are participating in an activity.
- Insurance cover is adequate to the organisation's needs.

Recording accidents and incidents
There should be appropriate recording mechanisms in place to detail any accidents or incidents which may occur. In differentiating between the two it is useful to note that an incident does not usually involve any casualty or the loss of life, while an accident will involve some form of injury.

Incidents should be recorded separately from accidents as they may need to be referred to when considering suspected child abuse or neglect.

4.3.5 Safe supervision of children and young people
Children/young people are less likely to experience accidents or incidents if they are supervised properly. Activities should be organised to maximise participation, fun and learning in a way that minimises risk. Ensure that:

- A work schedule is displayed so that everyone knows who is on duty or volunteering in an activity;
- Children/young people are not left unattended;
- Adequate numbers of workers/volunteers are available to supervise the activities (best practice would indicate that there are male and female workers/volunteers present to supervise coeducational activities);
- Workers/volunteers know at all times where children/young people are and what they are doing;
- Online activities are age appropriate and monitored;
- Any activity using potentially dangerous equipment has constant adult supervision;
- Dangerous behaviour is never allowed.

Things to consider
Code of behaviour for children and young people

It is good practice to involve children and young people in developing a code of behaviour for themselves. A code of behaviour for children/young people helps to explain their rights and responsibilities when taking part in an organisation's activities. Two useful resources which may help you in developing a code of behaviour for children and young people are:

- National Youth Council of Ireland: *Guidance Sheet: Developing a Code of Behaviour with Children and Young People* which can be accessed here.
- Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Barnardos: *A practical guide to including seldom-heard children and young people in decision-making* which can be accessed here.

In developing a Code of Behaviour for Children and Young People it is important to also consider rights and responsibilities when taking part in online activities.

4.3.6 Ensure safe adult-child ratios
Adult-child ratios should be specified, taking account of the nature of your organisation, types of activities, age and level of ability of your service users and relevant policy, insurance or legislative requirements. Best practice would be a ratio of one adult to

whatever maximum number of children/young people is appropriate for your service, plus an additional adult (i.e. 1 adult to *x number* children + an additional adult). Many sectors provide specific guidance for organisations within their remit.

There are times when one-to-one work with children is appropriate and this Guide should not be seen as indicating otherwise.

Key practice point
Working one-to-one with children and young people

One-to-one working requires transparency within the organisation in respect of workers/volunteers having individual contact with children/young people. A timetable should be displayed detailing the name of the worker/volunteer and the child/young person, the location (i.e. the room or detail of any outside venue) and the start and expected finish time for the one-to-one contact. Anyone undertaking one-to-one work with a child or young person should adhere to the organisation's code of behaviour.

Where one-to-one work is used, it is safe practice to have agreements in place between the organisation and the parents/carer regarding the reasons for the one-to-one work, the duration and the content of the sessions.

For an example of guidance on one to one working see the Arts Council's *Solo Practitioner Code of Practice for Working with Children and Young People*, available on the Arts Council website, here.

4.3.7 Using external facilities – whose reporting procedures apply?

When using facilities or services provided by another organisation it is important to clarify and agree which organisation's reporting procedures for child protection or welfare concerns will be followed.

There will be occasions when two or more organisations come together to collaborate or work in partnership. This may take many forms including:

- Work on a one-off basis around a particular event, project or initiative;
- Work on a medium to long term basis;
- Accessing the services of workers/volunteers from another organisation;
- Use or rental of premises.

It is important, that there is a clear understanding as to which organisation's guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures will be followed. This may necessitate developing a protocol, agreed by the various parties, which will operate for the duration of the collaborative work.

Everyone involved should be aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and of any changes to their usual practice as a result of partnership working.

Remember
Organisations working in partnership

When organisations are working together there is a risk that workers/volunteers may be confused about to whom they should report incidents or suspected child protection or welfare concerns. There is also a risk of confusion about who is responsible for passing on such concerns to the statutory authorities.

Where organisations are collaborating and/or sharing facilities it is essential that there is clarity on the reporting procedure to be followed in cases of incidents or suspected child protection or welfare concerns. For more information see Appendix 10 – *Organisations Working in Partnership*.

Tip Box
Renting space to other organisations
If you are renting space in your facility to an organisation which works independently please see appendix 11 for some points to consider.

4.3.8   Online Safety (Including use of photography, video and/or social/digital media)

Mobile phones, social networking sites and the internet can be great tools to help organisations and groups communicate with children and young people. Taking pictures and video footage and transmitting these to friends and family members has become a feature of everyday life. Social media sites are now commonly used to display images and videos and provide personal information.

Children and young people are often confident and competent users of new technologies and will often have online access through their own mobiles, gaming consoles and other devices. They may be less aware of safeguarding risks and that if used inappropriately digital technologies may lead to abuse, both online and offline.

Information and communication technology (ICT) forms an important platform for communication which is commonly used by adults and children/ young people alike. It is important, when working with children and young people, to ensure that the use of digital media and ICT is consensual, ethical and not misused to cause harm to an individual. If an organisation is allowing children access to the internet where they could be exposed to harm of abuse, there is an obligation on the organisation to ensure that procedures are in place to manage that risk.

Key practice point
Developing procedures for managing online safety

In developing a procedure for managing online safety consider:

How are children accessing the internet while in your organisation?
• Is it only through devices provided by the organisation?
• Is it through their own devices e.g. smartphones?

What can your organisation do?
• Develop a Code of Behaviour for online safety for workers and volunteers.
• Develop a Code of Behaviour for online safety for children and young people.
• Give information / training about online access including the dangers associated with same.
• Ensure the policy and procedures for managing online safety are communicated to workers/volunteers, parents/ guardians and children & young people.
• Ensure workers/volunteers, parents and children and young people agree to and sign up to your code of behaviour.
• Obtain informed consent for filming/taking of photographs.
• Put in place a policy on the use of the organisation's information, including

information about children, on social media sites which includes:
- o Expectations around the conduct of staff and service users' use of social media sites such as Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, etc.;
- o Use of mobile phones, i.e. calling, photographing, filming, texting while in the service;
- o Use of organisation's I.T. devices (including gaming consoles).

Security
Consider :
- The use of filtering software / content blockers.
- Supervising children and young people's online access.
- Management of the organisation's social media profiles (Facebook/ Instagram/ Snapchat, etc.).

Responding and Reporting
- Ensure any complaints regarding online issues are responded to
- Report breaches appropriately (internally and externally)

Remember
Protecting children in the care of the State

Children and young people in the care of the State cannot be included in photographs or video footage recorded for publicity purposes by an organisation without the express permissions of Tusla and the court or their birth parents.

See Appendix 7 – *Online Safety*, for more information on the safe use of digital media and ICT. Your organisation may find it useful to share this information with parents/guardians.

4.3.9 Managing trips away
If your activities involve use of off-site facilities or staying away from home overnight, consideration should be given to the following:

- Safe methods of transport;
- Adequate insurance to cover all aspects of the trip;
- Written parental consent (for each individual trip);
- Any information about the children/young people which may be relevant to staying away overnight, e.g. allergies, medical problems, additional needs, etc.;
- Number of workers/volunteers required to adequately supervise children/young people at all times;
- Appropriate and well supervised sleeping arrangements;
- Respect for the privacy of children and young people in dormitories, changing rooms, showers and toilets.

The following guidance is for workers/volunteers who are involved in organising residential/day trips away for children/young people.

Planning and documentation
- Ensure permission forms are signed and received from parents/guardians prior to departure.
- Ensure that all necessary medical forms are filled out detailing medical conditions, allergies and/or procedures that may need to be looked after during the trip.

- Ensure you have adequate insurance cover for the trips and activities involved.
- The selection process for choosing the children/young people for the trip must be fair and transparent.
- Follow proper recruitment procedures when selecting workers/volunteers to go on the trip, allowing enough time for Garda vetting, police checks and reference checks which may be outside Irish jurisdiction.
- Ensure that all workers/volunteers have received adequate child safeguarding training and are aware of the organisation's guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures.
- Ensure that emergency contact phone numbers for parents/guardians are documented and available at all times.
- All workers/volunteers should be given clear roles and responsibilities for the trip.
- There should be one person appointed as the overall leader of the group who will have final decision making authority during the trip.
- Ensure that a risk assessment has been conducted in line with the organisation's policy and that this has considered safety from harm in online activities.

Accommodation
- In the planning stage check the proposed sleeping arrangements for participants, employees/volunteers and other support personnel.
- Check health and safety issues relating to the accommodation such as emergency evacuation for upstairs rooms, accessibility of rooms and corridors for mobility of the participants.
- Ensure that single-gender dormitories/rooms are used for children/young people.
- Ensure that only children/young people of similar age share sleeping accommodation
- Ensure all workers/volunteers have a list of all the children/young people's accommodation allocation.
- Adults should never enter children's/young people's rooms without knocking first.

Preparing participants and programme
- Prepare an information pack for participants including the programme of activities, emergency information if necessary and a 'help me' card, particularly for foreign trips.
- It is essential that the children/young people are involved in every aspect of the process. This is an ideal opportunity for them to share the responsibility for the trip/activities that take place.
- A Code of Behaviour for the children/young people should be signed by the parents/guardian.
- Ensure one worker/volunteer is appointed group leader; they will have various responsibilities including making a report following the trip.
- There should be a plan for communication with parents/guardians and participants to inform them of travel and accommodation details, activities, special requirements, medical requirements, special dietary needs and any other necessary details. This can take the form of meetings or written correspondence.

Emergency procedures
- Have clear emergency procedures should you need to curtail your trip; have an emergency fund and know where the children/young people, workers and volunteers are at all times.
- Children/young people should be under reasonable supervision at all times and should never leave the venue or go unsupervised without prior permission.

- Have a back-up plan if the programme changes for any reason.
- Bring a medical/first aid kit with you.
- Workers/volunteers should ensure they have the contact details of senior management and the DLP with them while on the trip.
- For foreign trips, in particular, it is advisable to have an agreed contact person in the organisation who will be able to respond to emergencies if they occur at any time of the day or night. This may involve liaising with parents/guardians in difficult situations that can be hard to do over the phone. This person should ideally be the line manager responsible for the trip or activity and should have the full contact details of the group and the full itinerary for the trip.

Monitoring and evaluation

To put an effective monitoring and evaluation system in place, each of the following should be addressed:

- Systems for monitoring and evaluation should be developed prior to the trip and agreed among the team.
- Monitoring and evaluation should be carried out with the participants, employees and volunteers.
- There should be daily evaluations with the participants, employees and volunteers.
- Carry out a full and final evaluation which should be a real exercise to learn from. Review your risk assessment from the planning process to see if there are any areas that need to be addressed.
- Make sure there is a system for keeping records and reports during the trip.

4.4 Managing Workers and Volunteers

Following on from recruitment and selection, there are a number of policies, procedures and issues related to the management of workers and volunteers that should be considered to help create a safe, child-centred environment for children and young people. All services working with children, young people or their families should develop:

- A Code of Behaviour for workers and volunteers which provides guidance on acceptable and unacceptable practice and how workers/volunteers are to respond if they have concerns about the conduct of a colleague;
- Safe management practices which include supervision and support of workers/volunteers as well as reviews of work or professional development planning to ensure that practice remains child-centred and aligned with the aims of the organisation.

The following sections of Best Practice Theme 4 provide guidance in developing these policies and procedures.

4.4.1 Code of Behaviour for workers and volunteers

Having a Code of Behaviour in place helps workers and volunteers to focus on supporting children and young people's rights and child-centred practice in their everyday work.

