

# Wexford Local Development

## Child Safeguarding Statement, Policy and Procedures

### Revision History

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1.0	08/05/2017	WLD Staff	Policy creation
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## 1.0 Introduction

Wexford Local Development (WLD) is one of 49 Local Development Companies in Ireland. We deliver a range of interlinked programmes on behalf of local and national Government to address the needs of individuals and communities across the life cycle within County Wexford. We are a community based organisation working for County Wexford. We are committed to making a positive impact across the county by promoting employment, inclusion, supporting enterprise and addressing inequality.

Our core purpose is:

***To create opportunities that promote equality and improve quality of life for people and communities.***

Our Vision is:

***Thriving, resilient communities where people feel connected, are valued and have equal opportunity to reach their full potential.***

Some of our work with communities involves projects with children and vulnerable persons. Accordingly WLD has developed a Child Protection and Welfare Policy in order to promote best practice and safeguard the welfare of children and the welfare of staff and volunteers working with young people. The current WLD Child Protection and Welfare Policy has developed from our experience of working with communities, from previous child protection policy statements and with reference to the following documents and departments:

- Children First National Guidance for Protection & Welfare of Children 2017  
[https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Children\\_First\\_National\\_Guidance\\_2017.pdf](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Children_First_National_Guidance_2017.pdf)
- Children First Act 2015
- Dept of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

This child protection and welfare policy is for the use of all WLD staff, Board of Management and volunteers and it is particularly relevant to anyone working directly or indirectly with children and young people.

## 2.0 Child Safeguarding Statement

Wexford Local Development is fully committed to maintaining the highest possible standards of child protection in all aspects of the company's work. The safety and welfare of children and young people that access WLD activities and services is of paramount importance. Children must be kept safe from harm when they are involved in WLD activities or in the care of WLD staff or volunteers. WLD staff and volunteers will at all times show respect and understanding of children's rights, safety and welfare.

In order to implement this policy and maintain the safety of children and young people Wexford Local Development will:

- Provide and share clear information with young people, parents, carers, volunteers and workers about relevant WLD activities and services
- Ensure careful selection of workers and volunteers and provide appropriate training and supervision

- Enable parents, carers, young people, volunteers and workers to voice concerns or complaints in the knowledge that they will be listened to with respect
- Ensure that there are clearly defined roles for persons involved in activities organised by Wexford Local Development
- Ensure that there is a Designated Child Protection Liaison Person with responsibility for implementing child protection policy and procedures
- Ensure the inclusion and involvement of young people in planning activities
- Complete an annual review by an internal committee to evaluate activities and policies.

### **3.0 Principles behind the Child Safeguarding Statement**

Wexford Local Development has an important role in developing opportunities for children and young people in County Wexford. These opportunities must be developed in a way that demonstrates an understanding of children and young people. The key principles behind the Child Protection and Welfare Policy are:

- Rights – Wexford Local Development recognises the rights of children and young people to be protected and kept safe. Children will be listened to, included and respected
- Welfare – The welfare of children is of paramount importance
- Awareness – Wexford Local Development recognises the need for awareness around child protection issues and the prevention of abuse
- Safety – Wexford Local Development recognises the need for safety procedures to minimise the risk of accidental harm or injury
- Procedures – Wexford Local Development will maintain clear procedures with regard to responding to concerns, complaints, accidents or incidents
- Recruitment and Training – Wexford Local Development recognises the need for equal opportunities and fair and consistent recruitment procedures. WLD will provide Child Protection Training for volunteers and staff
- Communication – Wexford Local Development will encourage dialogue and facilitate active participation with young people, parents and carers.
- Uniqueness – Wexford Local Development recognises that every child is unique with their own experiences, needs, level of understanding and strengths
- Co-operation – Wexford Local Development will co-operate with other agencies and organisations to ensure the best outcomes for children
- Confidentiality – Wexford Local Development recognises the relevance and need for confidentiality regarding the welfare of children.

### **4.0 Guidelines Promoting Safe Practice When Working With Children and Young People**

Safe practice is essential in the work of WLD and in order to ensure the safety of children and young people engaged in WLD activities the following guidelines and procedures must be followed:

- Registration – all participants in WLD activities should complete registration and consent forms which must be signed by a parent or guardian (if under eighteen).

- Attendance – records will be kept of young people attending WLD projects and activities
- Accidents and Incidents will be acted upon, recorded and reviewed
- Supervision – Children and young people should always be supervised by a minimum of two adults. There should be an even gender balance amongst adult supervisors where possible. The ratio of adults to young people will vary depending on the particular event, the age of participants and the level of need.
- Health and Safety – venues and equipment used by WLD should be as safe and hygienic as possible with access to first aid, fire protection and phone
- Policy and Procedures – systems and procedures are in place with regard to Staff and Volunteer Recruitment, Code of Conduct, Anti-Bullying, Accidents and Incidents and Complaints and Comments (see relevant sections in this policy)
- Reporting – If a person has concerns about suspected abuse of a child it is important that they are aware of what action they should take. Serious child protection and welfare concerns should always be passed on to the Designated Child Protection Liaison Person. If this person is unavailable or if there is an emergency concerns could be passed directly to Tusla.
- Insurance – Adequate insurance cover will be in place for any activities delivered by or in association with WLD

#### **4.1 Guidelines for Activities Involving Overnight Stays Away From Home**

In all cases of residential stays involving young people Wexford Local Development will observe the following additional guidelines:

