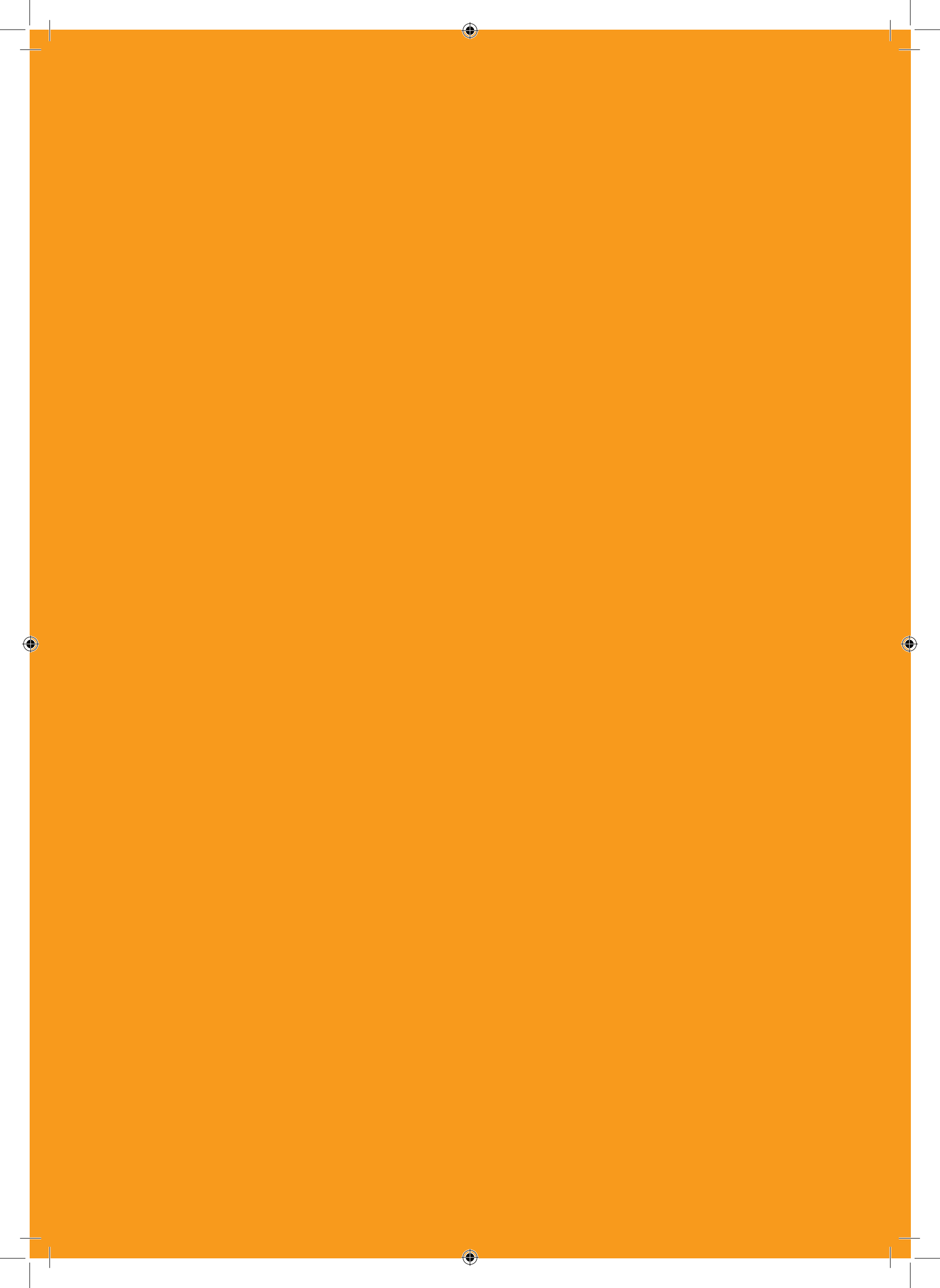


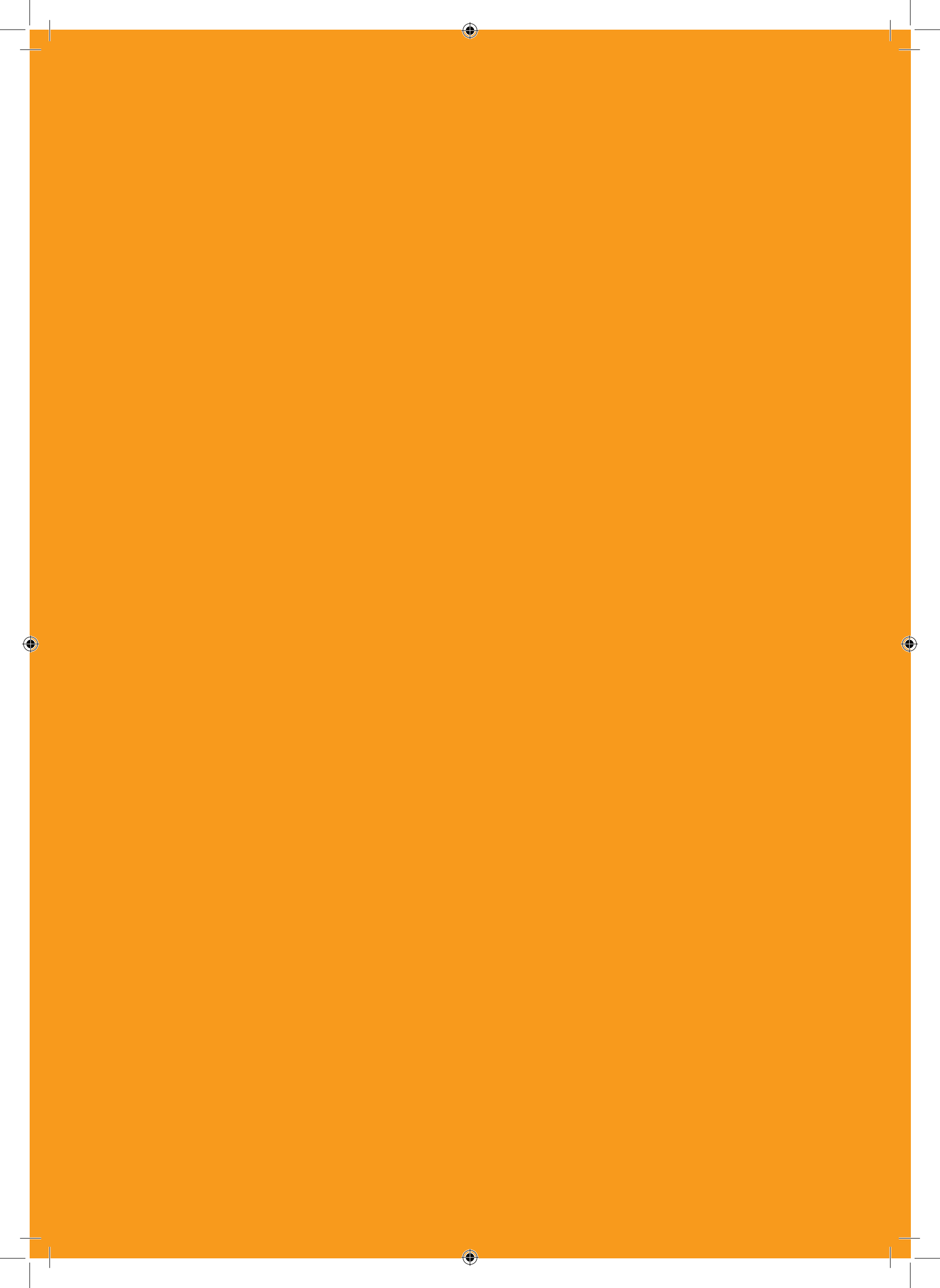


Protecting Children

A Child Protection Guide
for Early Years and School
Age Childcare Services
(2nd Edition)


Barnardos





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Protecting Children

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and School Age Childcare Services
(2nd Edition)

Anne Conroy and Corinne Kingston

Protecting Children:

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This publication does not purport to be a document giving legal advice and should not be used as a substitute for professional advice. While every care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the publication, no liability is accepted by Barnardos for any errors.

Barnardos supports children whose well-being is under threat, by working with them, their families and communities and by campaigning for the rights of children. Barnardos was established in Ireland in 1962 and is Ireland's leading independent children's charity.

Barnardos' vision is an Ireland where childhood is valued and all children and young people are cherished equally.

Barnardos' mission is to challenge and support families, communities, society and government to make Ireland the best place in the world to be a child, focusing specifically on children and young people whose well-being is under threat.

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Introduction

Child protection is everybody's concern. Those working with children in early years services and in school age childcare have both a professional and a moral responsibility to ensure that their services are managed in such a way as to maximise the safety and welfare of the children attending them.

Early years and school age childcare services have responsibilities under **Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children**. Barnardos provides training and consultancy on child protection to the sector and is aware of managers' and practitioners' concerns about competencies, policies and procedures in this area.

The need for services who work with children to understand their obligations under Children First and to have in place appropriate policies and procedures is necessary, not only for the protection of children, but also for the protection of staff.

Protecting Children is primarily aimed at managers and practitioners working in centre-based early years and school age childcare services. It will also be useful for any services that work with children and to development/support staff who might be working in a training or support capacity with services working with children.

vi

The aim is to provide a comprehensive guide to child protection for early years and school age childcare services covering relevant legislation, the policy context, principles and procedures. There is also guidance in relation to best practice for working with children, parents¹ and other agencies. A key message of *Protecting Children* is that safeguarding children needs to be part of the organisational culture of all organisations who work with children.

Protecting Children aims to cover two key areas:

1. The promotion of positive practice, which incorporates the protection and welfare of children.
2. Guidance in relation to dealing with concerns about suspected or actual child abuse or neglect.

The guide aims to be accessible and practical rather than a theoretical book, however it is informed by Irish and international research and by Barnardos' extensive experience in this area. While *Protecting Children* is not a training manual, it includes materials such as templates and scenarios which we hope will act as a resource for practitioners and managers seeking to implement best practice in relation to the protection and welfare of children in their care.

Protecting Children is not intended to replace Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children and it is essential that managers and practitioners familiarise themselves with Children First.

Anne Conroy
Corinne Kingston

¹ Where the term 'parent' is used in this guide, it refers to a parent or any person who is the primary caregiver of a child, for example grandparent, foster parent etc.

Section one

Introduction to Child Protection

1

This section looks at child abuse in Ireland along with some of the statistics and myths surrounding it. It also examines the importance of child protection and welfare policies in childcare services.



Introduction to Child Protection

This guide provides extensive resources for practitioners involved in early years and school age childcare services in relation to child protection and welfare. From a professional practice point of view, it is useful to think about two key dimensions to child protection and welfare as follows:

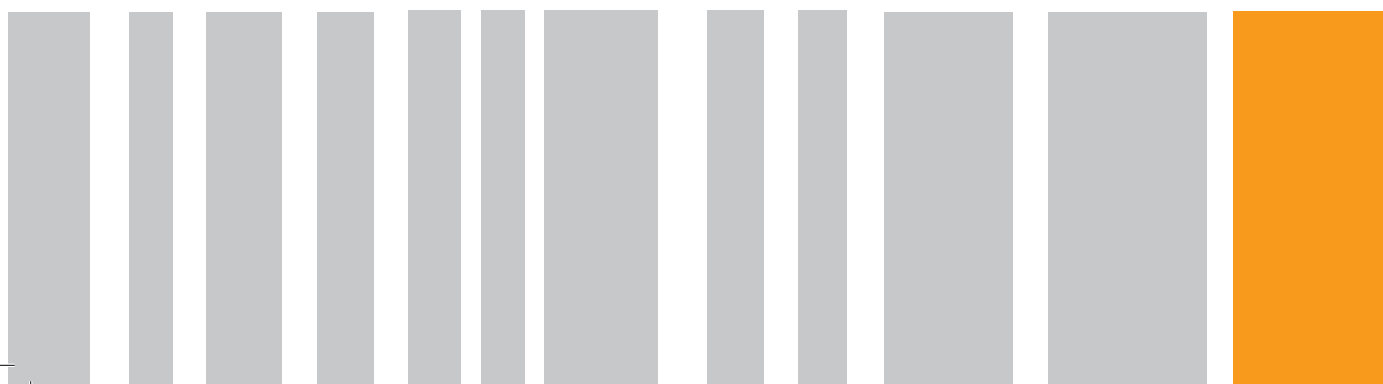
1. The promotion of positive practice, which incorporates the protection and welfare of children.
2. Guidance in relation to dealing with concerns about suspected or actual child abuse or neglect.

Most of the content of this publication will focus on practice guidelines in relation to these two dimensions. It is also important for practitioners to have an understanding of child abuse and the importance of child protection and welfare policies in childcare services, which is covered in this Section, and the legislative and policy context covered in Section 2.

Why Child Protection and Welfare Policies are Essential for Early Years and School Age Childcare Services

- Government policy, which is contained in Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (see Section 2), obliges all organisations working with children, whether publicly or privately funded, to provide the highest standard of care in order to promote children's well-being and safeguard them from harm. This includes the implementation of child protection policies.
- Quality early childhood care and education is recognised as having an important role to play in supporting children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Recent UK research found that, for children whose development was thought to be 'at risk', attending quality pre-school provision appeared to reduce the impact of these risks (Hall et al, 2009).
- Early years and school age childcare services can provide support to families and children who are experiencing stress and family difficulties.
- Practitioners are in a unique position to identify concerns about child abuse or child neglect because of the length of time that children spend in an early years or school age childcare service as well the opportunity for practitioners to observe children's development and well-being.
- UK research has found that children from 0-4 years are most at risk from child abuse, which highlights the vulnerability of pre-school children (Corby, 2007). It is essential that early years and school age services promote positive professional practice that incorporates the protection of children.
- Historically, many children were the victims of child abuse while in the care of residential services in Ireland (Madonna House Report [Dept of Health and Children, 1996] and Ryan Report [Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, 2009]). There have been some cases of child abuse in early years settings in the US and the UK, most recently the case of a crèche worker in Plymouth who in 2009 was convicted of sexual assault and possession of child pornography. Childcare services must always be alert to the possibility of child abuse within early years and school age childcare settings.

2



Compliance with Children First

A recent Irish study on the degree to which newly qualified teachers, in their first six months of full-time teaching, understood their child protection responsibilities found extremely low levels of awareness of the Department of Education and Science Child Protection Guidelines (Buckley and McGarry, 2010). While there has not been a similar study of early years practitioners' knowledge and understanding of Children First, is it likely to be any better?

The compliance of early years and school age childcare services in Ireland with Children First has not been formally reviewed. While the Children First Information and Advice Officers have been active in the delivery of child protection training and policy development work, the on-the-ground experience would suggest that much needs to be done in order for the early childhood care and education sector to be fully compliant with Children First.

Understanding Child Abuse

Perpetrators are found in all walks of life and can be of any age, occupation or religion.

3

Most child abuse is carried out by people who know the child rather than strangers. They are likely to be in a position of trust and power or authority over children. Most child sexual abuse is carried out by men, however women have also been found to sexually abuse children (NSPCC, 2014).

Child abuse is often associated with, though not directly caused by, poverty and other social problems like addiction or domestic violence and it is sometimes the result of stress. Sexual abuse is different and almost always involves careful planning and manipulation of children and situations.

Our Duty to Care²

² *Our Duty to Care: The Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People* was published by the Dept of Health and Children in 2002. It is currently out of print but can be downloaded at http://www.omc.gov.ie/viewdoc.aspx?fn=/documents/Publications/ODTC_Full_Eng.pdf





Introduction to Child Protection

Children can also abuse children and research has found that teenagers carry out a significant proportion of child sexual abuse. This topic will be explored further in Section 3.

Any child can be at risk of abuse but some children, including very young children and children with special needs, are more vulnerable to abuse and neglect. Children in early years settings are very vulnerable because of their age, their limited language development, their dependence on adult carers and their lack of understanding about inappropriate care. Babies and pre-school children are dependent on their carers for intimate care.

Research has found that children find it extremely difficult to disclose abuse. They may not have the words or the understanding, they may feel very afraid and have been threatened by the abuser, or they may feel embarrassed or guilty.

Children First (section 2.1.1) has identified four types of child abuse as follows:

- Neglect
- Emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse

More detail on each type of abuse will be given in Section 3.

