



Child Safeguarding Statement

Name & Address of service provided: Open Arms, Unit 13 Newbridge Industrial Estate, Newbridge, Kildare W12 HT38 & Clayton Hotel, Sandyford, Dublin.

Nature Of Service: Open Arms is a church that provides services for all ages. Our services take place at two physical locations and a virtual service (adults only). Our main goal for kids is to have fun and learn about God.

Kids Church services for children aged 2-12 are a time for children to learn more about God's love in a safe and engaging environment. This may or may not include games, arts and crafts, Bible lessons, age-appropriate multimedia.

During Sunday Service there are generally 3 classes available for children

- Class 1 - toddlers to pre-school
- Class 2 - junior and senior infants
- Class 3 - 1st class to 6th class

Youth Group is a separate event for teenagers held usually on Friday night in Open Arms, Newbridge. There is also a youth meeting in the Clayton Hotel on Sunday mornings. This is a social and spiritual event which allows teenagers who attend secondary school (1st year to 6th year) space to hang out with other teenagers and learn more about God's love. This may or may not include games, Bible lessons, music, snacks, age-appropriate multimedia, field trips (i.e., cinema, laser tag etc), and local and national youth conferences.

Principles to safeguard children from harm

Open Arms is committed to promoting the welfare of children and protecting them from harm in order for them to grow, develop and achieve their full potential.

Open Arms has developed a Child Safeguarding Policy and a Code of Good Practice which applies to all staff and volunteers working with or around children, young people and vulnerable adults. Good practice contributes towards the creation of a healthy and safe environment for children and young people regardless of race, ability, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.

The Open Arms policy and code are available from www.openarms.ie

Open Arms provides the following services to children & young people:

- Open Arms hosts Kids Church for children aged toddler-12 and a youth service for teenagers from 1st year to 6th year. Open Arms recruits adult volunteers for these classes and events. The classes include providing biblical and spiritual education through games, multi-media, arts and crafts and teaching for children in the Kids Church and games, worship, preaching, events, youth conferences and prayer for teenagers. All Kids Church services take place at the premises of 13 Newbridge Industrial Estate, Newbridge, Co. Kildare, and at Clayton Hotel, Sandyford, Dublin. All our volunteers are 18 years and over.
- We deliver youth events and provide spiritual support to young people, all of whom are of secondary school age. Youth events are held at 13 Newbridge Estate, Newbridge and at Clayton Hotel, Sandyford, Dublin.

Risk Assessment

Open Arms has carried out an assessment of any potential for harm to a child while availing of our services including the area of online safety when accessing the internet. Below is a list of the areas of risk identified and the list of procedures for managing these risks.

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.

This definition is understood as the harm caused to children by physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect. In the context of safeguarding, it may also relate to the bullying of children, child trafficking and or sexual exploitation, or the harm caused to children through the misuse of digital technology or on internet platforms.

Kids Church Risk Assessment

Hazard	Risk Rating	Control	Action Required	Sign & date
Sexual Abuse	L	Garda Vetting Multiple leaders present Child protection officer Child protection training Individual occupancy bathroom is accessed in the main children's room Supervision	Garda Vetting procured before interacting with children Minimum of 2 leaders present Child Protection Officer training Toileting policy implemented & known to parents CPO performs regular check in's	
Physical abuse	L	Garda Vetting Training Multiple leaders present Child protection officer Child protection training Supervision	Garda Vetting procured before interacting with children Minimum of 2 leaders present Child Protection Officer training CPO performs regular check in's	
Emotional/mental abuse	L	Training Multiple leaders present Supervision	Minimum of 2 leaders present Child Protection Officer training CPO performs regular check in's	
Harassment	L	Training Multiple leaders present Policies & procedures Supervision	Minimum of 2 leaders present CPO performs regular check in's Harassment policies Welfare training	
Abduction	L	Sign in/sign out procedure Supervision Documentation	Sign in/sign out procedure implemented CPO performs regular check in's Organised documentation maintained according to GDPR	
Recruitment of Volunteers	L	Garda Vetting Interviews Policy regarding safe recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers Training References	Policies & procedures Garda Vetting Training Calling and confirming references	
Information on children and photos/videos of children	L	We do not hold identifiable information on the children with whom we work. Information that we have on	GDPR Supervision Policies	

		<p>the young people with whom we work is password protected and access is restricted to use of the intended purpose.</p> <p>Any photographs/videos of children are held securely and are password protected and will not be used without parental permission. We respect and protect children's privacy, dignity and rights in our marketing, communication and programme work. We acquire permission before using any images.</p>		
Risk of harm to a child by adult church members, peers & strangers	L	Supervision policy Training Child Protection Officer	Training	

Youth Group Risk Assessment

Hazard	Risk Rating	Control	Action	Sign & date
Harassment	L	Policies & procedures Training Child protection officer Supervision Multiple leaders present	Training Regular supervision	
Sexual abuse	L	Garda Vetting Multiple leaders present Child protection officer Child protection training Supervision	Garda Vetting procured before interacting with children Minimum of 2 leaders present Child Protection Officer training CPO performs regular check in's	
Risk of harm to a child on Outings by staff members, strangers & peers	L	Garda Vetting Supervision Reporting Recruitment Training	Garda Vetting before the event Correct ratios of leaders adhered to Child protection officer training	

Physical abuse	L	Garda Vetting Training Multiple leaders present Child protection officer Child protection training Supervision	Garda Vetting procured before interacting with children Minimum of 2 leaders present Child Protection Officer training CPO performs regular check in's	
Emotional/mental abuse	L	Training Multiple leaders present Supervision	Minimum of 2 leaders present Child Protection Officer training CPO performs regular check in's	

<p>Messaging: Texts WhatsApp Facebook Messenger Instagram Snap Chat All social media platforms</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>Policies & procedures Communication & transparency Supervision Independent supervision GDPR Snap Chat is never used as a form of communication between teens & leaders</p>	<p>Policies determining: Time limits (no messages after 9pm) Messages between same gender leaders & teens if possible Do not delete any messages Copying senior leader (youth pastor) to all messages Independent third party periodically reading all messages Leaders and teens will never communicate through Snap Chat as the messages delete almost immediately.</p>	
<p>Online interaction</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>Policies Supervision GDPR</p>	<p>Policies determining: Time limits (no messages after 9pm) Messages between same gender leaders & teens if possible Do not delete any messages Copying senior leader (youth pastor) to all messages Independent third party periodically reading all messages. No interaction on Snap Chat Awareness training on posting on personal social media pages</p>	
<p>Social media</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>Supervision of all posts Group decisions and discussions around a predetermined philosophy GDPR Parental consent</p>	<p>All images posted for advertising purposes will be with parental (or own if over 16) consent All data stored and used according to GDPR legislation Double checking posts before posting.</p>	

Abduction Travel to and from youth	L	Teenagers are the responsibility of the church and the youth leaders once they enter the premises until they leave. The leaders take no responsibility for the teenagers while they travel to and from the premises. Leaders are not required to wait past the end of the youth service with any teens who have not yet been collected (if not travelling independently) though may choose to do so.	Training Supervision	
Prayer and counselling	L	Two leaders with every teen who requires prayer or counselling No physical touch between leaders and youth without consent, even then it is restricted to brief 'side hugs' and a hand on the shoulder	Training Policies & procedures Supervision	
Recruitment of staff and volunteers	L	Garda Vetting Interviews Policy regarding safe recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers Training References	Policies & procedures Garda Vetting Training Calling and confirming references	
Failure to report allegation of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child Failure to report child protection concerns from staff/volunteers.	L	Detailed reporting policies Training Supervision	Policies Supervision Training	

Procedures:

Our Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (2017), and Tusla's *Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice*. In addition to the procedures listed in our risk assessment, the following procedures support our intention to safeguard children while they are availing of our service:

- Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child availing of our service:

-Open Arms follows the Children First Act 2015 and Tusla Guidelines.

- Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers to work with children:

-Workers and volunteers are subject to Garda Vetting before commencing employment/volunteering with Open Arms.

- Two references from previous employers are required for all staff/volunteers during the recruitment process.

- Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm:

- Training and induction is carried out at the beginning of volunteering.

- Procedure for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla:

- Mandated concerns are reported to Tusla as soon as possible in accordance with the Children First Act.

The Designated Liaison Person and mandated person:

- Procedure for maintaining a list of the persons (if any) in the relevant service who are mandated persons:

-The mandated persons are listed in our Safeguarding documents and all staff are made aware of them.

- Procedure for appointing a relevant person:

- The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) holds the position of relevant person.

All procedures listed are available upon request.

Implementation:

We recognise that implementation is an on-going process. Our service is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while availing of our service. This CSS was reviewed in March 2024 and will be again in March 2026.

_____, Pastor, Open Arms.

For queries, please contact Claire Afolabi 0851146056 claire@openarms.ie, Relevant Person under the Children First Act 2015.



Child Safeguarding Policy Statement

Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers

1.0 Policy Statement

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.

Open Arms will discharge its responsibility to protect the dignity and welfare of children entrusted to its care and to support staff with responsibility for them. As emphasised in Children First Guidance 2017 the safety and welfare of children is everyone's responsibility and the best interests of the child are paramount.

This policy is established in line with The Children First Act 2015, The 'Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children' published in 2017 and Tusla Children First – Child Safeguarding.

Where allegations of abuse of a child are made against a staff member, the welfare and safety of the child is of paramount importance. It is also acknowledged that staff members may be subjected to erroneous, malicious or vexatious allegations which can have a devastating effect on the person's health, career and reputation. Open Arms recognises its obligation to protect the rights of the staff member and to ensure that there is a fair and impartial investigation of the allegation.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers of Open Arms. In this policy, references to staff should be interpreted as applying to direct employees of Open Arms, and volunteers. Compliance with this policy will ensure that allegations of child abuse against Open Arms staff and volunteers are dealt with expeditiously, consistent with a thorough and fair process in line with legislation and guidance.

Reasonable grounds for concern

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types:

1. neglect,
2. emotional abuse,
3. physical abuse
4. sexual abuse.

The different types of child abuse and how they may be recognised are set out in Chapter 2 of the Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children', 2017. Reasonable grounds for a child protection or welfare concern include:

Evidence, for example an injury or behaviour, that is consistent with abuse and is unlikely to have been caused in any other way

- Any concern about possible sexual abuse
- Consistent signs that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect
- A child saying or indicating by other means that he or she has been abused
- Admission or indication by an adult or a child of an alleged abuse they committed

- An account from a person who saw the child being abused

3.0 Reporting Procedures

Reasonable Concerns:

Staff are required to inform Open Arms when they have reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected by a member of staff/volunteer. Staff should refer to Open Arms's Staff Procedure for Reporting Child Protection and Welfare Concerns. Staff may become aware of a concern in a number of ways including, but not limited to, the following:

3.1 Staff member receives an allegation of abuse from a child, parent/guardian or member of the public concerning another staff member

A staff member who receives an allegation of abuse from a child, parent/guardian or member of the public concerning another staff member; once they have been made aware that the allegation relates to an Open Arms employee/volunteer should ensure that the details of the alleged abuse are fully documented including dates, times and any witnesses to the alleged incident. The statement should be read back to the person making the allegation to ensure accuracy. The staff member should then report the matter immediately to the Child Protection Officer. The concern should then be notified to the relevant social work department in line with reporting procedure for mandated persons, including protocol for reporting child protection and welfare concerns

3.2 Staff member suspects abuse

A staff member who suspects that a child may have been abused by another staff member should notify the Child Protection Officer without delay.

- The staff member should not question the person concerned
- The staff member should outline in writing the grounds on which his/her concerns are based
- This report should be submitted without delay to the Child Protection Officer. The concern should then be referred to the relevant social work department in line with reporting procedure for mandated persons, including protocol for reporting child protection and welfare concerns

3.3 Staff member observes another staff member/volunteer engaging in abusive behaviour towards a child

A staff member who witnesses another staff member engaging in inappropriate behaviour towards a child should intervene or seek help to stop the behaviour. The staff member should ensure that the child is not in any immediate danger and receives the necessary treatment and support. The staff member should then report the matter immediately to the CPO. The concern should then be referred to the relevant social work department in line with reporting procedure for mandated persons, including protocol for reporting child protection and welfare concerns.

4.0 Procedure for managing an allegation of abuse against a member of Open Arms staff/volunteer

4.1 Assigned responsibilities within area

Each area working with children should designate;

- A named Senior Officer (Children's Pastor) who has overall responsibility for ensuring that procedures in relation to allegations and concerns against staff are communicated to all staff within their teams;
- A designated named Child Protection Officer to whom allegations or concerns should be reported, by the staff member who has reasonable grounds of concern
- Where the person subject of the allegation or concern is a named senior officer or CPO, the matter can be referred to the senior leadership of the church.

4.2 Reasonable Grounds

Reasonable grounds for child protection or welfare concern can come from a variety of sources. Any staff member who receives information, suspects, or is concerned that a child has been abused, is being abused or at risk of child abuse has a duty of care to report the matter as soon as possible to the relevant social work department. The staff member who has reported the matter to the relevant social work department is not responsible for deciding whether or not child abuse has occurred but is obliged to report suspicions or allegations of child abuse so that appropriate action can be taken.

4.3 Persons to be notified

In principle as soon as possible after a reasonable ground for concern has been raised the relevant social work department should be notified in line with Staff Procedure for Reporting Child Protection and Welfare Concerns. As soon as possible, and ensuring no immediate risks associated with same, the staff member against whom the allegation is made should be notified in writing.

Reporting of Mandated Concerns

The Children First Act 2015 places a legal obligation on mandated persons to report child protection concerns at or above a defined threshold to the relevant social work department. Mandated persons are further required to assist that department, on request, in its assessment of child protection concerns about children who have been the subject of a mandated report.

Staff who are mandated persons are advised to consult Chapter 3 of the Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2017. The thresholds in respect of the four types of abuse are set out in Section 2 of this policy. Section 14 of the Children First Act 2015 requires mandated persons to report a mandated concern to the relevant social work department as soon as practicable.

A Mandated Report form should be created, demonstrated to staff, and used in such cases. The staff member should inform his/her designated named Senior Manager (Children's Pastor) that he/she has made a mandated report if it relates to a staff member.

It is important to note that the legal obligation to report under the Children First Act 2015 only applies to information that a mandated person acquires in the course of his/her professional work of employment. It does not apply to information acquired outside of work, or to information provided on the basis of a personal rather than a professional relationship. In such cases, staff are required to report all reasonable concerns in accordance with the requirements of Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2017 and this policy.

