



***CHILD SAFEGUARDING  
STATEMENT 2021-2023***

## **CHILDREN FIRST REQUIREMENTS FOR TUSLA-FUNDED ORGANISATIONS**

Tusla has a responsibility to ensure that funded organisations are aware of and have met their obligations under the Children First Act, 2015 and National Children First Guidance.

When Dochas Family Centre complete the SLA we will be asked to respond to questions in relation to our Child Safeguarding Statement, risk assessment and safeguarding procedures.

The Children First Information and Advice Service is linking with Tusla Commissioning, and Child Safeguarding Statement Unit to ensure that funded organisations receive support and training to understand these questions and to develop their Child Safeguarding Statement and procedures.

If at any time Tusla becomes concerned that practices in our organisation are not in line with Children First, we may be asked to address these issues with assistance. If there are serious concerns or there is a failure to address the issues highlighted funding arrangements may be affected.

# CHILD SAFEGUARDING GUIDING PRINCIPLES & STATEMENT

Dochas Family Centre (or Family Centre) 'Child Safeguarding: Guiding Principles, Policies and Procedures' set out the requirements for working with children and young people in accordance with the Children First Act 2015 and Children First National Guidance 2017. The Family Centre's policies etc. are aligned with National Guidance. The Family Centre, as a provider of a relevant service, must:

- ✓ Undertake an **assessment of any potential for harm** to a child while availing of the service
- ✓ Prepare a written **child safeguarding statement** specifying the service being provided and the principles and procedures to be observed to ensure as far as practicable, that a child, while availing of the service, is safe from harm
- ✓ **Appoint** a relevant person, named person, designated liaison officer
- ✓ **Keep a list of Mandated Persons in the FAMILY CENTRE**

## DECLARATION OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Dochas Family Centre provides the following services/activities to children aged 7-12 years of age:

- After School Activities
  - Rainbows Programme Separation and Bereavement
  - One to One Child Supports
  - Play/Creative & Art Therapies
  - Family Therapy
  - Counselling Service
  - Parenting & Family Related Activities
  - Day Trips
1. Our priority to ensure the welfare and safety of every child who attends our service is paramount
  2. Our guiding principles and procedures to safeguard children reflects 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 Family Centre
6. Workers and volunteers must conduct themselves according to the Family Centre Code of Behaviour and Conduct, in a way that reflects the principles, ethos and values of our Family Centre.

All Family Centre workers and volunteers must seek training appropriate for their role. They must sign-up to the guiding principles at induction and abide by them.

It is the responsibility of the Named Person, Relevant Person, Designated Liaison Person to ensure all workers and volunteers communicate the principles to children, young people, parents, and guardians where appropriate.

## **CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT (CSS) POLICY**

The Family Centre, as a provider of a relevant service, must have an up-to-date Child Safeguarding Statement which specifies the service being provided and the principles and procedures to be observed in order to ensure, as far as practicable, that a child availing of the service is safe from harm.

The Family Centre assesses the potential harm to the children and young people using its service(s) by carrying out a risk assessment. This written risk assessment then informs Family Centre's Child Safeguarding Statement. The Family Centre CSS outlines the policies and procedures which are in place to manage the risks that have been identified.

A Child Safeguarding Statement (CSS) for the Family Centre can be found in the next two pages.

### **It is the responsibility of the Named Person to ensure:**

- The CSS is displayed prominently in the Family Centre
- A copy of the CSS is provided to all staff and volunteers
- A copy of the CSS is made available to parents/guardians, families etc. if requested
- The CSS is provided to Tusla if requested

## **CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT**

1. Name of service being provided:

### **Dochas Family Centre**

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The Family Centre is actively committed to the child-centred approach to working with children and young people and undertake to provide a safe and nurturing environment where the welfare of the child is paramount. All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to safeguard children through promoting their welfare, health and development in a safe and caring environment that supports their best interest and prevents abuse.

2. Nature of service and principles to safeguard children from harm

The Family Centre provide the following services to children & families:

- After School Activities
- Rainbows Programme Separation & Bereavement
- One to One Child Supports
- Play/Creative & Art Therapies
- Family Therapy
- Counselling Service
- Parenting & Family Related Activities
- Day Trips

### **Our Principles to Safeguard Children from Harm**

We believe that:

- Our priority is to ensure the welfare and safety of every child and young person who attends our service is paramount;
- 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 every two years;
- 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;
- We are committed to upholding the rights of every child and young person who attends our service, including the right to be kept safe and protected from harm, listened to and heard;
- Our guiding principles apply to everyone in our organisation;
- Workers/volunteers must conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of our organisation.

### 3. Risk Assessment

We have carried out an assessment of any potential for harm (as defined in the Children First Act, 2015) to a child while availing of our services. Risk of harm as defined in the Act 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 a child.

Below is a list of the areas of risk identified and the list of procedures for managing these risks.

	<b>Risk of harm in relation to a child as defined in the Children First Act (2015)</b>	<b>Procedure in place to manage identified risk</b>
1	Risk of harm of abuse of children by staff/ volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Garda vetting all staff before allowing them on site</li> <li>✓ Full induction on commencement</li> <li>✓ Ongoing training/refresher</li> <li>✓ Tusla eLearning to be completed upon commencement</li> <li>✓ Clearly named and identified DLP’s and a policy that outlines exactly how to deal with a Safeguarding issue</li> <li>✓ Reporting promptly</li> <li>✓ Removing the staff or volunteer from the service immediately</li> </ul>
2	Risk of harm of abuse of children as a result of staff/volunteers not being aware of indicators of abuse or correct reporting or safeguarding procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Reporting Procedure</li> <li>✓ Training strategy for staff and volunteers</li> <li>✓ Staff and volunteer supervision procedure</li> </ul>
3	Risk of harm of abuse from peer to peer abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Code of behaviour for young people</li> <li>✓ Supervision of children procedure</li> <li>✓ Anti-bullying procedure</li> <li>✓ Complaints procedure</li> <li>✓ Training strategy for staff and volunteers</li> <li>✓ Reporting procedure</li> <li>✓ Safe use of internet and photographic and recording devices procedure</li> </ul>
4	Risk of harm of abuse by staff/volunteers while providing 1:1 working e.g. play therapy; psychotherapy/counselling and other support work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 1:1 working procedure</li> <li>✓ Always have another staff member on site</li> <li>✓ Age-appropriate literature for child/young person to make them aware of where to report any abuse</li> <li>✓ Training strategy for staff and volunteers</li> <li>✓ Staff and volunteer supervision procedure</li> <li>✓ Recruitment procedure</li> <li>✓ Allegations of abuse against staff/volunteers</li> </ul>
5	Risk of harm of abuse to children by the inappropriate use of digital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Code of behaviour procedure for staff/volunteers and young people</li> <li>✓ Supervision of young people procedure</li> </ul>