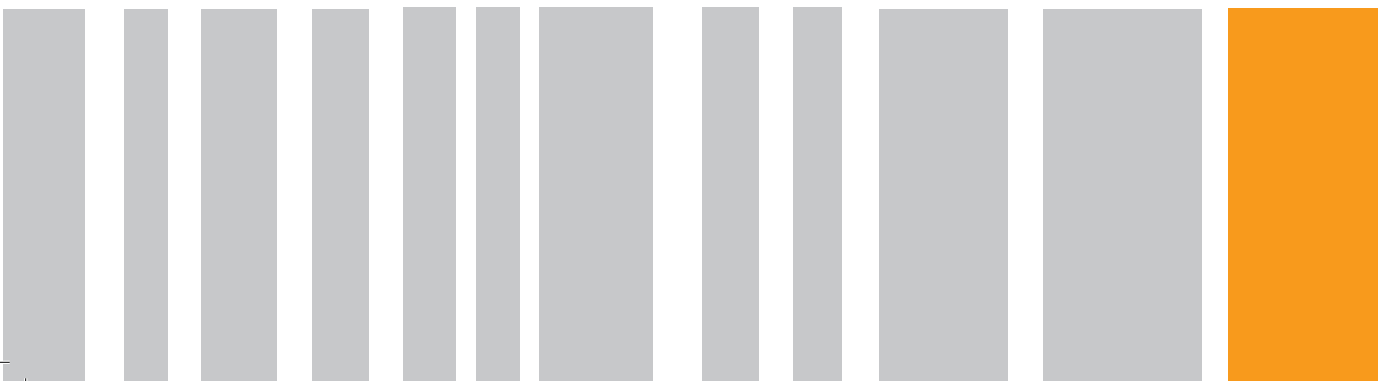
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Research has found that child neglect is the most common type of child abuse reported (Howarth, 2005) and may have the most damaging long-term effects on children in terms of the emotional impact it has on them (Corby, 2007). Child neglect is one of the most challenging forms of child abuse to address because it can be linked to emotional, social and economic problems and is often linked to disadvantage.

It is not always easy to recognise abuse. Possible signs and symptoms can have an entirely innocent explanation but childcare practitioners should be alert to the possibility of abuse and the need to consult further. It is important to have a child protection policy and procedures in place to guide practitioners if a concern arises and this is the subject of Section 6.

Remember, you are not diagnosing child abuse but sharing information about a worry or concern.

In the event that a concern is reported to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, the Agency will consider that information based on all the information available, and the information you provide may be part of a bigger picture. This will be addressed in Section 8 What To Do If You Have A Child Protection Concern.



Child Protection Statistics in Ireland

The statistics on reports regarding child protection and welfare concerns have been increasing in recent years as can be seen in the table below.

Table 1.1 Number of reports to social work departments 2005–2008

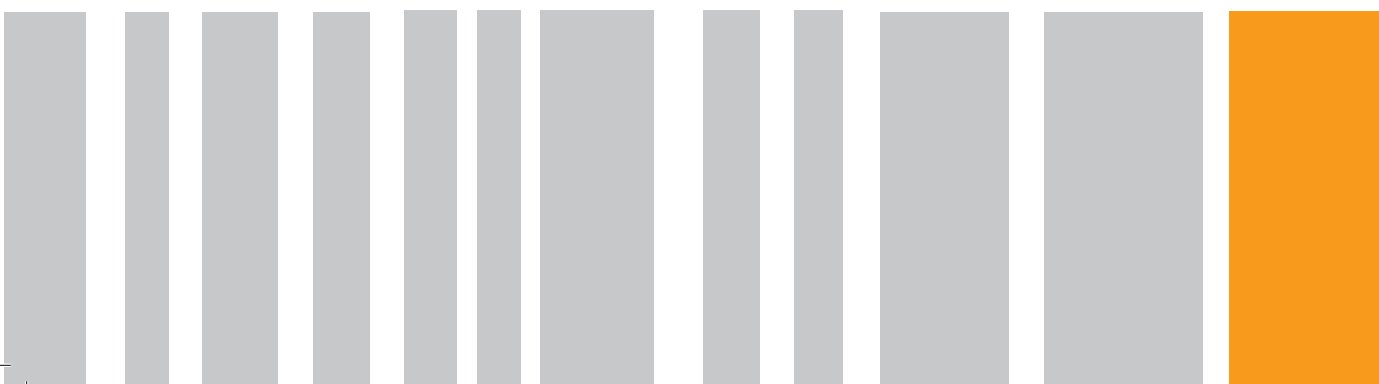
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Welfare	12,715	12,932	14,875	16,452	15,808
Physical abuse	2,152	2,399	2,617	2,608	3,033
Sexual abuse	2,306	2,379	2,594	2,962	3,326
Emotional abuse	1,981	2,192	2,125	2,500	4,001
Neglect	4,114	4,766	4,677	4,755	5,458
Total	23,268	24,668	26,888	29,277	31,626

(Dept of Children and Youth Affairs, 2012)

Child Abuse Myths and Truths Questionnaire

6

	True	False	Unsure
1. Children are more likely to be abused by someone they know than by strangers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Child abusers are easy to identify.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Sexual abuse only happens to girls.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Child abusers abuse indiscriminately.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Children who live with domestic violence are more likely to be abused.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Children who are abused are unlikely to disclose.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Children rarely make false allegations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Child sexual abuse will show physical evidence of abuse.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Children who are reported to social services will be taken into care.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Child abuse is on the increase.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Questionnaire Responses

1. Children are more likely to be abused by someone they know than by strangers.

True. The myth of the stranger approaching children in the playground needs to be dispelled. In the majority of cases, children are abused by someone known to them, either within their own family or extended family, or by someone in a position of authority over them (Corby, 2007).

2. Child sexual abusers are easy to identify.

False. Child sexual abusers cannot be easily distinguished from other people. One of the most dangerous assumptions is that a person who acts normal could not be a child abuser. Research has found that abusers typically operate a double life and appear to the outside world to be a good person whom the community believe would never harm children (Salter, 2003).

3. Sexual abuse only happens to girls.

False. Research in Ireland found that 20% of women and 16% of men reported experiencing contact sexual abuse in childhood (McGee et al, 2002).

4. Child sexual abusers abuse indiscriminately.

False. Not every child who comes in contact with a child abuser will be abused. Research has found that child abusers tend to carefully select and groom their victims (Conte et al, 1989).

5. Children who live with domestic violence are more likely to be abused.

True. One in three child protection cases shows a history of violence against the mother. Irish research with children has highlighted the difficulty children experience in having their voices heard (Buckley et al, 2006).

6. Children who are abused are unlikely to disclose.

True. Children who have been sexually abused find it very difficult to disclose their abuse. Boys are less likely to disclose than girls. Likewise, very few cases of child sexual abuse ever get reported to the authorities. Few children who have been abused ever access support services.

7. Children rarely make false allegations.

True. Research has found that children rarely make false allegations. Children are often reluctant to disclose abuse and tend to minimise their experiences rather than embellish them. It may be that children do not want to disclose their experiences, may lack adequate understanding and language to describe what has happened or may feel afraid and embarrassed about what has happened to them (Sjoberg, 2002).



8. Child sexual abuse will show physical evidence of abuse.

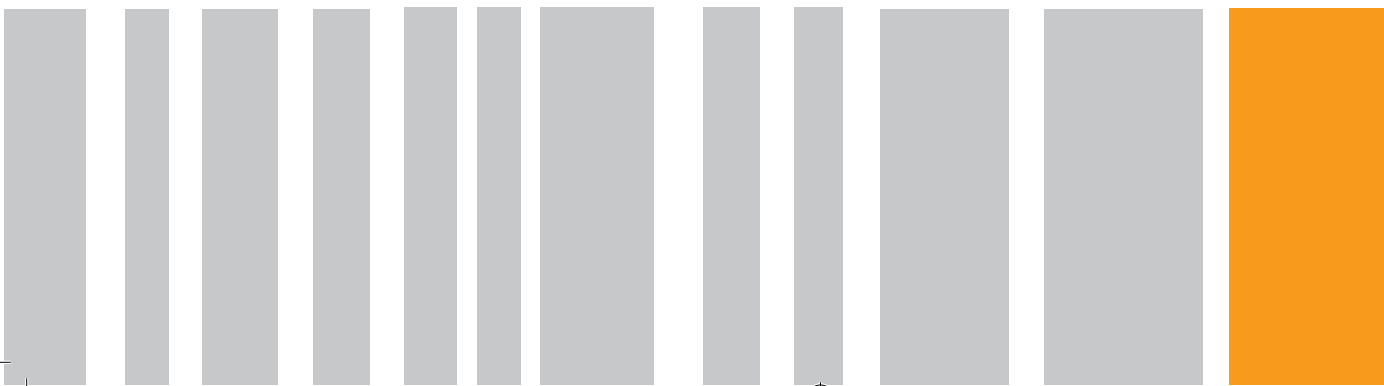
Research has found that there are few clear-cut medical signs of sexual abuse. Accordingly, most medical examinations of children suspected of having been sexually abused will yield normal results. Even in cases of proven sexual abuse, abnormal findings are rare.

9. Children who are reported to social services will be taken into care.

False. The vast majority of reports to social services do not result in children being taken into care. Government policy is to support children within their families. At the end of 2011, there were 6,160 children in care in Ireland.

10. Child abuse is on the increase.

This is unclear. The number of reports to social services about child protection and welfare concerns is on the increase. This may be linked to increased public awareness of child abuse. However, it is difficult to make meaningful comparisons with the past because there are no agreed definitions or means of collecting this information. In addition, there is a problem of under reporting.



Section two

The Irish Child Protection System

9

The Irish child protection system is based on a combination of legislation and government policy. This Section explains the relevant legislation as well as the main policy document, which is Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children. The Child Care (Pre-school Services) Regulations and the new National Standards for Pre-school Services are also covered.

Child Care Act 1991

The main piece of legislation is the **Child Care Act 1991**, which deals with the care of children who have been assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused, or who are at risk of abuse.

This Act requires the Child and Family Agency to promote the welfare of children who are not receiving adequate care and protection up to the age of 18³. It also empowers the Child and Family Agency to provide childcare and family support services. The Child Care Act recognises the rights of children and families to be together but places the best interests of the safety and welfare of the child as a paramount consideration.

Under the 1991 Child Care Act, the Child and Family Agency is obliged to:

- Be open to receiving information from any source about a child who may not be receiving adequate care and protection.
- Follow up such reports and assess the child's situation.
- Take appropriate action to protect the welfare of a child who is identified by the Child and Family Agency as not receiving adequate care and protection.

It is the Child Care Act 1991 that provides for the inspection of pre-school services.

10

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children

The key government policy document is **Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children**, first published in 1999. Children First provides guidance to organisations working with children, particularly in relation to compliance with child protection responsibilities.

In 2011, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) published a revised version of Children First. The revised Children First has been updated and amended to reflect changes in legislation, organisational changes etc., but has not been substantially changed in relation to the reporting of child protection concerns.

The Children First Bill, 2014 will put elements of Children First on a statutory footing. The Bill provides for a number of key child protection measures including a requirement on organisations providing services to children to keep children safe and to produce a Child Safeguarding Statement as well as a requirement on defined categories of persons (mandated persons) to report child protection concerns over a defined threshold to the Child and Family Agency.

The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs has indicated that legislation will be put in place to ensure that all staff employed by the State who are working with children and organisations in receipt of government funding will have a duty to comply with Children First and a duty to cooperate with other relevant services in the best interests of the child.

³ A child is anyone under the age of 18 years unless they are married or have been married.



Children First states that all organisations working with children should have child protection policies and procedures derived from Children First national guidance. It is also a requirement that all organisations dealing with children have a policy of co-operating with the Child and Family Agency Social Services.

The Child and Family Agency employs Children First Information and Advice Officers who are available to liaise with voluntary and community organisations on Children First. Their contact details are included in Sources of Further Information at the back of this book. They are also available to review child protection policies and procedures and it is recommended that services forward their child protection policy to the Child and Family Agency as a matter of good practice.

Aims of Children First: National Guidance

Children First is intended to assist people in identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect and deal effectively with concerns. It emphasises that the needs of children and families must be at the centre of child protection and welfare services, and that the welfare of children is of paramount importance.

It highlights the roles and responsibilities of the Child and Family Agency and An Garda Síochána, which are the two agencies with statutory responsibility for child protection. It also offers guidance to agencies and community and voluntary organisations (e.g. religious/faith sector, sporting organisations, etc.) that have contact with or provide services to children.

Society has a duty of care towards children and everyone should be alert to the possibility that children with whom they are in contact may be being abused or at risk of being abused. Children First is designed to encourage people to report concerns or suspicions to the Child and Family Agency.

Children First is also intended to provide a framework to support interagency cooperation and the strengthening of multidisciplinary responses to child abuse and neglect. Effective child protection will be best achieved where Children First and local procedures are underpinned by comprehensive training, supervision and support services for children and their families.

Use of Children First: National Guidance

According to Children First (1.3.1), every organisation, both public and private, that is providing services for children or that is in regular direct contact with children should:

- Ensure best practice in the recruitment of staff or volunteers, which includes Garda vetting, taking up of references, good HR practices in interviewing, induction training, probation and ongoing supervision and management
- Ensure that staff members or volunteers are aware of how to recognise signs of child abuse or neglect.
- Develop guidance and procedures for staff and/or volunteers who may have reasonable grounds for concern about the safety and welfare of children involved with the organisation. These procedures should not deviate from the current Children First, but may offer further elaboration to ensure local relevance and applicability. It is the responsibility of each organisation to ensure that such guidance and procedures are in place.





The Irish Child Protection System

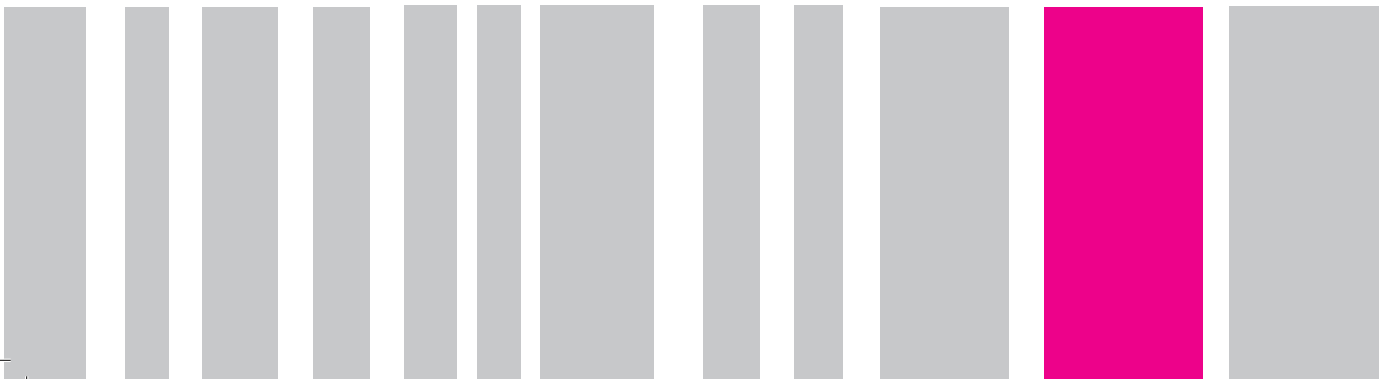
- Identify a Designated Liaison Person to act as a liaison with outside agencies and a resource person to any staff member or volunteer who has child protection concerns. The Designated Liaison Person is responsible for reporting allegations or suspicions of child abuse to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency or to An Garda Síochána.

