



This is a controlled document and supersedes all previous Child Protection policy/ Child Safeguarding Statement and procedures
05/07/2022

Title	Child Safeguarding Policy
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This policy must be read in conjunction with:
[Children First, National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children,](#)
[and Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice](#)

Vision

Aiséirí believes in the priceless potential of people and that recovery from addiction is possible for everyone.

Mission

Aiséirí provides community and residential services to help young people, adults and families overcome addiction and lead meaningful lives in recovery.

Introduction:

The guiding principles of Aiseiri set out the beliefs, values and codes that Aiseiri wishes to uphold in relation to the protection and welfare of children and young people. Aiseiri's guiding principles reflect the commitment to protecting and promoting the rights of children and young people in your practice, including their right to be protected, treated with respect, listened to, and to have their own views taken into consideration in all decisions affecting them. This policy aims to ensure that no child or young person is disadvantaged or treated differently because of gender, social or ethnic background, family status, sexual orientation, religion or disability.

There are a number of pieces of legislation relevant to the safeguarding of children. The following indicative list is not intended to be comprehensive but rather to give a sense of the breadth and wide array of relevant legislation to Aiseiri:

- Child and Family Agency Act 2013
- Child Care Act 1991
- Children Act 2001
- Children First Act 2015
- Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012
- Criminal Justice Act 2006, Section 176: Reckless Endangerment of Children
- Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003
- Domestic Violence Act 1996
- Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- Education Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2014
- National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016
- Non-Fatal Offences against the Person Act 1997
- Protected Disclosures Act 2014
- Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998

Declaration of Guiding Principles:

Aiseiri provides assessment, pre-admission, detoxification, treatment and Continuum of Care to children and young people. This policy and guiding principles apply to all staff, volunteers, board members, and other professionals directly involved in Aiseiri.

We believe the following:

1. Our priority to ensure the welfare and safety of every child and young person who attends our service is paramount.

2. Our guiding principles and procedures to safeguard children and young people reflect national policy and legislation and we will review our guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures every two years.
3. All children and young people have an equal right to attend a service that respects them as individuals and encourages them to reach their potential, regardless of their background.
4. We are committed to upholding the rights of every child and young person who attends our service, including the rights to be kept safe and protected from harm, listened to and heard.
5. Our guiding principles apply to everyone in our organisation.
6. Workers/volunteers must conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of our organisation.

Purpose:

Aiseiri Child Protection Policy is a guidance document for Aiseiri staff in identifying and responding to allegations and suspicions of child abuse or neglect. The document is based, on and adheres to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 and the Children First Act 2015

Scope:

The Policy applies to all staff of Aiseiri as well as staff, volunteers and Board members working in Aiseiri and while representing the Alliance at other venues. Aiseiri frequently responds to allegations of abuse made by individuals.

The Child Protection Policy identifies procedures to follow that include the following scenarios:

- safeguarding children working in the Alliance's offices (as volunteers or interns) or children present in the offices for other reasons (such as the children of staff members);
- safeguarding children at events in which Alliance staff (for the purpose of the Policy to include volunteers, interns and Board members) participate; and
- reporting allegations/suspicions of abuse made to Alliance staff by telephone, email, and letter or in person.

Responsibility of the DLP and DDLP:

1. To manage any risk identified.
2. In respect of any member of staff who is the subject of any investigation (however described) in respect of any act, omission or circumstance in respect of a child availing of the relevant service.
3. For the selection and recruitment of any person as a member of staff of the provider with regard to the person's suitability to work with children.
4. For the provision of information and, where necessary, instruction and training, to members of staff of the provider in relation to the identification of the occurrence of harm.

5. For reporting to Tusla by the provider of a member of staff of the provider (whether a mandated person or otherwise) in accordance with this Act or the guidelines issued by the Minister under section 6.
6. For maintaining the list of the persons, if any, in the relevant services who are mandated persons and for appointing a relevant person the purpose of this part.