	Risk of harm in relation to a child as defined in the Children First Act (2015)	Procedure in place to manage identified risk
	images or social media by staff/volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Appropriate IT precautions e.g. limiting access to certain sites</li> <li>✓ Complaints procedure</li> <li>✓ Training strategy for staff and volunteers</li> <li>✓ Induction and training procedure</li> <li>✓ Staff and volunteer supervision procedure</li> <li>✓ Reporting procedure</li> <li>✓ Allegations of abuse against staff/volunteers</li> </ul>
6	Risk of harm of abuse of children from visitors/members of the public/contractors/partner agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Supervision of children procedure</li> <li>✓ Procedure for sign in of visitors</li> <li>✓ Agreed joint child safeguarding procedures for contracted or partnership agencies</li> </ul>
7	Risk of harm of abuse by staff/volunteers to children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Training strategy for staff and volunteer</li> <li>✓ Staff and volunteer supervision procedure</li> <li>✓ Recruitment procedure</li> <li>✓ Code of Behaviour</li> <li>✓ Reporting Procedure</li> <li>✓ Allegations of abuse against staff/volunteers</li> </ul>

#### 4. 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*. The following procedures list in our risk assessment and the specified procedures below 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;
- Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers to work with children;
- Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm;
- Procedure for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla;
- Procedure for maintaining a list of the persons (if any) in the relevant service who are mandated persons;
- Procedure for appointing a relevant person;
- Additional procedures identified in risk assessment.

**This Child Safeguarding Statement will be displayed prominently.**

All procedures will be made available to staff, parents, young people, members of the public and Tusla if requested.

## 5. Implementation and Review

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 Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed on **1<sup>st</sup> July 2023** or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Project Director)  
(on behalf of the Board of Directors of Dochas Family Centre)

For queries, please contact the Project Director on 01 623 4531 or [claireMcE@dochasfamilycentre.ie](mailto:claireMcE@dochasfamilycentre.ie) who is the relevant person and the first point of contact regarding this Child Safeguarding Statement under the children First Act, 2015.



## **COMMITMENT TO LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE**

Dochas Family Centre complies with legislation, guidance and best practice.

### **RELEVANT LEGISLATION**

- Children First Act 2015
- Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998
- Criminal Justice (withholding of information on offences against children and vulnerable persons) Act 2012
- National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012-2016
- Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017
- Criminal Justice Act 2006
- Child Care Act 1991
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### **TUSLA GUIDANCE**

- Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children
- A Guide for the Reporting of Child Protection and Welfare Concerns
- Tusla Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice
- Tusla Guidance on Writing a Child Safeguarding Statement
- Tusla Best Practice Principles for Organisations in Developing Children First Training Programmes
- Tusla Children's Charter
- Tusla Signs of Safety Approach
- Tusla Mandated Assisting Protocol for Tusla Staff.

### **INSURANCE**

The Family Centre Board of Directors and DLP should be familiar with the terms and conditions of the organisation's insurance policies—particularly any immediate notifications required by the insurance company if there is an incident or accident.

#### **Insurance Policies Terms and Conditions**

Refer to and be aware of the Terms and Conditions of the Insurance Policies held by your Organisation.

## **KEY ROLES IN CHILD SAFEGUARDING**

The role of Named Person, Relevant Person, and Designated Liaison Person (DLP) can be undertaken by the same person - there is no requirement to have different people for each role.

- All workers and volunteers must be informed at induction who holds which safeguarding role in the organisation
- The Family Centre must keep a list of Mandated Persons in the organisation – this is held safely by the Designated Liaison Person
- The responsibilities of each role must be understood by the respective worker
- All workers and volunteers must receive appropriate training relevant to their responsibilities, so they know what to do and who to contact if they have a concern.

### **NAMED PERSON**

Dochas Family Centre, our named person(s) is:

Claire McEwen, Project Director

- Responsible for leading the development of guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures
- Ensures policies and procedures are consistent with best practice
- Liaises with all key workers and volunteers who have relevant roles and responsibilities
- Assists with the review process.

### **DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON (DLP)**

Dochas Family Centre has appointed a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) who is responsible for ensuring that reporting procedures within the Family Centre are followed, so that child welfare and protection concerns are referred promptly to Tusla. This should be completed in partnership with the relevant case worker.

The Family Centre has also appointed a Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLDP) who will assume responsibility when the designated liaison person is not available or on leave or if they are directly involved in a concern or incident.

The name and contact details of the DLP and DDLDP must be known to all workers and volunteers within the Family Centre, as well as parents and service users.

