

Child Protection & Welfare Policy Statement

The elbowroom Youth Club is committed to safeguarding the children in our care and to providing a safe environment in which they can play, learn and develop.

For the purpose of this policy, a 'child' means anyone who is under 18 years of age.

We are committed to child centred practice in all our work with children and full compliance with *Children First* and *Our Duty to Care*.

We recognise the right of children to be protected from harm, treated with respect, listened to and to have their views taken into consideration in all matters that affect them.

Management, staff, volunteers and students in this service recognise that the welfare of children is paramount and our service will endeavour to safeguard children by:

- Having procedures to recognise, respond to and report concerns about children's protection and welfare
- Having a confidentiality policy
- Having a code of behaviour for management, employees, students and volunteers
- Having a safe recruitment procedure
- Having procedures for managing/supervising employees, students and volunteers
- Having a procedure to respond to accidents and incidents
- Having a procedure to respond to complaints
- Having procedures to respond to allegations of abuse and neglect against staff members

As part of this policy, this service will:-

- Appoint both a Designated Liaison Person (Angela O'Brien) for dealing with child protection concerns and a Deputy (Estevao De Moraes)
- Provide induction training on the Child Protection and Welfare Policy to all staff, volunteers, students and management
- Ensure that staff attend child protection training as appropriate
- Provide supervision and support for all staff and volunteers in contact with children
- Share information about the Child Protection and Welfare Policy with families and children
- This policy will be shared with parents on enrolment with our service
- This policy will be reviewed each time an incident is reported or every two years if that is sooner. Reviews will be carried out by the Designated Liaison Person, at this time Angela O'Brien
- Work and cooperate with the relevant statutory agencies as required

It is the responsibility of all service personnel to ensure the safety, protection, and well-being of children in the care of the service. All staff, management, relief staff and volunteers are required to read, understand and sign off on the Child Protection and Welfare Policy. Any questions regarding the Policy may be directed to the Designated Liaison Person.

We will ensure that all personnel:

- Are aware of their responsibilities and their obligations under *Children First*
- Are aware of their responsibilities for reporting concerns and/or incidents regarding the safety or well-being of children to the Designated Liaison Person
- Attend child protection training as appropriate

This policy is applicable at all times when children are in the care of the service, including on day trips and on outings.

We will ensure this policy is observed by:-

- Youth Club Staff
- Afterschool Activity Coordinators
- Management
- Reception Staff
- Volunteers
- Students on placement
- Visitors to The elbowroom (as appropriate)
- Children (depending on the age)

Role of the Designated Liaison Person

Children First requires that every organisation providing services to children appoint a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) for reporting neglect or abuse. The DLP is responsible for dealing with child protection and welfare concerns in accordance with *Children First* and *Our Duty to Care*.

The Deputy DLP will be appointed by the management/manager to undertake the below duties when the DLP is on leave or is unavailable for a long period of time.

Designated Liaison Person	Deputy Designated Liaison Person
Angie O'Brien Youth Club Manager Phone: 01 677 9859 Located at Studio 2 12pm – 6pm Monday - Friday	Estevao De Moraes Youth Club Childcare Assistant Phone: 01 677 9859 Located at Studio 3 12pm – 6pm Monday - Friday

The role of the DLP is to:-

- Provide information and advice on child protection and welfare concerns and issues to the staff of the service
- Be accessible to all staff
- Ensure that they are knowledgeable about child protection and welfare and that they undertake any training considered necessary to keep updated on new developments
- Ensure that the Child Protection and Welfare Policy and procedures of the service are followed

- Be responsible for reporting concerns about the protection and welfare of children to TUSLA – Child & Family Agency or to An Garda Siochana
- Ensure that appropriate information is included in that report to the Child & Family Agency and that the report is submitted in writing (under confidential cover) using the Standard Report form (see Appendix (i))
- Liaise with the Child & Family Agency, An Garda Siochana and other agencies as appropriate
- Keep relevant people within the organisation informed of relevant issues, whilst maintaining confidentiality
- Ensure that an individual case record is maintained of the action taken by the service, the liaison with other agencies and the outcome
- Advise the organisation of child protection training needs
- Maintain a central log or record of all child protection and welfare concerns in the service

Recognising Concerns

- Staff and/or volunteers may at times be concerned about the general welfare and development of children they work with and they can discuss any concerns with their manager and/or DLP at any time.
- All staff and volunteers should be familiar with the definitions of abuse as outlined in *Children First* (see appendix (ii)) and the signs and symptoms of abuse (see appendix (iii)).
- in accordance with *Children First*:
- Everyone must be alert to the possibility that children with whom they are in contact may be suffering from abuse or neglect.
- The Child and Family Agency (TUSLA) should always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being or is at risk of being abused or neglected. Child protection concerns should be supported by evidence that indicates the possibility of abuse or neglect.
- A concern about a potential risk to children posed by a specific person, even if the children are unidentifiable, should also be communicated to the Child and Family Agency (TUSLA).
- The guiding principles in regard to reporting child abuse or neglect may be summarised as follows:
 1. the safety and well-being of the child must take priority
 2. reports should be made without delay to the Child and Family Agency.