Procedure when reasonable concerns or mandated concerns are reported

As soon as the social work department has determined that the person who is subject to the allegation is a member of staff of Open Arms, the social work department should notify the staff member's/volunteer's employer (Children's Pastor; Senior Pastor, Child Protection Officer). Thereafter, as soon as possible the staff member should be informed of the nature of the allegation, how enquiries will be conducted and the possible outcome e.g. disciplinary action, criminal investigation. In some circumstances, the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) may need to be told straight away, e.g. if a child is injured and requires medical treatment. If this is the case, the Children's Pastor should be notified immediately.

4.3.1 Support for the Child/ Young Person

The Social Work Department in consultation with the Children's Pastor or CPO if appropriate should consider the impact on the child concerned and provide support as appropriate. Where appropriate, liaison between disciplines and other agencies should take place in order to ensure that the child's needs are addressed. It should be clear to the child and their parent(s) /legal guardian(s) who is responsible for keeping them informed of the progress of the assessment of the allegation or allegation.

4.3.2 Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to maintain confidentiality and guard against publicity while a concern or allegation is being investigated or considered. Information should be restricted to those who have a need to know in order to protect children, facilitate enquiries, or manage related disciplinary or suitability processes. The person who is subject to an allegation of abuse is entitled to know who has been informed and the reasons for this information being shared. They are also entitled to know in advance, unless there is a known or suspected immediate and serious risk to a child, of any intention to inform other relevant third parties of the allegations made against them. The designated CPO, in consultation with the appropriate Social Work Department assigned to investigate the allegation will determine whether any other relevant third parties will be informed of the allegations and provide the alleged abuser with access to fair procedure in respect of this process. All staff/volunteers continue to be reminded of their obligations regarding

confidentiality and in line with Open Arms Data Protection Policy. Any breaches of confidentiality through this process will be considered in line with Open Arms Disciplinary Policy under serious misconduct.

4.3.3 Support for the person subject to allegation

As soon as possible after an allegation has been received, the person subject to the allegation or concern should be made aware of the allegation and advised to contact his/her legal representation. Human Resources should be consulted at the earliest opportunity in order that appropriate support can be provided via occupational health or employee welfare arrangements. The person should be clear on who will update them on the progress of the allegation. This is an ongoing process and should be continued throughout any An Garda Síochána investigation, social work department process or HR investigation outlined in section 5 of this policy. The staff member concerned should:

- be treated fairly and honestly and helped to understand concerns expressed and processes involved
- be informed that no conclusions in respect of their responsibility for any allegations of abuse will be formed until such time as an assessment has been completed and they have had opportunity to respond fully to any allegations made against them
- be kept informed of the progress and outcome of any assessment and the implications for any disciplinary or related process and
- if placed on administrative leave, be kept up to date about events in the workplace

4.3.4 Managing interim risk/ Protective Measures

It should be noted that any protective measures need to be proportionate to the level of risk to the child. In all situations the perceived level of risk needs to be considered and managed for all parties. As soon as the CPO has been made aware of an allegation; a risk assessment must be completed. In certain situations the level of risk may require the member of staff not to be working with a specific child or all children until the assessment is complete. If this is the case then various options are open to the responsible management including:

- reassignment so as not to come into contact with one or more children
- restricting a person's duties and agreeing that they will not work with children during the assessment
- administrative leave

Reassignment or restriction of duties or administrative leave should be considered and clearly communicated as neutral acts. They should be considered in any case where:

- there is cause to suspect a child is at risk of significant harm
- the allegation warrants investigation by An Garda Síochána or
- the allegation is otherwise considered serious.

In order to prevent interference, a decision needs to be taken quickly by the designated CPO and Children's Pastor as to what level of security is required in respect of any records that may contain information relevant to an assessment.

4.3.5 During the assessment by the Social Work Department

Throughout the assessment by the social work department relevant actions will be carried out where necessary and staff/volunteers will co-operate with any assessment queries.

4.3.6 Following the assessment by the Social Work Department

Upon completion of the social work department assessment a report should issue directly to the Children's Pastor with responsibility for the staff member. If the assessment of the allegation is founded, the outcome of the report will be considered by the CPO, who will commence an investigation as set out within section 5 of this policy. No investigation process as set out in section 5 of this policy will commence until such a time as is appropriate to do so and will not interfere with any An Garda Síochána investigation. Where it is concluded that there is insufficient evidence to substantiate an allegation the CPO will consider what further action, if any, should be taken.

5.0 Investigation following receipt of the report from Social Work Department

Upon receipt of the report from the Social Work Department the CPO will determine if a formal internal investigation is warranted. No investigation process will commence until such a time as is appropriate to do so and will not interfere with any An Garda Síochána investigation.

5.1.1 Initial Meeting with the Staff Member regarding the Investigation

A meeting should be arranged to advise the staff member of the intention to carry out an investigation in line with this policy. The staff member should be advised of his/her right to be accompanied at this meeting by a union representative, work colleague, or legal representative. The staff member should be given details of the allegation at least five working days prior to the meeting and afforded an opportunity to make an initial response if s/he so wishes. S/he should be advised as to what happens next and told not to make contact with the complainant. The staff member should be advised of support and counselling services that are available.

5.1.2 Managing interim risk/ Protective Measures

Further to receipt of the report from the social work department, a further risk assessment will be carried out in line with 4.1.7 above. It should be noted that any protective measures need to be proportionate to the level of risk to the child. In all situations the perceived level of risk needs to be considered and managed for all parties.

5.1.3 Conducting the Investigation

Principles governing the investigation

- The investigation will be conducted thoroughly and objectively in strict accordance with the terms of reference and with due respect for the rights of the complainant and the rights of the staff member to be treated in accordance with the principles of natural justice
- An investigation team will be appointed by the CPO
- The investigation team will have the necessary expertise to conduct an investigation impartially and expeditiously. Where appropriate, the investigation team may request appropriately qualified persons to carry out assessments, validation exercises, etc
- Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the investigation to the greatest extent consistent with the requirements of a fair investigation. It is not possible however to guarantee the anonymity of the complainant or any person who participates in the investigation
- The investigation team may interview any person who they feel can assist with the investigation. Staff are obliged to co-operate fully with the investigation process and will be fully supported throughout the process
- A written record will be kept of all meetings and treated in the strictest confidence and shared with the relevant parties
- Staff who participate in the investigation process will be required to respect the privacy of the parties involved by refraining from discussing the matter with other work colleagues or persons outside the church
- It will be considered a serious disciplinary offence to intimidate or exert pressure on any person who may be required to attend as a witness or to attempt to obstruct the investigation process in any way

5.1.4 Steps in conducting the Investigation

- The investigation will be conducted by the designated person(s) agreed between the parties
- The investigation will be governed by clear terms of reference based on the written allegation and any other matters relevant to the allegation. The terms of reference shall include and specify the following:
 - The investigation will be conducted in accordance with the Child Protection and Welfare Allegations against staff policy
 - The timescale within which the investigation will be completed
 - The investigation team may set time limits for completion of various stages of the procedure to ensure the overall timescale is adhered to
 - Scope of the investigation i.e. the investigation team will determine whether or not the allegation has been upheld and may make recommendations (other than disciplinary sanction) where appropriate

- The staff member against whom the allegation is made will be advised of the right to representation and given copies of all relevant documentation prior to and during the investigation process, i.e. the allegation, witness statements (if any). The investigation team will interview any witnesses and other relevant persons. Confidentiality will be maintained as far as practicable
- Persons may be required to attend further meetings to respond to new evidence or provide clarification on any of the issues raised
- The investigation team will form preliminary conclusions based on the evidence gathered in the course of the investigation and invite any person adversely affected by these conclusions to provide additional information or challenge any aspect of the evidence
- On completion of the investigation, the investigation team will form its final conclusions based on the balance of probabilities and submit a written report of its findings and recommendations to senior management
- The staff member against whom the allegation is made will be given a copy of the investigation report and an opportunity to comment before any action is decided upon by management. Open Arms reserves the right to initiate Disciplinary Procedure where considered appropriate following receipt of the investigation report and the comments of the staff member, if any.