## **Our Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is:**

Claire McEwen, Project Director

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## **Our Deputy Designated Liaison Persons (DDL) are:**

Christine O'Toole, Child & Family Support Worker

Laura Caffrey, Child & Family Support Worker

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## **ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON (DLP)/ DEPUTY DLP**

- Both the Designated Liaison Person and the deputy must be familiar with Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017, associated duties, Family Centre guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures
- The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and the deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL) must participate and complete DLP training
- Receive child protection and welfare concerns from workers and volunteers and consider if reasonable grounds for reporting to Tusla exist
- Consult informally with a Tusla Duty Social Worker if necessary
- Where appropriate, make a formal report of a child protection or welfare concern to Tusla on behalf of the FAMILY CENTRE, using the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form
- Inform the child's parents/guardians that a report is to be submitted to Tusla or An Garda Síochána, unless:
  - Informing the parents/guardians is likely to endanger the child or young person
  - Informing the parents/guardians may place you as the reporter at risk of harm from the family
  - The family's knowledge of the report could impair Tusla's ability to carry out an assessment.
- Record all concerns or allegations of child abuse brought to your attention as well as any action/inaction taken in response to these concerns
- Provide feedback to the referrer, as appropriate
- Ensure that a secure system is in place to manage confidential records

- Act as a liaison with Tusla and An Garda Síochána, as appropriate
- Make joint reports with Mandated Person/s in the Family Centre

**DLP's are appointed by their organisation to ensure that reporting procedures within Family Centre are followed.**

## **MANDATED PERSONS**

The Children First Act, 2015, outlines who are Mandated Persons in Schedule 2.

The Children First National Guidance 2017 outlines the role of the DLP.

Mandated Persons are required by law, under the Children First Act 2015, to:

- (i) report harm of children above a defined threshold to Tusla (i.e. mandatory reporting) and
- (ii) assist Tusla, if requested, in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report (i.e. mandatory assisting)

The Chairperson / Project Director for the post will inform the worker if they are a Mandated Person at induction. Workers who are Mandated Persons should be made aware of their responsibilities under the legislation.

## **MANDATED ASSISTING**

In essential circumstances, where it is determined to be in the best interests of the child, Mandated Persons can also be mandated to assist Tusla in their assessment of child protection and welfare concerns about children who have been the subject of a mandated report. A Mandated Person must comply with this request. Mandated assistance may include a request to supply further information over the phone, produce a verbal or written report or attend a meeting.

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

## **RELEVANT PERSON**

The Family Centre has appointed a Relevant Person under the Children First Act 2015. In Dochas Family Centre, our relevant person: **Claire McEwen, Project Director**

The relevant person is the first point of contact in relation to the Child Safeguarding Statement, and their name and contact details must be included in the Child Safeguarding Statement.

# **RESPONDING TO & REPORTING CHILD PROTECTION AND WELFARE CONCERNS**

This section details the Family Centre's child protection and welfare reporting procedures, including the role of Mandated Persons; information sharing and record-keeping in relation to child protection and welfare concerns; confidentiality; responding to children who disclose abuse; responding to adult disclosures of childhood abuse; and the FAMILY CENTRE's procedures for responding to allegations of abuse against staff.

## **RESPONSIBILITY TO REPORT A CONCERN**

- All child protection concerns should be brought to the attention of the Designated Liaison Person without delay. If the child is in immediate danger, call the police.
- The responsibility to report child protection or welfare concerns applies to everyone working with children or family members.
- Confidentiality should never be used as a reason not to report a child protection concern.
- The safety and wellbeing of the child takes priority over all other considerations. If you ignore what may be symptoms of abuse, it could result in ongoing harm to the child.

## **IDENTIFYING HARM AND ABUSE**

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

Cyberbullying should also be considered. Please see Children First National Guidance for more information.

Children First Act 2015 defines "'harm' as, 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".

## **REASONABLE GROUNDS FOR CONCERN**

You should always inform the DLP and/or Mandated Person in the Family Centre if you have reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected.

It is not necessary for you to prove that abuse has occurred to report a concern. All

that is required is that you have reasonable grounds for concern. It is Tusla's role to assess concerns that are reported to it. If you report a concern, you can be assured that your information will be carefully considered with any other information available and a child protection assessment will be carried out where enough risk is identified.

**Reasonable grounds for a child protection or welfare concern include:**

- Evidence, for example an injury or behaviour, that is consistent with abuse and is unlikely to have been caused in any other way.
- Any concern about possible sexual abuse.
- Consistent signs that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.
- A child saying or indicating by other means that he or she has been abused.
- Admission or indication by an adult or a child of an alleged abuse they committed.
- An account from a person who saw the child being abused.

**IF A CHILD IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER / EMERGENCY SITUATION**

- **If a child is in immediate danger, you must contact An Garda Síochána (the police)**
- In an emergency, where you believe the child is at risk of immediate harm, you should contact the DLP first, failing that, contact local Tusla Social Work Duty Service without delay before making a written report.
- Mandated reporters can access Tusla's emergency out-of-hours social work service. If you are a mandated reporter and wish to report a case of child harm to Tusla, you can contact out-of-hours social work service on 0818 776 315, 6pm and 6am every night and between 9am and 5pm on Saturdays, Sundays and bank holidays.
- Under no circumstances should a child be left in a situation that exposes him or her to harm or risk of harm if waiting for an intervention.
- If you are a Mandated Person, you must follow up with a mandated report to Tusla within three days of the emergency.

**REPORTING A CONCERN (ALL FAMILY CENTRE WORKERS & VOLUNTEERS)**

- Regardless of how a concern comes to a worker or volunteer's attention, it must be reported to the Designated Liaison Person without delay.
- If a worker/volunteer receives information regarding a suspicion of child abuse

from a third party this must be reported to the Designated Liaison Person who will then consult appropriately with Tusla Duty Social Work.