It also assists an organisation in trying to focus on the child/young person and the child/young person's needs. All organisations should establish a Code of Behaviour. The Code should be drawn up by representatives of management, workers and volunteers with input from children and young people. It should set out the boundaries which workers/volunteers are expected to adhere to when working with children or young

people. It should take account of best practice principles as well as the specific activities and programmes delivered by the organisation and should be based on a 'common sense approach'.

The Code of Behaviour establishes acceptable boundaries of behaviour for workers/volunteers and clarifies how to communicate/work with children and young people in a way which respects their right to be listened to, treated with respect and treated fairly.

The Code of Behaviour should also clarify the boundaries for acceptable physical contact between workers/volunteers and children/young people based on the needs of the children/young people and the nature of the service provided.

These elements within a Code of Behaviour limit the risk of child abuse, misinterpretation or unintentional harm occurring.

**Key practice point
Code of Behaviour**

- Where appropriate get the children/young people involved in discussing and drawing up the code of behaviour for workers and volunteers.
- Display the code of behaviour in your organisation or place of activity.
- Ensure the code is visible for workers, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, young people and visitors to see.
- Make a copy available to parents, guardians, children, young people and visitors.
- Ensure workers/volunteers are clear that the organisation's expectations of their behaviour with children and young people make them less vulnerable to erroneous allegations of abuse.
- Be clear on what happens if there is a breach of the code of behaviour.

A code of behaviour should take into consideration the age and intellectual understanding of the children/young people and include positive declarations and also guidance on the types of behaviour that are not acceptable when working with children and young people.

**Things to consider
Developing your organisation's code of behaviour for workers and volunteers**

Some of the areas/headings you may wish to consider, depending on the nature of your contact with children and young people, include:

- **Communication** – attitudes of workers and volunteers, use of ICT, social and digital media, etc. Examples might include guidance on how workers or volunteers should treat children or young people with respect and listen to children. Also, setting boundaries for worker/volunteer contact with children/young people over social media or outside of the group activities.
- **Safe supervision of children and young people** – adult-child ratios. Examples could include guidance on how to deal with behaviours that challenge (without the use of physical chastisement), explicitly banning the use of foul or sexualised language and directing the use of positive reinforcement to praise and encourage children and young people.
- **Transport issues** – consent forms, public or private transport, insurance,

etc. Examples could include guidance on the use of personal cars to transport children or young people as well as providing clarity on ratios of adults to children when transporting children or young people.

- **Intimate or personal care** – considering the child or young person's individual needs by insuring there is appropriate consultation with parents/guardians and children/young people. Consent should be sought for any agreed intimate or personal care practices. Consideration should be given to matters such as, appropriate levels of physical contact, how to communicate with the child/young person and keeping parents/guardians appropriately informed.
- **Safe management of activities** – consent and registration forms, planning activities, etc. Examples might include the responsibility to raise any issues regarding poor practice (should they arise), communicating appropriately with all children and planning activities or events in a way that facilitates all children's participation and inclusion.
- **Additional guidance for residential and day trips** – additional guidance on consent, supervision of children and young people, planning of activities and transport.
- **Online safety –** additional guidance for staff when children or young people are online while availing of your service. How to protect them from harm through supervision, agreed protocol on use of Wi-Fi or technology, consent of parents, and creating awareness, among other things.

It is best practice to have workers and volunteers sign up to your organisation's code of behaviour.

Key practice point
Uses of a code of behaviour

A code of behaviour has a number of uses:

- Induction training for all new workers and volunteers should include the code and its uses. The code should be used as a tool in on-going training to discuss and consider the organisation's expectations of workers'/volunteers' conduct.
- The code can provide a useful tool in supervision for workers / volunteers. It provides an agreed language and framework to discuss practice issues that may arise in day-to-day work. Managers have a responsibility to supervise and support workers/volunteers to ensure the code is being adhered to.
- There should be an explicit declaration in the organisation's code of behaviour about workers'/volunteers' responsibilities to report breaches of the code of behaviour to management. This should be emphasised in on-going training, induction and team meetings.
- The code will only be useful if implemented. Managers need to listen and respond appropriately to reports of breaches of the code. Having developed and implemented a code of behaviour for workers and volunteers, you will have clearly identified boundaries regarding acceptable and unacceptable practice. This makes it much easier to address issues of poor practice, should they arise. Disciplinary action should be taken where appropriate.

Organisations must also consider how children and young people or their advocates can make a complaint if they feel that there has been a breach of the code of behaviour. See Best Practice Theme 5.4 for more information on complaints procedures.

> **Key practice point**
> **Code of behaviour for trips away**
>
> In addition to developing your code of behaviour, you will also have to consider additional elements in your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures if you take children and young people away for outings or overnights (see also section 4.3.9 *Managing trips away*).

4.4.2 Supervision and Support of Workers and Volunteers

Management and supervision of workers and volunteers after appointment is equally important to keep children safe. Supervision of workers/volunteers helps maintain best practice and safeguards children availing of your service.

All workers/volunteers should have regular reviews of their practice to ensure that they improve over time. Conducting an annual appraisal of work is also important to allow for the recognition of good work and to help to develop skills further; this should be a formal, recorded process.

Functions of Supervision

Supervision provides a regular, structured opportunity to discuss work, review practice and progress, and plan for future development. The main functions of supervision are:

- **Management** to hold the worker/volunteer accountable for practice to ensure safe, quality, care for children and families;
- **Support** for the individual staff member in what is a demanding and potentially stressful working environment. This may involve debriefing which addresses the emotional impact of such work;
- **Learning and development needs** of each individual to identify their knowledge base, attitude, learning style and skills; to identify learning needs and the strengths and weaknesses of the worker/volunteer; and to plan and set targets for on-going development;
- **Mediation** to ensure healthy engagement with, and communication between, the individual and the organisation.

Models of Supervision

Models of supervision used by services can vary from formal to informal supervision and can be provided as either individual supervision or group supervision depending on the needs and resources of the organisation.

Informal supervision involves observing a worker/volunteer working with children/young people and other team members as well as informal chats to check out how things are going and to provide feedback.

Formal supervision involves meeting with an individual on a regular basis (for example every four weeks), notes are made of the meeting and kept confidentially. Formal supervision should be agreed, contracted (there is an agreement on the purpose, content and frequency), regularly scheduled and recorded.

Group supervision is where group members can explore, share and resolve issues together. It works best when group members know each other and have developed some trust between one another. The manager or leader would also need the skills to lead this type of supervision in a safe and respectful manner.

> **Key practice point**
> **Supervision and annual reviews**
>
> Your organisation should have regular supervision for workers/volunteers as well as a review at the end of a probationary period. At this review, check that the worker/volunteer understands the guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures.
>
> You should put in place an annual review or staff appraisal; the purpose of this is to assess general performance and it also gives an opportunity to review any changes in the personal circumstances of workers/volunteer, e.g. whether they have acquired criminal convictions or have developed health problems.
>
> Good supervision and review arrangements allow an opportunity to assess a worker's/volunteer's competence in performing their tasks. They also give an opportunity to be mindful of the types of relationships between workers/volunteers, and between workers/volunteers and children/young people. It is good practice for managers to be aware of the attitudes of workers/volunteers and the interactions that take place between them and with children/young people.

4.5 Dealing with a concern about another worker/volunteer

It is important that if a worker or volunteer has a concern about the behaviour of another worker/volunteer that they report these concerns to the Designated Liaison Person. Where the concern relates to the DLP, reports should be made to another senior manager within the organisation. This expectation should be included in the organisation's code of behaviour (see also section 3.5 *Confidentiality* and section 5.5 *Complaints procedures*).

The organisation should create an open and supportive environment where workers/volunteers feel comfortable and safe to pass on these types of concerns. Concerns about colleagues' behaviour may relate to:

- Breaches of the organisation's code of behaviour;
- Conduct which may breach professional standards or codes of ethics;
- Suspected or witnessed abuse.

A concern about another worker/volunteer may also come to your attention through your complaints procedure. This should be dealt with through your procedure for responding to allegations of abuse against workers/volunteers (see Best Practice Theme 3.4).

Where a worker/volunteer has a concern about a colleague they should:

- **Bring it to the attention of the DLP or a senior manager.** If the concern relates to poor practice it should be discussed with the relevant manager. If the concern involves suspected or witnessed abusive behaviour, this should be reported without delay to the DLP (following the organisation's reporting procedure).
- **Keep a record of the concern.** The DLP or senior manager will consider if the concern constitutes a child protection concern, if so he/she must follow the organisation's reporting procedures for child protection or welfare concerns. It will also be necessary to follow the organisation's procedure for responding to allegations of abuse against workers and volunteers.

Where the worker/volunteer feels their concerns for a child or young person's welfare or safety have not been given due regard within the organisation or feels nervous or worried about bringing the concern to the attention of the DLP or management they should contact Tusla or The Garda Síochána directly.

If the concern does not need to be reported to Tusla (i.e. does not meet the threshold for harm under the *Children First Act 2015* or reasonable grounds for concern), it may still need to be addressed by the DLP or line manager with the worker/volunteer. This would be the case, for example, if the concern related to poor practice rather than abusive behaviour.

> **Example**
> **Behaviours by a worker/volunteer that may cause concern**
>
> Behaviours by a worker/volunteer that may cause concern include when a worker:
>
> - Breaches an organisation's code of behaviour (this could be a one-off serious breach, or subtle continuous breaches, even after these have been addressed through supervision);
> - Is secretive and evasive about their activities and/or contact with children and young people;
> - Creates opportunities to spend significant amounts of time away from other workers/volunteers and with a single child or children/young people on a regular basis, e.g. invites child or young person to their home or is in online contact with child outside of professional avenues of communication;
> - Seeks out vulnerable children and young people;
> - Sidesteps one-to-one supervision and management of work;
> - Has an unusual amount of physical contact with a child or children;
> - Touches a child or children in an inappropriate way;
> - Talks to a child or children in an inappropriate way;
> - Excludes a particular child or children from activities;
> - Disciplines a child or children inappropriately or punishes a child or children harshly;
> - Handles children/young people roughly;
> - Teases, taunts, insults or makes derogatory remarks about or to a child/young person;
> - Restrains a child/young person as a way of punishment;
> - Sexually harasses or uses sexual innuendo;
> - Humiliates and/or embarrasses children/young people;
> - Deprives children/young people of their basic rights;
> - Inappropriately uses social media or mobile phones to connect with or share information about children;
> - Bullies children/young people.

4.6 Disciplinary procedures

Disciplinary procedures are essential in the overall response to a failure by a worker/volunteer to meet the expected standard of work or behaviour in their working practice. Disciplinary procedures are written, step-by-step procedures which an organisation commits itself to follow in every case where a worker/volunteer may have

to be warned, reprimanded, or dismissed as a result of a complaint or failure on the worker's part to meet the expected standards.

Disciplinary procedures may be instituted when:

- There is a complaint made about a worker or volunteer;
- There is an alleged breach of the code of behaviour;
- There is an allegation of abuse made against a worker or volunteer (see also section 3.4 *Responding to allegations of abuse made against workers/volunteers*).

The disciplinary procedures will need to work alongside and be consistent with your complaints procedures, code of behaviour and procedure for managing allegations of abuse against workers/volunteers.

When dealing with employees, procedures must comply with employment law. When dealing with volunteers, in the absence of employment law, procedures must adhere good practice and should not unfairly discriminate against the volunteer. Organisations may wish to seek legal advice when developing/reviewing their procedures to ensure that they are robust and reasonable.

Key practice point
Rights of workers/volunteers

Any person subject to disciplinary procedures is entitled under fair procedure to:

- Have clear information in respect of the complaint;
- Copies of any documentation used in decision making;
- An opportunity to provide their account and for this to be considered before any conclusions are drawn;
- Have conclusions and decisions set out in writing;
- A right of appeal.