Staff Training

1. A copy of "Children First" is available to all staff in the Clinical Staff Office. Staff must sign to indicate that they have read and understood the National Guidelines. This document can also be downloaded from:
<https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/Publications/ChildrenFirst.pdf>
2. All staff must complete training in Child Protection on HSE Land, prior to working directly with children.
3. It is the responsibility of the Head of Clinical Services to ensure that all staff members are kept up to date with this training.
4. Staff are required to follow all procedures within this policy.

Confidentiality

1. No undertaking regarding secrecy can be given in any situations.
2. The Aiseiri Organisation's [Confidentiality Policy 13-AGP-HR](#) contains clear guidance in regard to extensions of confidentiality regarding issues relating to Child Protection. The Aiseiri Organisation policy states that confidentiality may be extended when a client discloses that:
 - they have perpetrated sexual / physical abuse on another person,
 - they intend to perpetrate sexual / physical abuse on another person,
 - any other issues in relation to Child Protection, as described in Children First.

Reporting A Concern

Designated Liaison Person:

1. A staff member who acts as a resource to any staff member who has a child protection concern. The designated liaison person is responsible for ensuring that reporting procedures are followed correctly and promptly and they act as liaison person with other agencies. The Designated Liaison Person for Aiseiri is the Head of Clinical Services. Contact details: 0527441166

Mandated Person:

2. A mandated person must assist Tusla, on request, in its assessment of child protection concerns about children who have been the subject of a mandated report.
3. Mandated persons are people who are in a key position to help protect children from harm.

4. Mandated persons have two main legal obligations under the Children First Act 2015 these are:
 - To report the harm of children above a defined threshold to Tusla;
 - To assist Tusla, if requested, in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report;
5. As a mandated person, under the legislation you are required to report any knowledge, belief or reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed.
6. If a staff member receives information from a client that they were abused as a child, you must report this information to Tusla, as the alleged abuser may pose a current risk to children.

All staff / volunteers must follow the guidelines on record keeping as outlined in [8-AGP-CM Case Notes and Written Records Policy](#).

Responsibility to Report:

1. Every employee has a statutory responsibility to report any child protection concerns. Within Aiseiri Organisation the procedure is for all staff concerns to be reported to the Manager who has the responsibility to report to the Designated Liaison Person.
2. The Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse in “reasonable and in good faith” to designated officers, HSEs or any member of the Garda.

In addition to this any complaint raised will follow the procedure set out by the [Complaints Policy and Procedures 7-AGP-HR](#). There is a clear and transparent process for this.

Reasonable Grounds for Concern:

1. In accordance with Children First, reasonable grounds for concern are defined as:
 - specific indication from a child that he/she was abused;
 - an account by a person who saw the child being abused;
 - evidence, such as an injury, which is consistent with abuse and is unlikely to have been caused in any other way;
 - an injury that is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it is a case of abuse;
 - consistent indication over time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

All workers and volunteers (including students on placement or work experience) have a responsibility to safeguard children and young people and to report any concerns they may have for the protection or welfare of a child/young person.