- If you are a Mandated Person who also holds the role of designated liaison person, you must fulfil your statutory obligations to report a concern as a Mandated Person.
- The Designated Liaison Person, in consultation with the worker/volunteer who has raised a concern, will decide if reasonable grounds for concern exist.
- If the DLP is unsure if a child protection concern meets the reasonable grounds for concern, they should contact Tusla Duty Social Work for informal advice and guidance.
- Any query or concern in relation to children out of hours should be reported immediately to An Garda Síochána.
- The DLP will report child protection and welfare concerns using the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form (CPWRF) available on [www.tusla.ie](http://www.tusla.ie) to the Tusla Duty Social Worker.  
The DLP reports:
  - Child protection and welfare concerns that meet reasonable grounds for concern but do not meet the threshold for mandated reporting
  - Child protection and welfare concerns that meet reasonable grounds for concern and have been passed to them by persons who are not Mandated Persons
- In the event of an emergency and the unavailability of a Tusla Duty Social Worker, the DLP will contact An Garda Síochána.
- If a concern relates to the DLP, reports should be made to the Chairperson.
- If a concern is about a worker or volunteer of the Family Centre, the procedure for addressing allegations of abuse against staff / volunteers should be followed.
- The Chairperson of the Board of Directors will be informed when a report has been made by a DLP to Tusla. Information which identifies the child or family is only shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis.
- The DLP will record factual details of the concern, the decisions and actions taken. These records will be held securely and confidentially.

## **REPORTING IF YOU ARE A MANDATED PERSON**

- If you are a Mandated Person you must report a concern without delay. You may do this with the DLP in the Family Centre or independently of the DLP<sup>1</sup>. Guidance for Mandated Persons on the thresholds at which, or above which, they have a statutory obligation to report the concern under the Children First Act 2015.

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<sup>1</sup> Project Director should be made aware of all mandatory reporting in line with Dochas policy

- As a Mandated Person, if you have concerns you have a legal obligation to make a report as below.

“...where a Mandated Person knows, believes or has reasonable grounds to suspect, on the basis of information that he or she has received, acquired or becomes aware of in the course of his or her employment or profession as such a Mandated Person, that a child—

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

he or she shall, as soon as practicable, report that knowledge, belief or suspicion, as the case may be, to Tusla.”

Also, Section 14(2) of the Children First Act 2015 places obligations on Mandated Persons to report any disclosures made by a child:

“Where a child believes that he or she—

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

and discloses this belief to a Mandated Person in the course of a Mandated Person’s employment or profession as such a person, the Mandated Person shall, as soon as practicable, report that disclosure to Tusla.”

- **Mandatory reporting cannot be discharged by a DLP on your behalf. Mandated Persons can, however, make a joint report with a DLP.**
- Where a Mandated Person has a concern that they believe does not reach the threshold for a mandated report, they should consider whether the concern meets reasonable grounds for concern, and they should report the concern to their DLP.
- If the DLP does not wish to report to Tusla, you, as a Mandated Person, should proceed with making a report and inform the DLP that a report under the Children First Act 2015 has been made. The Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 will apply in this instance.
- If a child protection concern has come to the attention of several Mandated Persons, the report may be submitted jointly by them.
- Mandated Persons should inform the DLP in the Family Centre if they have made a report.

## **MAKING A MANDATED REPORT OUT OF HOURS**

Mandated reporters can now access Tusla's emergency out-of-hours social work service. If you are a mandated reporter and wish to report a case of child harm to Tusla, 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.

### **IF A DLP DECIDES NOT TO REPORT A CONCERN**

If, as a designated liaison person, you decide not to report a concern to Tusla, the following steps should be taken:

- The reasons for not reporting should be recorded.
- Any actions taken as a result of the concern should be recorded.
- The worker or volunteer who raised the concern should be given a clear written explanation of the reasons why the concern is not being reported to Tusla.
- The worker or volunteer should be advised that if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free to make a report to Tusla or An Garda Síochána.
- The worker or volunteer who raised the concern should also be reassured that if they do choose to further pursue the matter, they are covered by the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998.

### **CAN I REPORT ANONYMOUSLY?**

Workers and Designated Liaison Persons cannot report anonymously. Similarly, Mandated Persons may not report anonymously as they are obliged to report by law.

### **RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE FROM A CHILD**

You should deal with disclosures of abuse sensitively and professionally. The following approach is suggested as best practice for responding to a disclosure. Where a child/young person discloses abuse, the reporting procedure should be followed.

N.B. Think before you promise anything – do not make promises you cannot keep.

- 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
- Avoid asking about intimate details or suggesting that something else may have happened other than what you have been told
- Check back with the child that what you have heard is correct and understood
- Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser

**At the earliest possible opportunity:**

- Record in writing, in a factual manner, what the child/young person has said, including, as far as possible, the exact words used by the child/young person
- Ensure that the child understands the procedures that will follow
- Inform the DLP immediately per reporting procedures
- Treat the information confidentially

Things to say	Things not to say
I want to listen to what you have to say	Wait until I get my manager, so you can tell them too?
I am going to do my best to help you	I can't do anything
You did the right thing by telling me, this is what I am going to do next ...	I can't believe it, I'm shocked
You are not to blame	This is your fault
Is there anything else you want to share?	Don't tell me any more

## **RETROSPECTIVE ABUSE: RESPONDING TO ADULTS WHO DISCLOSE CHILDHOOD ABUSE**

- The requirement to report retrospective concerns should be made explicit to the client, prior to commencement of work, for example in a therapy or counselling contract.
- If a worker/volunteer receives a disclosure from a client or service user that they were abused as a child (i.e. a disclosure of retrospective abuse), you must report this information to Tusla using a Retrospective Abuse Report Form (RARF) as there may be a current or potential risk to children from the person against whom there is an allegation.
- If you are unsure about whether to report or not, consult with your DLP or the Tusla Duty Social Work.
- Guidelines for completing a RARF can be found on the Tusla website: [www.tusla.ie/children-first/publications-and-forms/](http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/publications-and-forms/)

## **TALKING TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS ABOUT CHILD PROTECTION OR WELFARE CONCERNS**

- It is usually good practice to tell the most appropriate parent/guardian in 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 (see below).
- 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.

## **PROCEDURE FOR ADDRESSING ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AGAINST STAFF / VOLUNTEERS**

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

- Behaved in a way that has or may have harmed a child/young person.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence in relation to a child/young person.
- Behaved towards a child/young person or children/young people in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to a child/young person.