5.1.5 Timescales

It is important to recognise that the right outcome is far more important than meeting set timescales.

The following principles should be used at all times.

- Minimising delay
- Providing full written information
- Being open
- Ensuring access to independent support

6.0 Allegations not meeting the threshold for social work assessment

If an allegation is screened by the social work department and it does not meet the threshold for the social work department to investigate under this policy; the allegation will be returned to the CPO. The CPO must assess if the allegation requires investigation. If it is determined that the allegation does require investigation, the above procedure will be followed.

7.0 Record Keeping

During the course of the investigation Senior leadership responsible should keep a clear and comprehensive summary of the case record in line with Data Protection Guidelines. The record should include details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved, the decisions reached and the action taken. It should be completed in consultation with the Child Protection Officer and Church Welfare Policies where a child protection assessment has been undertaken. A copy of this summary should be placed on the person's confidential file and given to the individual.

8.0 Professional Registrations

Further to an allegation being found against a staff member, the CPO will report the matter to the relevant professional registration body where necessary and appropriate. The CPO will notify the staff member concerned of their intention to refer the matter to the relevant professional registration.

9.0 Communicating the Child Protection and Welfare Allegations against Staff Policy and Procedure

Each staff member should be given a copy of the Child Protection and Welfare Allegations against staff policy and procedure. Briefing sessions should be organised for all staff to ensure that staff are aware of their obligations towards children and know the actions to take if abuse is suspected or alleged. Attendance at these briefing sessions should be mandatory.

10.0 Review of this policy

This policy will be reviewed initially within a 9-month period of initial launch and thereafter on an annual basis in line with best practice for reviewing policies and procedures.



Child Safeguarding Policy Statement

Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure

1.0 Introduction

Best Practice in recruitment and selection is important in safeguarding the interests of children, staff and management of childcare services. Open Arms has developed safe recruitment and selection policies and procedures to ensure clear processes and safe practices are in place to enable Open Arms to take all reasonable steps to ensure that only suitable people are recruited to work within children services.

2.0 Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide a sound framework to ensure an effective and unbiased recruitment and selection process where the principles of probity, merit, best practice, fairness and transparency are applied in decision making regarding the appointment of candidates to positions in Child services, while meeting the requirement of all relevant legislation.

2.1 Aim of this Policy

The aim of this policy is to outline Child services recruitment and selection policy, process and procedures and to ensure that all those who are involved at any stage of the process are aware of their roles and responsibilities.

2.2 Scope of this Policy

This policy relates to the recruitment of all employees and volunteers to Child services. The processes cover the period from when a request to recruit is notified to the congregation to the commencement of a new employee/volunteer with Child services.

2.3 Policy Statements

2.3.1 Recruitment

2.3.1.1 Staff will be recruited based on the requirements of the role, without bias on the grounds of the candidate's Sex, Marital or Family status, Age, Disability, Religion, Sexual Orientation, Race or Membership of the Travelling Community.

2.3.1.2 The Open Arms Board, Children's Pastor, and Senior Leadership will commence the recruitment and selection process to recruit candidates to identified vacant positions as soon as possible following the approval to fill the position.

2.3.1.3 A Recruitment Plan will be set out for each campaign in consultation with Senior leadership during which the job description will be reviewed/developed for the position and this will define the functions of the role and the specific agreed terms and conditions pertaining to the role.

2.3.1.4 All vacancies will be advertised internally within Open Arms and some positions maybe advertised externally in relevant publications and websites.

2.3.2 Selection

2.3.2.1 The selection process will always involve an interview but may also include other suitable assessment or selection methods deemed appropriate.

2.3.2.2 Candidates will be notified of interviews at least seven working days in advance. Where possible, interview dates will be arranged prior to advertising and the dates included in the advertisement.

2.3.2.3 Prior to offering an external candidate a position within Open Arms Child services the required pre-employment documentation must be in place and appointment approved. This will include satisfactory references from their current and most recent employers.

2.3.2.4 All decisions made as to the suitability of a candidate as a result of any disclosures received will be done with a commitment to fairness. The decision-making process will consider if the disclosure has a potential bearing on the suitability of the candidate for the position for which they have applied.

2.3.2.5 The successful candidate will be issued with a contract of employment which complies with the Terms of Employment (Information) Acts 1994 and 2001, and the Unfair Dismissals Acts 1997-2007. The contract will be signed by appointee and a representative of Open Arms.

3.3.2.6 Unsuccessful candidates will be notified in writing.

2.3.2.7 Open Arms will ensure that all documentation relating to the recruitment process is filed in a manner that complies with the relevant Freedom of Information and Data Protection legislation.

2.3.3 Garda Vetting

2.3.3.1 All applicants will be informed as part of the selection process that it is the Open Arms's policy to carry out Garda Vetting on all successful candidates prior to final offer of employment.

2.3.3.2 A copy of a Garda vetting form from a potential employee/volunteer is not acceptable as the vetting is required to be carried out in the name of Open Arms. Employees will be re-vetted during their employment in line with best practice and legislative requirements.

2.3.3.3 In the event of a disclosure on the candidate from the Garda Vetting Unit a designated representative from Open Arms in will carry out a risk assessment and make a decision on the suitability of the candidate for the position.

3.0 Process for Interview and Selection

The Interview Board for a full or part time staff member will consist of members of Senior Leadership, members of the Board of Directors, the Children's Pastor, and the Child Protection Officer. Successful candidates will be contacted by email and invited to attend for interview on the notified date/time. Candidates will normally be given at least 7 days' notice of interview. The timescale may be reduced in exceptional circumstances. Candidates for interview will be notified that they are required to produce a form of recent photographic identification e.g. driver license, passport or student ID. On invitation to interview the interview board is disclosed to the candidate. Interview schedule will be drafted when all candidates are confirmed and a copy will be provided to the Interview Board in the Interview Pack prepared for the campaign. The Interview Pack will contain a letter to each board member with names and contact details of the interview dates and times along with the following items:

- Job Specification
- Application Form for each candidate
- Interview Schedule
- Interview Board Member Guidelines
- Note taking sheets
- Candidate Interview Marking Sheets
- Recommendation Sheet/ Do not qualify sheet
- Competency/Key Performance Indicators and any other relevant documentation that additional assessments may generate
-

3.1 Interview of Volunteers

The Interview for volunteers will include the Children's Pastor, the CPO, a member of Senior Leadership. Candidates will normally be given at least 7 days' notice of interview. The timescale may be reduced in exceptional circumstances. Candidates for interview will be notified that they are required to produce a form of recent photographic identification e.g. driver licence, passport or student ID.