Key principles of best practice in child protection and welfare

According to Children First, the key principles that should inform best practice in child protection and welfare are:

1. The welfare of children is of paramount importance.
2. Early intervention and support should be available to promote the welfare of children and families, particularly where they are vulnerable or at risk of not receiving adequate care or protection. Family support should form the basis of early intervention and preventative interventions.
3. A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents/carers and families. Where there is conflict, the child's welfare must come first.
4. Children have a right to be heard, listened to and taken seriously. Taking account of their age and understanding, they should be consulted and involved in all matters and decisions that may affect their lives. Where there are concerns about a child's welfare, there should be opportunities provided for their views to be heard independently of their parents/carers.
5. Parents/carers have a right to respect and should be consulted and involved in matters that concern their family.
6. Factors such as the child's family circumstances, gender, age, stage of development, religion, culture and race should be considered when taking protective action. Intervention should not deal with the child in isolation; the child's circumstances must be understood within a family context.
7. The criminal dimension of any action must not be ignored.
8. Children should only be separated from parents/carers when alternative means of protecting them have been exhausted. Re-union should be considered in the context of planning for the child's future.
9. The prevention, detection and treatment of child abuse or neglect requires a coordinated multidisciplinary approach, effective management, clarity of responsibility and training of personnel in organisations working with children.
10. Professionals and agencies working with adults who for a range of reasons may have serious difficulties meeting their children's basic needs for safety and security should always consider the impact of their adult client/patient's behaviour on a child and act in the child's best interests.

In Section 6, this book presents guidance on best practice principles for early years and school age services which arise from the Children First guidance.



Our Duty to Care: The Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People

Our Duty to Care is a resource published by the Department of Health and Children in 2002, which is aimed at community and voluntary organisations that provide services of any type for children.

It offers practical guidance on the promotion of child welfare and the development of safe practices in work with children. It provides useful material and factsheets in assisting organisations in developing their child protection policies.

The key messages from *Our Duty to Care* are incorporated throughout *Protecting Children*.

Child Care (Pre-school Services) (No.2) Regulations (2006)

These regulations, commonly referred to as the 'regs' or the 'pre-school regulations', set out the regulations and requirements relating to the operation of pre-school settings.

Note, they do not apply to school age childcare services.

Three regulations and requirements have particular relevance to our focus on child protection and welfare and these will be addressed in greater depth in later sections of this guide:

1. Vetting of all staff, students and volunteers who have access to a child (see Section 4).
2. Behaviour management (see Section 5).
3. Clear guidelines on the identification and reporting of child abuse within the framework of Children First (see Section 8 of this book).

13

National Standards For Pre-school Services

The National Standards, published in 2010, are intended to provide a tool for Pre-School Inspectors, pre-school service providers and parents using pre-school services. There are 20 Standards in all and the standard for Child Protection is set out below.

Outcome

Children are safely cared for within the service. Any concerns coming to the attention of the service which relate to the safety and welfare of those children, either within or outside the service, are responded to in accordance with Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children.



Criteria

1. All adults working in the service, and/or those who have access to children attending the service, have been appropriately vetted in accordance with Regulation 8.
2. A written child protection policy is in place, and all adults working and looking after children in the service have received induction training on the policy and are familiar with it.
3. The written child protection policy reflects the requirements of Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children and clearly outlines arrangements for contact with the local Child and Family Agency Social Work Department (including contact names and telephone numbers).
4. The policy and procedures clearly set out staff responsibilities for the reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect.
5. A designated senior member of staff, together with a deputy, has received Children First training in child protection, and is responsible for liaising with the relevant agencies in any child protection situation. It is in line with best practice with keeping children safe that *all* staff receive Children First training.
6. All staff are aware of:
 - The vigilance required to remain alert to child protection and welfare needs.
 - The symptoms of children at risk of abuse.
 - Their responsibility to report any concerns without delay.
 - Their responsibility to report to the designated senior member of staff (or deputy) any other staff member behaving inappropriately towards a child.
 - The requirement for confidentiality in all such cases.



Other Relevant Legislation

Protection for Person Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998

This Act provides for the protection from civil liability of persons who have reported child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to designated officers of the Child and Family Agency (including social workers, Public Health Nurses, childcare workers and childcare managers) or to any member of the Garda Síochána. This protection applies to organisations as well as individuals.

According to Children First (3.10), this means that even if a communicated suspicion of child abuse proves unfounded, a plaintiff who took an action would have to prove that the person who communicated the concern had not acted reasonably and in good faith in making the report.

This Act also introduced an offence of false reporting of child abuse, where a person reports child abuse knowing that statement to be false, which is designed to protect innocent people from malicious reports.

Domestic Violence Act 1996

This Act provides for legal remedies to address domestic violence, i.e. the Safety Order and the Barring Order. It also gives the Child and Family Agency powers to intervene to protect individuals and their children from violence.

Children Act 2001

This Act provides for the protection of children in care, provides for family welfare conferences and deals with the juvenile justice system.

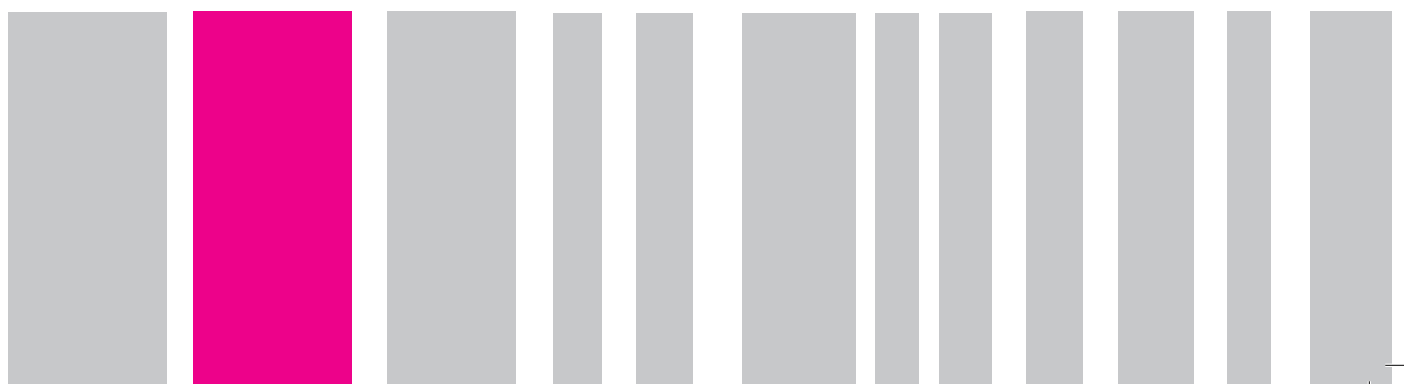
Criminal Justice Act 2006

This Act introduces the charge of 'reckless endangerment' of children. The Act makes it an offence for anyone with responsibility for a child to intentionally leave a child in a situation which creates a substantial risk to the child of being the victim of serious harm or sexual abuse, or who fails to take reasonable steps to protect a child from such risk.

Freedom of Information Act 1997 and 2003

Under the Freedom of Information Acts, members of the public have a right to access records concerning them being held by any public body and to have any such information that is incorrect amended.

Under the Acts, there are regulations relating to access by parents to their children's records, which emphasise that the overriding concern is the best interests of the child.



UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Ireland signed up to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992. While the Convention does not have any legal powers, it has impacted on Irish policy and legislation with regard to children. It includes a number of rights which are relevant to our focus on child protection and welfare including:

- The State shall provide the child with adequate care when parents or others conferred with such responsibility fail to do so.
- Every child has the inherent right to life and the State has an obligation to ensure the child's survival and development.
- All action concerning the child shall take account of his or her best interest.
- The child has the right to express his or her opinion freely and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting the child.

National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012

The purpose of this Act is to provide a legislative basis for the vetting of persons who seek positions of employment relating to children or vulnerable persons. Previously, persons applying for such positions were vetted on a non-statutory basis. This Act has not yet come into force (at the time of print) but, when enacted, it will make vetting mandatory. (See Section 4 for more information on Garda Vetting)



Section three

Recognising Child Abuse, Signs and Symptoms

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Children First categorises child abuse into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. In this Section, the definitions, signs and symptoms of the types of child abuse are outlined.

The role practitioners can play in recognising child abuse is also discussed while examples of what experienced practitioners have identified as possible signs of abuse within early years and childcare settings are given.

Scenarios

Throughout this guide, various scenarios illustrating different types of child abuse and neglect are outlined to facilitate practitioners to consider what their response might be if a child protection concern arises in their own workplace. These can be used for staff training, discussion at team meetings or for reflection by individual practitioners.

The example scenarios given are all of concern. Each situation requires a practitioner to respond, record and report to their Designated Liaison Person. All will require further discussion or information relating to the context of what the child has said or what has been observed or heard.

As this Section is concerned with recognising abuse, the scenarios given here are primarily to make practitioners alert to the possibility of abuse and help them to recognise the signs and symptoms of it. The questions given, therefore, relate to how practitioners might feel about a situation and what their initial response might be rather than the follow-up response, which will be dealt with in a later section.

It is important to emphasise at this point that it is NOT the job of the practitioner to make judgement, gather information or talk to parents without first gaining further advice from the Designated Liaison Person (see Section 6 for more information on this).

More thorough details on how to respond to child protection concerns as well as guidelines on the Standard Reporting Procedures will be given in Section 8 of this guide.

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Recognising Child Abuse

The safety, welfare and well-being of all children must be protected and promoted in all early childhood environments.

Síolta Principle

According to Our Duty to Care, it can be difficult for people to accept that children can be deliberately harmed. The possibility that parents, who appear to love their children, or workers, who are colleagues or friends, could hurt the children in their care is hard to take. Unfortunately, reluctance to think badly of people or lack of understanding and knowledge about abuse can lead to resistance in hearing, recognising and responding to it.

Children First (2.6.1) advises that child abuse can often be difficult to identify and may present in many forms. The ability to recognise abuse depends as much on a person's willingness to accept the possibility of its existence as it does on their knowledge and information.



Three stages in the identification of child abuse have been identified:

1. Considering the possibility
2. Looking out for signs of neglect or abuse
3. Recording of information

Signs and symptoms must always be considered in relation to the child's situation and family circumstances. Signs of abuse can be physical, behavioural or developmental.

A cluster or pattern of signs is a more reliable indicator of abuse than a single one. Children may hint at being harmed or may tell directly that they are being harmed. If a child makes a disclosure they should always be listened to and the information accepted as true in the first instance (see Section 7 for more information on disclosures from a child).

*Play situations, drawings or story-telling
may reveal relevant information.*

No one indicator should be seen as conclusive in itself of abuse. It is important to always be open to alternative explanations for physical or behavioural signs of abuse.

Our Duty to Care advises that good child protection practices mean that workers know how to recognise child abuse. This does not mean that they are responsible for deciding whether abuse has taken place – even for an expert that is a difficult decision – but they do have a responsibility to be alert to behaviour by children or workers which suggests that something is wrong.

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Children find it hard to tell that they are being abused, for a number of reasons:

- They may have been bribed or blackmailed not to tell.
 - They may be very frightened of the abuser.
 - They may be afraid of being blamed or punished, or excluded from the organisation.
 - They may be afraid of getting the abuser into trouble.
 - Children with learning disabilities and young children may not fully comprehend what is happening.
-

Children who are being abused often feel that they have tried to tell someone else – it must be remembered that they may have different ways of communicating information and practitioners must be sensitive to this.



Example scenarios

Aoife (aged 3) attended the pre-school daily. Practitioners were aware that there was a history of domestic violence in the family and Aoife's mum suffered with depression. The mum was 25 years old with four children under four years of age.

Aoife was playing with the mum and dad figures in the doll's house and they appeared to be fighting with each other. Her key worker overheard Aoife say:

'Daddy BOLD.'

'Mammy sad.'

'Daddy angry', Aoife then put the Daddy figure outside the house.

'Mammy happy, ahh! Mammy happy.'

Cian (aged 6) attended an after school group and practitioners were aware his mum was using drugs. Cian was playing at the doll's house using the policeman figure. He put the 'policeman' outside the bathroom, and said 'he needs to stay there so nobody flushes the things down the toilet'.

Questions to think about for each scenario

- How do you feel about this situation?
- What are your initial concerns?

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Role of Early Years and School Age Childcare Practitioners

Practitioners working with children in any childcare setting are well placed to observe and monitor children for signs of child abuse and neglect. They are the main caregivers outside the family context and have regular contact with children. Their understanding of child development can help to put into context the normal development of children for their age, ability and behaviour.

Children can develop a close trusting relationship with practitioners; this may lead to a child feeling comfortable enough to talk about their anxieties. Young children are often very open about what they see and hear. They regularly come into a childcare setting and tell practitioners what they have been doing at home or tell about events they have been to or things they have seen. This openness and honesty may work to their advantage when it comes to practitioners being alert to child abuse.

Those working with children are in a unique position to make observations of mood changes, school attendance, parent/child interactions, behaviour, body language, play, drawings and writing which may be helpful ways of evaluating possible child abuse (Peake, 2004).



Definitions, Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse

In this Section the different categories of child abuse will be described as set out in Children First, together with their signs and symptoms.

As previously stated, child abuse can be categorised into four different types:

1. Neglect
2. Emotional abuse
3. Physical abuse
4. Sexual abuse

Children can be subjected to one or more forms of abuse.

Neglect

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 instance:

- A child who suffers a series of minor injuries may not be having his or her needs in terms of necessary supervision and safety.
- A child whose height and 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

Neglect is the most common category of abuse. It can generally be divided into two kinds of neglect: 'wilful' and 'circumstantial'. 'Wilful' neglect would describe a deliberate deprivation by a parent/carer of a child's most basic needs, for example withdrawal of food, shelter, clothing, contact with others or warmth. 'Circumstantial' neglect may often be due to stress/inability to cope by parents or carers.

Neglect is often related to low socio-economic factors or to parental incapacity due to learning disability, psychological disturbance or alcohol/substance abuse.

According to Appendix 1 of Children First, child neglect should be suspected in cases of:

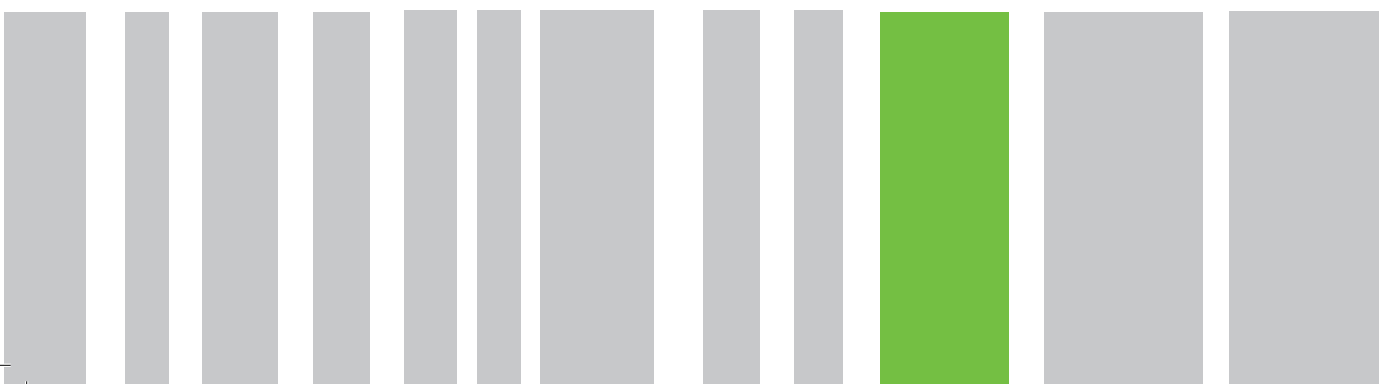
- Abandonment or desertion.
- Children persistently being left alone without adequate care and supervision.
- Malnourishment, lacking food, inappropriate food or erratic feeding.
- Lack of warmth.
- Lack of adequate clothing.
- Inattention to basic hygiene.
- Lack of protection and exposure to danger, 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 not only due to malnutrition but also due to emotional deprivation.
- Failure to provide adequate care for the child's medical and developmental problems.
- Exploitation, overwork.

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How might neglect be seen in an early years or school age childcare setting?

Experienced practitioners have identified the following as some signs of possible neglect that might be cause for concern:

- A child coming to the centre in the morning frequently hungry.
- A child coming frequently inadequately dressed for the weather, for example, no coat on when it is cold or wet, no socks or underwear on.
- A child being constantly tired and falling asleep during activities.
- A child coming in who is unwashed and is often in dirty clothes.
- Ill fitting shoes and clothes.
- Constant head lice.
- Nappies that appear to have not been changed since the night before.
- Failure to bring a child for health check-ups or medical appointments.
- Unwillingness to take an unwell child to the doctor or dentist despite staff bringing it to the attention of parents/carers.
- Becoming aware that a child is being left on their own while parents/carers are out.