The Family Centre has a dual responsibility in respect of both the child/young person and the worker/volunteer. There are two separate procedures to be followed:

- 1. The Designated Liaison Person will deal with the child welfare or protection concern procedure**

Note: Where an allegation of abuse is made against the Designated Liaison Person, the Deputy Designated Liaison Person will deal with the concern.

2. A member of the **Board of Directors** (Employer), ideally a member of the Staffing Sub-group and / or the Chairperson, will deal with the allegation against the staff member / volunteer i.e. **will deal with the employment aspect.**
  - Legal and/or HR advice should be sought by the Board if in doubt.
  - The same person should not have responsibility for dealing with the child protection reporting procedure and the employment/contractual issues.
  - If an allegation is made against a worker/volunteer the FAMILY CENTRE must ensure that everyone involved is dealt with appropriately and in accordance with:
    - the Family Centre’s guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures
    - the rules of natural justice
    - relevant employment law.

**PROCEDURE FOR ADDRESSING ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AGAINST STAFF / VOLUNTEERS**

First priority is for the safety of the child/young person; the Chairperson and / or DLP must ensure no child or young person is exposed to unnecessary risk. The FAMILY CENTRE will put in place necessary protective measures. This is not a presumption of guilt.

**Child welfare or protection concern**

- If an allegation against a worker or volunteer is received, it will be dealt with promptly and strictly in accordance with agreed reporting procedures to the DLP
- The DLP will alert the Chairperson and/or member of Staff Liaison Sub-group that a concern has been raised
- The decision to make a formal report will be based on reasonable grounds for concern
- The DLP will consult with Tusla Duty Social Worker and complete the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form as required

**Employment**

- Once alerted by the DLP of an allegation, the Chairperson will privately inform the worker/volunteer who the allegation is against of (1) the fact that an allegation has been made against them and (2) the nature of the allegation
- The FAMILY CENTRE will ensure that the principles of ‘natural justice’ apply throughout the process
- All stages of the process must be recorded
- The worker/volunteer should be offered the option to have representation
- The worker/volunteer will be afforded an opportunity to respond to the allegation and should be informed that any response will be noted in any subsequent report to Tusla or An Garda Síochána
- An investigation will take place into the allegation(s) as soon as possible and in accordance with the FAMILY CENTRE’s disciplinary and grievance procedures
- The FAMILY CENTRE will ensure that no other

## **PROCEDURE FOR ADDRESSING ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AGAINST STAFF / VOLUNTEERS**

- Parents/guardians should be informed of any action planned while having regard to the confidentiality and safety of all concerned including the worker / volunteer.

children or young people are put at risk during this period. This may include any of the following:

- suspension of duties pending the outcome of an investigation
- re-assignment of duties that do not involve children and young people
- working under increased supervision during the period of the investigation
- The FAMILY CENTRE will inform the person against whom the allegation has been made of the outcome of the investigation as quickly as possible
- The FAMILY CENTRE will work in consultation with Tusla and An Garda Síochána on what action(s) should be taken.

## **PROTECTED DISCLOSURES ‘WHISTLEBLOWING’**

Workers/volunteers in the Family Centre are made aware of the appropriate authorities outside the Family Centre to whom they should report if they are inhibited, for any reason, in reporting an incident internally or where they are dissatisfied with the internal response. Please see the Family Centre’s policy on Protected Disclosures.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY, RECORD-KEEPING AND SHARING INFORMATION**

Dochas Family Centre is committed to peoples’ rights to data protection and confidentiality. However, in relation to child safeguarding the Family Centre undertakes that:

- Information in relation to child safeguarding will only be shared on a ‘need to know’ basis within the Family Centre and will always be in the best interest of the child.
- No undertakings regarding secrecy can be given. Those working with children/young people and families and in adult services should make this clear to parents/guardians and to the child/young person.
- The Family Centre will co-operate with Tusla on proportionate sharing of records where a child welfare or protection concern arises.
- Records should be factual and include details of contacts, consultations and any actions taken.
- Records will be kept securely indefinitely.

- Records on child protection concerns, allegations and disclosures are kept securely and safely within the Family Centre by the DLP per data protection policies.
- Access to these records will be managed by the Designated Liaison Person or person delegated and the Chairperson.

## **WORKING SAFELY WITH CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE**

### **SAFE RECRUITMENT OF STAFF & VOLUNTEERS**

Dochas Family Centre will ensure best practice in the recruitment of staff and volunteers.

### **APPLICATION FORM AND ADVERTISING**

An application form must be filled out for all positions in the Family Centre, whether the position is paid or on a voluntary basis. For volunteers, the Application Form is combined with a Declaration.

### **GARDA VETTING**

Dochas Family Centre will ensure that it fully complies with all the requirements of this legislation. Under the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012–2016, it is compulsory for employers to obtain vetting disclosures in relation to anyone (whether paid or unpaid) who is carrying out relevant work with children or vulnerable adults. Vetting for Dochas Family Centre will be processed by Barnardos.

All prospective candidates consent to Garda Vetting if they successfully move to the conditional stage of offer. The process of Garda Vetting a successful candidate must be completed prior to that person commencing work with the organisation.

### **SELECTION & INTERVIEW PROCESS**

Staff will be selected by a panel of at least two or more representatives through an interview process. Volunteers with the Family Centre will also be required to go through an informal interview process with the Project Director and/or a member of the Board of Directors. Any person that is deemed to constitute a risk to children or young people will not be engaged / employed.

Some of the exclusions include:

- Any child abuse related convictions.
- Refusal to sign the application and / or declaration form.
- Insufficient documentary evidence of identity.
- Concealing information on one's suitability for working with children.