3.2 Results of Interview

All Candidates will be notified of the result of their interview at the earliest possible date after the interview. The recommendation of the interview board does not constitute a job offer as it is only one stage of the selection process. This selection process continues after interview and includes clearance checks such as references, Garda/police clearance, and occupational health, validation of qualifications and experience and provision of any other relevant documentation required for appointment. The interview board's decision on which candidates are the most suitable for the position does not constitute a job offer. Final offer is made following pre-employment screening.

4.0 Referees

In line with Children's First Guidelines candidates who are screened for positions that have direct contact with children and families will have their suitability for the role screened. At least one referee should have firsthand knowledge of the applicant's previous work or contact with children. Referees will be asked if the candidate is considered suitable by them to work with children on the reference they provide. The suite of references must include the candidate's current Supervisor or employer. A professional reference is understood to be from a person in a direct clinical/professional supervisory role to the candidate. An 'Employment Reference Form' is completed by a member of the recruiting team during the telephone conversation with the referee in relation to the candidate including professional ability. The completed form is then emailed to the referee for confirmation before being considered either satisfactory or unsatisfactory. The Form may also be e-mailed or posted out to a referee. Consideration is given, inter alia, to;

- Referee marks one or more skills/competencies as unsatisfactory
- Referee indicates he/she would not reemploy the person or recommend the person for employment
- Referee does not deem the candidate suitable for working with Children and Families
- Referee states negative comments about the person
- Referee refuses/fails to supply a reference
- Candidate does not wish to have a particular referee contacted.

In the event that a reference is not considered satisfactory, an evaluation is carried out by the staff member who oversees the follow up with the referee and other relevant persons to establish facts and to document findings and available information. A letter also issues to the candidate advising them of the situation that has arisen in relation to the difficulty in securing a complete suite of references to reflect their employment history. They are requested to provide any additional relevant information to be considered by Open Arms prior to a final decision being made as to whether or not their appointment can proceed.

Based on all the available information the candidate's file is then discussed by the interviewing team who are responsible for making a recommendation in relation to proceeding with 'the appointment to post' or 'the withdrawal of the job offer'.

4.1 Qualifications and other Documentation

At the application stage candidates are required to provide details of their qualifications and eligibility criteria for the post being advertised including relevant experience and courses undertaken. Candidates are advised that any credit given at interview, in respect of claims to qualifications, training and experience is provisional and is subject to verification. They are informed that the recommendation of the interview board is liable to revision if the claimed qualification, training or experience is not proven. Following their acceptance of the 'recommendation to proceed' to the clearances stage of the process, candidates are requested to submit documentation to Open Arms including original qualifications, validation (if applicable). The candidate will also be required to submit a copy of passport, and valid work permit (if applicable).

4.2 Garda and Police Clearance

It is Open Arms's policy to carry out Garda vetting on all new employees. New employees may not commence employment until the outcome of final Garda/Police Clearance Checks are in place. Candidates are advised on application that Open Arms will seek Garda Vetting for all their residences in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Providing international security clearances from other countries, where residency was for more than six months, are the responsibility of the candidate. All applicants are required to provide valid identification and

complete a Garda Vetting Form disclosing all convictions received. If a particular issue is raised about a candidate following the Garda vetting process, Open Arms completes a risk assessment in relation to the possible impact of this issue on the job in question and whether the candidate's conviction may have any adverse consequences. This is a matter for discussion among Senior Leadership and may require further consultation before a decision is made on whether to proceed with an appointment.

4.3 Contract of Employment

A contract of employment is drafted on agreement of a start date. A contract of indefinite duration is issued for all permanent positions and a specified purpose contract is issued for all temporary employments. Other contracts of employment may need exploration if a candidate is appointed alternatively to above. The candidate is issued the Contract of Employment in advance of commencing employment. Once a signed copy is on file the line manager is notified and requested to prepare for induction of the new employee. A Personnel/Payroll file is generated.



Child Safeguarding Statement

Procedure for the provision of information and training of staff in relation to the identification of the occurrence of harm

1.0 Introduction

The Children First Act 2015 sets out the requirement of providers of relevant services to have a Child Safeguarding Statement and specified procedures. Open Arms is identified as a provider of a relevant service. The specified procedure, herein, as required under the Act details 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

2.0 Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is:

1. To meet the requirements of the Child Safeguarding Statement and specified procedures.
2. To advise management on their role to ensure that staff have access to instruction and training in relation to the identification of the occurrence of harm.
3. To provide instruction to all staff to undertake the required mandatory training as outlined in this procedure.

3.0 Scope

This procedure applies to all staff and volunteers of Open Arms. In this procedure, references to staff should be interpreted as applying to direct employees of Open Arms, volunteers, and independent contractors providing services to Open Arms. This procedure sets out guidance and direction for the IAOG Board, all Open Arms staff and any member of the public who may request a copy of the Child Safeguarding Statement (CSS)'s specified procedure for the provision of Information and Training on the Occurrence of Harm.

4.0 Legislation and other related policies

- Children First Act 2015
- Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (DCYA 2017)
- Tusla Guidance on Developing a Child Safeguarding Statement
- Tusla Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice.
- Open Arms Staff Procedure for Reporting Child Protection and Welfare Concerns

5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Roles

- Directorates to ensure that Senior Leadership are aware of and implement this procedure.
- Senior Leadership to ensure that employees/volunteers are aware of this procedure.
- Pastor's to ensure that employees comply with this procedure through monitoring, audit and review.
- Employees/volunteers to undertake training available.

5.2 Responsibilities

Learning, Training, and Development are required and all must be made available, particularly the information and training on the occurrence of harm.

Managers must communicate procedure to employees.

All staff/volunteers must undertake an appropriate training programme on the occurrence of harm.

Employees must communicate with managers that training has been undertaken.

Managers are required to maintain a record of training completed.

6.0 Procedure

The procedure in respect of the provision of information and training on the Occurrence of Harm is as follows:

- Staff and Volunteers Learning and Development will provide the appropriate information and training programmes on the occurrence of harm
- Staff and Volunteers Learning and Development will disseminate information on all training programmes available.
- Senior Leadership must be aware of what programmes are mandatory and optional.
- Senior Leadership will match the training programme to the needs of their staff/volunteers and mandatory training requirements
- Children's Pastor will communicate with staff/volunteers the requirement to undertake training
- Children's Pastor will make adequate accommodation so that staff/volunteers may complete the training (for example, access to internet, time)
- Staff/volunteers will inform the Children's Pastor that such training has been completed.
- Children's Pastor will maintain a record of training undertaken with dates.

7.0 Review and Audit

The monitoring, audit and revision of the implementation of the 'Child Safeguarding Statement Procedure for the Provision of Information and Training to Staff in relation to the Identification of the Occurrence of Harm' will be undertaken when the Child Safeguarding Statement is reviewed unless a practice issue or change in legislation or policy guidance requires an earlier review. Additionally, if further developments and reviews are made these will also be taken into account.

Appendix 1

Outline of Children First Training Programmes

Children First – An Introduction to Children First Who Should Take This: Child Protection Officer, Assistant Child Protection Officer, Children's Pastor and other staff/volunteers (optional but recommended).

Aim: The aim of the programme is to help staff recognise child abuse and to report a concern in relation to a child's welfare or protection.

Objectives of Programme: At the end of this programme participants will have:

- Knowledge of the Children First Act 2015 and Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children.
- Understanding of the role of Tusla and An Garda Siochana in protecting children.
- Understanding of the roles and responsibilities of mandated persons as assigned under legislation.
- Understanding of the role and responsibilities of designed liaison persons.
- Knowledge of the types and features of abuse.
- Knowledge of the factors which may make children more vulnerable to harm
- Knowledge of how to respond to a disclosure of abuse from a child.
- Reviewed the reasonable grounds for concern and the thresholds for reporting.
- Knowledge of the importance of confidentiality and record-keeping.
- Knowledge of how to report child protection and welfare concerns.