- Becoming aware that a child is being minded by a sibling who is not old enough to do so.
- A parent under the influence of alcohol or drugs bringing or collecting their child.

Example scenarios

John (aged 5) came to the service with continuous bruises, the kind most children get from time to time. Both parents would say they didn't know how he got them. There appeared to be little parental supervision of John while he was out playing.

John talked about getting into fights with other children. His behaviour in the pre-school was challenging at times and he found it hard to accept boundaries. He was diagnosed with scabies, which continued for several weeks without clearing up. John was often dressed in light clothing even in cold weather. He frequently came to the pre-school without underwear or socks on.

Chloe (aged 2) missed a lot of days at the early years service and it was noticed that her attendance on Mondays was particularly poor. Practitioners were concerned about her speech and language development, which they felt was delayed for her age. Both of Chloe's parents had addiction issues and had, on occasions, come to collect her under the influence of drugs. While on a home visit, practitioners became aware that there was little or no food in the house.

Questions to think about for each scenario

- How do you feel about this situation?
- What are your initial concerns?

Emotional Abuse

Definition of emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the *relationship* between a caregiver 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 of emotional abuse of children include:

- 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 by the child's parent/carer.





Recognising Child Abuse, Signs and Symptoms

- 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 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.

Children show signs of emotional abuse by their behaviour (e.g. excessive clinginess to or avoidance of the parent), their emotional state (low self esteem, fear, unhappiness, anger), or their development (non-organic failure to thrive) (French, 2008a).

The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and parent.

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Signs and symptoms of emotional abuse

Emotional abuse occurs when adults responsible for taking care of children are unable to meet their children's emotional and developmental needs. Emotional abuse is not easy to recognise because the effects of it are hard to observe.

According to Appendix 1 of Children First, the following signs may indicate emotional abuse. However, it should be noted that no one indicator is conclusive of abuse.

- Rejection
- Lack of attachment
- Lack of comfort and love
- Lack of proper stimulation (e.g. fun and play)
- Lack of continuity of care (e.g. frequent moves)
- Serious over protectiveness
- Continuous lack of praise and encouragement
- 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's behaviour – relative to his or her age and stage of development



How might emotional abuse be seen in an early years or school age childcare setting?

Experienced practitioners have identified the following signs of possible emotional abuse that might be cause for concern:

- Parent at arrival or collection time regularly not making eye contact with their child.
- Parent regularly not showing any interest in what their child wants to show them when they are being collected, for example, paintings, crafts etc.
- Parents not listening or not interested in what their child wants to say to them.
- Parents always critical of their child, coming in everyday with tales of their misdemeanours with nothing positive to say about their child.
- Becoming aware of excessive punishments.
- Becoming aware that a child is witnessing domestic violence.
- Child being singled out as being the difficult one in the family, ‘always was trouble, always will be’.
- Over reaction to mistakes.
- A child having extreme fear of any new situation.

Example scenario

Ciara (aged 3) attended the pre-school. Over time, practitioners noticed that Ciara’s mum talked a lot about herself when she came to collect her daughter, she didn’t smile or make eye contact with Ciara when she came into the room to collect her, she often kept on talking to the other parents and didn’t show much interest in what Ciara had to say or show to her. Ciara’s mum would question staff to see if Ciara had been good or bad in the pre-school each day. Ciara was frequently reluctant to go home and would start to behave badly when her mum appeared.

On one occasion, Ciara scribbled on the role book at home time and practitioners observed her mum hitting her several times on the head with her hand following this incident. Ciara’s mum then made threats about what she would do to her when she got home.

Questions to think about

- How do you feel about this situation?
- What are your initial concerns?



Physical 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.

Examples of physical abuse include the following:

- Severe physical punishment such as beating, slapping, hitting, kicking, pushing, shaking, throwing pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling
- Terrorising with threats
- Observing violence
- Use of excessive force in handling
- Deliberate poisoning
- Suffocation
- Fabricated/induced illness
- Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child

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Signs and symptoms of physical abuse

According to Appendix 1 of Children First, unsatisfactory explanations for the following events are highly suspicious:

- 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
- Poisons – repeated (prescribed drugs, alcohol)
- Failure to thrive
- Coma/Unconsciousness
- Death

Non-accidental bruises can be marks from slapping or grabbing (the outline of fingers may be seen). Any bruises around the neck are suspicious as these are unlikely to have happened accidentally while a punch over the eye (black eye syndrome) or ear would also be of concern. Non-accidental bruises are frequently present on soft tissue areas such as the cheek, buttocks, lower back and upper leg. Mouth injury caused by forced bottle-feeding or other bruising which



may be left by the use of straps, belts, sticks or feet would be of concern. Any bruising on a child before the age of mobility must be treated with concern.

Accidental bruises are common on the chin, forehead, nose, elbow, knee and shins. An accident prone child can frequently have bruises in these areas.

Non-accidental burns – Children who have received non-accidental burns may exhibit a pattern that is not adequately explained by parents. The child may have been immersed in a hot liquid. The burn may show a definite line, unlike the type seen in accidental splashing. The child may also have been held against a hot object, like a radiator or a ring of a cooker, leaving distinctive marks. Cigarette burns may result in multiple small lesions in places on the skin that would not generally be exposed to danger. There may be other skin conditions that can cause similar patterns and expert paediatric advice should be sought.

Bites – Any suspect adult bite mark must be taken very seriously.

Shaking violently – Shaking is a frequent cause of brain damage in very young children.

Fabricated/induced illness – This occurs where parents fabricate stories of illness about their child or cause physical signs of illness.

How might practitioners in an early years or school age childcare setting distinguish physical abuse from marks and bruises that are typically found on all active young children?

The following should be a cause for concern:

- Any marks, bruises and other injuries that parents refuse to explain or give an improbable explanation for.
- If the child’s account of what happened is very different to the parents.
- Repeated or recurring injuries or burns may suggest inadequate care and attention within the home.
- A child who is fearful of physical contact.
- Child who is startled or ducks when adults who are close by move suddenly.



Example scenarios

Max (aged 3) came to the pre-school one day. Practitioners noticed that he had two small round bruises on the side of his right cheek. When asked what happened to his cheek, Max replied 'Mammy pinched me.'

Michelle (aged 4) attended the pre-school. Practitioners were aware that her father had custody of his four young children and was parenting alone. Michelle had poor speech and language skills and her gross motor skills were delayed as she had spent a lot of time as a young child strapped into her buggy.

Michelle appeared to really enjoy coming to the pre-school, however her attendance was erratic. Following a couple of days' absence, Michelle was washing her face after lunch and her key worker noticed that her ear was sore. She looked at the side of Michelle's face and noticed the outline of a bruise near her ear. When Michelle was asked what made her ear sore, she indicated with her fist a blow to her ear and said 'Da Da do it.'

Neil (aged 7) was playing on his bike in the yard at break time when his key worker noticed he had a bruise on his forehead. She asked Neil how he hurt his head and he replied 'Mammy threw a bottle at my head.' Mum was asked about it at home time, she explained that she had been throwing a bottle at the bin when Neil got in the way by mistake.

Following a conversation with the family's social worker, it came to light that, on that day one year previously, Neil's Dad had taken his own life.

Questions to think about for each scenario

- How do you feel about this situation?
- What are your initial concerns?

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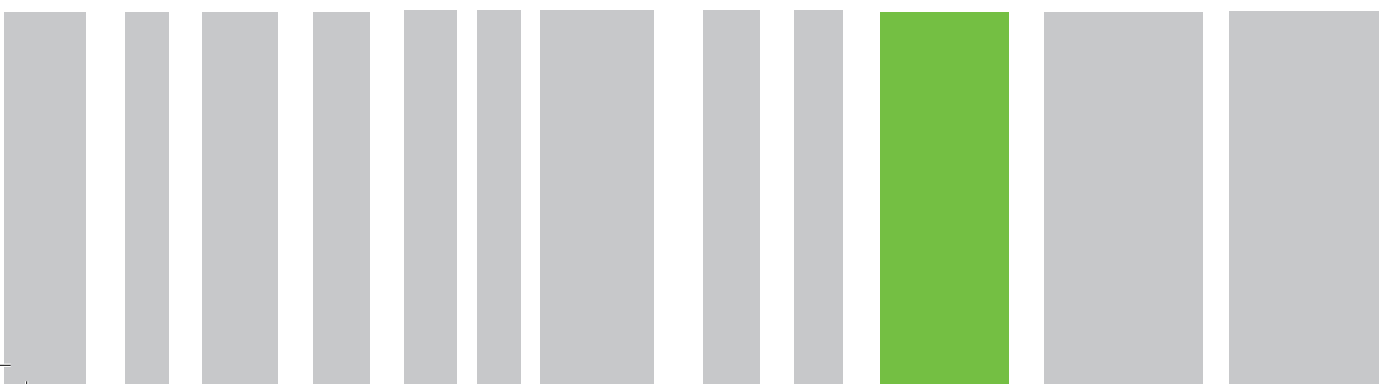
Sexual Abuse

Definition of 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.

Examples of child sexual abuse include the following:

- Exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of the child.
- Intentional touching or molesting 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 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, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its 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 under-age 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. An Garda Síochána will deal with the criminal aspects of the case under the relevant legislation.

Signs and symptoms of sexual abuse

Child sexual abuse often involves different types of abusive activities, which can occur over a number of years. Child sexual abuse frequently happens within the family. It is complex and difficult to deal with.

According to Appendix 1 of Children First, cases of child sexual abuse come to light through:

- Disclosure by the child or his/her sibling/friend
- The suspicions of an adult
- Physical symptoms

Children First suggests that carers and professionals should be alert to the following behavioural and physical 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 definite 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 in 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 which involve undressing, for example, games or swimming.





Recognising Child Abuse, Signs and Symptoms

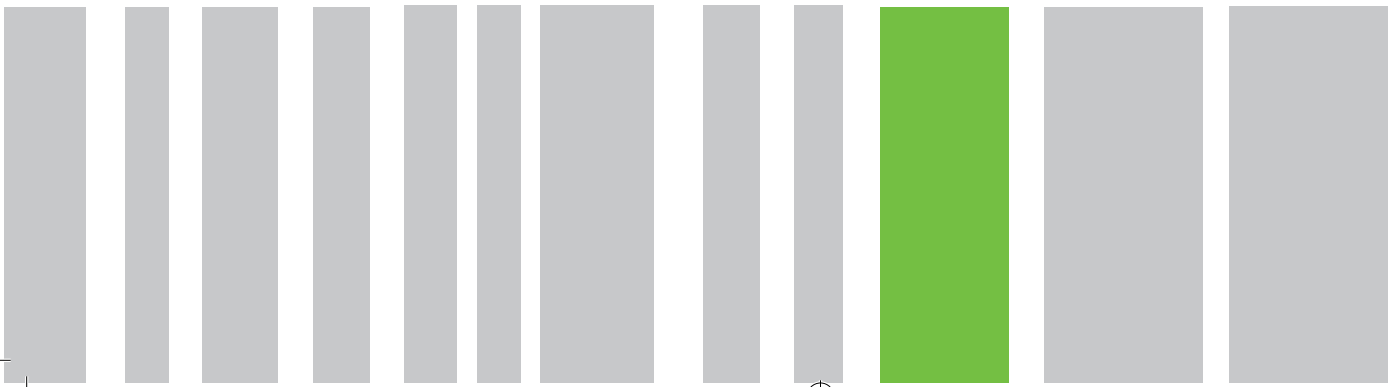
Particular behavioural signs and emotional problems suggestive of sexual abuse in young children (0-10 yrs) include:

- Mood changes, e.g. child becomes withdrawn, fearful, acting out
- Lack of concentration (change in school performance)
- Bed wetting, soiling
- Psychosomatic complaints such as pains or headaches
- Skin disorders
- Nightmares, changes in sleep patterns
- School refusal
- Separation anxiety
- Loss of appetite

Particular behavioural signs and emotional problems suggestive of sexual abuse in older children (10+ yrs) include:

- Mood change, e.g. depression, failure to communicate
- Running away
- Drug, alcohol, solvent abuse
- Self-harm
- Suicide attempts
- Truancy
- Eating disorders

All signs/indicators need careful assessment relative to the child's circumstances. Practitioners working in an early years or school age childcare setting need to acknowledge that sexual abuse exists, however difficult that is to accept, especially when it involves young children.



What signs might indicate sexual abuse on a child in an early years or school age childcare setting?

Some situations that should cause practitioners concern are:

- Any disclosure by a child.
- Sexual knowledge inappropriate for a child's age.
- Sexual role play using dolls or peers inappropriate for a child's age.
- Drawing sexually explicit pictures inappropriate for a child's age.
- Use of sexualised language inappropriate for the child's age.
- Being overly affectionate in a sexual way that is inappropriate for a child's age.
- Becoming aware that a child is being exposed to pornography.

Example scenarios

Over a period of time, practitioners observed that Claire (aged 3) would frequently add 'big willies' made with plastercine onto things she was playing with such as dolls or stuffed animals. She also included them in her drawings.

At 'newstime', Eoin (aged 3) was given his turn to tell the pre-school group his news. Eoin said, 'Last night I played the smelly game with Darren'. His key worker asked him what the smelly game was. Eoin replied, 'Darren puts his finger up my bum, then I put my finger up his bum.'

Questions to think about for each scenario

- How do you feel about this situation?
- What are your initial concerns?

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Peer Abuse

In some cases of child abuse, the alleged abuse may have been carried out by another child. Children First advises that child protection procedures should be adhered to for both the victim and the alleged abuser – i.e. it should be considered a child care and protection issue for *both* children.

Children who are abusive towards other children require comprehensive assessment and therapeutic interventions by skilled childcare professionals. It is essential to refer concerns about peer abuse immediately to the Child and Family Agency Social Work Department.





Sexual abuse by children and young people

Research shows that teenagers perpetrate a considerable proportion of child sexual abuse. Such cases also need to be referred to the Child and Family Agency.

Four categories of behaviour warrant attention according to Children First (9.3), they are:

- Normal sexual exploration
- Abuse reactive behaviour
- Sexually obsessive behaviour
- Abusive behaviour by adolescents and young people

It is important that the different types of behaviour are clearly identified and that no young person is wrongly labelled 'a child abuser'.

Bullying

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression – whether it is verbal, psychological or physical – that is conducted by an individual or group against another. It mainly occurs in social environments such as schools and it can be a feature of school age childcare. It includes behaviours such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting or extortion by one or more persons against another. Bullying can also take the form of racial abuse. With the developments in modern technology, children can also be the victims of non-contact bullying, via mobile phones, the Internet, and other personal devices.

Bullying behaviour may be a sign that a child is experiencing adult abuse. Bullying behaviour in a childcare setting should never be ignored. Both the child (or children) who is carrying out the bullying and the child who is the subject of the bullying need support and intervention. Concerns about bullying should be discussed with parents.

*Children First (9.4.5) states that **serious instances** of bullying behaviour should be referred to the Children and Family Agency Social Services*



Section four

Recruitment and Management Practices

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This section looks at ways to develop safe recruitment and selection practices and includes information on Garda vetting. It also examines the importance of safe management practices including staff supervision and training.

Scenario

This Section includes a scenario that could arise during recruitment. It can be used as part of reflective practice to help managers think about what they might do if such a situation should occur.

Most people who want to work with children do so from a genuine motivation and commitment to working with children. Unfortunately, people with a tendency to abuse children can be attracted to employment that gives them access to children. The recruitment, selection, support and management of staff, therefore, are key components of effective child protection in early years and school age childcare services. It is important that safe recruitment and management practices apply to all posts involved in services working with children, both childcare and ancillary posts such as cooks, cleaners, drivers etc. They are equally applicable to volunteers (which includes parents and students as well as the general public), part-time staff, full-time staff and staff on training schemes.

Developing Safe Recruitment and Selection Practices

Children First emphasises the importance of organisations working with children adopting and consistently applying a safe and clearly defined method of recruiting and selecting staff and volunteers. Services should ensure that they have a clear and up-to-date Recruitment and Selection Policy. The guidance in this section is consistent with Our Duty to Care and best practice.

Recruitment and selection processes need to be thorough and comprehensive in order to ensure that all practitioners and volunteers recruited are suitable to work with children as well as having the particular competencies necessary for the roles involved.