4.6.1 Appeals against disciplinary action

If the worker/volunteer feels that the disciplinary action taken against them is wrong or unjust they have the right to appeal against the decision. An appeals procedure should be developed as part of the disciplinary procedure.

Remember
Tailoring policy and procedure to your organisation

The processes outlined in Best Practice Theme 4 are about working safely with children and young people in the service you provide. For some organisations these may be very formal procedures. For example, a large employer may have a Human Resources Department which will look after the recruitment process and will provide training and time for supervision and support. A small community group may have less formal supervision through a senior volunteer or member of the management committee checking in with workers/volunteers and children/young people to see how things are going. The important point is to implement best practice in a way that is tailored to your service and keeps the children/young people in your care safe from harm. It is important that your records show the steps you have taken to comply with best practice and to implement your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures.

4.7 Review checklist

Best Practice Theme 4 Working safely with children and young people	Fully in place (working well)	Requires work (not working well)	Action required
A recruitment and selection procedure is in place with regard to a person's suitability to work with children/young people and applies to all workers and volunteers			
The organisation has a training strategy for child safeguarding training based on a training needs analysis			
Child safeguarding training provided is consistent with *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* and Children First legislation			
All workers/volunteers have attended child safeguarding training relevant to their role in the organisation			
A record-keeping system with regard to what safeguarding training workers/volunteers have attended is in place			
There are policies and procedures in place to support the safe management of activities			
An accident/incident procedure is in place			
There is a code of behaviour for workers and volunteers which specifies acceptable and unacceptable practices with regard to working with			

children/young people			
There is a supervision policy and appropriate supervision is provide to all workers and volunteers			66
The responsibility for all workers/volunteers to report concerns that they may have about a colleague's practices is clearly stated in policy			
A disciplinary procedure is in place			

Best Practice Theme 5: Procedures for sharing your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures and involving parents, guardians, families, children and young people

This section provides guidance on:

- How to involve parents/guardians and children/young people with your service;
- How to work in partnership with parents/guardians and communicate information regarding your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures;
- How to share information about child protection or welfare issues effectively with parents/guardians and children/young people.

Best Practice Theme 5: Procedures for sharing your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures and involving parents, guardians, families, children and young people Actions that evidence and promote best practice	
5:1	All parents/guardians have access to a copy of the guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures
5:2	Children and young people are empowered to claim their right to be protected, consulted, listened to and treated with respect appropriate to their age and developmental stage An anti-bullying procedure has been developed and shared with children and their parents
5:3	Relevant and appropriate information is communicated to parents/guardians and children/young people to enhance working in partnership Children and young people know how to raise concerns if they are unhappy or feel unsafe
5:4	Children, young people, parents and guardians know how to make a complaint if they are dissatisfied with the service being provided

Introduction

Partnership with parents/guardians and families involves information sharing and consultation regarding all aspects of their child's participation in your service. Meaningful communication is essential in building a partnership with parents/guardians and families.

Good communication depends not only on how information is shared but what is being shared. Organisations can support children's and young people's rights by ensuring that children and their parents/guardians are kept informed of matters that concern them.

5.1 Sharing your guiding principles and safeguarding procedures

Parents/guardians should be made aware of your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures on initial contact with your service. You should consider including your declaration of guiding principles in literature about your service and activities that you give to families (e.g. handbook for parents/guardians).

When communicating with parents/guardians, families, children and young people you should be mindful of possible literacy issues, language barriers and communication differences.

5.2 Empowering children and young people to claim their rights

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. Organisations should empower children/young people by making them aware of their rights. In particular organisations should encourage the active participation of children

and young people in all decision making relevant to their involvement in the service/activities, in a manner which is appropriate to their age and developmental stage.

To create a safer environment for children and young people, you also need to promote a practice culture amongst workers and volunteers which enables and supports children/young people to exercise their right to speak out when they feel they are suffering harm or are at risk of suffering harm. Also, when children and young people feel included in decision making, respected and valued by workers and volunteers, they are much more likely to speak up about any abuse they might be experiencing. Enabling and promoting the participation of children and young people within your organisation has many benefits, including:

- Providing you with the opportunity to check that what you are doing is actually what children/young people want;
- Demonstrating your commitment to upholding the rights of children and young people;
- Strengthening your commitment to safeguarding children and young people in your organisation;
- Building leadership skills of children and young people;
- Enhancing the safety of children/young people by identifying risks and dangers.

Below are some examples of how to encourage and empower children and young people's participation in your organisation. For very young or certain groups of children you may need to make extra effort to ensure that they understand the same messages.

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Example
How to empower children and young people

- Educate children and young people on their right to be safe from abuse and neglect through, for example, discussion sessions, leaflets and posters. This can help them to be active in their own protection.
- Educate children and young people about online safety and ask them to include a code of conduct for online safety in their code of behaviour (See Appendix 7 – *Online Safety*).
- Make sure children and young people know who to speak to if they feel unsafe or unhappy about something.
- Consider how you involve children and young people and support their participation.
- Train workers/volunteers in how to effectively listen to and communicate with children and young people.
- Feedback forms or surveys can be used to gain children/young people's views on when they feel safe/unsafe, happy/unhappy and included/not included.
- Ask children and young people to write their own Code of Behaviour that includes expectations for their interactions with other children and young people, workers and volunteers. It should include guidance about online safety and their use of the internet and social media.
- Include a child or young person on an interview panel where appropriate and possible, and ask them to assist in forming interview questions.
- Openly discuss your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures with children and young people in the service.
- Encourage children and young people to speak out and make complaints.

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5.2.1 Anti-bullying policy

Part of empowering children and young people is making sure that they are protected from bullying behaviour while attending your organisation. *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*, p.12, defines bullying as:

> "Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression – whether it is verbal, psychological or physical – that is conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating, and occurs mainly among children in social environments such as schools. It includes behaviours such as physical aggression, cyberbullying, damage to property, intimidation, isolation/exclusion, name calling, malicious gossip and extortion. Bullying can also take the form of identity abuse based on gender, sexual preference, race, ethnicity and religious factors. With developments in modern technology, children can also be the victims of non-contact bullying, via mobile phones, the Internet and other personal devices."

Please see also the Tusla *Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook* 2 for further information, including the types of bullying and strategies for responding where there are concerns about bullying, including cyber-bullying. Appendix 8 of this document also provides information on cyberbullying.

In cases of serious instances of bullying where the behaviour is regarded as possibly abusive, you may need to make a referral to Tusla and/or The Garda Síochána.

Your organisation, in consultation with children and young people, should develop an anti-bullying policy. More information on developing anti-bullying policies can be found in the National Youth Council of Ireland's (NYCI) document *Let's Beat Bullying*, available on the NYCI website, here.

5.3 Guidelines for working in partnership with parents/guardians and children/young people

5.3.1 Working in partnership with parents/guardians and families

Working in partnership with parents/guardians and families helps to safeguard children and young people. Forming positive relationships encourages mutual trust and reassures them that the organisation sees the welfare of the child/young person as paramount.

It is important to be aware of the family structure and endeavour to involve all family members who play a key role in the child's life. This may include mothers, fathers, grandparents, foster carers, etc.

In order for a parent/guardian/family member to believe that they can work in partnership with professionals they need to feel respected and valued. One of the ways this can be done is to assure them that, wherever appropriate, they will be

consulted/spoken with if a concern arises about their child/young person or before information is passed on to another agency about a concern. If you feel that you might put the child/young person at risk of further harm by informing the parents/guardians that a report is going to be made to Tusla, you should discuss this concern with the Tusla social worker prior to talking to the parents/guardian.

Discussing an issue with parents/guardians helps them to better understand the issue and gives them an opportunity to respond (see section 3.1.5 for further tips on talking to parents/guardians about child protection and welfare concerns).

Key practice point
Working in partnership and communicating with parents/guardians

Best practice in working in partnership and communicating involves:

- Providing visual information on who works in your organisation e.g. a photograph of each worker/volunteer;
- Having something that is clearly visible for parents/guardians that signposts information on safeguarding children/young people. Your statement of guiding principles and /or your Child Safeguarding Statement should be displayed;
- Providing information about online safety and your procedures for ensuring children and young people are protected from online abuse while availing of your service;
- Talking to parents/guardians informally on a regular basis;
- Providing information in a format and language that can be easily understood by everyone, including children/young people, e.g. a leaflet with the main points of your declaration of guiding principles outlined in brief, newsletters, parents/guardian's handbook, etc. These should be translated to other languages where appropriate.
- Having an open door policy, which allows parents/guardians to visit the service at any time;
- Regularly providing information and feedback to parents/guardians verbally as well as in writing.

Tip box
Encourage parents/guardians to

- Ask about your organisation's Child Safeguarding Statement (where appropriate) and guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures.
- Make suggestions/comments.
- Be involved with and part of the management committee.
- Look around the environment.
- Ask about their child/young person's experience of the workers/service/programme/activity/group and how they are getting on.
- Talk with workers/volunteers about how their child/young person is getting on in the service.
- Share information about their culture and traditions.
- Attend any information meetings/workshops for parents/guardian.
- Share information about their child/young person with workers or volunteers.

For successful partnership with parents/guardians there needs to be two-way communication. Your organisation should develop a communications strategy that supports working in partnership with parents/guardians and children/young people.

5.3.2 Communications strategy

Your communications strategy sets out your intention to involve parents/guardians and children/young people and share information in an open and transparent manner. Participation is important for parents/guardians and children/young people because it gives them an opportunity to have a say about issues and decisions that affect them, learn new skills, have fun and develop links with their community.

Your communications strategy should further clarify the rights of children and young people to be consulted and to have their views and opinions taken into account when decisions are being made about them. The following tips include some broad, good practice guidelines to consider when thinking about how you communicate information on your guiding principles and safeguarding procedures to various groups of interested parties (e.g. workers/volunteers, parent/guardians and children/young people).

Tip box
Sharing information

Display
- Have a notice board displaying:
  - Your communications strategy;
  - The name of the Designated Liaison Person;
  - Your calendar detailing activities, events, etc.;
  - Details of any information evenings/workshops for parents/guardians on diversity, equality and anti-discrimination issues, etc.

Tell
- Have a parents'/guardians' handbook/ leaflets/ newsletters communicating:
  - Information on how to make a child protection or welfare report (see Best Practice Theme 3) ;
  - Information on how to make a complaint.
- Share your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures with organisations that you work alongside and agree protocols, where appropriate (see Best Practice Theme 4 and Appendix 10 for more information).
- Tell children/young people, parents/guardians and workers/volunteers about your code of behaviour for workers and volunteers (see Best Practice Theme 4).
- Tell children of their right to be protected, listened to and to have their views taken into consideration.

Ask
- Gather appropriate information and be mindful of confidentiality.
- Registration forms for children/young people should evidence that parents/guardians have been informed of your organisation's Child Safeguarding Statement and/or guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures.
- It is important to establish who has guardianship rights for a child attending your service. Where guardianship issues arise, documentation from legal guardians should be requested and kept on the child's file evidencing who the child's legal guardians are (see key practice point in section 4.3 for further information on guardianship).
- Regularly check in with parents/guardians that the information you are sharing is being received and understood.
- Ask parents/guardians for feedback to find out what you are doing well and what you could improve or change to benefit parents/guardians and children/young people using your service.