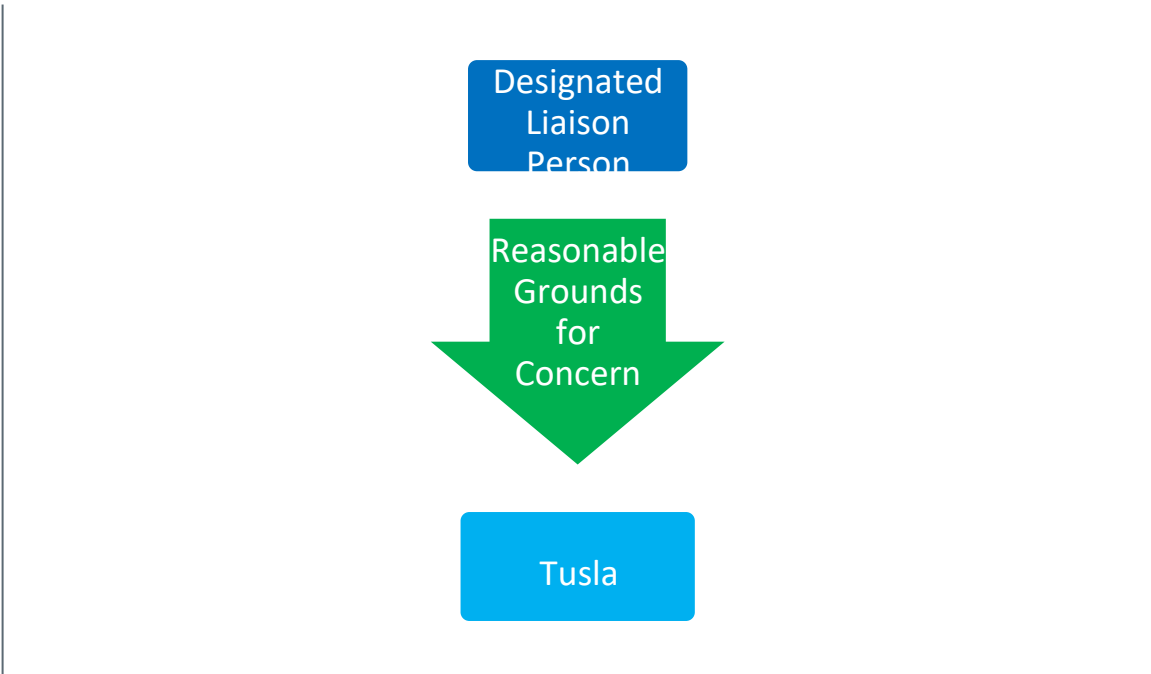
Regardless of how a concern comes to a worker/volunteer’s attention, it should be reported to the Designated Liaison Person or manager responsible for child safeguarding in your organisation. Figure 3, below, illustrates an internal reporting procedure. Figure 4, below, illustrates an external reporting procedures for moving concerns from an organisation to Tusla.

Figure 3 – Internal Reporting Procedure



The Designated Liaison Person, in consultation with the person who raised the concern, will decide if reasonable grounds for concern exist. If reasonable grounds for concern exist, the Designated Liaison Person will report to Tusla through either the Tusla Web Portal or relevant Dedicated Contact Point. If the DLP decides not to make a report, the worker/volunteer with the reasonable concern is still entitled to make a report to Tusla under Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, should they wish to do so. In reporting to Tusla, the individual worker has protections under the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998, should they report independently.

Figure 4 – External Reporting Procedure



Standard Reporting Procedure - Designated Liaison Officer

1. Also see, *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children: Chapter 3, Making a Mandated Report.*
 - The Designated Liaison Officer may contact the Senior Manager for advice around reporting the matter to the Tusla.
 - A report should be made directly Tusla by telephone or in writing.
 - In the event of an emergency, or the non-availability of the Tusla, the report should be made to a Garda.
 - The reporting form at the back of the Children First Guidelines must be completed at this stage to facilitate Tusla decision making. This may entail:
 - clarifying or getting more information about the matter:
 - where there is doubt or uncertainty, consulting initially with statutory child protection agency to receive their guidance on the matter:
2. A social worker may wish to speak to the person who first witnessed the incident, received the disclosure, or experienced the concern; if the report is made by the Designation Liaison Officer, staff should be informed of this possibility.
3. It is essential to keep accurate notes with dates, times and factual objective information when assessing or reporting abuse