Guidelines for safe recruitment and selection

- Be clear about the role of the staff or volunteers. This involves being clear about the role and responsibilities of the job and setting them out in the job description.
 - What is the purpose of the job?
 - What are the key activities or tasks?
- Be clear about the requirements necessary to effectively carry out the job. The person specification sets out these requirements and should include education, training, qualifications, skills or competencies, knowledge, experience and personal qualities.
- Use an application form to ensure that you collect all relevant information about the applicants on the same basis. Appendix 1 shows a Sample Job Application Form. You should ask the candidate to sign and declare that the information they have provided is true.
- Include a declaration on the application form that requires applicants to disclose if they have any previous convictions, are subject to current criminal investigation or have anything in their background that would render them unsuitable to work with children.



- All vacancies should be widely publicly advertised to ensure the widest pool of applicants.
- The shortlisting of candidates should be carried out by at least two people. It should be done on the basis of agreed criteria that are linked to the requirements of the job specification and which rank applications that most closely match the requirements of the role.
- In the case of small, owner-managed services, it may be difficult to identify a second person to carry out shortlisting and interviewing. It may be helpful for such services to seek a second person from a local childcare organisation who would be familiar with the early years sector.
- Most interview panels should have three people but not less than two. Use a structured interview process which involves devising a standard list of questions linked to the requirements of the post. All application forms should be checked thoroughly and any gaps or inconsistent information should be queried at the interview.
- It is important to ensure that written records of the shortlisting process and interview assessments are kept for each candidate, along with any issues that arose at any part of the process.
- Following interviews and selection of candidates it is important to take up a minimum of two references before any appointment is offered. References should be checked by telephone and in writing to verify the applicant's identity and to check their employment history, qualifications, experience and suitability for the role. References should be recent, relevant to the post and should not be provided by family members.
- An offer of the post should be subject to Garda vetting procedures being carried out (see below). Allowing someone to start before Garda vetting has been received is regarded as non-compliant under the Pre-school Regulations.
- An appointment should be offered subject to a probation period, normally of six months and not longer than 11 months. Reviews should be carried out throughout the probation period and in particular mid-way and at the end of the probation period. This gives the childcare service an opportunity to assess the suitability of a new worker to work with children and to implement the organisation's policies on safe practices.
- The employment contract agreed between the service and the employee should state that the contract, along with the organisations' policies and procedures (which includes the Child Protection Policy), form the conditions of employment.

Garda Vetting

Early years and school age childcare services need to include Garda vetting in their Recruitment and Selection Policy.

The Childcare (Pre-school) Regulations 2006⁴ require any person carrying on a pre-school service to ensure appropriate vetting of all staff, students and volunteers who have access to a child. This involves:

⁴ Childcare (Pre-school Services) Regulations 2006, Section 8.2.





Recruitment and Management Practices

1. Checking employer references in respect of staff and checking reputable sources in respect of students and volunteers.
2. Seeking Garda vetting from An Garda Síochána.
3. In respect of applicants who have lived abroad, ensuring that these persons provide the necessary police vetting from other police authorities.

The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 is to provide a legislative basis for the vetting of persons who seek positions of employment relating to children or vulnerable persons. When it comes into force, this Act will make vetting mandatory.

For students/employees/volunteers aged between 16 to 18 years, the guidance from the Gardai is they should be subject to Garda vetting only when they have substantial unsupervised access to children. A Garda vetting parental consent form must be signed in relation to applicants in the 16 to 18 age bracket.

Ensure that the identity of the applicant is confirmed against an original (not a photocopy) official documentation (such as a driving licence or passport), which includes the applicant's name, address, date of birth and a photograph. This should be compared with the written application.

The processing of applications

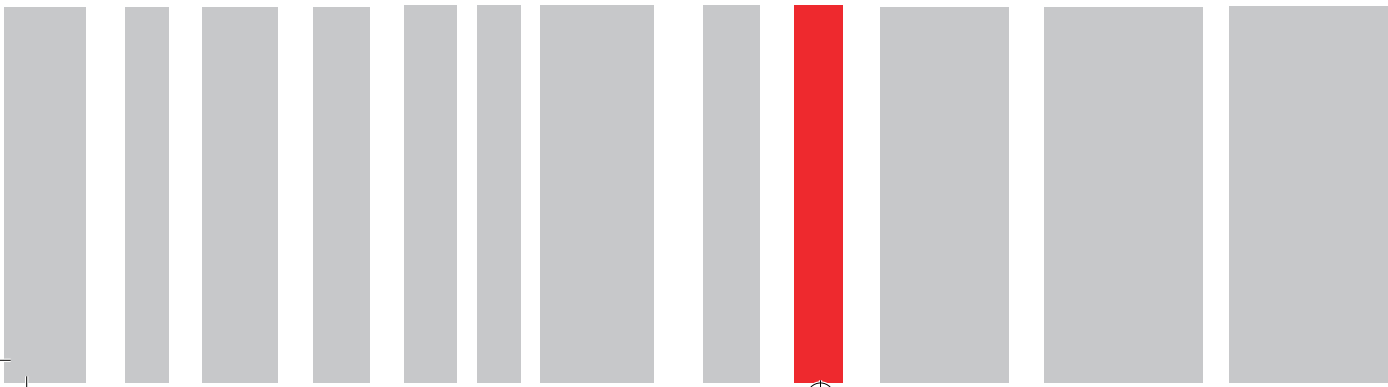
The processing of applications by the Garda Vetting Unit can take some months, which can be challenging for services. However, the Pre-school Regulations and best practice from a child protection perspective require that services complete vetting prior to any person being appointed or being allowed access to children.

The Garda Vetting Unit will only handle requests from authorised signatories of organisations registered with them. At the request of the DCYA, Barnardos and Early Childhood Ireland process vetting applications in respect of the early years sector. Barnardos deals with childcare providers, including childminders, who are not members of Early Childhood Ireland (see Sources of Information for contact details for both organisations). Barnardos also provides training for early years providers in regard to the Garda vetting process.

All persons working in the childcare service, including the owner or management committee, staff, volunteers and students, should be vetted.

School age childcare is not covered by the Childcare (Pre-school) Regulations; therefore Garda vetting is not currently a legal requirement. However, best practice would require that all persons working with children should be Garda vetted. It is recommended that school age services should seek Garda vetting through the appropriate authorised organisation. In the case of school age childcare services operating under the auspices of a school, it may be possible to apply for Garda vetting via the school.

For early years services, once vetting applications have been processed by the Garda Vetting Unit, the results are returned to the authorised organisation (i.e. Barnardos or Early Childhood Ireland) and forwarded to the line manager or contact person from the childcare service. Once the Garda Vetting Unit and the authorised organisation discloses data to the childcare provider, the provider is responsible for the data.



It is important that childcare services comply with data protection legislation⁵, including:

- Obtaining and processing information fairly.
- Keeping it for explicit lawful purposes.
- Using it and disclosing it only in ways compatible with those purposes.
- Keeping it safe and secure.
- Retaining it for no longer than is necessary for that purpose.
- Giving a person a copy of his or her personal data on request.

Your policy on Garda vetting needs to state how often Garda vetting will be repeated for employees/ management/owners, for example at five-year intervals.

Disclosure of convictions

The report that comes back from the Garda Vetting Unit will disclose the following:

- Criminal Convictions to be disclosed in all cases:
 - Offences against the Person.
 - Sexual Offences
 - Convictions on indictment
- District Court Convictions which will not be disclosed:
 - Motoring Offences (dating back more than seven years)
 - Minor Public Order Offences such as intoxication or disorderly conduct (dating back more than seven years)
 - Other minor offences (dating back more than seven years) where the person has one such offence only
- Probation Act Provisions – Where persons have been dealt with by a district court in accordance with the provisions of section 1 (1) (i) or 1 (1) (ii) of the Probation Act 1907, the offences will not be disclosed except in cases where the circumstances of the offence gives rise to a bona fide concern that the person concerned may harm a child or vulnerable person. Where persons have been dealt with by a court in accordance with section 1 (2) of the Probation Act, these will be disclosed in all cases.
- Non Convictions, offences in respect of which a person is charged but subsequently not prosecuted or acquitted, will be considered for disclosure where the circumstances of an offence gives rise to a bona fide concern that the person concerned may harm a child or vulnerable person. The Garda Central Vetting Unit will make such decision in the context of the information concerned; the relevance of the information to the type of work/activity; the source and reliability of the information: and the rights of the vetting applicant and any submissions made by them.

Organisations providing vetting to early years and school age providers do not have a decision-making role in relation to vetting results. Early years and school age services need to have in place procedures to deal with a disclosure of convictions or cases pending.

⁵ Data Protection Acts, 1988 and 2003.



Risk assessment

If you find that someone has a criminal record, it doesn't automatically mean they will be unsuitable. Services need to carry out a risk assessment in relation to the conviction or cases pending and the post being recruited for. This is a decision that each service has to make as part of their decision making on the suitability of the person to be appointed to the role.

When information is returned indicating a prosecution or possible match, it is recommended that a Garda vetting review meeting is held with the applicant. This has two purposes:

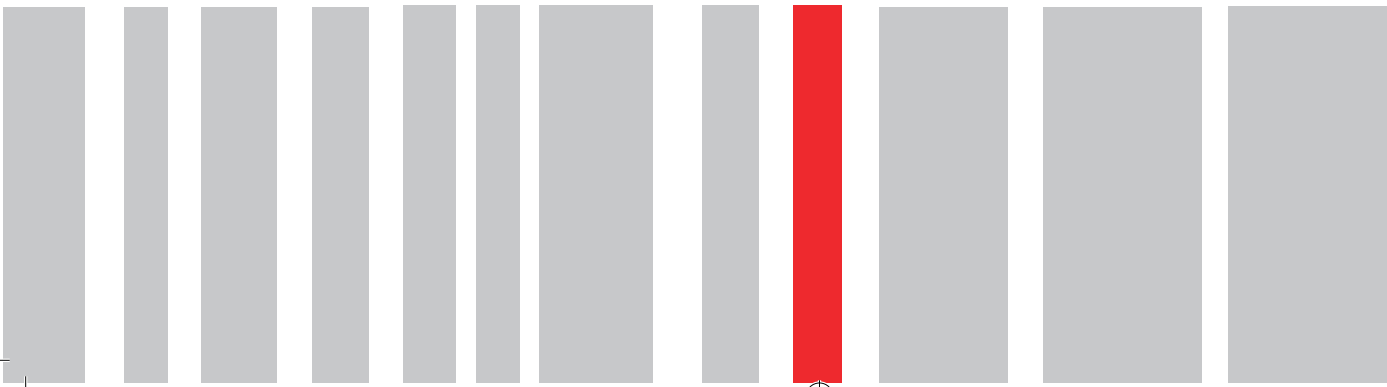
1. To verify that the applicant is the person about whom the disclosure of convictions has been made. The information returned by the Gardai may apply to the applicant and should be verified with the applicant before any decision is made.
2. To provide an opportunity for the employer and the applicant to discuss the disclosure from Garda vetting.

If the applicant disputes the information returned by the Garda Central Vetting Unit, the onus is on the applicant to contact the Gardai to resolve the matter. In carrying out a risk assessment you need to consider:

- The nature of the offence.
- How long ago it took place.
- Its relevance to the job.
- The risk to children if it were to be repeated.

The risk assessment and the decision to employ or not to employ should be carried out by the manager of the service and the owner or representative of the Board of Management. It is important that the service retains a record of the decision and the reasons for the decision as part of the overall recruitment records. In the event of a decision not to appoint on the basis of a Garda vetting disclosure, the advice from the Garda Central Vetting Unit is to retain records for seven years.

It is important to recognise the limitations of police vetting as research, which can only alert an employer to criminal convictions. Research indicates that very few child abusers receive criminal convictions. Garda vetting should be seen as part of the overall safe recruitment practices and should be seen as one component of the recruitment decision. Even if the checks come back with no disclosure, you still have to use your own judgement about whether the person is suitable for the post.



Example scenario

Rainbows childcare service has a vacancy for the position of Assistant Manager and, following interviews, selects Susan who meets the service's qualifications and experience requirements. A disclosure of larceny (i.e. theft), which occurred five years previously, comes back from Garda vetting.

Questions to think about

- What additional information may be relevant or useful?
- What factors should management consider when carrying out the risk assessment?
- What do you think the management of Rainbows childcare service should do?

Induction and Training

The provision of induction training for new staff and volunteers is an essential part of best practice in regard to child protection. Managers need to ensure that new recruits are provided with induction training which covers the service's Child Protection Policy as well as related policies such as those dealing with supporting positive behaviour, grievances, complaints and health and safety. At an early stage, practitioners should be asked to sign up to the services' Child Protection Policy.

Early years and school age services are required under Children First to provide child protection training for all staff to raise awareness of child protection and to ensure that all staff are familiar with the service's child protection policy and procedures for responding to concerns about child abuse. This is also consistent with Siolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education, which will be explained in Section 5.

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Child protection training should be compulsory for all staff.

Practitioners who carry out the Designated Liaison Person role (see Section 6) should participate in training specific to their role.

Early years practitioners can contact their local Childcare Committee or Barnardos for more information on how to avail of Children First training.

Developing Safe Management Practices

It is important that there is a system for staff support and supervision in place. The manager is responsible for ensuring conditions are in place that facilitate the team to carry out their work with children. From a child protection perspective, the staff support and supervision system should include the following elements.





Recruitment and Management Practices

Supervision

Staff supervision is neither an event nor a method; rather it is an ongoing process. The purpose of staff supervision is to support the practitioner to meet organisational, professional and personal objectives. Staff supervision recognises the inter-dependence of accountability, competency, professional development and personal support (French, 2008a).

Staff supervision should promote 'reflective practice', which involves checking and changing practice in the light of learning from past experience.

It is important for staff to meet with their supervisor on a one-to-one basis. In many childcare services, meetings will be scheduled on a monthly basis but the frequency will vary depending on the needs of the service and of the staff. For example, during the induction period, it might be necessary to schedule short weekly or fortnightly meetings with a new recruit.

Child protection should be a standing agenda item at supervision meetings. However, it is important that managers and practitioners do not wait until a supervision meeting to address any child protection concerns that might arise.

Team meetings

In childcare services, team meetings are essential to effective co-working and communications. Child protection should always be an item on the agenda to allow managers and staff to raise any child protection practice issues.

The line manager should periodically review, with all staff members, their understanding of the Child Protection Policy and also monitor any training needs in relation to safe care and child protection matters.

Dealing with child protection concerns can be stressful for practitioners and can have an impact on one's emotional well-being, which will be further explored in Section 10. It can be challenging for staff to come to terms with the possibility of a child they care about being abused. They may also have to deal with conflict and anger from parents/carers. Practitioners should actively seek support from their line manager and from colleagues, within the bounds of confidentiality. (See Section 8 for further information on confidentiality.)

Appraisal

Best practice would recommend that staff appraisals are carried out at least once a year. Appraisals enable the manager and the practitioner to review the performance of the worker over an agreed period of time and to agree objectives and any training needs that need to be addressed. They also provide an opportunity for the staff member to make a declaration in relation to criminal convictions on an annual basis. See Appendix 2 for a sample of an Appraisal Form.

Further guidance on HR issues can be found in Barnardos' publication *Human Resource Management in Early Years Services* (2010).



Section five

Keeping Children Safe

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Keeping children safe in an early years or school age childcare setting requires services to implement good practice principles consistent with the organisational culture or ethos of the service. In this section good practice principles are outlined in relation to protecting children during service provision, working with children and working with parents.

Scenarios

This section includes sample scenarios that reflect the possibility of a conflict of interest between what a parent feels and the needs of their child. They can be used for staff training, discussion at team meetings or for reflection by individual practitioners.

Good Practice for Child Protection and Welfare

Parents/carers are primarily responsible for the safety and welfare of the children in their care. If children are harmed or fail to receive adequate care, the Child and Family Agency is the statutory body responsible for child protection and welfare.

The wider community, i.e. neighbours, relatives, friends and those working with children, can also play their part in protecting children by passing on information concerning suspected or actual child abuse to the attention of the Child and Family Agency. Early intervention by the Child and Family Agency will help to bring about the best outcomes for a child. Organisations providing services for children must be guided by best practice principles.

According to Our Duty to Care, adopting the following principles in an organisation will help to create an environment in which children are listened to, given a sense of belonging and kept safe; parents are supported and encouraged; and staff and volunteers who work with children and young people are supported and protected.