Key practice point
Communication Strategies

In developing your strategy for communicating with parents/guardians and children/young people consider the following:

- Who is the first point of contact when parents/carers and children /young people walk into your organisation?
- Introducing parents/carers and children/young people to all workers/volunteers involved in the organisation;
- How does your organisation ensure individual cultures are valued and respected?
- Listening to every child, young person and parent/guardian;
- Respecting an adult and child/young person's right to confidentiality, and also making them aware that there are limits to this when it comes to a child's need for protection and safety.

Tip box
Communicating with children about staying safe

- Give children/young people a voice so that they can convey any concerns they might have
- Regularly check in with children/young people that the information you are sharing is being received and understood.
- Give children and young people information about online safety and your procedures for protecting them from harm from online safety while in your service
- You should have something that is clearly displayed for children/young people that signposts information on safeguarding children/young people.
- Check that children/young people understand that they are free to approach any worker/volunteer if they are worried about something.

5.4 Complaints procedure

Your organisation should develop a complaints procedure for the service. Many issues that arise can be resolved informally between the complainant and the organisation; it is important to have a process to respond to complaints that cannot be resolved informally. A complaint can sometimes arise as a result of someone's misunderstanding of a policy or procedure.

5.4.1 Defining a complaint
Complaints may arise in response to:

- An alleged breach of the code of behaviour by a worker/volunteer;
- A particular practice issue;
- Perceived poor attitude of a worker/volunteer;
- A child/young person feeling unhappy about an incident or an event;
- A parent/guardian feeling unhappy about an incident or event involving their child;

- Dissatisfaction in relation to an aspect of the service being provided.

Some complaints may need to be addressed through your procedure for responding to allegations of abuse against workers/volunteers – see Best Practice Theme 3.4.

5.4.2 Who can make a complaint?
It is important that everyone is aware of how to access the complaints procedure and that it is clear who can complain. An organisation should be open to receiving a complaint from a:
- Parent/guardian;
- Child or young person;
- An external agency or organisation involved in interagency working;
- Member of the public or other who may have a legitimate concern.

Note: Issues being raised by workers/volunteers or students on placement should be brought to the attention of the relevant manager, following the appropriate internal procedure.

5.4.3 Publicising the complaints procedure
Users of the service and workers/volunteers should be aware of how to access the complaints procedure. You should consider how you will raise awareness of your complaints procedure, e.g. leaflets, posters, website, induction training, etc.

5.4.4 Processing a complaint
Your organisation should have clearly stated steps for responding to a complaint. These should include naming the individual responsible for responding to complaints and details of both verbal and written response processes. Children and young people should not be restricted in to whom they can complain, but should be made aware that they can approach a worker/volunteer of their choice. All workers/volunteers should know that they have a responsibility to assist a service user in making a complaint.

Complaints should, where possible, be resolved informally. However where someone remains dissatisfied access to a more formal process should be available. The complaints process should contain guidance in respect of expected timescales for response, have instruction on how feedback to the complainant should be provided and contain guidance on how the response to a complaint can be appealed if required. Complaints should be recorded and all stages of the resolution process should be recorded.

Where a complainant is dissatisfied with the response they should be provided with access to an appeals process. It may be appropriate to provide access to a third party for final appeals; this may require cooperation with another organisation. Following an appeal, where the complainant remains dissatisfied, they should be advised that the matter may be referred to the Ombudsman for the relevant service area.

> **Remember**
> **Complaints which are child protection concerns**
>
> Sometimes complaints are in fact child welfare or protection concerns which should be responded to in accordance with your organisation's child protection reporting procedures.

5.5 Review checklist

Best Practice Theme 5 Procedures for sharing your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures and involving parents, guardians, families, children and young people	Fully in place (working well)	Requires work (not working well)	Action required
A procedure to provide a copy of your policy declaration to parents/guardians upon request is in place			
Children and young people have been made aware of their right to be protected, consulted and treated with respect			
An anti-bullying policy has been developed and is on display			
A communications policy has been developed and is on display			
A policy for working in partnership with parents/guardians has been developed and is on display			
A complaints policy is in place and has been communicated to children/young people and their parents/guardians			

Best Practice Theme 6: Implementing, monitoring and reviewing your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures

This section provides guidance on how to implement, monitor and review your guiding principles and chid safeguarding procedures.

Best Practice Theme 6: Implementing, monitoring and reviewing your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures	
Actions that evidence and promote best practice	
6:1	A plan is in place to implement, monitor and review your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures.

Introduction

It is important to recognise that developing your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures is only one part in the process of safeguarding children. To make certain your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures are put into practice you must put in place an implementation plan. An implementation plan sets out the tasks necessary to fully realise your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures.

Your implementation plan should also ensure that your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures are regularly reviewed and updated through on-going risk assessment and measures to address any identified risks. The best practice themes in this Guide contain information and guidance which, when applied, support completion of the actions that evidence and promote best practice for each best practice theme and will assist you to meet the requirements of *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*[7].

The implementation plan should include actions you will take in the introduction, development and implementation of your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures. It should describe how you will monitor whether these actions have been implemented.

Implementation is an on-going process (see Figure 6). It is a continuous cycle of development, response to change, and review of policies, procedures and practices relevant to meeting the requirements of Children First. As you work through the best practice themes you can complete the review checklists at the end of each section. These checklists will enable you to monitor your progress in fully realising your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures. Part of this process includes reviewing performance against actions required to evidence and promote best practice for each of the best practice themes. This review process ensures areas of procedure and practice that are working well can be acknowledged and areas requiring improvement can be identified and addressed.

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[7] Relevant services under the Children First Act 2015 must also regularly review their Child Safeguarding Statement.

Figure 6 – Implementation Plan Cycle
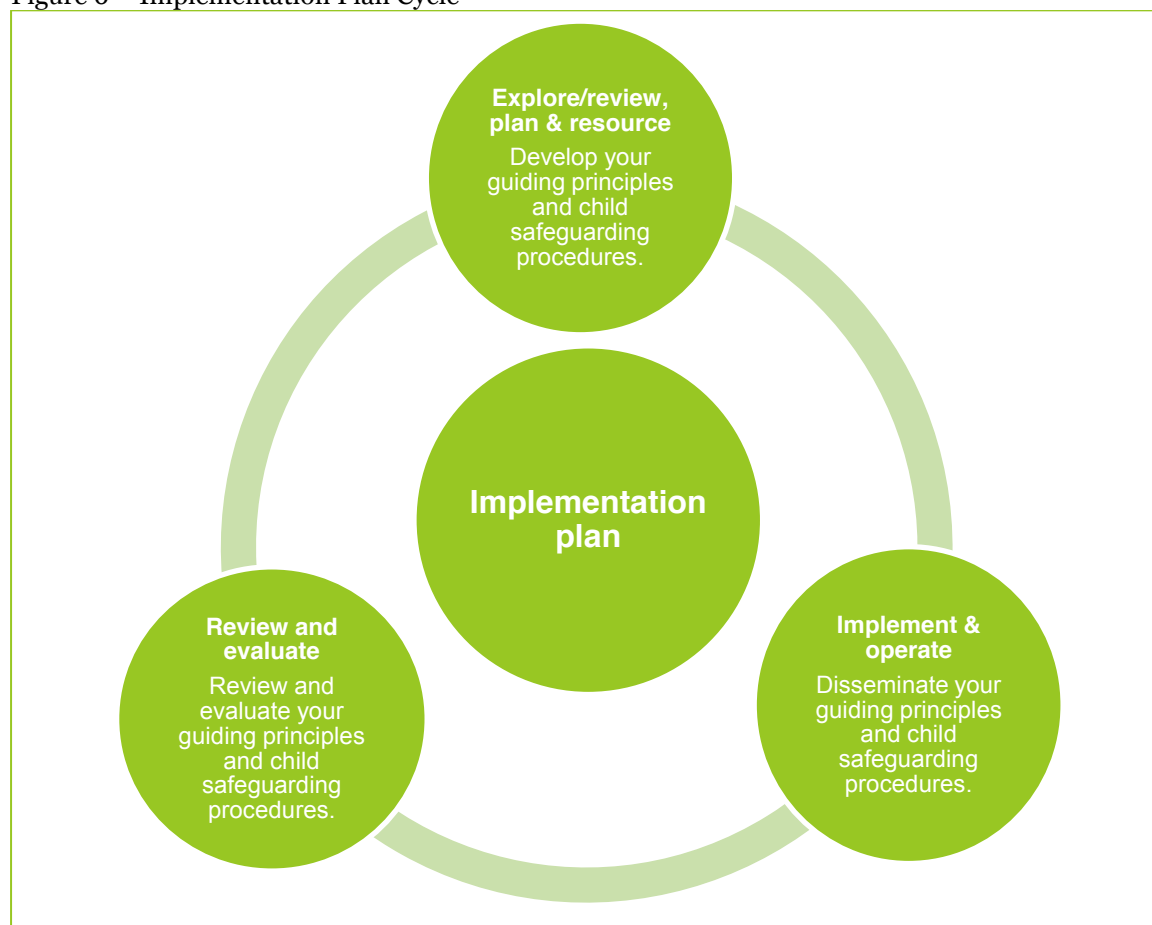
6.1 Planning for implementation, monitoring, review and evaluation

6.1.1 Step 1 – Explore/review, plan and resource

Your organisation may become aware of new circumstances that impact on good practice, e.g. new legislation, the broadening of your service into new areas or failures in existing practices. This leads to a review of practice to examine the impact of these changes/developments on the organisation and those within the organisation. You must decide who needs to be involved in the review process and how to resource any changes planned.

6.1.2 Step 2 – Implement and operate

The process of introducing child safeguarding into your organisation begins with identifying the guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures that are necessary to underpin your intention to keep children safe.

Next you will identify who needs to be involved in developing your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures. In considering how you will operationalise your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures, you should consider if these are the same people who will have responsibility for implementation. You may decide additional or alternative individuals should be included in the implementation process.

Implementing your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures will ensure that the actions that evidence and promote best practice set out in each best practice theme are met and can be evidenced/measured using the review checklists.

6.1.3 Step 3 – Review and evaluate

When you are confident that your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures are in place and functioning well in the organisation, you will have made good progress in achieving the implementation of the *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*. You will then be ready to monitor, further review and evaluate the effectiveness of your organisation's child safeguarding arrangements.

This step provides the opportunity to reflect upon the overall process. Useful learning from the experience of moving through steps 1 and 2 should be identified and used to inform future policy, procedure and practice decisions.

On-going monitoring helps to ensure that the practices, as outlined in your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures, are maintained throughout your organisation. It is recommended best practice that you review your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures within 24 months, or sooner if necessary due to service issues or changes in legislation/national policy, or where problems in the implementation process arise.

Monitoring and reviewing the implementation of your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures promotes accountability, learning, feedback and knowledge sharing. There are a number of performance measurement tools you could use to test and review whether children are being kept safe through the implementation of your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures. For example:

- Collation and analysis of any complaints;
- Collation of child protection concerns and the actions taken;
- Collation of feedback from children/young people, parents/guardians and families;
- Analysis of practice and any breaches of procedures, codes of behaviour, etc.;
- Checking people's understanding, awareness, feelings, perceptions, behaviour and attitudes through the use of:
    o Questionnaires;
    o Focus groups;
    o Interviews;
    o Audit;
    o Observation.