Contents of Programme

- Safeguarding children
- Recognising Abuse
- Reporting concerns about a child



Child Safeguarding Policy Statement

A Guide for the Reporting of Child Protection and Welfare Concerns

1 Introduction

Open Arms is committed to working in conjunction with Tusla and other relevant social work departments, including An Garda Síochána, to be an integral part of the promotion of child welfare. This policy outlines the correct reporting procedures between Open Arms, Tusla, and any other social work department. This policy and procedure should be read along with Children First: National Guidance, which can be found on the website of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. Children First: National Guidance places a responsibility on all people to protect children and, where appropriate, to report child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla.

2. Children's First Principles

Children First has a set of principles that guide work with families

Principle 1: The safety and welfare of children is everyone's responsibility.

Principle 2: The best interests of the child should be paramount.

Principle 3: The overall aim in all dealings with children and their families is to intervene proportionately to support families to keep children safe from harm.

Principle 4: Interventions by the State should build on existing strengths and protective factors in the family.

Principle 5: Early intervention is key to getting better outcomes. Where it is necessary for the State to intervene to keep children safe, the minimum intervention necessary should be used.

Principle 6: Children should only be separated from their parents or carers when alternative means of protecting them have been exhausted.

Principle 7: Children have a right to be heard, listened to and taken seriously. Taking into account their age and understanding, children should be consulted and involved in all matters and decisions that may affect their lives.

Principle 8: Parents and carers have a right to respect, and should be consulted and involved in matters that concern their family.

Principle 9: A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents, carers and families. Where there is conflict, the child's welfare must come first.

Principle 10: Child protection is a multiagency, multidisciplinary activity. Agencies and professionals must work together in the interests of the children.

3. Professionals with particular responsibilities

There are some people who have more responsibilities under the Children First Act 2015.

Mandated persons

Under the Children First Act 2015, certain people must by law report to Tusla any incidences of harm that meet or exceed a specified threshold. These people are known as 'mandated persons' under the legislation. Mandated persons are people who have ongoing contact with children and/or families and who because of their qualifications, training and experience are in a key position to protect children from harm. Mandated persons include professionals working with children in the education, health, justice, youth and childcare sectors. Professionals who may not work directly with children, such as those who work in adult counselling or psychiatry, are also mandated persons. A full

list of people who are classed as mandated persons can be found in the Children First Act 2015. Mandated persons have two main legal obligations under the Children First Act 2015:

- To report harm of children above a defined threshold to Tusla.
- To help Tusla, if requested, in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report.

The Children First Act 2015 defines harm as follows:

‘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.

If, as a mandated person, you are in doubt about whether or not your concern reaches the legal definition of harm for the purpose of making a mandated report, Tusla can advise you. You can find details of who to contact to discuss your concern on the Tusla website: www.tusla.ie.

As a mandated person, staff/volunteers of Open Arms, may make a report jointly with another person. For example, you might make a joint referral with your Designated Liaison Person. In addition, Tusla has developed a Mandated Assisting Protocol, which is available on www.tusla.ie. In some instances, staff/volunteers of Open Arms may need to report concerns directly to An Garda Síochána. The Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 may apply. Under this Act, it is a criminal offence to withhold information about a serious offence, including a sexual offence, against a person under 18 years or a vulnerable person. The offence arises where a person knows or believes that a specified offence has been committed against a child or vulnerable person and he or she has information which would help arrest, prosecute or convict another person for that offence but fails without reasonable excuse to disclose that information as soon as is practicable to do so to a member of An Garda Síochána.

Designated Liaison Person (Child Protection Officer)

Open Arms has a Child Protection Officer in accordance with the Children First: National Guidance. This person’s role is to be a resource for any staff member or volunteer who has a child protection or welfare concern. The Designated Liaison Person should be well-informed about child protection and have received all the necessary training for the role. They will help any person in their organisation who is considering making a report to Tusla and will liaise with outside agencies.

4. Four Steps in Making the Decision to Report a Child Protection or Welfare Concern to Tusla

If staff/volunteers of Open Arms are concerned about a child, they may need to report it to Tusla. These four steps will be a guide through the process of making the decision to report. Please note that in an emergency situation, where you believe the child is at risk of immediate harm, you should contact Tusla without delay before making a written report. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a situation that exposes him or her to harm or risk of harm, while waiting for Tusla to intervene. If you think the child is in immediate danger and you cannot contact Tusla, you should contact An Garda Síochána. In such an emergency situation, if you are a mandated person, you must follow up with a mandated report to Tusla within three days. Note: In these emergency situations, you do not need to follow the four steps outlined below. Please note that confidentiality should never be used as a reason not to report child abuse.

National Approach to Practice: The Signs of Safety

Tusla has adopted the Signs of Safety approach as a way of working with children and their families. The Signs of Safety approach is helpful, as it gives a clear and effective way to assess risk and find solutions. Open Arms staff/volunteers will use this approach when risk assessing potential harm.

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

What am I worried about?

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

What is working well?

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

What needs to happen?

- What do I think needs to happen to make the situation better?
- Who do I think is best placed to help this family?
- What services do I think this family/parent/children need most?

Helpful questions you might ask the family before contacting Tusla.

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

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

5. A GUIDE FOR THE REPORTING OF CHILD PROTECTION AND WELFARE CONCERNS

Step 1. – Informing the family, where appropriate.

It is usually good practice to tell the family that you are making a report. This means that the family is fully informed about the services they are being referred to and understand what information professionals are passing on and why. However, there are some exceptions to informing the family.

Step 2. – When to report a child protection or welfare concern to Tusla

You do not need to tell the family that a report is being made, if:

- By doing so, the child will be placed at further risk.
- Where the family knowing about the report could affect Tusla's ability to carry out a risk assessment.
- You believe that doing so would place you at risk of harm from the family. You should always inform Tusla if you have reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected.

What are reasonable grounds for a child protection or welfare concern?

- Evidence that is consistent with abuse and unlikely to have been caused in any other way. This evidence, for example, could be in the form of an injury or behaviour.
- 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.
- Consistent signs that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.
- An account from a person who saw the child being abused

Further information on the definitions and features of abuse can be found in Children First: National Guidance.

Step 3. – Submitting the report

If you make the report verbally, you should follow it up by completing the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form. This can be found on the Tusla website: www.tusla.ie/children-first/publications-andforms/. Mandated persons must make mandated reports on the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form.

Tusla's Response to Reports

Once Tusla receives a report, its first consideration is always the immediate safety of the child. Tusla checks all reports and information on the day they are received. Emergency action is taken if it is necessary to protect the child. Some reports may not need the intervention of Tusla and can be dealt with through other types of services. A lot of children can be kept safe from harm and have their needs met through this wide range of excellent health, education and social supports.

Screening process

When Tusla receives a report, they 'screen' or review the information to see if the child's needs could be met through these other services. Through this screening process, they also consider where children's needs might be more complex but do not need an assessment led by social workers. These children are referred to the early intervention response, which is detailed below. In cases that do need an assessment, they assign them to a social worker to begin this assessment process. The purpose of the assessment is to gather and analyse information on:

- The danger or risks of harm to the child
- The factors that are making it harder to keep the child safe
- The strengths or safety that are present in the family
- The things that need to change for the child and family.

