

TIRC's CHILD PROTECTION & WELFARE POLICY

Tralee International Resource Centre (TIRC) is committed to ensuring that all children attending our service are respected, protected and kept safe from harm. Management and staff, and volunteers in the service recognise that the welfare of children is paramount and will endeavour to safeguard children at all times. TIRC's policy is based on the guidelines contained in the Children's First Act 2015 and Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017). All staff including staff who do not have a specific role in child protection in the centre have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Date created:	22.10.25
Date adopted by Board:	3.11.25
Revision Date:	3.11.27
Person responsible:	Mary Carroll

TIRC recognise that implementation is an ongoing process. Our service is committed to the implementation of this Child Protection Policy and our Child Safeguarding statement and the accompanying child safeguarding policies and procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while using the centre. The Policy and Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed every 2 years, or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

This policy has been published on the centre website and is displayed in the centre. It has been provided to all staff, volunteers and any other persons involved with the centre. It is readily accessible to parents and guardians on request. A copy of this Policy and the Child safeguarding statement will be made available to Tusla if requested.

INTRODUCTION

The Tralee International Resource Centre's (TIRC), Child Protection Policy (hereinafter the 'Policy' is in line with the Children First Act 2015. TIRC's Child Protection Policy is a guidance document for TIRC staff in identifying and responding to allegations and suspicions of child abuse or neglect and also to respond to allegations relating to staff or volunteers. This Policy has been developed in line with the Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (hereinafter referred to as the 'Children First Guidance') and adheres to the Children First Act 2015 and the Charities Regulator Safeguarding for Charitable Organisations working with Children 2020.

The Policy promotes a Code of Behaviour for our staff, volunteers, students on placement and board members (hereinafter referred to as 'staff' in their work with children. This Policy provides guidance for staff on dealing with any disclosures which may arise through their interaction with children. It details the procedures for reporting any such child protection or welfare concerns. The procedures outlined in this Policy are designed to protect children who may interact with TIRC's services and to protect staff of TIRC by minimizing the potential for allegation of misconduct or the possibility of misunderstanding.

KEY PRINCIPLES/CENTRE OBLIGATIONS OF CHILD PROTECTION

The following principles underpin TIRC's Child Protection Policy:

1. The welfare and best interests of children are of paramount importance. TIRC is committed to respecting the right to dignity and bodily integrity of every child and to protecting those rights in line with the core principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as articulated in Articles 2, 3 and 6.
2. TIRC upholds and is guided by the principles of the UNCRC and, in this regard, is committed to ensuring that all children with whom staff members have contact are treated equally and that all children have a right to voice their opinion in matters affecting them (Articles 2, 12 and 13).
3. All TIRC staff members have a responsibility to protect children and therefore have a duty to report child abuse as set out in the Children First Act 2015.
4. TIRC fully accepts and endorses the Children First Guidance.
5. TIRC will not knowingly engage with any person, organisation or any project that poses a risk to children or that does not meet the child protection and safeguards outlined in the Children First Guidance.
6. TIRC ensures that staff receives the appropriate training in child protection and welfare procedures. TIRC recruitment policy adheres to best practice and ensures that anyone employed in TIRC or contracted on a consultancy basis to work on projects that involve contact with children, are, where appropriate, Garda vetted or works alongside a TIRC member of staff who has been vetted by the Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU).

The Children First Act 2015 places specific obligations on organisations which provide services to children and young people, including the requirement to:

- Keep children safe from harm while they are using the service

- Carry out a risk assessment to identify whether a child or young person could be harmed while availing of the service
- Develop a Child Safeguarding statement that outlines the policies and procedures which are in place to manage the risks that have been identified
- Appoint a relevant person to be the first point of contact in respect of the organisation's Child Safeguarding statement
- Appoint a Designated Liaison Person and Deputy Designated Liaison Person
- Maintain a mandated persons list

PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The Manager of TIRC has overall policy and implementation responsibility for the protection of children with whom TIRC directly interacts. The Manager is the Designated Liaison Person (DLP). The Manager is also the Relevant Person as defined in the Children First Act 2015: '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'.

Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

The DLP at TIRC has the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the organisation's Child Protection Policy is promoted and implemented. The role of the DLP involves the following duties:

1. To be familiar with the Children First Guidance, the Children First Act 2015, the Charities Regulator Safeguarding Guidance for Charitable Organisations working with Children and the Tusla Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice, the principles of good practice for the protection of children and young people and to have responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the Child Protection Policy
2. To receive reports of alleged/suspected or actual child abuse and act on these in accordance with the guidelines. The DLP is responsible for taking all initial reports;
3. To ensure that training is provided for all new and existing staff on the Child Protection Policy;
4. To ensure that supports are put in place for the young person and staff in cases of allegations being made;
5. To keep up to date and undertake relevant training on child protection policy and practice,
6. To review TIRC's policy and procedures on child protection on a regular basis and amend as appropriate;
7. To ensure that systems are in place for recording and retaining all relevant documentation in relation to child protection issues appropriately, safely and confidentially.

Mandated Persons

Key professionals defined under the Children First Act 2015 Act as 'Mandated Persons', are required to report concerns to Tusla. Mandated Persons must also assist Tusla, on request, in its assessment of child protection concerns. While mandated persons have statutory obligations to report mandated concerns, they may make a report jointly with another person, whether the other person is a mandated person or not. In effect, this means that a mandated person can make a joint report with a DLP.

A mandated person is required to report to Tusla without delay, any knowledge, belief or reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed. If a mandated person has any concern regarding the protection or welfare of a child, which does not meet the threshold for making a mandated report, the TIRC Child Protection and Welfare Reporting Procedure must be followed, and the concern reported to Tusla where there is Reasonable Grounds for Concern.

Name of DLP in TIRC: Mary Carroll, Manager

Contact: 0667127918 info@tirc.ie

Name of Deputy DLP in TIRC: Seán Lyons

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TIRC's WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

TIRC's staff members may engage with dependent children who are living in congregated settings including direct provision centres, reception centres or other International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS)-provided accommodation. While principally it is the responsibility of the parents or guardians to ensure the care and protection of their children in these settings, staff members and volunteers with TIRC should also be alert to any activities indicating the possibility of abuse.

TIRC engages with children in the following ways:

- TIRC's Advocacy Service provides face-to-face support, advice and representation, and on occasion a child is brought along with their parent. The parent is responsible to supervise their child during these consultations.
- TIRC staff members responsible for outreach may visit a family home for the purposes of providing information, advice or support and may meet children as part of the family unit living in that home. Children will be accompanied by a parent or guardian during any such visits.
- TIRC provide classes for children and young people on occasion, namely English, guitar and drama.
- TIRC provide a Homework club in the DP centre, and a parent toddler group.
- TIRC organise family outings and activities, such as parties, and family fun events at various times during the year.

ABUSE

Definition of abuse

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. The important factor in deciding whether the behaviour is abuse or neglect is the impact of that behaviour on the child. The definitions of neglect and abuse presented in this section are not legal definitions. They are intended to describe ways in which a child might experience abuse and how this abuse may be recognised.

Neglect

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

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

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

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

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

Emotional Abuse

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

A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when the behaviour becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer. Emotional abuse may be seen in some of the following ways:

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

There may be no physical signs of emotional abuse unless it occurs with another type of abuse. A child may show signs of emotional abuse through their actions or emotions in several ways. These include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, risk taking and aggressive behaviour. It should be noted that no one indicator is conclusive evidence of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is more likely to impact negatively on a child where it is persistent over time and where there is a lack of other protective factors.

Physical Abuse

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

Physical abuse can include the following:

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

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

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or arousal, or for that of others. It includes the child being involved in sexual acts (masturbation, fondling, oral or penetrative sex) or exposing the child to sexual activity directly or through pornography. Child sexual abuse may cover a wide spectrum of abusive activities. It rarely involves just a single incident and in some instances occurs over a number of years. Child sexual abuse most commonly happens within the family, including older siblings and extended family members. Cases of sexual abuse mainly come to light through disclosure by the child or his or her siblings/friends, from the suspicions of an adult, and/or by physical symptoms.