## **ID & REFERENCES**

Two forms of identification, including one form of photo I.D. with a signature (e.g. passport or driving licence) must be provided by staff and volunteers. Contact details for two referees, who are not family members, must be provided. References will be sought in writing or by telephone and will be followed up by telephone or personal visit as appropriate.

## **SIGN-OFF**

All appointments must be approved by the Board of Directors (where applicable), not by any individual member of the Family Centre.

## **INDUCTION**

- New staff and volunteers in Docahs Family Centre must undertake an induction process that includes information on the policies and procedures of the Centre particularly this child safeguarding policy.
- All volunteers and staff that work with the Family Centre are required to sign and abide by child safeguarding policy and procedures.
- All staff members and volunteers will be provided with clear job descriptions that outline their roles and responsibilities.
- Staff who are Mandated Persons will be informed of this by the Relevant Person.
- If the volunteers or staff members are external to the Centre, then it will be agreed beforehand with their respective employer or Project Director what policies and procedures they will be governed by as well as the level of responsibility both organisations have in implementing the placement agreement.
- Appropriate induction will be an integral part of each agreement.
- Where the Family Centre is managing an activity / programme in the Centre in partnership with another organisation (or organisations), a contract will be drawn up and agreed with the relevant organisation(s).
- This contract will include procedures for the safe management of staff and volunteers for the particular co-managed activity / programme.

## **PROBATION**

Staff and volunteers will complete a probationary / trial period of at least three months (or as otherwise agreed but no less than). During this time, their interaction with children and young people and their willingness to abide by, and actively implement, child safeguarding policy and procedures will be assessed by the Project Director.

## **SUPERVISION & SUPPORT FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

- The Project Director of the Family Centre provides support and supervision for staff at least every eight weeks.

- All staff members have regular access to the HR Sub-group of the Board of Directors. Meetings are scheduled at the beginning of each year.
- Staff team meetings are held weekly and volunteers are invited to attend as appropriate.
- Staff appraisal meetings take place annually and / or in line with the terms of staff contracts and are overseen by the HR Sub-group of the Voluntary Board of Directors. Child protection and the promotion of child welfare will be addressed during the appraisal meeting.
- Volunteers are supported and supervised by the Project Director.
- Volunteers will be facilitated to meet at least annually, or more often as required, to review their performance and discuss any emerging issues.
- Appropriate support and supervision structures for staff / volunteers from an external organisation will form part of their placement agreement.
- The Terms of Reference for all working groups / sub-groups of the Board of Directors will include a reference to the need to abide by this child safeguarding policy.

### **CHILD SAFEGUARDING TRAINING**

- The Family Centre will assess its child safeguarding training needs on a regular basis and seek to provide training on Children First relevant to the role of the worker or volunteer in the Family Centre. Family Centre Management is responsible for ensuring that all relevant workers and volunteers are trained in the recognition of the signs of abuse, understand their responsibilities to safeguard children and know the procedures to follow.

### **Training Resources**

- Universal e-learning training programme called 'Introduction to Children First' developed by Tusla, Department for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth (DCEDI&Y) and HSE.
- Tusla's Best Practice Principles for Organisations in Developing Children First Training Programmes.
- Tusla Children First Information and Advice Officers are available to liaise with voluntary and community organisations and provide advice and guidance on Children First. They can also help with any queries about child protection and welfare training.

### **Training Records**

The Family Centre will keep a log of what safeguarding training workers and volunteers have received. This log is maintained by the Named Person / Designated Liaison Person and records the following details:

- Date and name of training programmes delivered
- Names of worker/volunteers who attended and their position within the



organisation

- Details of workers/volunteers who did not receive training but need to complete it
- Number of workers/volunteers trained
- Training programmes completed by each worker/volunteer (e.g. induction into the organisation's guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures, child safeguarding training, DLP training, etc.)
- The names of the trainers who delivered the programme and the organisation
- A signed receipt of all workers/volunteers who have been given a copy of the organisation's declaration of guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures.

### **WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP (EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS)**

- When using facilities or services provided by another organisation, Family Centre workers / volunteers will clarify and agree which organisation's reporting procedures for child protection or welfare concerns will be followed.
- The Family Centre will clarify the nature of its relationship with the other organisation immediately – particularly in relation to management of staff and volunteers and agreement of the required policies and procedures to ensure a safe environment where the welfare of the child is paramount.
- Where students, scheme participants or people on work placements are engaged by the Family Centre, the Designated Liaison Person will explore with their Employer / Line Manager child safeguarding policies and procedures that the organisation operates under and will agree who has responsibility for addressing any child protection or welfare issue that might arise.
- Codes of Behaviour will be discussed to identify any variances in work practices and to agree a shared approach as part of the placement agreement.
- Complaints procedures / how to address allegations of inappropriate behaviour will also be part of this discussion and both organisations will have agreed procedures in place regarding information sharing, should such issues arise.
- Where the Family Centre is co-managing an activity / programme in the Family Centre, a written contract will be agreed with the other organisation(s). The contract will stipulate the agreed policies and procedures that are required to ensure the safe management of the activity / programme and will identify the Designated Liaison Person to lead any child protection or welfare concern that may arise.
- Information sharing / record keeping protocols will also be agreed in relation to each procedure outlined in the contract.

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- Information sharing / record keeping protocols will also be agreed in relation to each procedure outlined in the contract.

## **EXTERNAL GROUPS / ORGANISATIONS USING A ROOM IN THE FAMILY CENTRE**

If the external group is using your facilities outside the hours your service operates (for example: your service operates 9am to 6pm and the external group is using your facilities after 6pm) you should ensure, where applicable:

- That the external organisation understands that they are fully responsible for managing their own activities
- They have appropriate insurance cover and have provided copy of same.
- That the external group is aware of Children First and has appropriate policies in place (if applicable)

- That the external group has informed parents/guardians of their agreement with your service and that there is a clear distinction between the two services (if applicable)

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

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

**If a group is delivering a service to children and families in partnership with our organisation, then it is essential that governance issues are clarified and agreed prior to the service commencing.**

### **CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE**

Dochas Family Centre is committed to providing equal opportunities for all children and young people regardless of their gender, age, culture, disability, religious beliefs, family status, sexual orientation or membership of the Traveller community.