6.2 Review checklist

Best Practice Theme 6 Implementing, monitoring and reviewing your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures	Fully in place (working well)	Requires work (not working well)	Action required
Implementation plan for your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures are in place			
A review of your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures is planned			
Processes for monitoring, review and evaluation of the implementation of your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures arein place			

Appendices

Appendix 1: Child Safeguarding Statements and this document

Providers of Relevant Services are required under the *Children First Act 2015* to develop a Child Safeguarding Statement. The Act specifies a number of procedures which must be included in your Child Safeguarding Statement. This document, *Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice*, provides guidance on the development of these procedures, as well as information on developing an implementation strategy for the commitments set out in your Child Safeguarding Statement. Below, you will find a handy cross-referencing of the various sections in this document with the specified procedures from the *Children First Act 2015*.

s.11(3)(b) in respect of any member of staff who is the subject of any investigation (howsoever described) in respect of any act, omission or circumstance in respect of a child availing of the relevant service

> See
> 3.1 Procedures for reporting child protection or welfare concerns
> 3.4 Responding to allegations of abuse made against workers/volunteers
> 4.3 Safe management of activities
> 4.4 Managing Workers and Volunteers
> 4.5 Dealing with a concern about another worker/volunteer
> 4.6 Disciplinary Procedures
> 5.4 Complaints Procedure

s.11(3)(c) for the selection or recruitment of any person as a member of staff of the provider with regard to that person's suitability to work with children

> See
> 4.1 Safe recruitment and selection

s.11(3) (d) for the provision of information and, where necessary, instruction and training, to members of staff of the provider in relation to the identification of the occurrence of harm

> See
> 4.2 Developing a child safeguarding training strategy
> 4.4 Managing Workers and Volunteers

s.11(3) (e) for reporting to the Agency by the provider or a member of staff of the provide (whether a mandated person or otherwise) in accordance with this Act or the [Children First] guidelines issued by the Minister under section 6

> See
> 3.1 Procedures for reporting child protection or welfare concerns

s.11(3)(f) for maintaining a list of the persons (if any) in the relevant service who are mandated persons

> See
> 2.3 mandated persons

s.11(3)(g) for appointing a relevant person for the purposes of this Part

> See
> 2.4 Other Roles

There will be other procedures, identified in the risk assessment part of your Child Safeguarding Statement. You will find information on many of these throughout this document. Remember, the index at the front can be used to easily locate specific content.

You also have a responsibility under the Act to provide a copy of your Child Safeguarding Statement to all employees and to make it available, upon request, to parents or guardians, members of the public and Tusla.

> See
> 5.1 Sharing your guiding principles and safeguarding procedures
> 5.3 Guidelines for working in partnership with parents/guardians and children/ young people

The Act also requires that your Child Safeguarding Statement is displayed in a prominent place and is reviewed every two years, or sooner if there has been a material change in any of the issues to which it refers.

Appendix 2 – Schedule of relevant services under the *Children First Act 2015*

Schedule 1 of the *Children First Act 2015* specifies the relevant services for the purposes of the Act:

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 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 The Garda Síochána, a necessary and regular part of which consists mainly of the person having access to, or contact with, children.

Appendix 3 – Review checklist of guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures

Best Practice Theme 1: Guiding principles	Fully in place (working well)	Requires work (not working well)	Action required
Declaration of guiding principles is in place			
Name of organisation and the services and activities provided to children and young people are listed with your declaration of guiding principles			
Your declaration of guiding principles specifies to whom they apply.			
Your declaration of guiding principles is communicated to children, young people, parents/guardians, workers and volunteers.			
Best Practice Theme 2: Key personnel in safeguarding	Fully in place (working well)	Requires work (not working well)	Action required
A named person is appointed			
The DLP and Deputy DLP are appointed			
The role and responsibilities of the DLP/Deputy DLP are outlined			
The role and responsibilities of Mandated Persons are outlined			
A procedure for maintaining a list of Mandated Persons is in place			
Best Practice Theme 3: Responding to and reporting child protection and welfare concern	Fully in place (working well)	Requires work (not working well)	Action required
Guidance on reasonable grounds for concern is included in your reporting procedure.			
Definitions and features of child abuse as per *Children First:*			

National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children are included or referenced in your reporting procedure.			
Guidance on roles and responsibilities related to your reporting procedure are available			
Guidance on Mandated Persons' responsibility to report child protection concerns is included in your child safeguarding procedures.			
Reporting procedure that clearly outlines the steps to be followed in reporting child protection or welfare concerns is in place.			
Guidance on dealing with disclosures is included in your child safeguarding procedures.			
Guidance on dealing with adult disclosures of childhood abuse, where it is identified there may be current risk to a child/young person, is included in your child safeguarding procedures.			
Procedure to deal with any allegations of abuse against workers/volunteers/ management are included in your child safeguarding procedures.			
Guidance on confidentiality is included in your child safeguarding procedures.			
Guidance on information sharing and record-keeping is included in your child safeguarding procedures.			
Best Practice Theme 4: **Working safely with children and young people**	**Fully in place (working well)**	**Requires work (not working well)**	**Action required**
A recruitment and selection procedure is in place with regard to a person's suitability to work with children/young people and applies to all workers and			

	Fully in place (working well)	Requires work (not working well)	Action required
volunteers			
The organisation has a training strategy for child safeguarding training based on a training needs analysis			
Child safeguarding training provided is consistent with *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* and Children First legislation			
All workers/volunteers have attended child safeguarding training relevant to their role in the organisation			
A record-keeping system with regard to what safeguarding training workers/volunteers have attended is in place			
There are policies and procedures in place to support the safe management of activities			
An accident/incident procedure is in place			
There is a code of behaviour for workers and volunteers which specifies acceptable and unacceptable practices with regard to working with children/young people			
There is a supervision policy and appropriate supervision is provide to all workers and volunteers			
The responsibility for all workers/volunteers to report concerns that they may have about a colleague's practices is clearly stated in policy			
A disciplinary procedure is in place			
Best Practice Theme 5: **Procedures for sharing your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures and involving**	**Fully in place (working well)**	**Requires work (not working well)**	**Action required**

parents/guardians, families, children and young people			
A procedure to provide a copy of your policy declaration to parents/guardians upon request is in place			
Children and young people have been made aware of their right to be protected, consulted and treated with respect			
An anti-bullying policy has been developed and is on display			
A communications policy has been developed and is on display			
A policy for working in partnership with parents/guardians has been developed and is on display			
A complaints policy is in place and has been communicated to children/young people and their parents/guardians			
Best Practice Theme 6: **Implementing, monitoring and reviewing your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures**	**Fully in place (working well)**	**Requires work (not working well)**	**Action required**
Implementation plan for your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures is in place			
A review of your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures is planned			
Processes for monitoring, review and evaluation of the implementation of your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures is in place			

Appendix 4 – Learning from Inquiries

Best Practice Theme 1 – Guiding Principles
The *Report of the independent inquiry into matters relating to child sexual abuse in swimming (1998)* made this recommendation in the context of the *Health and Safety Act* but focused on keeping children safe: "The process of drafting a safety declaration requires an identification of risks of dangers and the possibility of those dangers occurring. It requires consideration to be given to measures to avoid such dangers and consideration of the persons responsible."

Learning from inquiries
Inquiries show that all places of work that involve children should provide particularly for the safety, health and welfare of children. The purpose of the guiding principles is to communicate this intent to all volunteers, staff, children and parents.

Best Practice Theme 2 – Key Personnel in Safeguarding
The *Report of a committee of inquiry (1995) "Kelly – A Child is Dead"* says the following: "We recommend that each school nominate a teacher to develop special expertise in the identification of child abuse and neglect and function as its liaison officer with local health board staff. Special joint in-service training programmes should be provided and this will assist in developing collaborative relationships locally".

Learning from inquiries
Confusion about roles and responsibilities is highlighted in inquiries. Where clear responsibility was not placed on named personnel to report child protection concerns, child abuse continued unchecked and other children were placed at risk of abuse.

Best Practice Theme 3 – Responding to and reporting of child protection or welfare concerns
The *Report of the independent inquiry into matters relating to child sexual abuse in swimming (1998)* noted: "Clearly in order to prevent and detect child sexual abuse, it is vital that the abuse be reported and that the reports be believed."

The *Report of a committee of inquiry (1995) "Kelly – A Child is Dead"* found: "We recommend that the reporting of actual or suspected child abuse or neglect become a legal requirement for relevant designated staff, including health board personnel, general practitioners, the gardai, teachers and staff of voluntary and private child care services."

The Ferns Report (2005) recommended that efforts should be made amongst the general public and organisations to strengthen a more open environment of reporting. It also led to the introduction of new legislation: section 176 of the *Criminal Justice Act 2006*, titled 'Reckless endangerment of children'.

The *West of Ireland Farmer Case (1998)* report noted the breakdown in communication between agencies and professionals as a contributing factor to the long-term abuse within the family.

The *Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (Ryan 2009)* stated: "The withholding of information between professionals and between agencies is not acceptable where failure to disclose may have an influence on the future safety and welfare of the child."

The *Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (Ryan 2009)* also noted: "If a child reveals abuse on a confidential or 'secret' basis to a professional this confidentiality cannot be binding. The professional person involved – social worker,

teacher, doctor, etc. – must make it clear to the child that absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed."

Learning from inquiries
Inquiries have repeatedly shown that the failure to report concerns to the appropriate authorities without delay has led to on-going abuse of children. Haphazard and sloppy recording of concerns and actions have also inhibited recognition of abuse and safeguarding of children.

Best Practice Theme 4 – Working safely with children and young people

The *Report of the independent inquiry into matters relating to child sexual abuse in swimming (1998)* found: "Coaches should be appointed after interview by the committee of the club, who should, in the case of the club coach, ensure that she or he meets the qualification requirements of the Association and, in all cases, that full written references are provided and verified with the referees. A gender balance should be encouraged. Coaches should be asked to sign written contracts."

The *Kilkenny Incest Investigation (1993)* stated: "All Health care staff must have clearly written directions from their employer as to what their role and responsibilities are in relation to child abuse."

The *Kilkenny Incest Investigation (1993)* also noted: "The manager of an institution should be responsible for:

- Making the best use of available resources
- Vetting of staff and volunteers
- Ensuring that staff are well trained, matched to the nature of the work to be undertaken and progressively trained so as to be kept up to date.
- Ensuring on-going supervision, support and advice for all staff
- Regularly reviewing the system to identify problem areas for both staff and children
- Ensuring rules and regulations are adhered to
- Establishing whether systems failures caused or contributed to instances of abuse
- Putting procedures in place to enable staff and others to make complaints and raise matters of concern without fear of adverse consequences."

The *Commission of Investigation "Report into the Catholic Dioceses of Cloyne" (2010)* found: "Child protection training should be sourced and provided for those involved in child protection in the Diocese, to improve their ability to recognise risk and to record their practice appropriately"

Working in partnership
The *Report of the independent inquiry into matters relating to child sexual abuse in swimming (1998)* recommended "The relationship between the Association and the clubs with local authorities, schools and management companies of sport complexes should be defined in terms of function and responsibility."

Safe management of activities
The *Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (Ryan 2009)* noted: "To prevent where possible and reduce the incidence of abuse of children in institutions and to protect children from such abuse, Childcare policy should be child-centred. "

The *Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (Ryan 2009)* also noted: "The state and congregations lost sight of the purpose for which the institutions were

established, which was to provide children with a safe and secure environment and an opportunity of acquiring education and training."

The *Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (Ryan 2009)* further stated: "A culture of respecting and implementing rules and regulations and of observing codes of conduct should be developed."

The *Report of the independent inquiry into matters relating to child sexual abuse in swimming (1998)* contained recommendations on having a code of behaviour and what to do if there is a breach of this code.

The *Ferns Report (2005)* highlighted the need for codes of conduct/behaviour to be developed for every organisation which facilitates adult's access to children.

Learning from inquiries
Inquiries show that poor recruitment, inadequate staff training and a lack of supervision creates an environment where children are not safe from harm. The inquiries highlighted the need for child-centred work practice and clear codes of behaviour/conduct for staff.