All organisations providing services for children should:

- Acknowledge the **rights of children** to be protected, treated with respect, listened to and have their own views taken into consideration.
- Recognise that the **welfare of children** must always come first, regardless of all other considerations.
- Develop a **Child Protection Policy** that raises awareness about the possibility of child abuse occurring and outline the steps to be taken if it is suspected.
- Adopt the **safest possible practices** to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and protect workers from the necessity to take risks and leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or neglect.
- Establish a **code of behaviour** between workers and children to avoid the possibility of misunderstanding or the potential for allegations of misconduct.
- Adopt and consistently apply clearly defined methods of **recruiting staff and volunteers**.
- Develop procedures for responding to **accidents and complaints**.
- Remember that **early intervention** with children who are at risk may prevent serious harm from happening to them at a later stage.



- Remember that a **child's age, gender and background** affect the way they experience and understand what is happening to them.
- Provide **child protection training for workers**. This should clarify the responsibilities of both organisations and individuals, and clearly show the procedures to be followed if child abuse is suspected.
- Develop a **policy of openness with parents** that involves consulting them about everything that concerns their child and encouraging them to get involved with the organisation wherever possible.
- **Co-operate** with other childcare and protection agencies and professionals by sharing information when necessary and working together towards the best possible outcome for the children concerned.
- **Make links** with other relevant organisations in order to promote child protection and welfare policies and practices.

Remember, valuing children means valuing workers as well. Insisting on safe practices, eliminating the necessity for staff to take risks and providing them with support will make for a healthier and safer organisation.

Child Care (Pre-school Services) Regulations 2006

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As mentioned earlier, the Child Care (Pre-school Services) Regulations 2006 came into effect in order to improve childcare standards and ensure the health, safety and welfare of pre-school children. The purpose of the Regulations is to set minimum standards throughout the sector. The Regulations focus on the development of children, the physical environment for children's services, safety and emergency aspects, behaviour management and appropriate record keeping.

The Regulations also require that a person providing a pre-school service ensures that a written policy and procedures on behaviour management are in place to deal with and to manage a child's challenging behaviour and to assist children to manage their own behaviour as appropriate to their age and stage of development. Practitioners must ensure that no corporal punishment is used and that practices are not disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful in respect of any child attending their service.

The Pre-school Regulations require that when planning activities to support children's development, each child's individual needs, interests and abilities be considered by childcare providers. They should also work in co-operation with parents/carers to ensure that each child's needs are met appropriately.



Síolta – The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education

Síolta – The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education was developed by the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) in consultation with the early years sector. Síolta aims to facilitate the advancement of quality standards across a range of settings for children aged from birth to six years. Síolta also acts as a tool for policy development for childcare services. It is designed to assist all those concerned with the provision of early childhood education in Ireland.

- The **12 Principles of Quality** are the ultimate benchmark for all quality practice and service provision in early education (see Appendix 3).
- The **16 Standards of Quality** cover the areas of practice to be addressed and translate the vision of quality contained in the Principles into the reality of practice (see Appendix 4).

Síolta asks early years settings to reflect on the following in connection with child protection:

How does your setting ensure that all adults are fully briefed on good practice in relation to child protection?

Think about:

- Relevant information available and accessible to all.
- Briefing on child protection policies and procedures in your induction process for adults working in the setting.
- Involving all relevant adults in the development of a policy and procedures related to child protection.
- Role of in-service training to support the adult's engagement with child protection policies and procedures.
- Ensuring that information updates are communicated to all adults, as appropriate.
- Ensuring that parents are familiarised with policies and procedures on child protection.

What processes are in place in your setting to ensure that children are treated with respect and dignity, especially in relation to personal care?

Think about:

- Supporting children to have a say in decision-making.
 - Ensuring children's rights to privacy are respected.
 - Ensuring that behaviour management processes maintain respect for the dignity and rights of children.
 - Ensuring that all complaints are dealt with sensitively and responsively.
 - Ensuring that adults are never unsupervised/alone with an individual child.
 - Supporting children's understanding of their own role in respecting the rights of others.
-



What procedures do you have to deal with suspected or actual abuse of children in your setting or elsewhere?

Think about:

- A Designated Liaison Person who takes responsibility for issues related to child protection.
- Opportunity for the Designated Liaison Person to gain the skills and knowledge necessary for this important role.
- Recognition of, and response to, abuse.
- Reporting of suspected abuse.
- Supporting the child to report abuse
- Provision of support for the child where abuse has been identified
- Liaison with other agencies/individuals who can intervene and/or support you in dealing appropriately with this issue.

(Siolta, Component 9.3)

Aistear – The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework

The purpose of Aistear is to support children's learning from birth to six years. It describes the types of learning experiences that are important to enable children to develop as competent and confident learners. Aistear also provides guidelines for adults in planning, providing for and supporting these experiences.

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Working with Children

Code of behaviour between workers and children

According to Our Duty to Care, all organisations should establish a code of behaviour between workers and children. Establishing a code of behaviour will promote good practice and contribute towards raising practice standards. It will give guidance on what is expected and what is not expected with respect to behaviour between all staff and children. All staff should become familiar with the organisation's code of behaviour as part of their induction training.

Such codes should include the following guidance:

- Workers should be sensitive to the risks involved in participating in contact sports or other activities.
- While physical contact is a valid way of comforting, reassuring and showing concern for children, it should only take place when it is acceptable to all persons concerned.
- Workers should never physically punish or be in any way verbally abusive to a child nor should they ever tell jokes of a sexual nature in the presence of children.
- Workers should be sensitive to the possibility of developing favouritism or becoming over involved or spending a great deal of time with any one child.





Keeping Children Safe

- Children should be encouraged to report cases of bullying to either a Designated Liaison Person or a worker of their choice. Complaints must be brought to the attention of management.
- Everyone involved in the organisation should respect the personal space, safety and privacy of individuals.
- It is not recommended that workers give lifts in their cars to individual young people, especially for long journeys.

Our Duty to Care advises that individual workers also have a responsibility to promote and protect children's rights by:

- Treating them with dignity, sensitivity, and respect.
- Making time to listen, talk to and get to know the children.
- Making sure that children know the organisation's rules about behaviour.
- Encouraging children to have an input into how things are run.
- Helping children to be safe, happy and have as much fun as possible.
- Never favouring one child or children over others.
- Enabling children to regard their bodies as their own property.
- Encouraging them to express feelings, fears and experiences openly.
- Giving written information about the organisation to children and their parents/carers.
- Knowing about the principles and practices of child protection including their legal duties.
- Never engaging in sexually provocative games or make suggestive comments, even in fun.
- Respecting children's privacy in bathrooms or changing rooms.
- Sensitively ensuring that children know about the Child Protection Policy.
- Always responding to complaints or allegations.
- Helping children realise the difference between confidentiality and secrecy.
- Being sensitive to the fact that some children are more vulnerable and have special needs.
- Never using physical punishment with children.

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Early years or school age childcare services that centre their activities around children's safety, enjoyment and comfort will help to create an environment in which children can have trusting relationships with practitioners. This will allow children to speak more freely about things that are making them unhappy.

Protecting Children During Service Provision

The following is a list of Barnardos' recommendations/considerations for inclusion in a service's written procedures to ensure that a safe and secure environment is provided for all children in an early years or school age childcare service (Barnardos, 2006):

- Each child will be under the care of a specific adult and the adult knows where the child is at all times.
- Children will be under the care of a minimum of two adults at all times.
- All entrances must be kept secure.



- An adult will be present close to the main entrance of the building and during all hours of service.
- Parents/carers are allowed access to their children's rooms at all times.
- Playground gates are secured to prevent unauthorised access.
- Children will not be released to anyone under 18 (including siblings) who staff feel is not responsible enough to ensure the welfare of the child.
- Children under 10 are not permitted to leave the service unaccompanied.
- Children aged 10 and over are permitted to leave for school and regularly scheduled activities only with written parent/carer permission.
- Parents/carers are contacted when children do not arrive at the service when expected.
- All visitors are signed in and out and are accompanied while in the building.
- Volunteers and students are supervised at all times.
- It is possible to view each room used for the childcare service through a window in the doors or walls.
- It is possible to view into storerooms etc. or they are kept locked during hours of operation.
- Lights are left on in all rooms including closets with windows, toilets, offices and storage areas when building is in use.
- Nothing is placed over windows to prevent or obstruct viewing.
- Children's arrivals and departures are supervised (as outlined in the Arrivals and Departures Policy).
- Behaviour policies and practices promote the development of children. Staff must never physically punish or be in any way verbally abusive to a child. Positive behaviour management techniques should be used to support positive behaviour (as outlined in the Behaviour Guidance and Discipline Policy).
- Records are kept accurately and up to date (as in the Records and Record Keeping Policy).
- Training in child protection is provided and is compulsory for all staff members.
- Staff are supervised and appraisals are carried out regularly (as outlined in the Staff Support and Supervision Policy).
- Staff must be sensitive to the risks involved in participating in contact sports or other activities.
- Physical contact is a valid way of comforting and reassuring and showing concern for children but should only take place when it is acceptable to all persons concerned.
- The personal space, safety and privacy of all individuals in the service are to be respected.
- The level of contact around intimate care should be sensitively dealt with and a child's need for privacy in the toilet, for example, should be respected in accordance with his or her self-care abilities.
- Staff members should not, as a general rule, carry a child in their own car in respect of their work.
- Be alert, open to and accepting of the possibility of child abuse or neglect.
- Be familiar with the identification of child abuse and neglect, and be able to effectively implement procedures efficiently and in a timely and professional manner.
- Recognise that dealing with child protection can be distressing. Know one's own limitations in dealing with it and having the awareness to be able to source support, supervision or assistance if necessary.



Accident/Incidents

The Pre-school Regulations require that all services record accidents and incidents, no matter how small, in an accident and incident book. This applies to accidents/incidents involving staff, children or visitors to the service. The details of any accident/incident involving a child must be recorded and the parents notified. In the case of a serious accident to a child, parents should be informed immediately. Telephones must be easily accessible to staff with emergency numbers displayed beside all telephones and parent's numbers should be readily available (Barnardos, 2006).

Services are required to have an Accident/Incident Policy which ensures that staff know what procedures to follow in the event of an emergency situation arising

Day trips

Day trips and outings provide opportunities to gain new experiences and extend children's learning beyond an early years or school age childcare setting. Organisations need to consider the following when developing an Outings/Excursions Policy in order to provide a safe and valuable experience for children (Barnardos, 2008):

- Outings and excursions should be planned to ensure that they are appropriate for the age and developmental stages of participating children.
- All families should be provided with advance notice of each outing/excursion with details of the date, destination, staff and group size, time, cost and transport.
- Written parental consent must be obtained for each child participating.
- Parent/carer support should be encouraged and welcomed for outings/excursions.
- The ratio of children to adults should not exceed two children to one adult at any time and where possible will be lower.
- If you plan to have parents/carers or other adults who are not staff members (and therefore who may not have been subject to any vetting procedures) accompany a group of children as volunteers on any outings you need to consider how you will ensure that your child protection procedures will be followed. You should consider including in your policy that no volunteers will be allowed to care for any children other than their own, unless accompanied by a member of staff.
- All necessary steps should be taken to ensure that children will be transported safely using car seats as appropriate.
- All families have the option of declining any offer for their child/children to be involved in any outings/excursions and alternative arrangements will be made by the staff/Centre.

IT Usage

It is important that services have a clear-cut policy around the use of IT within their service for both staff and children.

Employees using IT systems such as email or the internet are representing the service and are therefore responsible for ensuring that they are used in an effective, professional, ethical and lawful manner in accordance with the service's guidelines for acceptable use.



Increasingly, children attending school age services will have their own mobile phone or other devices which may have access to the internet and a built-in camera. School age services should have an Acceptable Use Policy, which should be signed by parents and children, which details the use of mobile phones, photography, computers and the internet. There is nothing inherently wrong in the use of technology by children, however it can present challenges for school age services in particular. Children should always be supervised when using technology.

Practitioners should be aware of the potential risk to children from e-bullying or cyberbullying, sometimes carried out by other children. Cyberbullying refers to bullying which is carried out using the internet, mobile phones or other devices. Practitioners need to respond to cyberbullying in the way they would respond to regular bullying.

If you have concerns that a child's safety is at risk because you suspect that someone is using communication technologies to make inappropriate contact with the child, this should be raised with the manager and should be discussed with parents. If the concerns appear to have a foundation, ensure that the child ceases all communication, save the evidence and contact the Gardai.

For more information on cyberbullying see *Get with It! A guide to cyberbullying* published by the Office of Internet Safety in conjunction with Barnardos in 2008.

More information is available from the PDST Technology in Education website www.psdtechnologyineducation.ie/en

Working with Parents

*Parents are the primary educators of the child
and have a pre-eminent role in promoting
her/his well-being, learning and development.*

Siolta Principle

Siolta advises that quality early childhood care and education must value and support the role of parents. Open, honest and respectful partnership with parents is essential in promoting the best interests of the child. The development of connections and interactions between the early childhood setting and parents is valued and requires a proactive approach.

Staff and parents should develop both formal and informal opportunities for communication and information sharing about the child (Siolta, Component 3.1).





Keeping Children Safe

If a good working relationship has been established with parents, it is much easier to work together with parents in relation to any allegations or incidents of child abuse that might occur at a later stage (Our Duty to Care).

Parent/carer co-operation is essential for four reasons:

1. **Effectiveness:** Co-operation with families is essential to ensure the welfare of the child.
2. **Families are a source of information:** Families and extended family members have a unique knowledge and understanding of the child's situation.
3. **Rights:** Family members may have rights to know what is said about them and to contribute to important decisions about their lives and those of their children.
4. **Empowerment:** Involvement in decision making helps parents/carers to build up their self esteem and encourages them to feel more in control of their lives. This should have a beneficial effect on the well-being of both parents/carers and the child.

When parents need to be informed of child protection concerns, practitioners must be open, honest and able to act in a professional manner when talking to them.

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Where the interests of the parent and the child appear to conflict, the child's interests are paramount.

When working with parents, Barnardos' best practice standards include the following:

- Parents are respected and consulted in relation to their child's welfare.
- Parents are informed of child protection policies and procedures at the commencement of their attendance at the service.
- Parents are advised that the service has a responsibility to report child protection concerns to the Child and Family Agency Social Work Department.
- Parents are informed of any child protection concerns relating to their child, except where informing parents would place the child at risk or would prejudice the investigation, prior to the submission of the Standard Report Form.
- Parents are offered continued support throughout the child protection process.

There may be occasions when talking with parents requires practitioners to help parents to focus on the child's best interests. When there is a conflict of interest between the needs and rights of a child and the needs and rights of parents, the child's needs and rights are paramount, particularly in relation to child protection issues. By helping parents to focus on the best interests of the child, the practitioner can help to resolve conflicting child and parental interests.



Example scenarios

Over a period of time, practitioners observed that Paul (aged 2 ½) was not reaching his developmental milestones. They spoke to his mum and dad about making a referral for an assessment. His parents were unwilling to accept any suggestion that their child needed an assessment despite practitioners gently discussing it with them on several occasions. It was in Paul's best interests to have an assessment as early as possible but both parents were reluctant and unable at that time to come to terms with the possibility that their child may need extra support or might have a developmental delay.

Two parents had recently separated. Their child, Emily, was attending the pre-school service. It appeared to practitioners there was still a lot of tension between Emily's mum and dad. Each would complain about the other to staff at collection or on arrival in front of Emily.

Questions to think about for each scenario

- How would you help parents to focus on their child's best interests in these and other similar situations?
- What steps would you take to bring about better outcomes for the child?

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Comments and Complaints Policy

A Comments and Complaints Policy allows those who come into contact with a service, especially parents, to make comments, both positive and negative, or, if necessary, to make a complaint. A complaint may be either about a member of staff or about a practice issue.

Having an effective Comments and Complaints Policy is an important way of helping services to make improvements to their service and practice. Parents need to be informed about the policy and procedures at registration/enrolment.

All complaints need to be recorded and acted upon. Complaints need to be taken seriously and resolved efficiently and effectively. Staff should be aware that if they receive a complaint there is a specific procedure in place for dealing with it. A Sample Complaints Form is given in Appendix 5.