A Member of Staff / Volunteer is Accused of Abuse

1. If a member of staff / volunteer is accused of abuse, the matter will be investigated immediately in collaboration with external authorities.
2. If an allegation is made against a worker, two separate procedures must be followed:
 - The standard reporting procedure in respect of suspected child protection concerns and,
 - The procedures outlined below:
3. Procedures to follow for dealing with the worker involved in the complaint:
 - Inform the Senior Manager.
 - Ensure no child is exposed to unnecessary risk.
 - Confidentiality is of the utmost importance and only those who need to be informed should be notified or made aware of the situation.
 - A worker may be suspended with pay to protect the child and other children attending the organisation, at all times considering the employees contract and the rules of natural justice.
 - Staff / volunteers may be subject to erroneous or malicious allegations. Therefore, all allegations must be dealt with sensitivity and support, such as counselling, offered.
 - An action following an allegation of abuse against an employee may be managed in consultation with the HSE and the Gardaí.
 - If pursuing the future position of a worker, the Senior Manager will advise the person accused of the allegation and the procedure that is to be followed.
 - The Senior Manager will take care that the actions taken by them do not undermine or frustrate any investigations being conducted by the HSE or Gardaí.
4. It is recommended that the same person should not have responsibility for the reporting issues and the employment issues. They should be separated and managed independently. There may be situations where the allegations turn out to be unfounded. But it is important that suspicions are treated seriously and in the manner

outlined above. Therefore, if this occurs, the Head of Recovery Services will investigate the allegation.

Follow up on Child Protection Report with Statutory Services

1. Where the organisation has an ongoing relationship with the case, follow up with the relevant social worker can be organised as part of the care plan; where there is consent provided by the adult service user involved in the case. Ideally this will be through the medium of a case meeting which aims to reach an agreement on what supports need to be provided and which agency is most suitable to provide these. In some cases, this may be done through phone or email communications.

Special Considerations:

Abuse by visitors to the service:

The possibility of abuse by a visitor must be recognised. If such abuse occurs, it will be dealt with in the same way as other incidents of suspected abuse.

Admission of retrospective abuse

If a disclosure of abuse is received from a client that they were abused as a child, this must be reported to Tusla, as the alleged abuser may pose a current risk to children.

Garda Vetting

See [National Vetting Bureau Policy 2-AGP-HR](#) for further detail. In essence the policy outlines that all staff are required to furnish details of past addresses to facilitate garda vetting and that any individuals with past offences in relation to child abuse will not be facilitated access to children or vulnerable adults by the organisation.

Incident Reporting:

If an incident occurs that involves a child protection issue, this will be completed by the relevant staff member or volunteer and discussed with the Leadership Management Team by the Operations Manager to establish if further investigation or if mandatory reporting is necessary.

Safe Practice

1. If a parent or a guardian brings a child into the service, the service will record the name and address of the child, but the child will be the responsibility of the parent / guardian.
2. In the event that a child is brought into the organisation accompanied by an adult who is not their parent / guardian, and where this is a new arrangement or unknown arrangement, the Clinical Team should be contacted; they have a role of determining whether this arrangement is suitable.
3. Children should at no time be left unattended. As far as possible the child will remain with the adult.

Glossary

Child Safeguarding – ensuring safe practice and appropriate responses by workers and volunteers to concerns about the safety or welfare of children, including online concerns, should these arise. Child safeguarding is about protecting the child from harm, promoting their welfare and in doing so creating an environment which enables children and young people to grow, develop and achieve their full potential.

Guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures – previously referred to as child protection and welfare policy and procedures, the procedures an organisation has in place to safeguard children from harm and reduce the risks to children of being harmed.

Child Safeguarding Statement – defined in the *Children First Act 2015*, this is a statement which includes a written assessment of risk of harm to children while availing of the service, and the measures that will be taken to manage any identified risks.

Child or young person – a person under the age of 18 years, who is not or has not been married.

Child Protection and Welfare Report Form – form for reporting suspected or alleged abuse or welfare concerns to Tusla (available on the Tusla website, [here](#)).