Best Practice Theme 5 – Procedures for sharing your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures and involving parents/guardian, families, children and young people

The *Report of the independent inquiry into matters relating to child sexual abuse in swimming (1998)* recommended: "The Association should ensure that clubs have a series of simple posters so that children of all ages know what constitutes unacceptable behaviour. They must also know how to complain…."

The Kilkenny Incest Investigation (1993) found: "Children in care should be able to communicate concerns without fear."

The *Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (Ryan 2009)* recommended "putting procedures in place to enable staff and others to make complaints and raise matters of concern without fear of adverse consequences."

The *Ferns Report (2005)* recommended that written records of complaints must be kept.

Learning from inquiries
Inquiries show that when complaints of abuse were made there was a reluctance to receive and respond appropriately to these complaints. Children and parents must understand how to make complaints and be confident that these complaints will be handled appropriately.

Best Practice Theme 6 – Implementing, monitoring and reviewing your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures

The *Report of a committee of inquiry (1995) "Kelly – A Child is Dead"* stated: "We recommend that the Western Health Board assess the current level of knowledge and compliance of its staff with the Department of Health Guidelines and establish and address any reasons for non-compliance."

The Kilkenny Incest Investigation (1993) recommended: "We recommend that a regular system of evaluation of the procedures be established. It is insufficient to adopt Department of Health procedures in principle".

The *Report of the independent inquiry into matters relating to child sexual abuse in swimming (1998)* recommended: "The functional responsibility for ensuring compliance with procedures including complaints procedures and procedures relating to away trips, should rest with the Secretary/Registrar/Controller of the Association."

The *Commission of Investigation "Report into the Catholic Dioceses of Cloyne" (2010)* noted: "The Diocese of Cloyne adopts immediately a safeguarding policy for children that meets the standards expected of it within the church as a whole".

The *Commission of Investigation "Report into the Catholic Dioceses of Cloyne" (2010)* stated: "Preventative actions should be reviewed and implemented in all cases that are known to the Diocese to protect other children from potential further abuse".

The *Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (Ryan 2009)* stated: "The failures that occurred in all the schools cannot be explained by the absence of rules, or any difficulty in interpreting what they meant. The problem lay in the implementation of the regulatory framework." The report goes on to recommend: "A culture of respecting and implementing rules and regulations and of observing codes of conduct should be developed".

Learning from inquiries
Inquiries have shown that it is not enough to adopt guidelines for the protection of children. Failure to fully implement and comply with these guidelines results in a failure to protect children.

Appendix 5 – Child Safeguarding: Relevant Legislation

There are a number of pieces of legislation relevant to the safeguarding of children. The following indicative list is not intended to be comprehensive but rather to give a sense of the breadth and wide array of relevant legislation.

- Child and Family Agency Act 2013
- Child Care Act 1991
- Children Act 2001
- Children First Act 2015
- Criminal justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012
- Criminal Justice Act 2006, Section 176: Reckless Endangerment of Children
- Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003
- Domestic Violence Act 1996
- Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- Education Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2014
- National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016
- Non-Fatal Offences against the Person Act 1997
- Protected Disclosures Act 2014
- Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998

Copies of all legislation can be accessed at www.irishstatutebook.ie.

Appendix 6 – Schedule of mandated persons under the *Children First Act 2015*

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 The 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 Tusla.

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

Appendix 7 – Online Safety

(Technology, Internet and Social Media: Safe Use for Children and Young People)

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines Social Media as a '*form of electronic communication…through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content*'. Any website that enables users to interact is considered a social media site, including social networking sites (SNS) such as *Facebook*, *Instagram*, Snapchat and *Twitter*; gaming sites and virtual worlds such as *Club Penguin*, *Moshi Monsters* and the *Sims*; video sharing sites such as *YouTube*; and blogging sites such as *Tumblr*.

There are a number of possible motivations for Social Media usage, including:

- To connect with others with common interests and hobbies;
- To connect with friends, and make new ones;
- To browse the internet for information;
- To 'chat' with others, download music and play games;
- A need to belong and a need for self-presentation;
- To satisfy individuals' need for self-worth and self-integrity; Risks and Dangers

The sections below outline some of the risks and dangers associated with social media usage.

Access to inappropriate content, including pornography:

Children and young people may be exposed to illegal or unsuitable content online, such as:

- Pornography
- Child abuse images
- Dangerous advice encouraging eating disorders, self-harm or suicide
- Excessive violence or race hate materials
- Some websites show illegal content. Others that are legal might have unregulated advice or are meant for adults only.

Children may come across this content by mistake, or they may look for it because they are curious. Promises of special offers or prizes can also draw young people to inappropriate sites or material. Furthermore, many online games are free but offer the chance to buy items such as extra lives or new levels; children may run up big bills without realising it or provide personal details in order to receive 'extra lives' or game credits.

Harmful online communities:

Young people may also access websites which promote eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia or self-harm. Harmful online communities can change the way young people see real life – even if they do not want that to happen.

Ignoring age restrictions:

Some websites and games use age restrictions and checks to make sure that children do not see unsuitable content. Children must be at least 13 year of age to register on most social networking websites. However, verifying the age of a member is an issue.

'Friending' or communicating with people they don't know:

Children and young people may 'chat' or become 'friends' with people on social networks or online games, even if they do not know them or have never met them in person. These people are unknown strangers and their public persona on social media does not necessarily reflect the reality of who they are or what their motives may be.

Grooming and sexual abuse:
'Groomers' can use social media sites, instant messaging apps (including teen dating apps), or online gaming platforms to connect with a young person or child. They can spend time learning about a young person's interests from their online profiles and use this knowledge to help them build a relationship with the child or young person. It is easy for groomers to hide their identity online. For example, they may pretend to be a child and then chat and become 'friends' with children they are targeting.

Child sexual abuse on line:
When sexual exploitation happens online, young people may be persuaded, or forced, to send or post sexually explicit images of themselves, take part in sexual activities via a webcam or Smartphone, or have sexual conversations by text or instant messaging. Abusers may threaten to send images, videos or copies of conversations to the young person's friends and family unless they take part in further sexual activity or pay the abuser money

Sharing personal information:
Privacy controls can limit who can see a child's details, like their name, age and where they live. However, when a child connects to someone as a 'friend', that person will have access to the child's personal information. Some 'free' games might ask a child to provide personal details before they can play; some will then illegally rent or sell this data on to others. Many apps and social networking sites use software to locate where the user is. Children and young people can also reveal their location by tagging photos on sites such as on Instagram or 'checking in' on Facebook or Foursquare. This means that people can find out where the child lives, socialises, works or studies.

'Sexting':
'Sexting' involves sending sexually explicit images, videos or text messages via ICT. Primarily such 'sexts' are sent using mobile phones and/or chat apps such as Snapchat, Viber and WhatsApp. The 'sext' can constitute child pornography.

Length of time online:
An ISPCC Survey on Children and the Internet (2011) found most children and young people (around half) said they spent 1-3 hours online per day. 9% of the secondary school aged group said they spent between 3-5 hours online per day. Less than 5% of the older young people said they didn't use the internet.

Just under half of the secondary school aged group said they accessed the internet at home in their bedroom (44%), rather than in a communal area at home; fewer children in the primary school aged group said they accessed the internet in their bedroom (23%).

The young people who spent longer online were found to be more likely to access the internet in their own rooms and to engage in more social activities online. Furthermore, young people who spent longer online are also generally more likely to be exposed to all the elements and risks of the internet, including being more likely to give out personal details, not to use privacy settings, to meet up with someone from online and to access sites for the 18+ age group.

Connections between social media use and negative outcomes
Researchers[8] have identified a number of negative outcomes which can be associated with excessive social media usage.

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[8] Pantic et al., 2012; Lou et al., 2012; Kalpidou et al., 2011; Rosen et al,. 2013; Drouin et al, 2012; Rothberg et al, 2010, etc.

Depression: A link has been identified between the amount of time spent on Facebook by high school students and their likelihood to experience depression.

Anxiety & Compulsive Behaviour: There are several studies linking social media to anxiety and compulsive behaviour. Younger generations (particularly the iGeneration[9] and Net Generation[10]) are checking in very often (defined as every hour, every 15 minutes, or all the time) with their messages and social networks. A new medical term has been created out of this constant connectivity. Phantom vibration syndrome, defined as perceived vibration from a mobile phone that is not vibrating, has been reported to occur with large numbers of people. Phantom vibration syndrome may reflect a manifestation of the anxiety that mobile phones elicit in those obsessed with checking in on their social media and messages.

Loneliness and Narcissism: Narcissistic personality disorder is marked by a grandiose sense of self-importance, fantasies of unlimited power, self-promotion, vanity and superficial relationships. Many studies show that social networking sites exacerbate narcissism. More time spent on Facebook and a higher frequency of checking Facebook predicted higher narcissism scores. Social media affects mental health by influencing how people view, maintain, and interact with their social network. Social media is so seductive because it allows for the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship.

Diminished privacy: Another way that social media is changing how young adults interact with their networks of relationships is by changing the privacy of these relationships. The relationships people have on Facebook are visible to many, often resulting in a loss of privacy within personal relationships. Monitoring of others' activities on social media can lead to negative relationship outcomes such as online and offline relational intrusion, stress from 'defriending' and blocking, or students catching their 'significant other' cheating online. Bullying can also occur.

Fear of missing out & Diminished self-esteem: Fear of missing out refers to the blend of anxiety, inadequacy and irritation that can flare up while skimming social media such as Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter and Instagram. The worry that the fear of missing out signals in the mind is set off by the fear of 'regret'.

Social media users are often exposed to details about their peers' lives that were not actively sought out. Exposure to other people's activities can lead to users comparing their own social lives with that of their peers which subsequently may have harmful effects. Fear of missing out keeps people from being able to relax and be content with their particular circumstances because they are bombarded with the interesting activities of their friends. Fear of missing out can also foster a feeling of victimization and exclusion in young adults.

Making social comparisons was associated with lower self-esteem and more negative health outcomes. Use of the internet and social media has been linked to increased social comparison and diminished self-esteem and self-image.
Research findings have shown that Facebook usage can be damaging to romantic relationships due to increased jealousy, partner surveillance and compulsive Internet use.

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[9] Those born after 1994 who have grown up with smartphones and direct access to online content.
[10] Those born between 1982 and 1991 who have grown up with computers and the internet.

The Impact of Sedentary Behaviours on Mental Health:
Sedentary behaviours, like those which social media usage encourages, have been linked to physical health risks, including: increased risk of type II diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and metabolic syndrome.

Several studies provide evidence that people with high levels of sedentary behaviour (for example, TV watching and computer use) have an increased risk of developing a depressive and/or anxiety disorder. While there is a connection between sedentary behaviours and mental health risks, it is unclear which one follows the other. People who spend more time in sedentary behaviours have less time for face–to-face social interaction and physical activity, both of which have been proven to be protective against mental disorders.

Social Media and ICT correlation with disrupted sleep patterns:
There is a correlation between disrupted sleep patterns and use of ICT and social media. One of the reasons for this is the effect of the particular lighting used to illuminate many screen devices which interferes with the brain's ability to produce the chemicals that help a person sleep. Browsing social media before bed is not just distracting from sleep; it can quite literally stop a person from being sleepy at all. This is particularly concerning as the connection between sleep and mental health is well documented. Poor sleep can make people less receptive to positive emotions and a link has been identified between disrupted sleep patterns and depression.