- Parents and guardians will be provided with complete and clear information about the event and given a copy of the timetable
- Adequate and safe travel arrangements will be made
- There will be an additional registration and consent form for the activity
- All relevant information including contact details, allergies, medical, dietary or other needs will be kept by one of the staff or voluntary leaders on the trip
- WLD will ensure that the physical surroundings are safe, comfortable, accessible and suitable for the work being delivered
- Accommodation will be in single sex rooms. Staff and volunteers will not share sleeping accommodation with children and young people.
- All staff and leaders working on residential events with young people will have received Garda vetting
- There will be a designated 'key contact person' for the event and parents / guardians will be given the person's contact details in the event that they have any queries or concerns
- Parents and guardians will also be familiar with the contact details for the Child Protection Liaison Person. Any concerns regarding the safety and welfare of the children and young people should be brought to the attention of the Child Protection Liaison Person.
- A list of ground rules will be compiled for each event with the active participation of the children / young people. Participants will be expected to comply with the ground rules.
- The personal privacy of participants will be respected at all times with particular regard to sleeping areas, changing rooms, showers and toilets

- Any staff or volunteers working on the event will have received full information on the work and policies of WLD, the particular skills required for the residential event and child protection training with reference to WLD policy.

## **4.2 Guidelines when Working With Young People under the Influence of Substances and/or Alcohol**

Wexford Local Development staff and volunteers will at all times have regard to issues of safety in relation to working with those under the influence of substances and/or alcohol. The safety and welfare of the young person will always be paramount and the following guidelines will apply:

- Staff and volunteers will judge each situation on its merits and staff will be trained on how to manage this. There is an obligation to act in the event that children or young people present under the influence of substances and / or alcohol.
- In such circumstances any information or disclosures received from young people that are relevant to child protection should be recorded in the relevant CRM and their being under the influence (of substances or alcohol) at the time should also be noted. A parent, guardian or other relative may be contacted to ensure that the young person returns to their family as safely as possible
- Medical assistance for the young person may be sought as appropriate and further action or assistance may be offered on a case by case basis as required
- WLD will ensure that proper precautions are taken to ensure the safety of the young person and others whilst they are effectively in the care of the company
- Incidences of young people presenting under the influence of substances and / or alcohol and any follow up should always be recorded.

## **4.3 Guidelines for Digital Safety**

Keeping children and young people safe whilst they have access to internet is essential. Our policy focuses on how to keep them safe and what is acceptable use when they are online. We believe that children and young people should never experience abuse of any kind and should be able to use the internet safely for their education and personal development. The following guidelines help to support this:

- WLD staff should avoid direct contact with young people via email / phone etc without parental consent.
- Guidance will be provided to children, young people, parents and guardians about what consent is in relation to posting photos and videos of other people online.
- We will work in partnership with children and young people and their parents and guardians to encourage them to be responsible in their approach to online safety
- Acknowledge how important the online world is to children and young people and discuss the benefits and drawbacks with them
- Online safety is an ongoing part of our work with children and young people, not just a one-off session
- Children & young people participating in WLD activities will be involved in creating agreed rules for the use of online platforms.

- Technical solutions may be used to manage access to online platforms. This will be explained to participants to ensure that they understand the purpose of such safeguards.
- Children and young people will be encouraged to understand and manage their privacy settings online using the guidance below:

**Online and Social Media tips for keeping safe:**

- Only accept 'friend requests' from people you know,
- Block or 'unfriend' people who are not being friendly and respectful,
- Be careful about the posting comments and uploading photos,
- Always report abuse to a trusted person
- Be cautious about identity, because not everyone online is who they say they are,
- Keep privacy settings up to date on social networking sites,
- Keep passwords and log-in details private and secret from friends,
- Remember to log out after using public computers, such as at a library or cafe.
- If someone online asks you for videos or photos, do not share and stop the communication immediately and report it to a trusted person. Do not delete any of the message as they can be used as evidence.
- If someone has threatened you online and demanded payment, do not pay anything. Stop the communication and tell a trusted person. Do not delete any of the message as they can be used as evidence.

## 5.0 Code of Conduct

Staff and volunteers working with children and young people have a responsibility to behave in a way that helps foster child development in a caring, consistent and appropriate manner. The following code relates to the standards and practice expected:

- Children's personal space, privacy and dignity will be respected
- Children will be listened to and their feelings and opinions acknowledged
- Children will participate in decision making and sharing ideas
- Children will be encouraged to contribute and acknowledged for doing so
- Children will be recognized, accepted and valued positively for who they are
- The diversity of children and their families in terms of gender identity, sexuality, ethnicity, beliefs, disability and culture will be valued and accepted.
- Children will be encouraged to report to staff any incidences of bullying or other concerns that they may have
- Volunteers and staff will be alert to the individual needs of children and take account of any specific special needs
- Volunteers and staff will avoid as far as possible taking individual children on car journeys. Where children are transported by car ideally there should be at least two children present and /or another volunteer / worker present
- Volunteers and staff will use appropriate language in front of children and will not engage in verbal abuse
- Volunteers and staff will recognise, value and encourage positive behaviour

- Volunteers and staff will not engage in or allow behaviour that involves unacceptable or unnecessary risk
- Volunteers and staff will enable and assist children to devise and implement agreed codes of conduct and behaviour on a regular basis
- Volunteers and staff will be aware of the need for adequate supervision and will avoid being alone with children unnecessarily. When working on a one to one basis with a child or young person volunteers and staff will ensure that another responsible adult is informed.
- Volunteers and staff will never engage in any inappropriate physical contact with children. Physical contact may be used to comfort a distressed child but must be acceptable to all involved
- Parents or carers should be fully informed about any physical contact involving comforting or assisting a child with personal care
- Volunteers and staff will communicate regularly and positively with each other, share responsibilities and develop a good understanding of children and child development
- Children, young people, parents and guardians will be encouraged to voice any complaints, issues or concerns through clear communication procedures
- All staff and volunteers will be offered training and supervision to ensure that the code of conduct is adhered to