Child Safeguarding Guide – this document, Child Safeguarding: A guide for policy, procedure and practice

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children – national, overarching guidance for the protection and welfare of children, published by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The current version was published in 2017.

Dedicated Contact Point - each Tusla area has a dedicated contact point that you can contact to discuss and/or report your child protection or welfare concern

Designated Liaison Person (DLP) – a resource to any staff member who has a child protection concern. DLPs are responsible for ensuring that reporting procedures are followed correctly and promptly and act as a liaison person with other agencies (see *Children First: National Guidance*).

Mandated person – as defined in the *Children First Act 2015*, mandated persons have a statutory obligation to report concerns which meet or exceed the threshold of harm, as defined in the Act, to Tusla and to cooperate with Tusla in the assessment of mandated reports, where requested to do so.

Named person – a person appointed by an organisation to lead the development of guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures and for ensuring that policies and procedures are consistent with best practice as detailed in this Guide.

Organisation – any department/sector/body/agency/organisation whether private, public or voluntary.

Provider – as defined in the *Children First Act 2015*, 'means, in relation to a relevant service, a person-

- (a) who provides a relevant service, and
- (b) who, in respect of the provision of such relevant service—
 - (i) employs (whether under contract of employment or otherwise) one or more than one other person to undertake any work or activity that constitutes a relevant service,
 - (ii) enters into a contract for services with one or more than one other person for the provision by the person of a relevant service, or (iii) permits one or more than one other person (whether or not for commercial or other consideration and whether or not as part of a course of education or training, including an internship scheme) to undertake any work or activity, on behalf of the person, that constitutes a relevant service'.

Retrospective Abuse Report Form (RARF) – For reporting to Tusla cases of adults disclosing childhood abuse (available on the Tusla website, [here](#)).

Relevant person – as defined in the *Children First Act 2015*, 'means 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'.

Relevant service – as defined in the *Children First Act 2015*, 'means any work or activity specified in Schedule 1 [of that Act]'.

Tusla – Tusla is Ireland's Child and Family Agency, the lead, statutory organisation for safeguarding children in Ireland.

Tusla Web Portal – A web portal has been developed to allow professionals to securely submit Child Protection and Welfare Report Forms and Retrospective Abuse Report Forms to Tusla. It can be accessed from the Tusla website, [here](#).

Worker and volunteer – *inter alia*, any staff member, volunteer, member of any board of management, or student engaged in an organisation to provide services to children or families.

Associated Policies:

The following procedures support our intention to safeguard children while they are availing of our service.

- Aiseiri child safeguarding statement- displayed in the Aiseiri treatment Centres, signed by the designated liaison officer.
- Aiseiri case notes and written records policy (8-AGP-CM)
- Aiseiri Diversity and Inclusion Policy (30-AGP-CO)
- Aiseiri CCTV Policy and Procedures (21-AGP-CO)
- Aiseiri Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure (9-AGP-HR)
- Aiseiri Volunteer Policy (18-AGP-CM)
- Aiseiri National vetting bureau Policy and Procedures (2-AGP-HR)
- Aiseiri Induction Policy and Procedure (11-AGP- HR)
- Aiseiri Complaints Policy and Procedures (7-AGP-HR)
- Aiseiri Staff, Student and Volunteer code of ethics (22AF)
- Aiseiri Safety Policy Statement
- Aiseiri Admission Contract (10ATC)
- Aiseiri Workplace dignity and respect policy and procedures (6-AGP-HR)
- Aiseiri Whistleblowing Policy (21-AGP-HR)
- Aiseiri Grievance/Disciplinary Policy (1-AGP-HR)
- Aiseiri mandatory Children’s First Training Plan (All Staff)
- Aiseiri Treatment Policy (11-AGP-CM)
- Aiseiri Lone Working Policy and Procedure (15-AGP-HR)

All procedures and policies listed above are available on request or are available on the Aiseiri web-site www.aiseiri.ie