Dochas Family Centre promotes a child centred-approach to creating a safe environment for children and young people. Staff and volunteers are provided with clear good practice guidelines on what is acceptable behaviour when working with children and young people.

Worker and volunteers in this Family Centre have a responsibility to promote children's rights.

### **WORKERS AND VOLUNTEERS WILL:**

- Create a safe, inclusive, accessible environment
- Treat children and young people with dignity, sensitivity and respect
- Listen to and value children's opinions and beliefs
- Make sure that children know the Family Centre's rules about behaviour
- Include children in appropriate decision making
- Help children to be safe, happy and have as much fun as possible
- Enable children to regard their bodies as their own property
- Give written information about the Family Centre to children and their parents / carers
- Know about the principles and practices of child safeguarding, data protection, including their legal duties
- Respect children's privacy in bathrooms and in changing rooms
- Sensitively ensure that children know about the child safeguarding policy
- Always responding to complaints or allegations
- Help children realise the difference between confidentiality and secrecy
- Use encouragement to positively develop confidence and self-esteem
- Be sensitive to the fact that some children are more vulnerable and have special needs
- Facilitate the young people to draw up an Anti-bullying Code of behaviour that will be followed while they are in the Centre or involved in any activities with the FAMILY CENTRE. Cyberbullying should also be discussed.

### **WORKERS & VOLUNTEERS WILL NOT:**

- Bully children
- Spend excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others. Meetings with individual children or young people will take place as openly as possible
- Shout at or show aggression towards children
- Subject children to any form of verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse
- Will not engage in sexually provocative games or making suggestive comments, even in fun

- Exclude children from groups or activities because of difference
- Favour one child or children over others
- Have inappropriate physical contact with children
- Tell jokes of a racist, sexual or derogatory nature
- Refuse to act on a child welfare concern about someone in their care
- Engage in slagging or joking that belittles children.

### **SAFE MANAGEMENT OF ACTIVITIES**

- The Family Centre will minimise opportunities for accidents or harm to children and young people by ensuring that its facilities are fit-for-purpose, and in compliance with health and safety regulations before planning and running activities.
- The Family Centre will keep an appropriate record of participants when running activities including emergency contact telephone number, address, individual needs, and medical conditions (if disclosed and relevant).
- The Family Centre will keep up-to-date records of attendance, accidents (accident records should be reviewed regularly, and any unusual patterns reported to senior management), incidents, consent forms, any complaints or grievances.

Family Centre workers/volunteers will consider the following if organising activities and events:

- Appropriate transport arrangements will be made for all activities
- Activities will be age appropriate
- Registration forms, parental consent forms etc. will be provided as required
- Incident, and accident report forms, safety procedures will be used to ensure the safety and protection of children and young people
- There is insurance, and insurance companies are notified immediately if there is an incident or accident
- Clear lines of communication between organisers and parents/guardians regarding attendance, location, drop-off and pick-up, duration of activities will be agreed.

### **SAFE SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

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

Ensure that:

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

### **PHYSICAL CONTACT**

- Physical contact will be in response to the need of the child and not the need of the adult.
- Physical contact should always be with the child's permission – resistance from the child will be respected.
- Breasts, buttocks and groin should always be avoided.
- Physical contact should be open and not secretive.
- Any physical contact should be governed by the developmental stage of the child.
- Tasks of a personal nature will only be undertaken with the utmost of discretion in an emergency; for very young children or disabled children and always with the full understanding and consent of the parents.

### **ONLINE SAFETY**

Comprehensive procedures will be put in place to minimise the risk to children and young people from inappropriate use of the internet, social media, photographic and digital recording devices by staff/volunteers and young people involved in Family centre activities.

### **ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS**

Dochas Family Centre has a Health and Safety Statement in line with Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2015 that includes a risk assessment of each area of operation. Procedures to follow in the event of an accident or incident are below. Incidents must be recorded separately to an accident.

### **PROCEDURES**

- All accidents in the Family Centre must be reported to the Health & Safety

officers who has participated in First Aid training / refresher training in the previous two years.

- All accidents and incidents must be recorded using the Centre's respective Incident Report Form and Accident Report Form (in main office).
- If a child has an accident, the primary carers are always informed of the nature of the accident and any treatment given.
- The location of the First-aid boxes is known to all staff members / volunteers and they are checked and re-stocked regularly.
- Children and young people are advised of any possible health and safety risks when participating in any activities / programmes in the Centre .
- Where trips are made 'off site', requirements in relation to having staff/volunteers trained in first aid will be an integral part of planning.
- Trips away must be planned for and managed according to the Family Centre policy.
- External organisations that the Family Centre works with are obliged to provide proof that they have adequate public liability insurance cover.

### **DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES**

All workers and volunteers must be aware of, and familiar with the FAMILY CENTRE's Disciplinary and Grievance procedures.

# **SHARING OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES, CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT, CHILD SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURES INVOLVING PARENTS, CARERS, FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

## **SHARING OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- Parents/guardians, children and young people should be made aware of the Family Centre's guiding principles, child safeguarding procedures, and Child Safeguarding Statement on initial contact with the Family Centre
- Codes of Behaviour, Code of Conducts, including the Family Centre's anti-bullying policy will be communicated to all

## **WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP**

- Children and young people are made aware of their right to be protected, consulted and treated with respect.
- When communicating with parents/guardians, families, children and young people, workers and volunteers should be mindful of possible literacy issues, language barriers and communication differences.
- Workers and volunteers should encourage the active participation of children and young people in decision making in a manner which is appropriate to their age.
- Family Centre workers and volunteers will check that children/young people understand that they are free to approach any worker/volunteer if they are worried about something.
- Children will be unconditionally respected and will be heard, listened to and taken seriously in the Centre.
- Children will be appropriately consulted on the development of codes and policies including anti-bullying.
- Where possible and depending on resources, age-appropriate workshops will be facilitated to maximise their participation.
- Family Centre workers and volunteers will seek feedback from parents/guardians informally and via formal review and evaluation.