## **6.0 Volunteer and Staff Recruitment and Training**

Volunteers and staff working with children and young people need to be subject to a specific selection procedure that acknowledges the special requirements and responsibilities of the work. Candidates will be provided with information about WLD together with a clear job description. It is essential to ensure that anyone recruited to work with children and young people has the understanding and competency to prioritise children's safety and welfare. Registered sex offenders or persons with certain criminal convictions will not be eligible for this type of recruitment. Candidates will be required to provide proof of identity including name and address together with a signature or photograph. When recruiting volunteers or staff for posts involving work with young people WLD will follow normal recruitment practice and will:

- Have a copy of the applicant's C.V. and a copy of the relevant application form
- Have a minimum of two people on the interview panel
- Ask the interviewee about their experience of working with children
- Ask about their specific attributes and the skills that they can bring to the work
- Give a clear description of their prospective roles and responsibilities
- Ask about their training and understanding of child protection

Successful applicants will be required to provide details of two referees (not family members) who will be contacted for a character reference. All written references will be verbally checked. All new recruits will be expected to participate in appropriate training and will be subject to Garda vetting, in line with the [National Vetting Bureau \(Children and Vulnerable Persons Act 2012 to 2016\)](#). The Bill provides the necessary statutory basis for the use of Garda Criminal records database to conduct vetting of persons applying for employment working with children or vulnerable adults.



All new employees are subject to a probation period of 6 months to allow WLD to establish the suitability of new entrants. The probationary period may be extended at the discretion of WLD. Any employee considered unsuitable may at the discretion of management be dismissed during the probationary period, following the Disciplinary Procedure outlined in the staff handbook, and in accordance with the Minimum Notice & Terms of Employment Act.

Volunteers and staff will participate in child protection training, code of conduct training and will read the WLD Child Protection Policy. Volunteers and staff will be asked to sign a document certifying that they have read the policy and agree to abide by its principles. Volunteers and staff will be asked to sign a declaration stating if there is any reason why they would be considered unsuitable to work with children or young people. New staff will be provided support and supervision through training, regular team meetings and through monthly one to one informal support from the relevant line manager.

## **7.0 Anti-Bullying Policy**

Wexford Local Development acknowledges that all children and young people should feel safe when participating in activities and therefore bullying behaviour by children, young people or adults will not be tolerated and will be challenged. The Department of education defines bullying as:

*“Bullying is defined as unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) which repeated over time. This definition includes cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying (such as homophobic bullying and racist bullying)”*

Bullying is a deliberate form of intimidation and can include hitting, teasing and name calling, threats, inciting others, making gestures or sending messages or images. The potential harm that may be caused by bullying should not be underestimated. All volunteers and staff have a responsibility to challenge and deal with any occurrences of bullying. Staff should try and adopt a restorative/ no blame approach outlined in fact sheet two of ‘Our Duty to Care’. Bullying will also be confronted by:

- Making it very clear that bullying is completely unacceptable
- Ensuring that activities are socially inclusive and based on the principles of WLD.
- Drawing up a code of conduct and behaviour with the input of the young people
- Encouraging young people to be confident, assertive, co-operative, understanding and willing to negotiate.
- Listening to all persons involved with or witness to alleged incidents of bullying to hear their story and how they feel about the incident
- Encouraging young people to resolve conflict positively and without resort to violence
- Enabling groups to take a collective approach and responsibility for preventing bullying
- Reviewing any incidents of bullying and assessing outcomes and progress

## **8.0 Accidents and Incidents**

By adhering to the child protection policy volunteers and staff can minimise the risk of accidents. Whenever working with children or young people there should be at least one person present with a current first aid certificate. The safety of children is paramount and in the event of an

accident the welfare of the child or children involved must be addressed first. Management, volunteers and staff should ensure that:

- First aid boxes are easily located and regularly checked and re-stocked
- Young people, volunteers and staff avoid unnecessary risks
- Records are kept up to date
- Parents and carers are kept informed of any accidents or incidents involving their children
- Any accidents or incidents are recorded in writing including details of what happened, who was involved, the date, time and location of the incident and what action was taken

## **9.0 Complaints and Comments Procedures**

Wexford Local Development endeavours to respond constructively to complaints or comments from participants, volunteers, staff, parents, carers or members of the public. Proper consideration should always be given to the complainant and their concern. Any concerns relating to child protection should always be passed on to the named, designated person. Our feedback and policy is available here: [Customer Complaints Feedback Policy](#). The WLD Staff Handbook contains a grievance and disciplinary procedure relating to issues regarding employed staff. Other complaints of a more general nature may be dealt with in the following ways:

- Verbal Complaints- should be heard with due regard to confidentiality. If possible the issue should be resolved at this stage
- Where the complainant is not satisfied they should be asked if they want the complaint recorded and referred to the relevant manager
- Recorded or written complaints should be acknowledged within 1 week. Where possible a response to the issue raised should be given within 1 month.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the response they may appeal in writing to the WLD board. Appeals will be acknowledged and a response given within one month.

## **10.0 Confidentiality Statement**

Wexford Local Development is fully committed to people's rights with regards to confidentiality. In order to safeguard and protect children in a manner that pays due regard to confidentiality WLD will:

- Only forward information about a child when it is in the interest of the protection and welfare of the child to others on a need to know basis.
- Share child protection information or concerns with parents or carers except in cases where it could place a child at risk of harm
- Explain to the young person how confidentiality applies in the context of child protection i.e. that information about their welfare, whilst confidential, may be passed on to Tusla
- Advise staff of the need to respect confidentiality
- Never discuss sensitive information relating to a child or children with a person or person's who have no professional or other need for such information
- Recognise that total confidentiality cannot always be guaranteed if it involves placing a child at risk
- Record and store information safely, securely and confidentially.