Any reasonable concern or suspicion of abuse or neglect must elicit a response. Ignoring the signals or failing to intervene may result in ongoing or further harm to the child.

Section 176 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006 introduced the criminal charge of reckless endangerment of children. It states:

‘A person, having authority or control over a child or abuser, who intentionally or recklessly endangers a child by – (a) causing or permitting any child to be placed or left in a situation which creates a substantial risk to the child of being a victim of serious harm or

sexual abuse, or (b) failing to take reasonable steps to protect a child from such a risk while knowing that the child is in such a situation, is guilty of an offence.’

The penalty for a person found guilty of this offence is a fine (no upper limit) and/or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years.

A Concern Could Come to Your Attention in a Number of Ways

- A child tells you or indicates that she/he is being abused. This is called a disclosure (see appendix (iv) for guidance on responding to a disclosure from a child).
- An admission or indication from the alleged abuser.
- A concern about a potential risk to children posed by a specific person, even if the children are unidentifiable.
- Information from someone who saw the child being abused.
- Evidence of an injury or behaviour that is consistent with abuse and unlikely to have been caused in any other way.
- Consistent indication over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.
- An injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse, but an innocent explanation is given.
- Concern about the behaviour or practice of a colleague.

All personnel are expected to consult *Children First* and *The Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook* (copy in Youth Club) for detailed information on the signs and symptoms of abuse.

Procedures for Reporting or Responding to a Child Protection or Welfare Concern

- Under no circumstances should a child be left in a situation that exposes him or her to harm or risk pending Child and Family Agency intervention. In the event of an emergency and the unavailability of a Duty Social Worker, the DLP will contact An Garda Siochana
- If the child has made a disclosure, a written record will be made. If there are other grounds for concern that the child has been abused or neglected, a written record will be made.
- If there are reasonable grounds for concern (see appendix (v)) the DLP will complete that Standard Report Form without delay and send it to that Duty Social Work Team in the Child & Family Agency. Phone 01 856 7704

Recognising, Responding and Reporting Concerns about a Child’s Welfare or Possible Abuse

<p>Duty Social Work Team, Tusla –Child & Family Agency</p> <p>Area Manager Phone: 01 856 7704</p>

<p>An Garda Siochana</p> <p>Bridewell Garda Station Phone: 01 666 8000</p>
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- If the concern is urgent and the child is in immediate danger, the report to the Child & Family Agency will be made by telephone and followed up with the completed Standard Report Form.
- In the event of an emergency and the unavailability of a Duty Social Worker, the DLP will contact the Garda Siochana.
- The DLP may use the process of informal consultation with the Duty Social Work Team to discuss the response to a child protection and welfare concern and whether or not it warrants reasonable grounds for concern. Informal consultation is carried out without providing the name of the family or the child. If advised to do so, a formal report will be made.
- The DLP will record information about the concern, informal consultation (if carried out) and details regarding if and when the parents were informed.

At The elbowroom, where the owner is not the DLP they are informed when a referral or a report is made under the Child Protection and Welfare Policy.

Procedure when a referral is not made to the Child and Family Agency

- Not all concerns will meet the reasonable grounds for concern. In this case, the concern and any informal consultation will be documented and kept confidentially and securely.
- The DLP will inform the member of staff, volunteer or student who raised the concern that it is not being referred to in writing, indicating the reasons. The DLP will advise the individual that they may make a report themselves or contact the Duty Social Work Team and that the provision of the *Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998* will apply. (The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 provides protection from civil liability and penalisation by an employer where reports are made to designated officers in the HSE or to An Garda Siochana reasonably and in good faith.)

Confidentiality Statement

- The effective protection of a child often depends on the willingness of the staff in statutory and voluntary organisations involved with children to share and exchange relevant information. It is therefore critical that there is a clear understanding of professional and legal responsibilities with regard to confidentiality and the exchange of information.
- All information regarding a concern or assessment of child abuse or neglect should be shared on a 'need to know' basis in the interests of the child with the relevant statutory authorities.
- No undertakings regarding secrecy can be given. Those working with a child and family should make this clear to all parties involved, although they can be assured that all information will be handled taking full account of legal requirements.
- Ethical and statutory codes concerned with confidentiality and data protection provide general guidance. They are not intended to limit or prevent the exchange of information between different professional staff with a responsibility for ensuring the protection and welfare of children. The provision of information to the statutory

agencies for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality or data protection.

- It must be clearly understood that information gathered for one purpose must not be used for another without consulting the person who provided that information.

Allegations of Abuse or Neglect against Employees (including all ancillary staff, students and volunteers)