Examples of child sexual abuse include the following:

- Any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child
- An invitation to sexual touching or intentional touching or molesting of a child's body whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification
- Masturbation in the presence of a child or the involvement of a child in an act of masturbation
- Sexual intercourse with a child, whether oral, vaginal or anal
- Sexual exploitation of a child, which includes:
 - Inviting, inducing or coercing a child to engage in acts of child sexual abuse which are used to generate financial gain or the production of material which depicts child sexual abuse [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]
 - 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 (2017). https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Children_First_National_Guidance_2017.pdf

Retrospective Disclosures

Adults may disclose abuse which took place during their childhood. A disclosure by an adult of abuse which took place during their childhood must be noted or recorded. In these cases, it is essential that consideration is given to the current risk to any child who may be in contact with the alleged abuser. If any risk is deemed to exist to any child who may be in contact with the alleged abuser, a report of the allegation will be made to Tusla without delay.

It is essential to establish whether there is any current risk to any child who may be in contact with the alleged abuser revealed in such disclosures. If any risk is deemed to exist to a child who may be in contact with an alleged abuser, the DLP will report the allegation to Tusla without delay.

Recognising Child Abuse

Recognising abuse is not always easy, even for professionals working in this field. It can be difficult to recognise the signs and symptoms indicating that a child has suffered neglect or abuse. The Children First Guidance have compiled a non-exhaustive list of indicators of abuse. The following factors may act as reasonable grounds for concern.

- Disclosure of abuse and neglect by a child or a young person;
- Age-inappropriate or abnormal sexual play or knowledge;
- Specific injuries or patterns of injuries;

- Absconding from home or a care situation;
- Attempted suicide;
- Under-age pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases;
- Signs in one or more categories at the same time. For example, signs of developmental delay, physical injury and behavioural signs may together indicate a pattern of abuse;
- Observation by a staff member that give rise to concerns that there may be an abusive situation prevailing (for example, observing physical or emotional abuse by a parent, carer or other person with contact with the child).

It is important to stress that no one indicator should be seen as conclusive in itself of abuse; it may indeed indicate conditions other than child abuse.

Reasonable grounds for concern

A report should be made to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) where there are reasonable grounds for concern that a child has been or is at risk of being abused or neglected. It is not a requirement to prove that abuse has occurred to report a concern.

Reasonable grounds for concern include:

- evidence that is consistent with abuse and is unlikely to have been caused in another way;
- a concern about possible sexual abuse;
- signs that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect;
- a child saying or indicating 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 someone who saw the child being abused.

REPORTING

TIRC's staff members have a responsibility to ensure that all allegations and suspicions of child abuse are treated seriously and with the utmost professional integrity. They must therefore be familiar with, and adhere to, the Child Protection Policy. This section offers information on what a staff member should do if it is suspected or disclosed that a child or young person is being abused by a staff member or a person outside of the organisation, and the procedures to be followed by the DLP once the complaint has been made.

It is not the responsibility of a staff member to decide whether a child is being abused or to prove that abuse has occurred in order to report a complaint. Any legitimate concerns or suspicions should be acted upon. A staff member who has concerns about the possibility of abuse should make detailed notes of what has been observed and identify the nature of the engagement between TIRC and the child or the child's family and bring the matter to the immediate attention of the DLP. Some of the information that the staff member should note where possible are:

- The name and contact details of the person reporting, the name of the child(ren) (if provided);
- The relationship of the reporting person to the child;

- The names and addresses of the parent(s)/carer(s);
- A detailed account of the reason for the report and any other relevant information.

Guidance for staff members on dealing with a disclosure of abuse

A disclosure may be defined as any information either directly or indirectly received, which leads you to believe that a child is being abused. Any staff member reporting a disclosure to Tusla in good faith, is protected under Irish legislation by the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998.