Rapid task switching (also known as multitasking) encouraged by social media and ICT usage may also be a root cause of depression. While multitasking is inherently a human trait, technology has perhaps overly encouraged and promoted it. The current use of multi-window computer environments, multi-app Smartphone screens and the wide ranging sensory stimulation (and distraction) offered by high definition, customisable visual and auditory signals, coupled with tactile stimulation through vibrations, all contribute to reducing the ability to focus and increase an individual's vulnerability to depression.

Responses & Solutions

It is recommended that young people have an awareness of how online activities make them feel. For example if they feel anxious or sad, or if those online activities might be getting in the way of other interests that improve their overall mental health and wellbeing.

Parents should also be aware of the threats to mental health that their children can face. By understanding how social media can affect the mental health of their children, parents can talk to their children about social media habits, balancing their time on social media and ICT, and help protect their children from experiencing mental health issues later in life.

How do we safeguard children from the dangers of excessive internet usage?
- Keep up to date with developments in internet technology:
- Know what sites children are accessing, what they do on these sites, why they access these sites, who they have contact with, how long they are on the internet, what are their worries are while using the internet and what supports are available for children.
- Become familiar with social media language; for example, **LMIRL** (let's meet in real life), **ASL** (age, sex, location), **NIFOC** (nude in front of computer). The UK

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (Ceop) has identified a helpful guide to social media language[11]. It is essential that parents learn to identify warning signs of excessive or inappropriate ICT and social medial usage to aid early detection and intervention.

- Keep communication channels open with children. It can be helpful to discuss risky and safe behaviour (privacy settings, not using profile photos, not using own names), help to set up social networks, equip children with coping skills and information on where to get help, discuss opinions on the benefits and limitations of the internet, and talk to children about their online reputation.
- Set controls using security and filter software, supervise the time and place they use the internet, limit the time of access and regularly check user history.
- Create a healthy culture – agree basic usage rules together e.g. time limits and places of use (adults need to model these rules); make going online a daily event which allows adults to monitor and observe reactions.

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[11] http://parentinfo.org./article/online-teen-speak-updated

Information gathered from:

NSCPP website: Summary of a qualitative study – NSPCC *qualitative study of children, young people and 'sexting'* (2012) prepared for the NSPCC by Jessica Ringrose, Rosalind Gill, Sonia Livingstone and Laura Harvey.

ISPCC: ISPCC Survey on Children and the Internet -The ISPCC carried out a survey on young people's attitude towards and experience of the internet 2011.

Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, Department of Education and Skills (2013)

Examining the Overlap in Internet Harassment and School Bullying: Implications for School Intervention. Michele L. Ybarra, M.P.H., Ph.D.a,*, Marie Diener-West, Ph.D.b, and Philip J. Leaf, Ph.D.c Journal of Adolescent Health 41 (2007) S42–S50

"Exploring The Effects of Social Media Use on the Mental Health of Young Adults"- by Amelia C Strickland- thesis 2014
Net Children Go Mobile: Full findings from Ireland 2015 report compiled by Dr. Brian O'Neill and Thuy Dinh, (DIT): (Webwise):

http://websafety.youth.ie and Barnardos

Useful websites:
https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/be-safe-online/?referrer=/besafeonline - Ireland's official on-line safety hub.
https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/mental-health/bullying-and-harassment.html - HSE information on bullying and supports available.
http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Cybercrime - Home page of the Department of Justice and Equality Cybercrime division; responsible for developing policy in relation to the criminal use made of the internet and information technology generally, and coordinating a range of different cyber initiatives at national and international level.
https://www.hotline.ie/ - Anonymous facility for internet users to report suspected illegal content, particularly child sexual abuse material, accidentally encountered online, in a secure and confidential way.
https://www.youth.ie/programmes/projects-initiatives/web-safety-in-youth-work/ - A resource page to support those who work with young people in all youth work organisations who often share similar concerns, risks and challenges to ensure all young people, staff and volunteers are safe online.

Appendix 8 – Cyberbullying

Description

Cyberbullying is defined as 'an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly, over time, against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself' (DES 2013).

Debate surrounds the use of the word *repeated* in this definition of cyber-bullying, as in some instances one behavioural act can create an ongoing sense of intimidation for the victim (i.e. a single posting of a humiliating photo/video can be viewed by a large audience with long standing affects; therefore 'one post' can be multiplied online to equate with 'repeatedly').

Cyberbullying is the use of electronic and digital means, particularly mobile phones, personal computers, email and internet use to deliberately harass, ridicule or hurt another. It can be an extension of face-to-face bullying with Information Communication Technology (ICT) used to deliberately hurt someone else. Messages (text, email), photographs, videos can all be used to spread rumors, make threats or harass.

Cyberbullying differs from more traditional forms of bullying in a number of ways:
- The audience is now larger,
- There are no time or location barriers,it can happen 24/7The target's reaction is often not seen, leading to a reduction in feeling of empathy or guilt.
- It can be anonymous

Forms of cyberbullying

Cyberbullying can be classified by the media through which the abuse occurs, (i.e. mobile phones, instant messenger, chat rooms, social networking sites, video/photo sharing sites/apps, and gaming sites, etc) and/or by the nature of the abuse itself (i.e. flaming, impersonation, harassment, etc).
Willard (2007) has identified the following seven forms of cyberbullying:

1. **Flaming** – On-line 'fights' using electronic messages with angry and vulgar language.

2. **Harassment** – Repeatedly sending nasty, mean, and insulting messages.

3. **Denigration** – Intentionally setting out to damage a person's reputation or friendships by sending or posting derogatory comments, cruel gossip, or rumours about the person; creating a web page or web site devoted to insulting another person.

4. **Impersonation** – Gaining access to someone's account, posing as that person, and sending messages to make the person look bad, get that person in trouble or danger, or damage that person's reputation or friendships. This behaviour is commonly referred to as 'fraping' when it occurs using Facebook.

5. **Outing and Trickery** – Sharing someone's personal or embarrassing information or images online or via mobile phone or other electronic media, or tricking someone into revealing secrets or embarrassing information, which is then shared online.

6. **Exclusion** – Intentionally excluding someone from an online group (i.e. a 'friend list', a gaming environment, or group chat). Within a gaming context the term '*griefer*' is often applied to a player who deliberately irritates and harasses other players within the game, using aspects of the game in unintended ways.

7. **Cyberstalking** – Repeatedly sending messages that include threats of harm or that are highly intimidating, or engaging in other online activities that make a person afraid for his/her safety. Another definition of cyberstalking is using the Internet or other electronic means as a way to harass, intimidate, threaten, monitor or make unwanted advances towards another. It can involve direct communications through e-mails, chat rooms, bulletin boards or social sites such as Facebook, the surreptitious gathering of information regarding the target, or covert observation[12].

Why does it happen?

Cyberbullying can happen for a number of reasons.

Willard (2007: 268-269) lists the following possible reasons for cyberbullying

- A cyber-bully may be a person whom the target knows or an online stranger. Or the cyber-bully may be anonymous, so it is not possible to tell. A cyber-bully may solicit involvement of other people who do not know the target—cyberbullying by proxy.

- Cyberbullying and cyberthreats may be related to in-school bullying. Sometimes, the student who is victimized at school is also being bullied online. But other times, the person who is victimized at school becomes a cyber-bully and retaliates online. Still other times, the student who is victimized will share his or her anger or depression online as distressing material.

- Cyberbullying may involve relationships. If a relationship breaks up, one person may start to cyber-bully the other person. Other times, teens may get into online fights about relationships.

- Cyberbullying may be based on hate or bias—bullying others because of race, religion, physical appearance (including obesity), or sexual orientation.

- Teens may think that cyberbullying is entertaining—a game to hurt other people.

- Teens may have no one to talk with about how bad they are feeling and how horrible their life is, so they describe their feelings online. They might think that if they post this material online, they will meet someone who cares about them. Unfortunately, they may meet a dangerous stranger who will do them harm or other hurt teens, who only reinforce their bad feelings.

What are the signs/symptoms that someone is being cyber-bullied?

Some signs or symptoms that may present when a child or young person is experiencing cyberbullying include:

- More frequent health problems – headaches, stomach aches, frequent absenteeism, sleep problems, depression, or suicidal thoughts;
- Behavioural and emotional changes – distressed, anxious, frustrated, fearful, angry;
- School related changes – inability to concentrate, drop in academic performance, reluctance to attend school;
- Negative emotional expressions after use of social media – poor self-image, sadness, hopelessness, loneliness, suspicion of others

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[12] https://www.stalkingriskprofile.com/victim-support/cyberstalking

- Changes in online behaviour – more careful or cautious approaches to communicating online;
- Being emotionally upset during or after using the Internet or the phone;
- Being very secretive or protective of their digital life;
- Wanting to stop using the computer or mobile phone;
- Being nervous or jumpy when getting an instant message, text, or email;
- Avoiding discussions about computer or mobile phone activities; and
- Physical symptoms such as self-harm, eating disorders and/or risky behaviours.

Messages from Research

1. Recently, Cyberbullying (repeated harassment and aggression using technology, e.g. emails, text messaging, picture and video clips, social media websites and internet forums), has become prevalent (Bauman et al, 2013; Slonje et al., 2013). According to Turner et al. (2013: 53), cyberbullying has 'more far reaching effects' than traditional bullying because harassment and attacks 'can appear in multiple places online and endure over lengthy periods of time'. Young people spend more time interacting and communicating online (in chat rooms, social media outlets and through email, twitter and snapchat). As identities online can be withheld and/or altered or protected, more opportunities are now afforded for involvement in bullying (Mishna, et al., 2012). In addition, as technology develops, new forms and methods of bullying emerge (Slonje et al., 2013).

2. The quality of relationships with family and friends is important in determining adolescent resilience to bullying, including online harassment. Good family and peer relationships, in particular, protect adolescents, may reduce the impact of bullying and help victims to better cope with harassment (Cassidy et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2009; Sapouna and Wolke, 2013).

3. Cyberbullying may occur within friendship groups and attention needs to be paid to peer interactions; routine teasing among peer groups can quickly lead to serious abuse and harassment (Cassidy et al., 2009; Mishna, 2009; Wang et al., 2009).

4. The high risk of adverse mental health issues developing as an outcome of persistent cyberbullying highlights a need for targeted intervention efforts with victims, according to Turner et al. (2013).

5. According to Turner et al. (2013), practitioners working with bullied children and adolescents should consider the type of harassment experienced (e.g. physical, verbal, cyber), in order to devise and implement appropriate responses. Parents, practitioners and teachers, among others, need to be aware of and knowledgeable about youth online communication and interaction as well as its role in children's socialisation (Cassidy et al., 2009; Mishna, 2009; Davidson and Gottschalk, 2011).

Practice Note

Actions to consider when a young person is the target of cyberbullying:

- Confirm that you are dealing with bullying behaviour.
- Listen calmly and uncritically to the report the young person is making.
- Remind the young person that it is not their fault; it is the person who is doing the bullying that has the problem.
- Tell the young person not to respond to the bully as this can exacerbate the issue.
- Keep a copy of all correspondence between the young person and the bully.
- Encourage the young person to remove the cyber-bully as a 'friend' online and block them from his/her phone.

- Report the issue to the website and/or mobile phone company as appropriate.
- Serious issues should be reported to The Garda Síochána – legal issues include making inappropriate sexual suggestions, racist remarks or persistent bullying that is seriously damaging to the young person's well-being.
- A number of laws may have relevance to specific cyberbullying behaviours, such as:

  o [Criminal Damage Act, 1991;](#)
  o [Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act, 1997;](#)
  o [Post Office Amendment Act, 1951](#)
  o [European Communities (Electronics Communications Networks and Services) (Data Protection and Privacy) Regulations 2003 (S.I. No. 353 of 2003)](#)
  o [Video Recordings Act 1989](#)

Coping strategies for dealing with cyberbullying

In one of the few studies that asked young people directly how they coped with cyberbullying, Riebel, Jäger & Fischer (2009) identified four major coping strategies:
- Social coping (e.g. looking to others for help, getting advice from others, asking someone with authority to put a stop to the bullying);
- Aggressive coping (e.g., 'I threaten to beat him/her up');
- Helpless coping (e.g., 'I don't know what to do'); and
- Cognitive coping (e.g. attempting to reason with the bully or understand their motives).