## **11.0 Data Protection - GDPR**

Wexford Local Development is taking a proactive approach to GDPR. Our policies have been reviewed and will be updated on an ongoing basis around Data Protection. Our current policy can be found here: [WLD Data Protection Policy](#)

## **12.0 Involvement of Parents and Primary Carers**

Wexford Local Development is committed to being open with parents and primary carers and welcomes their involvement, participation and contribution to projects for children and young people. In keeping with this WLD will:

- Inform and advise parents and primary carers of our child protection policy
- Make copies of the policy available to parents and primary carers
- Keep parents and primary carers informed of activities aimed at young people
- Issue registration and consent forms for activities as appropriate
- Aim to provide age appropriate activities that are relevant to children and young people
- Be open to the input and involvement of parents and primary carers
- Adhere to guidelines on volunteer recruitment and comply with good health and safety practices
- Respond to the needs of children and young people
- Inform parents and primary carers of any welfare concerns
- Inform parents and primary carers in the event of information being passed to Duty Social Workers and or Garda Síochána unless doing so would present the child or children at increased risk of harm
- Inform parents and primary carers of the role of the Designated Child Protection Liaison Person and make that person available for consultation where relevant and appropriate to the child or children's welfare

## **13.0 Guidelines and Procedures for Reporting Child Protection Concerns**

The National Guidance for the protection and welfare of children provides extensive information and can be found at the following link: [Child Protection and Welfare](#)

It is a possibility that children with whom WLD is working may be experiencing abuse or have or have experienced abuse in the past. It may be difficult to be sure how to react if confronted with disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse. If a person suspects a child is being abused they have a duty to act in the interest of the safety and well-being of the child.

To do nothing means that if abuse is occurring the child may continue to be harmed. Concerns must therefore be reported to the designated person whenever there is a reasonable suspicion of child abuse.

### ***Reasonable Grounds for Concern***

Statutory authorities should always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been abused or is being abused or is at risk of abuse. A suspicion that is not supported by any objective indicator of abuse or neglect would not constitute reasonable grounds for concern.

The following examples would constitute reasonable ground for concern:

- A specific indication or disclosure from the child that she or he was abused
- An account by a person who witnessed or saw the child being abused
- Evidence such as injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to have been caused in some other way
- An injury or behaviour for which an innocent explanation is given but could be consistent with abuse and where there are corroborative indicators suggesting abuse, e.g. a pattern of injuries, a pattern of implausible explanations, other indicators or behaviors
- Consistent indicators over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect

If at any time a child says something or behaves in a way that indicates suspected abuse then the volunteer or worker present should:

- Stay calm – listen to the child without interrupting or passing judgement
- Allow the child to say what they want to say and listen carefully
- Check back with the child that you have heard and understood correctly
- Be aware of who else is present
- Do not ask leading questions
- Do not express any opinion about an alleged abuser
- Do not promise to keep the matter secret or attempt to deal with the issue alone
- Reassure the young person that they have taken the right action by talking and advise them that you will try and help by contacting the designated person
- Confidentially record what happened as soon as possible
- Pass on the information to the Designated Child Protection Liaison Person (see [‘Reporting Procedure’ page](#) )

It is important to recognise that disclosures that raise reasonable concerns about child welfare and safety may also be made by adults. For example an adult may refer to events that took place during their childhood i.e. retrospective disclosure. There is also the possibility that an adult may have been abused as a child by a person or persons that still hold positions of authority or influence involving contact with children. Disclosures by an adult about abuse that may have taken place during their childhood should be acted upon particularly where there is a continued risk of harm to children or young people. Volunteers and workers will be provided with ongoing support and supervision. Any ongoing concerns about child welfare and protection should be recorded in a safe and confidential manner.

The Designated Child Safeguarding Liaison Person will ensure that concerns can be checked with parents or primary carers and, if necessary, referred to the social work department of Tusla Child and Family Agency using the Standard Report Form or other agencies as appropriate. Garda

Síochána should be contacted in cases where Tusla is unavailable and it is suspected that the child is in immediate danger.

## **14.0 Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Child Safeguarding Liaison Person**

The Designated Child Safeguarding Liaison Person has responsibility for ensuring that the Child Protection and Welfare Policy is promoted and implemented. Any concerns with regard to child protection and the safety of children should be passed on to the Designated Liaison Person. This person has a broad knowledge of child protection issues and has participated in child protection training. A Deputy Designated Child Safeguarding Liaison Person will assume these responsibilities in the event that the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is unavailable. The DLP and Deputy DLP will be appointed on an annual basis. The role of the Designated Liaison Person involves the following duties:

- To be familiar with the national guidelines and publications ‘Children First’ and ‘Our Duty to Care’ and to be responsible for the implementation and monitoring of Wexford Local Development’s Child Protection and Welfare Policy
- To receive reports of alleged or suspected child abuse and to act on these reports in accordance with the guidelines.
- To contact Tusla Child and Family Agency, Ely House, Wexford 053 9198201 where there are relevant child protection concerns
- To ensure without delay that referrals are made confidentially, appropriately and in writing
- To ensure that training and information is provided for new and existing WLD staff on the Child Protection and Welfare Policy
- To maintain a professional working relationship with Tusla, An Garda Síochána and other agencies as appropriate
- To ensure that relevant support is in place for children, young people, staff or volunteers in the event of allegations being made
- To ensure that the Child Protection and Welfare Policy is reviewed on an annual basis and amended as appropriate.
- To ensure that systems are maintained for the confidential recording and retention of all relevant documentation pertaining to child protection to ensure that a WLD Child Protection Steering Group convenes annually to monitor and evaluate referrals, staff and volunteer training and any matters arising with regards to implementation and best practice issues.