- 1 Remain calm;
- 2 Listen to the child with sensitivity and openness;
- 3 Take all disclosures seriously;
- 4 Do not ask leading questions or make suggestions to the child;
- 5 Inform the complainant (this could be the young person themselves or somebody else) that you cannot guarantee confidentiality regarding the information disclosed. Do stress however that it was right to tell;
- 6 Offer reassurance but do not make promises;
- 7 Do not stop a child recalling significant events;
- 8 Do not overreact;
- 9 Explain that further help may have to be sought;
- 10 Record the discussion accurately and retain the record of dates, times, names, locations, context and factual details of conversation.

Guidance for TIRC staff members in reporting a concern

The following procedures apply to all TIRC staff who engage in work involving contact with children or to whom allegations or suspicions of child abuse are made. These procedures are also appropriate in the case of anonymous reports, or reports from adults who experienced childhood abuse. The same procedures also apply in relation to reporting allegations of abuse made against a TIRC employee. The following steps must be adhered to by the TIRC staff member reporting an allegation or disclosure of abuse. These steps apply to a disclosure made in person, in writing (post or email) or by telephone.

Steps to be followed by TIRC staff in reporting a concern:

Step 1: If a TIRC member of staff has identified reasonable grounds for concern, then it is important to obtain and record information about the concern. Observations should be accurately recorded, including the following, where applicable: dates; times; names, location and context.

Step 2: Respond to any immediate safety needs of the child where there is an immediate danger to the safety or wellbeing of a child. Where there is an immediate or serious risk, contact should be made by phone with a Tusla Duty Social Worker without delay. Where Tusla is not available, contact should be made with An Garda Síochána.

Step 3: Consult with the DLP or delegated staff member. Any allegation, concern, suspicion or disclosure of abuse or neglect should be forwarded to the DLP or delegated staff member within TIRC without delay.

The DLP will determine whether it is appropriate or not to make a formal report. In such a case, the DLP or delegated staff member may discuss their concerns with the Child and Family agency (Tusla) in advance of making a formal report (See Appendix B for contact details). Where a staff member and line manager have discussed a concern, there should be agreement regarding whether the concern should be reported to Tusla or not. Where there is disagreement, either party can seek further consultation with Tusla. Each local Tusla office has a social worker on duty for a certain number of hours each day. If the DLP does not feel a report should be made to Tusla, the staff member can still make a report.

Step 4: Wherever possible, parents or guardians should be informed of any child protection or welfare concern, and where a report is being made to Tusla or An Garda Síochána, and the reasons for that decision. Sharing information with a parent in relation to a concern can promote open and honest relationships and can support the parent to effect positive change. Where a parent objects to this disclosure of information, their refusal should be clearly recorded and they should be informed that the information must be shared for the protection of the child. All cases of disclosure to a third party should be clearly documented.

The exceptions to informing a parent regarding a report include where doing so may:

- Place the child at further risk of harm, or
- Place you or others at risk of harm, or
- Impair Tusla's ability to carry out a risk assessment, or
- Impair the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime by An Garda Síochána