Although this study did not assess which strategies were most successful, social and cognitive coping are commonly considered the most effective (O'Moore et al., 2012). It is important that parents/guardians of young people are made aware that aggressive and helpless coping strategies are ineffective and should not be encouraged. As each individual perceives and copes with cyberbullying in different ways, it is also important to connect the emotional impact of cyberbullying with the psychosocial contexts of the victims (Šleglova, & Cerna, 2011).

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Appendix 9 - Guidance Note on Developing a Child Safeguarding Training Strategy, Training Strategy Template, Training Needs Analysis Template

What is a training strategy?

A training strategy is an organisation's plan to safeguard and promote the welfare of children through the provision of child safeguarding training. It outlines how your organisation will support your 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 should be integrated with the over-arching guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures and implementation plan.

A training strategy identifies training aims, learning outcomes, target groups, proposed initiatives, performance indicators and evaluation processes. The training strategy will contain a detailed plan on how each of these components will be developed and achieved.[13]

The level and type of training that is required by individual staff and agencies will depend upon the nature and extent of the work they undertake with children and families and their degree of involvement in child protection and welfare cases.

Training needs will change continuously and training in child safeguarding must be an integral part of plans in all agencies. A percentage of the annual budget in each agency should be explicitly committed to child safeguarding training. An annual review of the training strategy for child safeguarding should be undertaken.

The aims of a training strategy are:

- To provide good quality, evidence based training opportunities for staff and volunteers 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.

How is a training strategy developed?

- Identify and consult with key stakeholders;
- Establish existing resources (human, financial, practical) and expertise;
- Identify gaps/needs in resources and expertise;
- Identify and consult with target audiences to establish levels of training required[14];
- Conduct a training needs analysis.

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[13] Some of these components may be derived from Tusla's *Best Practice Principles for Organisations in Developing Children First Training Programmes*.

[14] See page 38 of *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*.

Who may be involved in the development?

- Representatives from the responsible Children First Oversight Group;
- Representatives from other related Children First committees;
- Children First lead or co-ordinator;
- HR, training or other internal departments or staff;
- Designated representatives from Tusla;
- Representatives of budget holders responsible for funding relevant services;
- Representatives of service providers of relevant bodies in receipt of funding;
- Representatives from non-funded relevant bodies.

Child Safeguarding Training Strategy Template

Who we are and services provided   • *Departments of State*   • *Relevant services provided by or on behalf of the Department of State*   • *Any body that provides a relevant service and received funding from the Department concerned*   • *Sector*   • *Organisation*
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 Children First Oversight Group (roles including roles allocated):
Who is responsible for development and implementation of the training strategy?   • *Consider Children First coordinator or lead, training sub-group, etc.*   • *Provide details of personnel, system and arrangements*
How will (please also include person named responsible for each area):
1. Training programme(s) be coordinated:
By whom:
2. Training needs be identified:
By whom:
3. Trainers be recruited/selected:
By whom:
4. Support and information be provided to trainers:
By whom:
5. The organisation ensure resources are available:
By whom:
6. Regular review and evaluation be carried out:
By whom:
7. A quality assurance strategy be implemented:
8. A training register be maintained:
By whom:

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.*
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):

Training Needs Analysis Template

1. Organisation[15] details

1.1. Name of organisation:

1.2. Brief description of organisation:

Services provided	Describe level and type of contact with children and families[16]

1.3. For organisations[17] which provide funding or support to other organisations or bodies – list of recipient relevant services:

Name of organisation	Services provided	Describe level and type of contact with children and families[18]

	N/A	Dept./Service Sector
1.4. For service sectors or umbrella bodies – identify what department(s), if any, you are accountable to:		
1.5. For organisations – list what service sector or umbrella body and government department, if any, you are accountable to:		

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[15] Organisation is defined as any government department, service sector, body or organisation.

[16] Consider in this section all services provided directly or indirectly to children, families and/or members of families where there are children (even where there is no direct work with children). "Many services have contact with adult family members and can pick up signs of problems...While some professionals may not define their core role as 'child protection' (e.g. professionals who may be working primarily with adults in the household), their information and involvement may be crucial in ascertaining and managing present and future risks to a child or young person" (*Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook*, p. 29).

[17] To include funding bodies, large umbrella organisations and those with governance responsibilities for other organisations or bodies, among others.

[18] Consider in this section all services provided directly or indirectly to children, families and/or members of families where there are children (even where there is no direct work with children). "Many services have contact with adult family members and can pick up signs of problems...While some professionals may not define their core role as 'child protection' (e.g. professionals who may be working primarily with adults in the household), their information and involvement may be crucial in ascertaining and managing present and future risks to a child or young person" (*Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook*, p. 29).

2. Children First implementation

	N/A	No	Yes
2.1. Identify links established with relevant government department(s) and/or service sector(s) or umbrella bodies:			
2.2. Has your organisation established a Children First implementation or oversight group?			
2.3. Has your organisation established and/or published a Children First implementation plan or strategy?			

3. guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures

	N/A	No	Yes
3.1. Are your organisation's guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures in place?			
3.2. Have your 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*?			
3.2.1 If yes, by whom and date of review:			
3.2.2 Please identify any outstanding issues identified in the review:			
3.3. If the organisation's guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures are not in place, date work is to be completed:			
3.4. Name of person/s responsible for development of the organisation's guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures:			
3.5. Have all relevant staff received induction training on the organisation's guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures?			
3.6. For organisations which provide funding or support to other organisations or bodies – have your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures been shared with the recipient relevant services?			

4. Training Resources

	N/A	No	Yes
4.1. Percentage of organisation's budget that is explicitly committed to child safeguarding training:			_____ %
4.2. Does the organisation have a training department?			
4.3. Does the organisation have a child safeguarding training strategy?			
4.4. Does the organisation have a co-ordinator for child safeguarding training?			
	Contact details:		
4.5. Are resources available /in place to support child safeguarding training in the organisation?			
4.5.1 Training coordinator			
4.5.2 Access to venues			
4.5.3 Number of trainers available for child safeguarding training			
4.5.4 Number of administrative support staff			

4.5.5 Number of professionals with experience in the area of child safeguarding				
4.6. For organisations which provide funding or support to other organisations or bodies – are you willing to facilitate relevant non-affiliated groups/organisations in accessing child safeguarding training (e.g. groups or organisations with similar service provision but which do not receive funding or support from your organisation?				

5. Child safeguarding training required within the organisation

Type	Organisational Policy Induction	Introduction to Children First (eLearning)	Foundation Training	DLP Training	mandated person Training	Refresher Training	Senior Management Workshop
Number of staff/volunteers with **direct** or **indirect** contact with children and families[19] who will require:							

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[19] Consider in this section all services provided directly or indirectly to children, families and/or members of families where there are children (even where there is no direct work with children). "Many services have contact with adult family members and can pick up signs of problems…While some professionals may not define their core role as 'child protection' (e.g. professionals who may be working primarily with adults in the household), their information and involvement may be crucial in ascertaining and managing present and future risks to a child or young person" (*Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook*, p. 29).

Appendix 10 – Organisations Working in Partnership

It is essential that governance issues are clarified when delivering a service to children and families through a partnership structure.

A partnership structure can take many forms and may be permanent or temporary in nature. It may be two organisations working together, an individual contracted to work in an organisation on a temporary basis or two individual parties working in partnership to deliver a service, project or activity.

The areas covered in the six best practice themes outlined in this Guide should be discussed and agreed when working in partnership. The following sections outline the key areas that should be discussed. It is essential that agreement is reached between organisations working in partnership prior to commencing work with children.

Best Practice Themes 1 and 2
- Have both/all parties shared their declaration of guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures?
- Have both/all parties compared guidance outlined within their procedures at the outset of the engagement?
- Is it agreed which guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures will be followed or does a new policy need to be developed and implemented?
- Who will take responsibility for communicating the agreed guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures to all involved?
- If it is agreed to follow the existing guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures of one organisation, has there been a review of the policy and accompanying procedures to ensure children within the new service are safeguarded from harm?
- Is the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) named and agreed?
- Is the role of the DLP clearly outlined?
- Are mandated persons identified and their responsibilities understood by both organisations?

Best Practice Theme 3
- Has a communication system been agreed for information sharing between DLPs of both organisations? This should include guidance on decisions to report or not report and the recording of all child protection or welfare concerns, confidentiality and data protection.
- If support is needed by workers/volunteers in relation to the processing of a report, who will provide this support?
- Is the procedure for responding to allegations of abuse against a worker/volunteer agreed? Does this include communication pathways between the partner organisations and management of the concern by a 'lead' agency?
- If the organisation/project operates outside of Irish jurisdiction (e.g. international trips away), have you identified and incorporated appropriate reporting procedures?

Best Practice Theme 4
- Have both organisations shared their policies and procedures regarding recruitment and selection of workers/volunteers?
- Have both organisations shared their policies and procedures regarding the management of staff and training requirements?
- Who will take responsibility for induction, training, support and supervision of the workers in relation to following the guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures?

- If the policy and procedures are different between the organisations, how will this be resolved?
- Have both/all parties agreed which organisation's code of behaviour is to be followed?
- If a worker/volunteer breaches the code of behaviour what cross-organisation communication systems are agreed?
- Are children participating in the project registered with one of the organisations already or is this a new project requiring new registration?

Best Practice Theme 5
- How will information be shared with parents/guardians?
- Has it been agreed by both organisation's whose anti-bullying policy will be followed and has this been communicated to all workers/volunteers involved?
- What is the arrangement for consent in relation to this activity?
- Which organisation's complaints procedure will be utilised? Will a new complaints procedure be put in place for this project? If one organisation handles the complaint and it involves a worker from another organisation, how will this information be shared?

Best Practice Theme 6
- Have you agreed how you will implement and operate your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures?
- Are there agreed review mechanisms in place?

Appendix 11 - External organisations using your facilities

This guidance is for organisations that allow other groups to use their facilities, such as renting out meeting rooms or community halls. The advice is based on the assumption that the external group is not providing services in conjunction with your organisation.
If the external group is using your facilities outside the hours your service operates (for example: your service operates 9am to 6pm and the external group is using your facilities after 6pm) you should ensure, where applicable:

- That the external group has appropriate insurance cover;
- That the group is aware of Children First and has confirmed it has appropriate policies in place;
- That the group has informed parents/guardians of their agreement with your service and that there is a clear distinction between the two services.

If the external group is using your facilities during the hours that your service operates you should ensure, where applicable:

- That you include this factor when carrying out a risk assessment of harm that may occur to children availing of your service if you are a provider of a relevant service under the *Children First Act, 2015;*
- That you have adequate policies and procedures in place to ensure the safeguarding of children while availing of your service;
- The group is aware of your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures
- The group has appropriate insurance cover;
- The group is aware of your organisation's principles and values;
- The group is aware of Children First and has confirmed that they have appropriate policies in place;
- There is a signed agreement between the two parties.

If the group is delivering a service to children and families in partnership with your organisation, then it is essential that governance issues are clarified and agreed prior to the service commencing. See section 4.3.7 and appendix 10.