The assessment involves meeting and talking to the child, parents, their extended family network and other relevant professionals. For a child to be kept safe, you must involve all those who are naturally connected to the child through personal or professional relationships.

Response pathways

When the assessment is finished, there are a number of outcomes - response pathways. In Appendix 2, you can see what happens when a report is received and the full process of screening, initial assessment and the response pathways.

Importance of Record-keeping

Open Arms records all significant conversations and interactions about involvement in the lives of children and young people to show that the conversations and interactions took place and the agreed actions to be taken. Good guidance and record-keeping procedures help staff to record relevant information in an accessible and practical way. The quality of the information shared will greatly influence how Tusla assess and respond to the concern.

Open Arms has a policy on the proportionate sharing of records with Tusla where necessary for the protection or welfare of a child. This policy will:

- Ensure records are factual and include details of contacts, consultations and any actions taken.
- Cooperate with Tusla in the sharing of records, 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.
- Store records on child protection concerns, allegations and disclosures securely and safely.
- Use records for the purpose for which they are intended only.
- Share records on a need-to-know basis only in the best interests of the child or young person.

Points to consider about record-keeping:

Feedback to the Reporter

Tusla, will acknowledge reports that are made about children and will usually contact the reporter for further information. Tusla will always seek to cooperate fully with professional reporters. But at the same time, this must be balanced with the wishes, consent and permission of parents or carers and the child. Tusla will, where possible, provide feedback to reporters. However, in some cases, to protect the privacy of the child and family, it may not always be possible for them to inform the reporter on the outcome of a Tusla assessment of the child.

Out-of-Hours Service

Tusla operate an out-of-hours social work service, which is available by contacting An Garda Síochána. This service deals with any emergencies that occur outside of office hours. If staff/volunteers have concerns for the immediate safety of a child, they can contact An Garda Síochána in an out-of-hours situation. The out-of-hours service deals with cases that come to the attention of An Garda Síochána, where a child is at immediate risk of harm. Emergency placements can be made when necessary.

Child Protection Training

As Open Arms works with children, we are responsible for ensuring that staff and volunteers receive adequate and appropriate child welfare and protection information and training. Open Arms provides all staff with good-quality information on how to recognise and report child protection and welfare concerns. Training also includes clear information about the role of the statutory agencies with primary responsibility in child protection and welfare, namely Tusla and An Garda Síochána. Open Arms uses the Tusla, e-learning training module that covers recognising and reporting child protection and welfare concerns which is available to everyone, free of charge and can be found on the Tusla website: www.tusla.ie. The training also covers the role of mandated persons, mandated assisting, responsibilities of organisations working with children, and the role of designated liaison persons. Tusla also employs Children First Information and Advice Officers who can help you with any queries about child protection and welfare training.



Child Safeguarding Policy Statement

Mandated Persons

The Children First Act 2015 places a legal obligation on certain people, many of whom are professionals, to report child protection concerns at or above a defined threshold to Tusla - Child and Family Agency. These mandated persons must also assist Tusla, on request, in its assessment of child protection concerns about children who have been the subject of a mandated report.

Mandated persons are people who have contact with children and/or families who, by virtue of their qualifications, training and experience, are in a key position to help protect children from harm. Mandated persons include key professionals working with children in the education, health, justice, youth and childcare sectors. Certain professionals who may not work directly with children, such as those in adult counselling or psychiatry, are also mandated persons. The list also includes registered foster carers and members of the clergy or pastoral care workers of a church or other religious community. The Children First Act 2015, Schedule 2, provides a full list of people who are classified as mandated persons.

Designated Mandated Person

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

- member of the clergy (howsoever described) or pastoral care worker (howsoever described) of a church or other religious community;
- 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;
- person responsible for the care or management of a youth work service within the meaning of section 2 of the Youth Work Act 2001.

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.

What are the legal obligations of a Mandated Person?

Mandated persons have two main legal obligations under the Children First Act 2015

- To report harm of children, above a defined threshold, to the relevant social work department
- To assist, if requested, in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report

As a mandated person, under the legislation you are required to report any knowledge, belief or reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed. The Act defines harm as assault, ill-treatment, neglect or sexual abuse, and covers single and multiple instances.

The reporting requirements under the Children First Act 2015 apply only to information that you as a mandated person, received or became aware of since the Act came into force. However, if you have reasonable concern about past abuse, where the information came to your attention before the Act and there is possible continuing risk to children, you should report it to Tusla under the Children First Guidance 2017.

What are the types of abuse and how do I recognise them?

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

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

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

Neglect

Child neglect is the most frequently reported category of abuse, both in Ireland and internationally.

Neglect occurs when a child does not receive adequate care or supervision to the extent that the child is harmed physically or developmentally. It is generally defined in terms of an omission of care, where a child's health, development or welfare is impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, medical care, intellectual stimulation or supervision and safety. Emotional neglect may also lead to the child having attachment difficulties.

The following are features of child neglect:

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

Emotional abuse

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

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

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

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

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

Physical abuse

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

Physical abuse can include the following:

- Physical punishment
- Beating, slapping, hitting or kicking
- Pushing, shaking or throwing
- Pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling
- Use of excessive force in handling
- Deliberate poisoning
- Suffocation
- Fabricated/induced illness
- Female genital mutilation

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

Sexual abuse

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

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

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

It should be remembered that sexual activity involving a young person may be sexual abuse, even if the young person concerned does not themselves recognise it as abusive.

Examples of child sexual abuse include the following:

- Any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child
- An invitation to sexual touching or intentional touching or molesting of a child's body whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification
- Masturbation in the presence of a child or the involvement of a child in an act of masturbation
- Sexual intercourse with a child, whether oral, vaginal or anal
- Sexual exploitation of a child, which includes:
 - Inviting, inducing or coercing a child to engage in prostitution or the production of child pornography [for example, exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, videotape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of an image by computer or other means]
 - Inviting, coercing or inducing a child to participate in, or to observe, any sexual, indecent or obscene act
 - Showing sexually explicit material to children, which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse
- Exposing a child to inappropriate or abusive material through information and communication technology
- Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person

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

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

Circumstances where children may be more vulnerable to harm

Some children maybe more vulnerable to abuse than others. Also, there may be particular times or circumstances when a child may be more vulnerable to abuse in their lives. In particular, children with disabilities, children with communication difficulties, children in care or living away from home, or children with a parent or parents with problems in their own lives may be more susceptible to harm

Bullying

It is recognised that bullying affects the lives of an increasing number of children and can be the cause of genuine concerns about a child's welfare. Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression - whether it is verbal psychological or physical - that is conducted by an individual or group against others. While bullying can happen to any child, some may be more vulnerable.

In cases of serious instances of bullying where the behaviour is regarded as possible abusive, you may need to make a referral to Tusla and /or the An Garda Siochana

The threshold for making a mandated report

As a mandated person, under the legislation you are required to report any knowledge, belief, or reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed, to the relevant social care department.

Definition of Harm:

The threshold of harm for each category of abuse at which mandated persons have a legal obligation to report concerns is outlined below.

“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

Making a mandated report out of hours:

Mandated persons can now access Tusla's emergency out-of-hours social work service. If as a mandated person you have a concern about a child you can contact our 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.