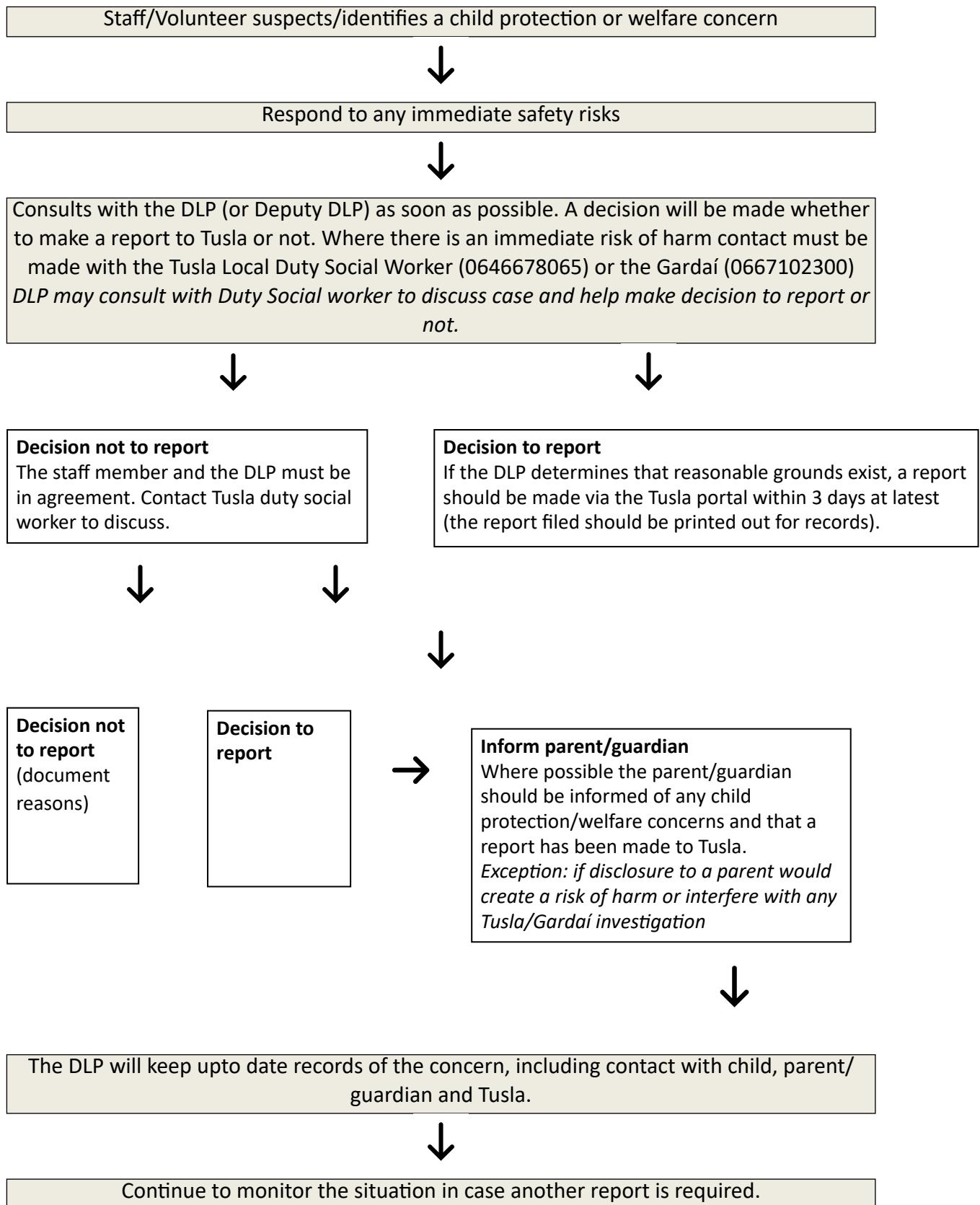
Where any concerns as to the above arise, the staff member should consult the DLP, and where necessary, the DLP may consult with Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána in making this decision. The reasons for not informing the service users/parents or guardians should be recorded.

Step 5: Report to Tusla, without delay, (Legal timeline within 3 days) where any staff member has reasonable grounds for concern, or where there is a legal requirement to report as a mandated person. If it is determined by the DLP that a complaint requires further action, then a report should be made to Tusla - the Child and Family Agency, in person, by phone or in writing using the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form (CPWRF) (Form attached in Appendix A) or via the Tusla reporting portal. Any in person or phone notification is to be followed up by completion of the CPWRF.

Step 6: Record all relevant information in relation to the child protection or welfare concern. Include any contact with the child, parents or guardians, as well as any consultations, decisions and reports. The information recorded should include the names, dates, times and locations of events and the conversation. All notes and email correspondence relating to the report should be kept in electronic form by the DLP. No other persons and staff members are permitted to access this information.