## **15.0 Contact Details for Designated Child Safeguarding Liaison Person**

The contact details for the Designated and Deputy Designated Child Protection Liaison People for Wexford Local Development are listed below:

<b>Role</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>Contact No</b>
Designated Child Safeguarding Liaison Person	Brian Kehoe	bkehoe@wld.ie	053 9158800

Deputy Designated Child Safeguarding Liaison Person	Clare Ryan	cryan@wld.ie	053 9158864
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In the event that neither the Designated Child Safeguarding Liaison Person or Deputy Designated Child Safeguarding Liaison Person is available child protection concerns may be passed directly to the Social Work Department of the South East Area. The contact details for the department are listed below:

Department	Address	Contact Details
Tusla Child and Family Agency	Ely House, Wexford	053 9198134*

\*In an emergency where Tusla is unavailable contact An Garda Síochána on 053 91 65200

For advice to organisations regarding child protection policy Tusla Children First Information and Advice Officer is:

Department Contact	Address	Contact Details
Charney Weitzman	Old SAP Building, St Loman's Campus, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath	Email: charney.weitzman@tusla.ie

## 16.0 Reporting Procedure with Regard to Suspected Child Abuse

Wexford Local Development has a standard reporting procedure for dealing with disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse. The following principles apply:

- The safety and well-being of the child must take priority
- Reports should be made without delay to Tusla
- Whilst the basis for concern must be established as comprehensively as possible children or parents/guardians should not be interviewed in detail about the suspected abuse

The procedure for dealing with disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse is outlined in the following steps:

### Step 1

The employee or volunteer who has received a disclosure (of child abuse) or has other concerns that abuse may be occurring should bring it to the attention of the Designated Child Protection Liaison Person as soon as possible.

### Step 2

The Designated Child Protection Liaison Person will assess and review the information provided. The Designated Child Protection Liaison Person may contact Tusla for advice relating to the disclosure, concern or allegation

### Step 3

The Designated Child Protection Liaison Person will then take one of two options:

1. Report the allegation, concern or disclosure to Tusla

2. Not make a formal report but keep a record of the matter on file together with clear information as to the reasons for not making a formal report.

The staff member or volunteer who submitted the initial report will be informed of the action taken. If a formal report is not made to Tusla, the staff member will do so directly to Tusla if they feel it is necessary.

#### **Step 4**

Once in receipt of a formal report Tusla will follow its own set of procedures. Tusla may decide to contact the person that submitted the original report for clarification (see appendices – HSE Investigation Process)

#### **Step 5:**

The Designated Liaison Person needs to ensure that Parents / Guardians are informed of the allegation, concern or disclosure unless doing so is likely to further endanger the child

#### **The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998**

This act provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse ‘reasonably and in good faith’ to the Designated Child Protection Liaison Person, Tusla or An Garda Síochána.

### **16.1 Allegations made against Staff or Volunteers**

Any allegations made against staff in relation to the suspected abuse of a child or children will follow the same reporting procedure and processes. In the event that an allegation of abuse is made against an employee or volunteer of Wexford Local Development two procedures will be put in place:

1. The reporting procedure in respect of the child
2. The procedure for dealing with the employee or volunteer

Procedures followed in respect of the child or children will be separate from procedures followed in respect of the volunteer or worker. Both procedures will not be dealt with by the same person. The Designated Child Protection Liaison Person will carry out the normal procedures in respect of the child. The relevant line manager will deal with procedures in relation to the staff member or volunteer. Wexford Local Development will have a duty of care to both the staff member or volunteer and the child. If an allegation or concern with regard to child protection is made against a staff member or volunteer the following steps will be taken:

- The appropriate line manager will deal with all aspects of the case relating to the staff member or volunteer. If the allegation is made about a line manager the CEO will deal with the case.
- If an allegation is made against the CEO the Board of WLD will deal the case.
- The allegation or concern will be assessed by the Child Protection Designated Liaison Person to establish whether or not a formal report needs to be made to Tusla.
- Both the relevant line manager and the Designated Liaison Person need to work in co-operation with each other and Tusla regarding protective measures and the sharing of information



- Appropriate measures which can be taken if required to ensure the safety of the child and other young people during the period of investigation.
- The staff member or volunteer will be informed by the appropriate line manager of any allegation or concern made and the procedures that will be followed.
- If a formal report is being made the staff member or volunteer will be notified of the nature of the report and afforded the right to respond. This response should be documented and retained.
- Wexford Local Development will apply the principle of natural justice and an individual will be considered innocent unless investigations indicate otherwise
- Wexford Local Development will co-operate fully with Tusla and any other agencies that may become involved
- The outcome of any investigations may require further action in consultation with Tusla and any other relevant agencies
- In the event that the allegation is unfounded Wexford Local Development will continue to support the staff member or volunteer and maintain their dignity in the workplace
- All stages of the process will be recorded and the documentation securely retained.

## **16.2 Record Keeping**

The Designated Child Protection Liaison Person is responsible for keeping recorded information in a secure, locked filing cabinet. Records are confidential and access is only permissible to WLD staff members that have a professional requirement to view the information. Confidential records relating to child protection include the following:

- Any complaint or concern about the safety and welfare of children and young people participating in WLD initiatives
- Any disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse
- The follow up to any complaints, disclosure, concerns or allegations including informal advice from Tusla, reports to Tusla and informing parents / guardians.
- Any bullying complaints pertaining to WLD initiatives for children and young people and any follow up action to the complaints.
- Signed acceptance forms of the Wexford Local Development Child Policy by staff members and volunteers
- Relevant Garda vetting forms

## **16.3 List of services provided**

Wexford Local Development provide a number of services which directly involved children and have been categorised below:

- One to one counselling
- Group counselling
- After school homework club
- One to one training for education progression and personal development
- Group personal development training for young people
- Social, cultural and recreational activities



## 16.4 Risk Assessment

We have carried out an assessment of any potential for harm to a child while availing of our services. Below is a list of the areas of risk identified and the list of procedures for managing these risks.