If you cannot contact Tusla and have an immediate concern about the safety of a child, please contact An Garda Síochána without delay.

Kildare Dedicated Contact Points

Address: Building 2, Vista Primary Care Centre, Ballymore Road, Naas, Co. Kildare, W91 HT2X

Phone: (045)839-300

How should I deal with a disclosure of abuse from a child?

Everyone should be alert to the possibility that children with whom they are in contact may be being abused or at risk of being abused.

It is very difficult for a child to tell someone that they are being, or have been, abused. A child needs to have someone they can trust in order to feel able to disclose abuse they may be experiencing. They need to know they will be believed and will get the help they need. Without these things they may be vulnerable to continuing abuse.

As a trusted adult, a child may decide to disclose their experience of abuse to you. You should deal with such a disclosure sensitively. Accept what the child has to say – false disclosures are very rare.

If you receive a disclosure of harm from a child, you may feel reluctant to report this for a number of reasons. For example, the child may say that they do not want the disclosure to be reported, or you may take the view that the child is now safe and that the involvement of Tusla may not be desired by either the child or the family.

You are not required to judge the truth of the claims or the credibility of the child. However, you need to inform Tusla of all reasonable concerns about a child.

If, as a mandated person, you receive a disclosure of harm from a child, you must make a mandated report of the concern to Tusla .

The following steps are suggested for dealing with a disclosure of abuse from a child:

- React calmly
- Listen carefully and attentively
- Take the child seriously
- Reassure the child that they have taken the right action in talking to you
- Do not promise to keep anything secret
- Ask questions for clarification only. Do not ask leading questions
- Check back with the child that what you have heard is correct and understood
- Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser
- Ensure that the child understands that you must tell someone who understand this area and who can help
- Make a written record of what the child has told you as soon as possible, in as much detail as possible
- Treat the information confidentially

- Contact Tusla's Duty Social Work Department without delay and report the disclosure made to you.
- Continue to support the child

What is mandated assisting?

It is usual practice for professionals who have on-going contact with a child, where there is concern about possible abuse, to continue to engage with Tusla's Social Work team to assist in the protection of a child. To support and reinforce this practice, the Children First Act 2015 provides that all mandated persons can be asked, by Tusla, to provide any necessary and proportionate assistance to aid Tusla in assessing the risk to a child from a mandated report. Assistance includes verbal or written information or attendance at meetings.

- A mandated person must comply with this request regardless of who made the report.
- Information that Tusla shares with another person's (mandated or otherwise) in the course of carrying out an assessment, must not be shared with a third party, unless Tusla considers it appropriate and authorises in writing that the information may be shared.
- Any information furnished by mandated person shall not give rise to civil liability or be admissible in evidence against that person in any civil or criminal proceedings.



Child Safeguarding Policy Statement

Procedures for Appointment of a Relevant Person

1.0 Introduction

The Children First Act 2015 sets out the requirement of providers of relevant services to have a Child Safeguarding Statement and specified procedures. Tusla is identified as a provider of a relevant service. The specified procedure herein as required under the act details the appointment of a relevant person for the purposes of this part. This part refers to in this case the Child Safeguarding Statement.

2.0 Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to:

1. Meet the requirements of the Child Safeguarding Statement and specified procedures.
2. To provide all Tusla staff and board members with the process of identifying a relevant person
3. To provide the name of a relevant person for the purpose of the Child Safeguarding Statement

3.0 Scope

This procedure applies to all staff and volunteers of Open Arms. In this procedure, references to staff should be interpreted as applying to direct employees and volunteers of Open Arms, and independent contractors providing services to Open Arms. This procedure sets out guidance and direction for the Open Arms Board and all staff and any member of the public who may request a copy of the CSS's specified procedure relating to the appointment of a relevant person. A relevant person is defined within the Children First Act 2015 and is 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

4.0 Legislation and Other Related Policies

- Children First Act 2015
- Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017
- Tusla Guidance on the Developing a Child Safeguarding Statement
- Tusla Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice

5.0 Policy/Procedure/Protocol/Guidance

The procedure to appoint a relevant person for Open Arms is as follows.

1. The Open Arms Board propose the relevant person and delegate the function of the relevant person to the Senior Pastor.
2. The Senior Pastor may delegate this function to a nominated individual.
3. The board agree the Senior Pastor or other nominated individual as the named relevant person for the purpose of the Child Safeguarding Statement.
4. The name of the relevant person will be displayed on the Open Arms CSS.

6.0 Review and Audit

This Open Arms CSS Procedure for the Appointment of a Relevant Person will be reviewed 24 months after adoption and every 24 months thereafter. It should be reviewed earlier if there is a material change to legislation and policy, or if there is an incident relating to matters covered in this policy. All managers must ensure that all staff comply with this procedure.



Mandated Report Form

Date of Report: _____

Details of Child:

First Name: _____

Surname: _____

Gender: _____

Address:

Date of Birth: _____

Estimated Age: _____

School Name: _____

School Address: _____

Details of Concern:

Type of Concern:

Child Welfare Concern Emotional Abuse Physical Abuse

Sexual Abuse Neglect

Details of Reporter:

First Name: _____

Surname: _____

Address:

Mobile Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Organisation: _____

Position held: _____

Is this a Mandated Report made under Sec 14, Children First Act 2015? Yes No

Details of Other Person when a Joint Report is being made:

First Name: _____ Surname: _____

Address:

Mobile Number: _____ Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Organisation: _____

Position Held: _____

First Name: _____ Surname: _____

Address:

Mobile Number: _____ Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Organisation: _____

Position Held: _____

Relationships:

Details of Mother

Mothers First Name: _____ Surname: _____

Address:

Mobile Number: _____ Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Is the mother a legal guardian? Yes No

Details of Father

Father's First Name: _____ Surname: _____

Address:

Mobile Number: _____ Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Is the father a legal guardian? Yes No

Household Composition

First Name	Surname	Relationship	Date of Birth	Estimated Age	Other info (i.e. occupation, school etc.)

Details of Person(s) allegedly causing harm:

First Name: _____ Surname: _____

Gender: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Estimated age: _____

Address:

Mobile Number: _____ Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Occupation: _____

Organisation: _____

Position Held: _____

Relationship to Child: _____

Address at time of alleged incident:

If name unknown please indicate reason:

First Name: _____ Surname: _____

Gender: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Estimated age: _____

Address:

Mobile Number: _____ Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Occupation: _____

Organisation: _____

Position Held: _____

Relationship to Child: _____

Address at time of alleged incident:

If name unknown please indicate reason:

Any Other Relevant Information, Including any Previous Contact with the Child or Family

In completing this report form you are providing details on yourself and on others. Details such as name, address and date of birth fall under the definition of 'Personal Data' in the Data Protection Acts, 1988 & 2003. Tusla has a responsibility under these Acts in its capacity as a Data Controller to, amongst other things, obtain and process this data fairly; keep it safe and secure; and to keep it for a specified lawful purpose. That purpose is to fulfil our statutory responsibility under the Child Care Act 1991 to promote the protection and welfare of children. Tusla may, during the course of the assessment of this report disclose such Personal Data to other agencies including An Garda Síochána. Further details about Tusla's responsibilities as a Data Controller and your rights as a Data Subject can be found on our website, www.tusla.ie. As you are providing Personal Data on others, you are a Data Processor. We ask that you only provide those details that are necessary for the report and that you keep this report and the Personal Data contained in it secure from unauthorised access, disclosure, destruction or accidental loss.