High quality, accurate record-keeping is essential to safeguard children and promote their welfare.

Reporting Flow Chart



Protection for persons reporting abuse

The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to Tusla or An Garda Siochana. This protection applies to organisations as well as individuals. All reports should be passed to the relevant statutory bodies as quickly as possible.

Recording/Storage of information

All data in relation to child protection records collected must be stored in a safe and confidential manner in a secure locked cabinet. All information must be stored in line with General Data Protection Regulations 2018. Online records kept in TIRC will be password protected.

Reporting alleged abuse by a TIRC staff member/volunteer

Where the allegation is made against a TIRC staff member, the reporting procedures outlined above will be followed.

The following steps will also be taken:

1 The DLP (on receiving the allegation) will immediately ensure that no child is or continues to be exposed to unnecessary risk.

2 The DLP will then seek advice and will liaise with a member of the Board of Trustees staff subcommittee.

3 The DLP will meet with the staff member against whom the allegation of abuse has been received, and explain the circumstances of the allegation and the overriding duty of the organisation to child protection. The DLP will also:

- a. tell the staff member that a report has been made to the Child and Family agency (Tusla) services;
- b. perform a risk assessment to identify whether or not suspension of the individual is appropriate;
- c. consider whether a report be made to the Gardaí if a criminal offence is suspected to have occurred;
- d. give the employee copies of any written records relating to the allegation;
- e. offer the employee an opportunity to respond to the allegation within a specific time frame; and
- f. forward the employee's response to the Child and Family agency (Tusla) (if appropriate).

4 The staff member will immediately be suspended from duty on full pay until the allegation is fully investigated. Legal advice will be sought in this case.

Any investigation to be undertaken as a result of an allegation made against a member of staff will be investigated in accordance with the procedures for dealing with disciplinary matters, set out in the TIRC Employee Handbook. The staff member will be advised by the DLP of confidentiality and that the staff member has a right to separate representation at any stage of the investigative process. The staff member will be kept informed at every stage of the process and will have the right of reply.

Where the allegation relates to the DLP, reports should be made to the Deputy DLP who will inform the Board. The Chair of the Board, or a person nominated by him/her will carry out the above steps. If, as a result of further action, it is determined that a serious breach of the TIRC's Child Protection Policy has occurred, which amounts to gross misconduct on the part of a staff member, a ground for fair dismissal will ordinarily be made out.

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR TIRC'S STAFF MEMBERS, VOLUNTEERS, BOARD IN RELATION TO WORKING WITH CHILDREN

TIRC ensures that staff, volunteers and interns and Board members exercise vigilance in their relationship with children, ensuring that the appropriate balance between the needs of the child and the discharge of professional responsibility is reached.

Physical contact with children is often a valid way to offer comfort and reassurance to children. In particular, children who have suffered significant trauma in their lives may seek out such contact. It is important that individuals representing TIRC can offer appropriate support in such circumstances but should take care that any physical contact is appropriate and only takes place with the consent of all the parties concerned, and takes place in the open, with other staff present.

The following procedures apply to all TIRC staff, volunteers and interns and Board members. TIRC will:

- ensure all children are treated equally as defined under the Equal Status Act 2000 to 2004.
- Respect a child's dignity and their right to privacy.
- Ensure that staff, volunteers and interns and Board members are vigilant to the signs of abuse as defined in the TIRC child protection policy and report such concerns as well as any concerns regarding a colleague's behaviour with regard to a child(ren).
- Ensure staff are trained to recognise signs of trafficking e.g. MECCPATH training.
- If necessary, discuss boundaries on behaviour with children and young people, particularly when a representative of TIRC is working one-to-one with a child.
- Endeavour to ensure that staff members are accompanied when they are engaging with children. However, this may not always be feasible. On all occasions, an appropriate balance is maintained between meeting the needs of the child, and the discharging of our professional responsibilities.
- Ensure that at TIRC sponsored events and activities involving children, the appropriate staff supervision ratio will be ensured, with 2 staff always present for activities involving a group of children (without parents). On outings and events there will always be 2 staff present and
- Ensure that at TIRC sponsored events and activities involving children, a parental/guardian consent form has been completed for all participating children.
- Ensure that at events, being organised by TIRC member organisations or other agencies, in which TIRC is participating, that those organisations have in place adequate child protection procedures to which TIRC representatives can adhere and that representatives of TIRC are made aware of their obligations to report any child protection concerns using the procedures of that organisation.
- Parents will register children for all TIRC activities ensuring consent is given for photographers to be taken, medical help to be given, as well as names and contact numbers of parent/guardian who can collect the child.