Risk identified
1 - Risk of harm to a child by a staff member.
2 - Risk of harm to a child from a service user, visitor or volunteer.
3 - Risk of harm to a child due to a child protection or welfare concern not being recognised or reported by a child.
4 - Risk of harm to a child due to a child protection or welfare concern not be recognised or reported by a staff member.

The categories of risk identified above is not an extensive list and any additional risks identified would be assessed in line with this guidance.

Procedures in place to manage identified risks
All staff are provided with a copy of the company's Child Safeguarding Statement, Policy and Procedures.
The company has a procedure in place for volunteer and staff recruitment and training.
The company has a procedure in place for staff to report a child protection concerns.
The company has a procedure in place for allegations made against a staff member or volunteer.
The company has a designated child safeguarding liaison person and a deputy designated child safeguarding liaison person.
The company has a procedure for reporting child protection concerns to Tusla.
The company has a code of conduct for staff.
The company adheres to the requirements of the Garda vetting legislation.

## 17.0 Children First National Guidance - Definitions of Child Abuse

Wexford Local Development recognises that child abuse is always unacceptable and should always be challenged. Children can be abused by a parent, a sibling or other relation, by a carer, by a friend or family friend or by any person in a position of greater power or authority. It may not always be obvious that someone presents a risk or threat to children. Anyone connected with WLD should be aware of the fact that child abuse can take place where a person behaves in a way that causes harm or is likely to cause harm to a child. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs Child Protection Guidelines – *Children First 2011*- categorises child abuse 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. In the *Children First: National Guidance*, 'a child' means a person under the age of 18 years, excluding a person who is or has been married. Below is the *Children First's* definitions of the types of abuse:

### Definition of Neglect

Neglect can be defined in terms of an *omission*, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, and/or medical care. Harm can be defined as the ill-treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child. Whether it is *significant* is determined by the child's health and development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a child of similar age.

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways *over a period of time* rather than at one specific point. For example, a child who suffers a series of minor injuries may not be having his or her needs met in terms of necessary supervision and safety. A child whose height or weight is significantly below average may be being deprived of adequate nutrition. A child who consistently misses school may be being deprived of intellectual stimulation. The *threshold of significant harm* is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that his or her well-being and/or development are severely affected.

### **Signs and symptoms of neglect**

Child neglect is the most common category of abuse. A distinction can be made between 'willful' neglect and 'circumstantial' neglect. 'Willful' neglect would generally incorporate a direct and deliberate deprivation by a parent/carer of a child's most basic needs, e.g. withdrawal of food, shelter, warmth, clothing, contact with others. 'Circumstantial' neglect more often may be due to stress/inability to cope by parents or carers. Neglect is closely correlated with low socio-economic factors and corresponding physical deprivations. It is also related to parental incapacity due to learning disability, addictions or psychological disturbance.

Child neglect should be suspected in cases of:

- abandonment or desertion
- children persistently being left alone without adequate care and supervision
- malnourishment, lacking food, inappropriate food or erratic feeding
- lack of warmth
- 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
- non-organic failure to thrive, i.e. child not gaining weight due not only to malnutrition but also to emotional deprivation
- failure to provide adequate care for the child's medical and developmental problems exploited, overworked.

### Definition of Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the *relationship* between a parent/carer and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's developmental need

for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms. Examples may include:

- the imposition of negative attributes on a child, expressed by persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming;
- conditional parenting in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his or her behaviours or actions;
- emotional unavailability of the child's parent/carer
- unresponsiveness of the parent/carer and/or inconsistent or inappropriate expectations of the child;
- premature imposition of responsibility on the child;
- unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of the child's capacity to understand something or to behave and control himself or herself in a certain way;
- under- or over-protection of the child;
- failure to show interest in, or provide age-appropriate opportunities for, the child's cognitive and emotional development;
- use of unreasonable or over-harsh disciplinary measures;
- exposure to domestic violence;
- exposure to inappropriate or abusive material through new technology.

Emotional abuse can be manifested in terms of the child's behavioural, cognitive, affective or physical functioning. Examples of these include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, and oppositional behaviour. The *threshold of significant harm* is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become *typical* of the relationship between the child and the parent/carer.

### **Signs and symptoms of emotional neglect and abuse**

Emotional neglect and abuse is found typically in a home lacking in emotional warmth. It is not necessarily associated with physical deprivation. The emotional needs of the children are not met; the parent's relationship to the child may be without empathy and devoid of emotional responsiveness. Emotional neglect and abuse occurs 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 neglect and abuse is not easy to recognise because the effects are not easily observable.

Emotional neglect and abuse can be identified with reference to the indices listed below. However, it should be noted that no one indicator is conclusive of emotional abuse. In the case of emotional abuse and neglect, it is more likely to impact negatively on a child where there is a cluster of indices, where these are persistent over time and where there is a lack of other protective factors:

- 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

- serious over-protectiveness
- inappropriate non-physical punishment (e.g. locking in bedrooms)
- family conflicts and/or violence
- every child who is abused sexually, physically or neglected is also emotionally abused
- inappropriate expectations of a child relative to his/her age and stage of development

Children who are physically and sexually abused and neglected also suffer from emotional abuse.

### **Definition of Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse of a child is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction, or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents. Physical abuse can involve:

- severe physical punishment;
- beating, slapping, hitting or kicking;
- pushing, shaking or throwing
- pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling;
- terrorising with threats;
- observing violence;
- use of excessive force in handling;
- deliberate poisoning;
- Suffocation
- fabricated/induced illness (*see Appendix 1 for details*);
- allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child.