Best Practice Guidelines for Early Years and School Age Childcare Regarding Keeping Children Safe

The following guidelines summarise the main best practice principles and can be used for reflection.

Working with Children

Our service:

- Acknowledges the rights of the children to be protected, treated with respect, listened to and have their own views taken into consideration (Our Duty to Care).
- Recognises that the welfare of children must always come first, regardless of all other considerations (Our Duty to Care).
- Has adopted the safest possible practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and protect workers from the necessity to take risks and leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or neglect (Our Duty to Care).
- Has developed a code of behaviour for working with children.
- Ensures that children are able to trust and confide in adults working in our setting (Síolta, Component 9.3.2).
- Ensures that adults are never unsupervised/alone with an individual child (Síolta, Component 9.3.2).
- Has an Accidents and Incidents Policy.

Working with Parents

Our service:

- Provides opportunities for staff and parents to have both formal and informal communication and information sharing (Síolta, Component 3.1.5).
 - Ensures that parents are familiarised with policies and procedures on child protection (Síolta, Component 9.3.1).
 - Advises parents that the service has a responsibility to report child protection concerns to the Child and Family Agency Social Work Department.
 - Informs parents of any child protection concerns relating to their child (except where informing parents is likely to endanger the child).
 - Has a Comments and Complaints Policy.
-



Section six

Child Protection Policy and Procedures

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Policies and procedures are needed to guide the actions of everyone involved in the provision of early years and school age childcare services. Guidance on how to develop child protection policies and procedures are given in this section.

The roles and responsibilities of the Designated Liaison Person are also outlined and the importance of interagency co-operation and networking are discussed.

Child Protection Policy and Procedures

According to Children First, all organisations providing services for children must develop guidance and procedures for staff and volunteers who may have reasonable grounds for concern about the safety and welfare of children within the organisation. These procedures should not deviate from the Children First national guidance but could offer further elaboration to ensure local relevance and applicability.

When developing local guidelines, the **definitions, reporting procedures and guidance on confidentiality** (as provided in Chapter 2 and 3 of Children First) should **NOT BE CHANGED OR ADAPTED IN ANY WAY**. This is because it is essential that there is **consistency** in definitions, the basis for reporting and the standard reporting procedure.

The Child Care (Pre-school Services) Regulations 2006 require a written Child Protection Policy based on Children First.

A copy of Children First, Our Duty to Care and Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook should all be available for practitioners to refer to in all childcare settings.

Definitions and Purpose of Policies and Procedures

A policy is a statement of principles, values or intent that guides or usually determines decisions and actions to achieve an organisation's goals.

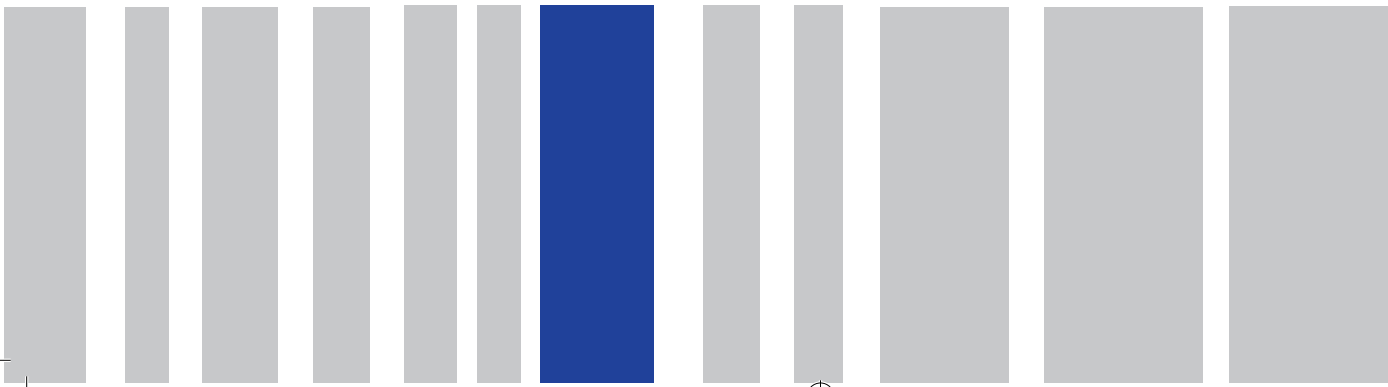
Procedures spell out precisely what action is to be taken in line with the relevant policy and outline the steps to be followed or the way a task is to be performed.

Having clear and accessible policies can also assist new staff or relief staff to familiarise themselves with the service's practices.

The purpose of a Child Protection Policy is to raise awareness about child abuse and to outline the steps to be taken within an organisation if it is suspected. It will provide a common understanding and give step-by-step guidance about how things should be done within a service when a child protection concern arises.

Policies are 'living' documents that should be regularly reviewed to respond to the individual needs of those working with them, to reflect new knowledge and to meet changes in the service and the wider community.

It is essential that policies are put into practice and are not just an official document in a policy folder. All staff and parents/carers should be involved in adopting, implementing and reviewing policies so they can have an input into how the service is run.



For further details on a range of childcare policies read *A Practical Guide to Developing Childcare Policies Books 1 and 2* (Barnardos, 2008, 2010a).

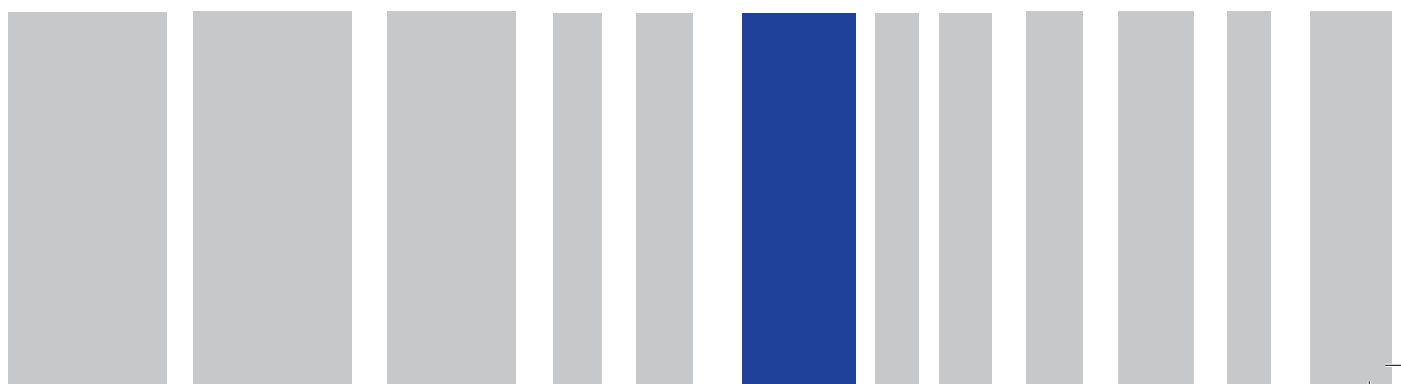
Developing Child Protection Policy and Procedures

It is important to ensure that a childcare service's policies:

- Are fit the purposes for which they were intended.
- Make sense to everyone that they affect, including parents/carers and staff.
- Can be put into practice.
- Are accurate and reflect current best practice.
- Meet or exceed all legislative requirements.
- Consider all stakeholders (in particular the children but also parents/carers, staff and management).
- Are reasonable and practical.
- Provide guidance and tools for implementation as well as rules.
- Are in a format that is easy to update and is accessible.

A Child Protection Policy and Procedures should include the following:

- A policy statement outlining the services role and responsibility in protecting children.
- Definitions of child abuse.
- Role and responsibilities of the Designated Liaison Person.
- Reporting procedures.
- Safe recruitment procedures.
- Best practice principles/code of behaviour.
- Supporting and training staff.
- Confidentiality and record keeping.
- Allegations of abuse against employees.
- Complaints procedure.
- Accident/incident procedure.
- Guidance on day trips (if appropriate).
- Contact details of local Child and Family Agency Social Work Department and Gardai.
- Clear descriptions of responsibilities at local level, both individual and corporate.
- Organisation and management arrangements, as well as procedures for child protection, including arrangements for interagency cooperation.
- Expectations of best professional practice.
- Arrangements for training and support and supervision of staff.
- Approach to family support and the involvement of the child.



All staff must be made aware of the contents of the service's Child Protection Policy as part of their induction.

Parents also need to be informed and have access to the policy document. Attention should be drawn to the policy and procedures as part of a parent's information pack/meeting before a child enters the service. However, as parents may be overloaded with information of various kinds when their child is starting in a service, it may be worthwhile to revisit and reinforce the child protection information again at a later occasion.

A template of a Child Protection Policy is included in Appendix 6. It can be used as a guide for service providers to adapt to their own particular requirements when developing a Child Protection Policy.

To get further useful information on how to develop childcare policies see A Practical Guide to Developing Childcare Policies Books 1 and 2 (Barnardos, 2008, 2010a).

Children First states that where voluntary or community organisations have adapted the national guidelines to local guidelines and wish to have them reviewed for their efficacy, the Information and Advice Officers of the Child and Family Agency (see Sources of Further Information) will facilitate this. Completed local guidelines should be forwarded to the Child and Family Agency as a matter of good practice.

For services receiving funding from the Child and Family Agency, a comprehensive Child Protection Policy will be required as part of the Service Level Agreement.

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The Designated Liaison Person

Appointment of a Designated Liaison Person

Children First advises that all organisations providing services for children should have a Designated Liaison Person to act as a liaison with outside agencies. The Designated Liaison Person is responsible for ensuring that the standard reporting procedure is followed, so that suspected cases of child neglect or abuse are referred promptly to the Children and Family Services' Duty Social Worker or An Garda Síochána.

The Designated Liaison Person should ensure that they are knowledgeable about child protection and undertake any training considered necessary to keep themselves updated on new developments.

The Designated Liaison Person also acts as a resource to any staff member or volunteer who has child protection concerns.

All organisations should also appoint a Deputy Designated Liaison Person. Best practice advises that where a Designated Liaison Person is going to be absent from their workplace (for example on sick or annual leave) they should make provision for cover by the Deputy Designated Liaison Person.



Role and responsibilities of the Designated Liaison Person

It is the responsibility of the Designated Liaison Person:

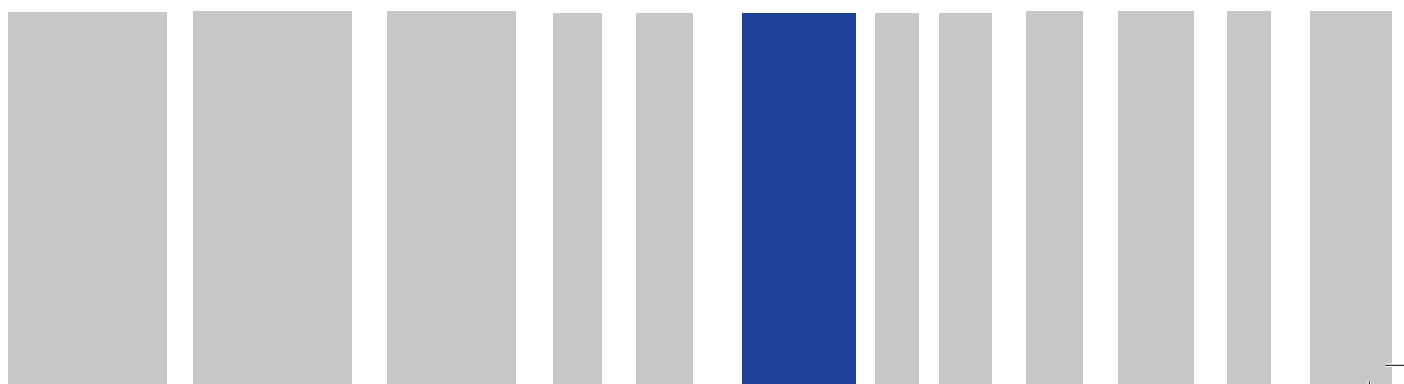
- To ensure that they are fully conversant with their organisation’s duties to the protection and welfare of children.
- To ensure that they know their organisation’s child protection and welfare policies and procedures, and that they know what they are and where to find the most up-to-date version.

If a person, including third parties, reports suspected child abuse to the Designated Liaison Person, their responsibility in the first instance is:

- To establish, in consultation with the individual who has raised the concern, if reasonable grounds for concern exist.
- The information given to the Designated Liaison Person should be forwarded to the Children and Family Agency’s Duty Social Worker if reasonable grounds for concern exist, regardless of whether the source wishes to be identified or not. The source should be made aware that the Designated Liaison Person will be reporting the information.
- If the Designated Liaison Person is unsure whether the concern constitutes reasonable grounds for concern, they may consult informally with the Duty Social Worker (see Section Eight).
- Where the Designated Liaison Person decides not to pass on the concern brought to their attention, they must inform the person of this and also tell them that they may report directly to Children and Family Agency and that the provisions of the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act would pertain.
- Any professional who suspects child abuse or neglect should inform the parents/carers if a report is to be submitted to the Children and Family Agency or to An Garda Síochána, unless doing so is likely to endanger the child.

For early years and school age childcare practitioners it is important to note that the roles and responsibilities of the Designated Liaison Person are complex and training is required to carry out the duties. In most situations, the Designated Liaison Person will be the manager or another senior member of staff within the service.

The main role for the majority of practitioners working in a childcare setting is to pass on any child protection concerns to the Designated Liaison Person whose duty is to then follow through with this information.



Interagency Co-Operation

The Child and Family Agency Social Work Department has overall responsibility for the assessment and management of child protection concerns.

An Garda Síochána has responsibility for the investigation of alleged offences.

All persons working with a child may have a particular contribution to make to ensure the child's safety and welfare. It is essential therefore that a co-ordinated response is made by all persons involved with a child deemed to be at risk.

Our Duty to Care

The negative impact on children as a result of poor interagency and interprofessional co-operation has been highlighted repeatedly in child abuse inquiries in the past. This brought about recommendations for change in many areas of policy, particularly the need to improve interagency co-operation.

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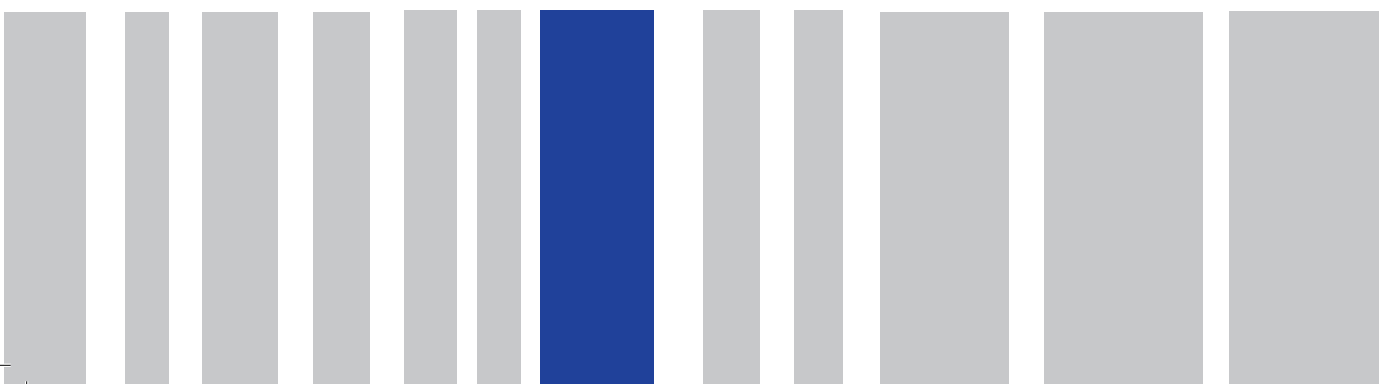
Effective inter-agency co-operation will depend on:

- Understanding and acceptance by all professionals working with children and young people of their responsibilities and roles in the promotion of child welfare.
- Mutual trust and sharing of information.
- Willingness of personnel to respect the contributions made by each other, irrespective of status and position within agencies and organisations/groups.
- Joint training between statutory child protection authorities and community and voluntary organisations.

Effective inter-agency co-operation has three benefits according to Children First:

1. It ensures a comprehensive response to all concerns about children.
2. It avoids gaps in the service response.
3. It provides mutual support for professionals in complex cases.