No staff member, volunteer, intern, student on placement or board member of TIRC will:

- Develop sexual, or inappropriately intimate, relationships with children. spend excessive time alone with a child.
- Socialise with children outside of structured TIRC or interagency activities.
- Favour one child or children over others.
- Engage in sexually provocative activities, jokes or make suggestive comments. shame, humiliate or single-out a child in a degrading way.
- Hit, physically chastise or verbally abuse children
- Have contact (by phone, email, through social media) with a child -contact must be made via the parent/guardian for work/activities.

STAFF RECRUITMENT/TRAINING

Role descriptions and person specifications All centre staff require a clear and accurate description of the tasks and responsibilities they are expected to undertake. Prior to any assignment or recruitment effort, a role description must be developed for each opportunity. This must include a title of the role, starting and finishing dates, hours and place of work, name of supervisor and tasks to be undertaken. If appropriate, a brief person specification may also be drawn up. Applications All centre staff are required to complete a screening process and garda vetting on acceptance of any job offer.

Interviews

All applications are short listed and suitable candidates are invited to attend an interview with manager, to ascertain their interest in and suitability for the role. Written records of all interviews are kept.

Checks for suitability

References are always taken up. If the role requires it, health (mental and physical) is also undertaken. Other checks may also be completed (for example, ascertaining professional qualifications). Staff are always warned in advance of the intention to make these checks. If they refuse permission and cannot provide an acceptable reason, they will not be placed.

Probation

All centre staff are subject to a probation period of 6 months. At the end of this period, manager meets with the staff member to fill out a probation report.

Induction

All centre staff receive induction when they begin work with. This consists of a general introduction to the organisation, as well as a specific orientation on the purposes and requirements of their role (which includes procedures to inform new staff about the Child Safeguarding statement and accompanying safeguarding policies and procedures). Staff must sign each policy to say they have read and understood it.

On-the-job training

All centre staff receive initial and ongoing on-the-job training to provide them with the information and skills necessary to perform their tasks well. The training must be appropriate for the demands of the position. This training includes HSE's eLearning module – Introduction to Children First Training.

Additional training

All centre staff are actively encouraged to identify training courses, seminars, conferences, and so on, which would help them to perform their roles better and which would aid their personal development. Approval to undertake such training free-of-charge must be given by manager and this will only be done if sufficient funds are available.

STAFF MEETINGS/BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETINGS

Every staff meeting agenda will have Child Protection on it as a standing item, to ensure it is kept central to all staff at all times.

Board of Trustees meetings will also have Child Protection as a standing item on the agenda and the Board will be updated on any child protection concerns and any reports made (anonymously).

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Child Protection and Welfare Form https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Child_Protection_and_Welfare_Report_Form_FINAL.pdf

APPENDIX B

Useful contacts

Kerry Child and Family Agency, Unit 7/8, Block 1, Reeks Gateway, Cleeney Roundabout, Killarney, Co Kerry. V93 CTX9 (064) 6636030

An Garda Siochána, Tralee
066 710 2300

Name of DLP in TIRC: Mary Carroll, Manager
Contact: 0667127918 info@tirc.ie

Name of Deputy DLP in TIRC: Seán Lyons
Contact: 0860810980 carraigeendaniel@gmail.com