### **Signs and symptoms of physical abuse**

Unsatisfactory explanations, varying explanations, frequency and clustering for the following events are high indices for concern regarding physical abuse:

- bruises (*see below for more detail*)
- fractures
- swollen joints
- burns/scalds ( *see below for more detail*)
- abrasions/lacerations
- haemorrhages (retinal, subdural)
- damage to body organs
- poisonings – repeated (prescribed drugs, alcohol)
- failure to thrive
- coma/unconsciousness
- death.

There are many different forms of physical abuse, but skin, mouth and bone injuries are the most common.

### **Definition of Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others. Examples of child sexual abuse include:

- exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of the child;
- intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification;
- masturbation in the presence of the child or the involvement of the child in an act of masturbation;
- sexual intercourse with the child, whether oral, vaginal or anal;
- sexual exploitation of a child, which includes inciting, encouraging, propositioning, requiring or permitting a child to solicit for, or to engage in, prostitution or other sexual acts. Sexual exploitation also occurs when a child is involved in the exhibition, modeling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including it's recording (on film, video tape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of the image by computer or other means. It may also include showing sexually explicit material to children, which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse;
- consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person. In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that, for the purposes of the criminal law, the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years for both boys and girls. An Garda Síochána will deal with the criminal aspects of the case under the relevant legislation.

It should be noted that the definition of child sexual abuse presented in this section is not a legal definition and is not intended to be a description of the criminal offence of sexual assault.

### **Signs and symptoms of sexual abuse**

Child sexual abuse often covers a wide spectrum of abusive activities. It rarely involves just a single incident and usually occurs over a number of years. Child sexual abuse most commonly happens within the family. Cases of sexual abuse principally come to light through:

- disclosure by the child or his or her siblings/friends
- the suspicions of an adult;
- physical symptoms.

Carers and professionals should be alert to the following physical and behavioural signs:

- bleeding from the vagina/anus
- difficulty/pain in passing urine/faeces
- an infection may occur secondary to sexual abuse, which may or may not be a definitive sexually transmitted disease
- Professionals should be informed if a child has a persistent vaginal discharge or has warts/rash in genital area
- noticeable and uncharacteristic change of behaviour
- hints about sexual activity
- age-inappropriate understanding of sexual behaviour
- inappropriate seductive behaviour
- sexually aggressive behaviour with others

- uncharacteristic sexual play with peers/toys
- unusual reluctance to join in normal activities that involve undressing, e.g. games/swimming.

The definitions above are as per the Children First Child Protection Guidelines. Further information is available at: [Children First Guidance](#)

**Indicators of abuse are not necessarily evidence of abuse.** It is important to stress that no single indicator should be seen as a conclusive sign of abuse and it may be symptomatic of conditions other than child abuse. A cluster or pattern of indicators is likely to be more indicative of abuse. The child's social and family history is also relevant and it is important to note that child abuse is not restricted to any socio economic group, gender or culture. It is not the role of staff or volunteers to investigate suspicions or concern about child abuse but it is important to pass any **reasonable grounds for concern** on to the [designated child protection person](#). The publications 'Children First' and 'Our Duty to Care' contain further information that staff and volunteers should read and be familiar with. Both are available in WLD offices with additional copies available from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

## **18.0 List of Appendices:**

1. Declaration form for staff or volunteers working with children
2. Acceptance and agreement to comply with Wexford Local Development Child Protection Policy
3. Reference Form
4. Incident / Accident report form
5. Flow charts for HSE procedures

**1 - Declaration form for Staff or Volunteers Working with Children**

Full Name:	
Date of Birth:	
Place of Birth:	
Address:	
Telephone:	
Mobile:	
Have you ever been known by a different name?	Yes / No
Have you previous experience of working with children and young people? (please give details and dates)	
Is there any reason that you would be considered unsuitable to work with children and young people?	
	Yes / No

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence?	Yes / No
Please provide contact details for two referees:	
Signed:	
Date:	



## **2 - Acceptance and agreement to comply with the Wexford Local Development Child**

### **Protection and Welfare Policy**

Declaration from all staff and volunteers working with children and young people

Full Name:
Date of Birth:
Address:
Contact Phone number/s
<p>I have read the Wexford Local Development Child Protection and Welfare Policy and code of behaviour and agree to abide by the contents.</p> <p>Signed.....</p> <p>Date .....</p>

### **3 - Confidential Reference Form for Persons Working with Children and Young People**

.....has applied to work for Wexford Local Development. Some of the work may involve contact with children and young people and as part of our commitment to child protection we would be grateful if you could complete this reference form in confidence.

How long have you known this person?					
Do you have any reason to be concerned about this person being in contact with children?					
In what capacity have you known this person?					
What strengths and skills does this person have that would make them suitable to work with children and young people?					
Please provide a rating for this persons attributes below (please tick)					
Attribute:	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Responsibility					

Maturity					
Self –Motivation					
Team Player					
Energy					
Reliability					
Trustworthiness					
<p>Signed: _____ Date: _____</p> <p>Occupation: _____</p> <p>Telephone: _____</p>					

Notes:

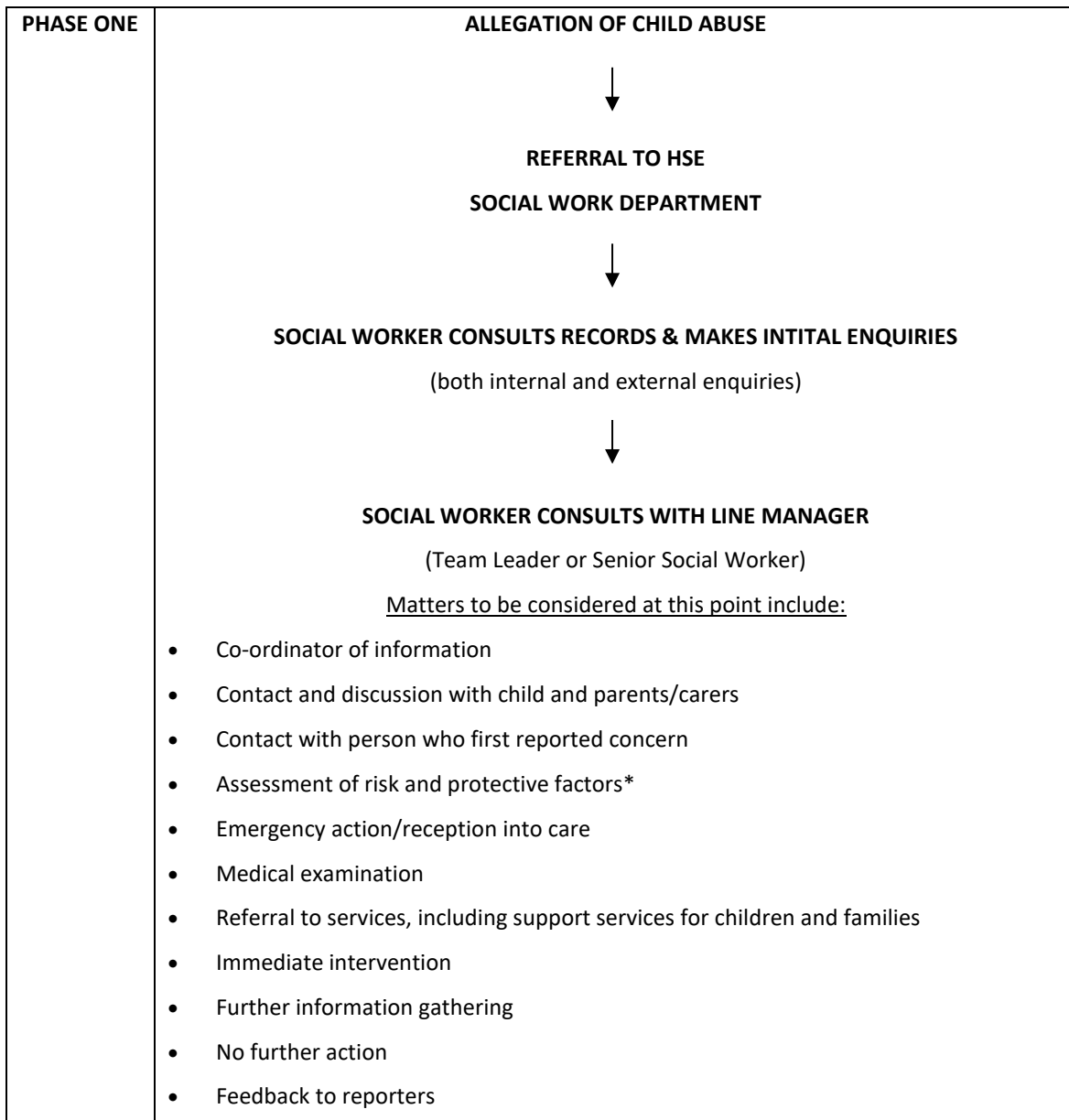
#### 4 - Incident / Accident Report Form

Name of the event or initiative where the incident / accident occurred	
Location:	Date:
Briefly describe what happened	
Who was involved	
Was any injury or harm sustained?	
Who dealt with the situation?	
How was the situation resolved?	

Any follow up required?
Signed:
Print name:

Please attach any additional information as necessary:

## 5 – Flowcharts for HSE Procedures



<div>PHASE TWO</div>	<div>NOTIFICATION TO CHILD CARE MANAGER</div> <div>Options to be considered at this point include:</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> <table><tr><td><div>Notification to An Garda Síochána</div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Garda Investigation</li><li>Key interviews and review</li><li>Prepare file for Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP)</li><li>DPP reviews file</li><li>DPP decision due</li></ul></td><td><div>Strategy Meeting Consult with:</div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Family</li><li>Team Leader/Senior Social Worker</li><li>Child Care Manager</li><li>Legal Advisor</li><li>An Garda Síochána HSE Liaison Team</li></ul><div>Assess risks and protective factors:</div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Medical input</li><li>Legal input</li><li>Psychosocial input</li></ul></td><td><div>HSE Assessment</div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Assessment by HSE Social worker or other professional</li><li>Placement on Child Protection Notification System</li><li>Referral to other specialist assessment teams</li><li>Ongoing contact with child and parents/carers</li><li>Continued liaison with relevant professionals</li><li>Emergency action/court reception into care</li><li>Record everything</li></ul></td></tr></table>	<div>Notification to An Garda Síochána</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Garda Investigation</li><li>Key interviews and review</li><li>Prepare file for Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP)</li><li>DPP reviews file</li><li>DPP decision due</li></ul>	<div>Strategy Meeting Consult with:</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Family</li><li>Team Leader/Senior Social Worker</li><li>Child Care Manager</li><li>Legal Advisor</li><li>An Garda Síochána HSE Liaison Team</li></ul> <div>Assess risks and protective factors:</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Medical input</li><li>Legal input</li><li>Psychosocial input</li></ul>	<div>HSE Assessment</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Assessment by HSE Social worker or other professional</li><li>Placement on Child Protection Notification System</li><li>Referral to other specialist assessment teams</li><li>Ongoing contact with child and parents/carers</li><li>Continued liaison with relevant professionals</li><li>Emergency action/court reception into care</li><li>Record everything</li></ul>
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<div>PHASE THREE</div>	<div>CHILDREN PROTECTION CONFERENCE</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Further evaluation of risk</li><li>Negotiation of a comprehensive inter-agency child protection plan between professionals and family</li><li>Allocation of tasks</li><li>Treatment intervention</li><li>Review of progress</li></ul> <div>CHILD PROTECTION REVIEW</div>			