Roinn an Taoisigh
Department of the Taoiseach

Children First

Child Safeguarding Statement

Updated October 2022

Department of the Taoiseach

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1. Background

The Children's First Act 2015, requires organisations that are providers of 'relevant services' under the Act, to publish a Child Safeguarding Statement. This Statement details the relevant services provided by staff of the Department of the Taoiseach to children, as well as the principles and procedures in place to safeguard children from harm while availing of these services.

2. Introduction

The purpose of the Department of the Taoiseach, as set out in its Statement of Strategy 2017-2020), is to implement the Government's Programme, help the Taoiseach and the Government to develop a sustainable economy and a successful society, to pursue Ireland's interests abroad and to build a better future for Ireland and its citizens.

3. Relevant services

Within the Department itself, interaction with children by staff is limited. A review of all functions and activities across the Department was carried out in the context of the Children First Act. It found that at a corporate level, the only relevant service that the Department provides within the meaning of the Act is the periodic provision of work experience placements to Transition Year students and or third-level students under the age of 18 [*specifically paragraph 5(a) of Schedule 1 in relation to the provision of training opportunities to children*].

The employment of any Temporary Clerical Officers (TCOs), under the age of 18, by the Department would also be a relevant service. While the Department does not currently employ TCOs, the risks to underage TCOs are considered to be identical to those applying to Transition Year students. Therefore, the risks identified and mitigating procedures outlined below will be adapted as appropriate to any TCOs under the age of 18.

There is only one body under the aegis of the Department - the National Economic and Social Development Office (NESDO). The Department has confirmed that it is not a provider of a 'relevant service' under the legislation.

4. Commitment to safeguard children from harm

The Department is committed to maintaining the highest standards of child safeguarding, in line with all relevant legislation including the Children First Act 2015 and informed by best practice including Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children as well as Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy Procedure and Practice.

5. Obligations under the Children First Act 2015 in relation to relevant services

As the placement of students under the age of 18 in the Department is considered to be a relevant service to children under the Act, the following principles and obligations apply:

a) To keep the child safe from harm while receiving the service, [i.e. on the placement];

b) To assess the risks; and

c) To address those risks, as required by the Act, in the Department's Child Safeguarding Statement.

6. Relevant Persons

The Department does not have any "mandated persons" as defined in Schedule 2 of the Children First Act 2015.

The Department has appointed a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) who is the Personnel Officer and Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP), Administrative Officer in the HR Unit, as relevant persons for the purposes of the Children First Act and in line with best practice in child safeguarding. The DLP is Mr. Brian Keenan and the deputy DLP is Ms. Lynda Harte – contact details in Section 8.

They are the resource persons for any child protection concerns within the Department; they are responsible for ensuring that reporting procedures within the organisation are followed; and they will act as a point of contact with outside agencies as required, to ensure that all child welfare protection concerns are addressed, dealt with and referred promptly to Tusla where appropriate. The Department has developed a Children's First Reporting Protocol for staff for the reporting of child welfare and protection concerns.

Recruitment to the Department is managed by the Public Appointment Service. It is the practice that all staff recruited through this process are Garda vetted prior to assignment. Garda vetting is also required for temporary assignments under contract.

7. Risk Assessment and Procedures

Risk Identified	Procedures in place to manage identified risk(s)
That the child will be harmed or suffer an injury by a staff or non-staff member in the course of their placement	i. All placements, to be notified one week minimum in advance to the HR Unit. ii. All students on placement will be introduced to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) or Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLP) on induction as the point of contact for them, to raise any issues or concerns about abuse, bullying/harassment, inappropriate behavior or any other matter of concern to the student. iii. All students and their parents/guardians to be given a copy of the DoT Child Safeguarding Statement and the DOT Children First Reporting Protocol, in advance or as part of induction documentation. iv. Student to be supervised during hours of placement. v. Student made aware of the ICT Policy and not given internet access unless specifically required for duties and then under supervision. No student to be given access to any information - physical or digital - unsuitable for viewing by a minor. vi. All staff directly supervising or working on an individual basis with the student to complete, prior to the placement,

	the Tusla Children First e-Learning Programme. Certification upon completion of the on-line course is valid for 3 years. vii. The DLP or Deputy DLP to make contact with the student halfway through the placement and on its conclusion. viii. Departmental Health and Safety Statement and associated controls adhered to. Written consent must be obtained in advance for a student who wishes to leave the premises during placements hours, at lunchtime or to attend external events. ix. All staff are expected to adhere to relevant departmental and Civil Service codes, policies and protocols in interactions with children and young people. Non-compliance and failure to uphold expected standards may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.
That an occurrence or allegation of harm (whether or not it occurred in the course of the placement) that is either disclosed by the student or witnessed/suspected by a staff member, may not be recognised or appropriately reported to the DLP/ Deputy DLP and/or to the relevant statutory authorities including Tusla.	i. The Department has developed a **Children First Reporting Protocol**. In advance of the placement, the relevant primary supervisor will forward a signed copy to HR. He/she will confirm to HR in advance of the placement that all staff have been made aware of the Reporting Protocol. ii. The primary supervisor involved will check with staff, on exit of the student on placement, whether any disclosures have been made, and if so, that they have been passed on to the Department's Designated Liaison Person and/or to Tusla as appropriate. iii. The DLP and Deputy DLP will undertake the Tusla e-learning and certification as required every 3 years, as will any staff who routinely supervise TY students on placement.

8. Implementation and Review

The DoT Child Safeguarding Statement will be circulated to all staff members, displayed publicly and on the intranet, and made available to parents and guardians, members of the public and Tusla upon request.

This is the second iteration of the Department of the Taoiseach's Child Safeguarding Statement. It will be reviewed as necessary as material changes are notified to the Personnel Officer.

The Child Safeguarding Statement must, under section 11(7) of the Children's First Act 2015, be reviewed no later than 2 years from the date of publication. This document will be reviewed no later than March 2022.

For queries please contact:

Designated Liaison Officer

Brian Keenan, Personnel Officer

619 4000

Brian.Keenan@taoiseach.gov.ie

Or

Deputy Designated Liaison Officer

Lynda Harte, AO, HR Unit

619 4000

Lynda.Harte@taoiseach.gov.ie