## **COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

Children's rights and entitlements will be widely communicated within the Family Centre using posters and age-appropriate information leaflets, including information on the Family Centre's child safeguarding principles and procedures.

The Family Centre notice board can be used to display:

- The name of the Designated Liaison Person, and Deputy;
- Communications Policy;
- Family Centre Equality Statement and Safeguarding Statement (if the display board



- is in a prominent place);
- How to access the Family Centre Complaints Policy;
- Details of any information evenings/workshops for parents/guardians on diversity, equality and anti-discrimination issues, etc.

The Family Centre will work closely in partnership with parents / carers and other agencies / support services that are working with the individual child.

The Family Centre will engage a variety of communication tools when working with children that have communication difficulties.

### **COMMUNICATION/ONLINE POLICY**

- Registration forms for children/young people evidence that parents/guardians have been informed of the Family Centre Child Safeguarding Statement.
- All communication, including electronic email and text, between staff, volunteers and children will be appropriate and will only be done with parental/guardian's consent.
- Communications will not contain inappropriate images or text that might be construed as pornographic, racist, derogatory or contain innuendo or material that in any way might be inappropriate or offensive.
- Young people will not be contacted by the Family Centre through social media.
- Photographs, video or other images of children or young people will not be taken without the freely given consent of the young person and the parents / guardians / carers.
- Parents / guardians should be advised prior to a social event to be mindful of seeking consent to take photos, record footage of other attendants and children at Family Centre events etc.
- Use of, and retention of photographs will be in line with the Family Centre's data protection policy and procedures including any processing of children's data.

### **GUARDIANSHIP**

Family Centre workers and volunteers will establish who has guardianship rights for a child where appropriate.

### **SHARING INFORMATION WITH PRIMARY CARERS**

Primary carers are encouraged to be involved as much as possible in the work of the Family Centre and is committed to keeping them informed of all aspects of the activity / programme that their child is involved in.

A copy of the Family Centre's child safeguarding policy and procedures is available to all primary carers.

In the event of a child welfare and protection concern arising, the practice in the Family Centre is to inform primary carers immediately unless doing so is likely to endanger the child.

If the Family Centre has concerns about the welfare of any child or young person, the Family Centre will:

- Respond to the needs of the child and ensure that the interests of the child are paramount;
- Inform the primary carers unless it is thought that this action would put the child at further risk;
- Encourage the primary carers to work in partnership with the Family Centre and ensure that they have an opportunity to consult with the Designated Liaison Person;
- Liaise with Tusla and/ or An Garda Síochána as appropriate;
- If there is a complaint against a member of staff or a volunteer, the Family Centre will immediately take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the child and inform the primary carers as appropriate.

## **COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

Dochas Family Centre promotes best practice and always welcomes feedback. We encourage people to address their comments / concerns to us as soon as possible as this will facilitate us to address the matter most effectively.

- If the complaint relates to the safety and welfare of a child, it will be dealt with in accordance with this child safeguarding procedures.
- All comments or complaints will be treated properly, fairly and impartially.
- Informal comments or complaints could initially be addressed to the person(s) in question, if appropriate.
- Alternatively, the Project Director of the Family Centre can be contacted. They will be responsible for directing the complaints / comments to the appropriate person.
- Where a complainant feels that their comment / complaint has not been addressed satisfactorily through the informal process outlined above, the comment / complaint should be put on a formal basis following the FAMILY CENTRE Complaints Procedures. Where possible formal complaints / comments should be made in writing.
- The Chairperson will acknowledge the complaint, in writing, within 10 working days. The Board will do their best to resolve the matter as soon as possible. Where the matter cannot be resolved, the Board will investigate the matter and issue a complaint investigation report within 30 working days.
- In the event that the investigation cannot be concluded within 30 working days, the Chairperson will write to the complainant, explaining the reason for the delay. The Chairperson will provide the complainant with an update, in writing, every 20 working days thereafter.

# **IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING, REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND CHILD SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURES**

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

- Implementation is an on-going process and a continuous cycle of development, response to change, review of policies, procedures and practices relevant to Children First.

Note: The 'Best Practice Theme' checklists, found in Tusla Guide for Child Safeguarding Policy, Procedure and Practice, and Tusla Self-Assessment Checklist for Tusla-funded organisations, should be used to assess the Family Centre's compliance with requirements of Children First National Guidance.

- Workers who hold key child safeguarding roles in the Family Centre (Named Person, Designated Liason Person, Relevant Person) will work with the Board to review and evaluate child safeguarding in the Family Centre. They will assess what resources are needed. They will put in place an implementation plan for child safeguarding with details tasks, timeframe and person(s) responsible.

## **MONITORING AND REVIEW**

- Part of the implementation cycles includes monitoring and reviewing performance against tasks required. This helps to evidence and promote best practice for each of the best practice themes. This review process ensures areas of procedure and practice that are working well can be acknowledged and areas requiring improvement can be identified and addressed.
- The Family Centre will monitor, on an ongoing basis, safeguarding practice and training needs via the Family Centre's supervision, support and appraisal structure.
- A Review History and signature sheet can be found at the front of this document.
- The FAMILY CENTRE will assess risks to child safeguarding on an ongoing basis and raise potential risks with the Designated Liaison Person who will suggest changes to internal procedures and practice to mitigate risks.
- The Family Centre Named Person will review guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures every two years or sooner if service issues arise or there are changes in legislation or national policy.

## **EVALUATION**

- The Family Centre will evaluate how well child safeguarding is embedded in the Family Centre using consultation tools appropriate to the audience being consulted.