Children First also states that interagency and interprofessional cooperation between disciplines and agencies is as crucial to the long-term management of a case as it is at the outset. Commitment and flexibility in relation to carrying out the work specified in the child protection plan, together with the willingness to exchange information promptly, will be required by all professionals involved with the child.



Networking

According to Our Duty to Care, it can be helpful for services, particularly small ones, to link up with other professionals in the field of child protection such other voluntary agencies, public health nurses and Child and Family Agency social workers in both formal and informal ways (see Sources of Further Information).

Síolta relates to settings gathering and making available a comprehensive range of information at local, regional and national level.

Signs for reflection asks:

- How familiar are you with roles, responsibilities, programmes and services of other organisations involved with children and families in your local community?
- To what extent is your setting involved in networks at local, regional and national level that support the achievements of your goals and objectives?

(Síolta, Standard 16)

Ways of making links with other childcare services could include sharing events such as training sessions on child protection, conferences, or sharing newsletters.



Best Practice Guidelines for Early Years and School Age Childcare Regarding Child Protection Policy and Procedures

Child Protection Policy and Procedures

Our service:

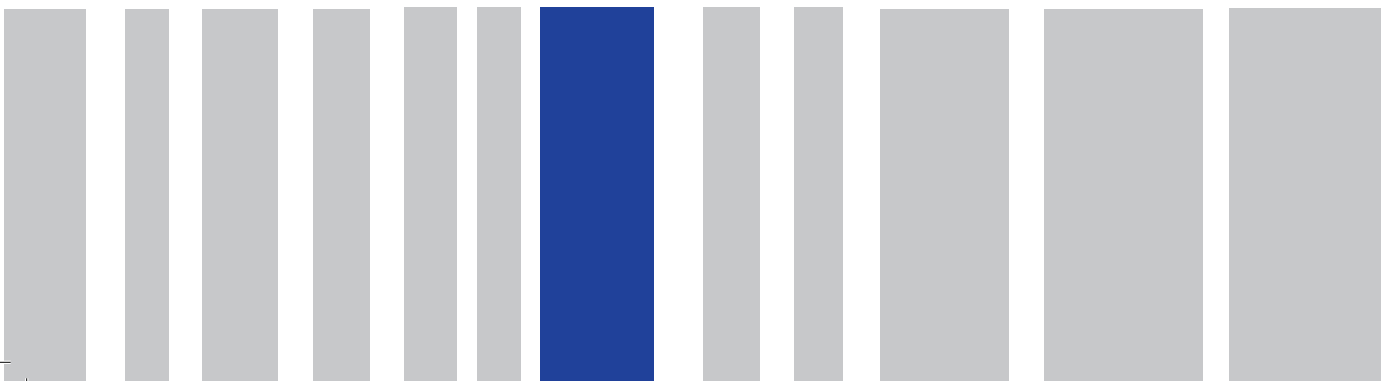
- Has a Child Protection Policy in line with the aims and objectives of Children First.
- Has copies of the Children First, Our Duty to Care and Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook and staff are aware of how to access them.
- Has appointed a Designated Liaison Person and Deputy Designated Liaison Person who can take the lead role and responsibility in all matters of child protection concerns and has received training on this role.
- Staff members are familiar with the Child Protection Policy and know what procedures to follow from point of initial concern to conclusion by manager/Designated Liaison Person.
- Demonstrates best practice staff recruitment, interviewing and selection policies.
- Has implemented the guidelines from Children First and Our Duty to Care in relation to child protection.

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Interagency Working and Networking

Our service:

- Recognises the Child and Family Agency as the agency with responsibility for assessing child protection concerns.
 - Responds to child protection concerns in a timely manner.
 - Will co-operate with other professionals.
 - Is connected and integrated with the local, regional and national community (Síolta, Component 16.3).
 - Has developed partnerships and professional relationships with community organisations, services and other professionals (Síolta, Component 16.3.2).
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Section seven

Dealing with a Disclosure from a Child

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This section deals with how practitioners can support a child who is making a disclosure and the supports a child needs after the disclosure has been made.

Supporting the Child During the Disclosure

Knowing what to say or do when a child makes a disclosure can be very difficult for practitioners. Often something is disclosed very unexpectedly. In these difficult situations it is important that practitioners know how to support a child following a disclosure of child abuse.

Practitioners can support the child in the following ways:

- Be as calm and natural as possible. Remember that you have been approached because you are trusted and possibly liked. Do not panic.
- Do not promise to keep secrets. At the earliest opportunity tell the child that:
 - You acknowledge that they have come to you because they trust you.
 - You will be sharing this information with people who understand and can help.
 - These are secrets and secrets are not helpful and should not be kept because they make matters worse. Such secrets hide things that need to be known if people are to be helped and protected from further ongoing hurt.
- Be aware that disclosure can be very difficult for the child.
- Remember the child may initially be testing your reactions and may only fully open up over a period of time.
- Listen to what the child has to say. Give them time and opportunity to tell as much as they are able and wish to. Do not pressure the child. Allow them to disclose at their own pace and in their own language.
- Be careful when asking questions. Questions should be supportive and for the purpose of clarification. Avoid leading questions such as asking whether a specific person carried out the abuse. Also avoid asking about intimate details or suggesting that something else could have happened other than what you have been told. Such questions could complicate the official investigation.
- Assure the child that you believe them. False disclosures are rare.
- It is important that the adult differentiate in their own mind between the person who carried out the abuse and the act of abuse itself. The child, quite possibly, may love or really like the alleged abuser while also disliking what was done to them.
- It is important, therefore, to avoid expressing any judgement on or anger towards the alleged perpetrator while talking with the child.
- It may be necessary to reassure the child that your feelings towards them have not been affected in a negative way as a result of what they have disclosed.

By refusing to make a commitment to secrecy to the child, you do run the risk that they may not tell you everything, or indeed anything, there and then. However, it is better to do this than to tell a lie and ruin the child's confidence in yet another adult. By being honest, it is more likely that the child will return to you at another time (French, 2008a).

Promises that cannot be kept should not be made to children.

As soon as possible after a child has made a disclosure or a practitioner has observed or overheard something a child has said that is of concern, it should be recorded in writing including the exact words used by the child.

Inform your Designated Liaison Person and follow the procedures as outlined Section 8, maintaining confidentiality as appropriate.

Supporting the Child After the Disclosure

Following a disclosure, it is important that practitioners continue in a supportive relationship with the child. Disclosure is a huge step for many children.

Practitioners should continue to offer support, particularly through:

- Maintaining a positive relationship with the child.
- Keeping lines of communication open by listening carefully to the child.
- Continuing to include the child in the usual activities.

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Any further disclosures should be treated as a first disclosure and responded to accordingly (French, 2008a).

Similarly, if a child protection report is made to the Child and Family Agency about a child attending a childcare service, the child must continue to be included in the usual activities and no special attention drawn to the child by practitioners. Maintaining confidentiality is essential.



Dealing With a Disclosure From a Child



Section eight

What To Do If You Have a Child Protection Concern

65

When a child protection concern arises, it is important that practitioners are clear and confident about what procedures to follow. This section sets out what the standard reporting procedures are. It looks at the importance of record keeping and confidentiality, and what the different responses from the Child and Family Agency might be following the making of a child protection report.

Scenario

This section includes a sample scenario concerning the reporting of a child protection concern. It can be used for staff training, discussion at team meetings or for reflection by individual practitioners.

Reporting a Child Protection Concern

If you are concerned that a child or young person may have been abused, or is at risk of abuse, there is one thing you must not do, that is NOTHING.

Everyone must be alert to the possibility that children with whom they are in contact may be abused. Any reasonable suspicion must elicit a response. Ignoring the signals or failing to intervene may result in on-going or further harm to the child or young person.

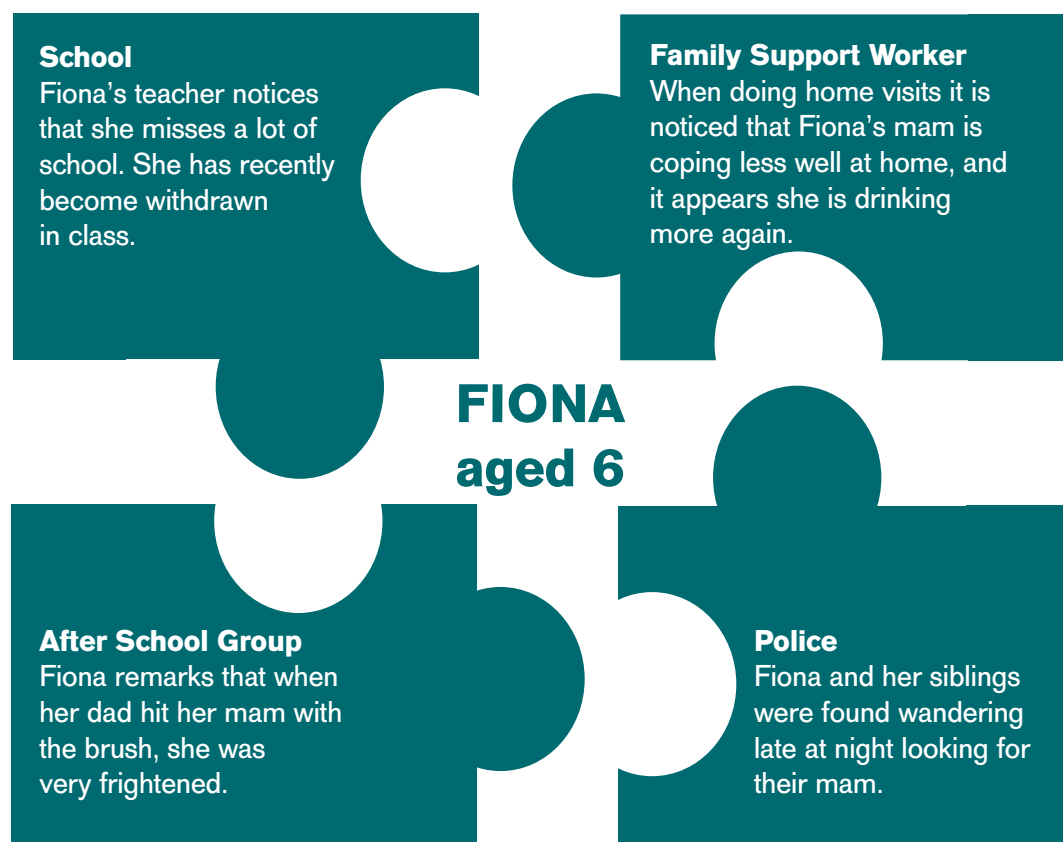
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If a person has misgivings about the safety or welfare of a child, they can discuss their concerns before deciding whether or not to make a formal report with a health professional or directly with the Duty Social Worker of the Child and Family Agency Social Services (Children First). During this informal consultation, no identifying information should be given in relation to the child or family.

It is important to note that the person reporting the concern regarding a child is simply *expressing* that concern. It is not their responsibility to decide if abuse has taken place but simply to report concerns giving as much information as possible.



Abuse of children often goes undetected because people who have pieces of information are reluctant to share them. Sharing information can help piece together the jigsaw.



One incident may not in itself seem very significant but may contribute to a much bigger picture that is being pieced together by a social worker who is working to bring about positive outcomes for a child or family.

Responding to incidents of alleged or suspected child abuse must be based on clearly defined procedures. All services must have clear written procedures on actions to be taken by staff. It is important that high standards of practice are promoted through staff training.

For staff working in a childcare setting, the following are ways in which child protection concerns may arise and give **reasonable grounds for concern**:

- An injury or behaviour that is consistent both with abuse and an innocent explanation, but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse.
- Consistent indication over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.
- Admission or indication by someone of an alleged abuse.
- A specific indication from a child that he or she was abused.
- An account from a person who saw the child being abused.
- Evidence (e.g. injury or behaviour) that is consistent with abuse and unlikely to have been caused in any other way



A suspicion which is not supported by any objective signs of abuse would not constitute a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern. However these suspicions should be recorded internally as future suspicions may lead to the decision to make a report.

French, 2008a

Standard Reporting Procedures

The Duty Social Worker of the Child and Family Agency Social Services should always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been abused, is being abused or is at risk of abuse.

According to Children First (3.4), the standard reporting procedures are as follows:

- Any person reporting a child abuse concern should do so without delay to the Child and Family Agency Social Services. A report can be made in person, by telephone or in writing. **Contact numbers for all Child and Family Agency offices nationwide are available on the Child and Family Agency website (www.tusla.ie)**
- Before deciding whether or not to make a formal report, you may wish to discuss your concerns with a health professional or directly with the Duty Social Worker of the Child and Family Agency Social Services.
- **Under no circumstances should a child be left in a situation that exposes him or her to harm pending Child and Family Agency intervention.** In the event of an emergency where you think a child is in immediate danger and you cannot get in contact with the Child and Family Agency, you should contact the Gardai. This may be done through any Garda station.
- The **Standard Report Form** (see Appendix 7) should be used by **professionals, staff and volunteers in organisations working with or in contact with children, or providing services to children** when reporting child welfare and protection concerns to the Children and Family Social Services of the Child and Family Agency. If a report is made by telephone, this form should be completed and forwarded subsequently to the Child and Family Agency.



Information Required When Making a Report

Children First (3.5.1) states that the ability of the Child and Family Agency or An Garda Síochána to assess suspicions or allegations of child abuse will depend on the amount and quality of information conveyed to them by the people reporting concerns (hereafter called 'reporters').

As much as possible of the following detail should be provided:

1. The name, address and age of the child (children) for whom the report is being made.
 2. The name of the child's school.
 3. The name and address of the reporter.
 4. The contact number and occupation of the reporter.
 5. The relationship of the reporter to the child.
 6. A full account of what constitutes the grounds for concern in relation to the welfare and protection of the child or children, for example, details of the allegation, incident, dates, description of any injuries etc.
 7. The names and addresses of the parents/carers of the child or children.
 8. The names of other children in the household.
 9. The name, address and details of the allegedly causing concern in relation to the child or children.
 10. The child's and parents/carers' own view, if known and relevant.
 11. The name and addresses of other personnel or agencies involved with the child or children, for example, GP, social worker, public health nurse, Gardaí, etc.
 12. Any other relevant information.
-



Developing Reporting Procedures

Each service must develop its own reporting procedures.

Practitioners are advised to actively listen to children and should strive to promote their safety and welfare. All disclosures by children should be taken seriously.

The following reporting procedures could be used as a template for an early years or school age childcare setting (adapted from Barnardos' Child Protection Policy):

- Any practitioner who has a concern that a child may be experiencing or is at risk of abuse should record the concern in writing and discuss this with the Designated Liaison Person for their service at the earliest opportunity.
- On receiving a report from a member of staff of suspected or disclosed abuse, the Designated Liaison Person should ascertain whether the information furnished by the staff member constitutes sufficient grounds to be concerned that abuse may have occurred.
- The practitioner or Designated Liaison Person who intends to make a report to the Child and Family Agency should notify the parents/carers as early as possible, unless doing so is likely to endanger the child. If it is decided not to inform the parents/carers for this reason, this decision and its basis should be recorded on the case file and signed by the Designated Liaison Person.
- If the information constitutes reasonable grounds for concern, the Designated Liaison Person should report the concerns to the Child and Family Agency, on the Standard Report Form (see Appendix 7).
- Where a telephone referral has been made, a formal report should be followed up in writing.
- Where it is decided by the Designated Liaison Person and the practitioner that the information does not constitute sufficient grounds for concern, the information and the basis of this decision should be recorded on the child's file.
- Where there is disagreement between the Designated Liaison Person and the practitioner about whether to report concerns to the Child and Family Agency, the practitioner should be given a clear written statement of the reason why the service is not reporting the concern and advised that, if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free to consult with or report to the Child and Family Agency or An Garda Síochána (Children First 3.8.1). In this situation, practitioners are protected from penalisation from their employer under the Protection of Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act.
- Reports should be addressed to the relevant Duty Social Work Team for the area in which the child ordinarily resides.
- In an emergency, or when the Child and Family Agency personnel are not available, contact should be made with the local Garda Station nearest to where the alleged incident occurred. In this situation, the Standard Report Form must still be forwarded to the Child and Family Agency, with a copy also sent to the relevant Garda Station.

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Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending Child and Family Agency intervention.



Example scenario

You are going home one evening in your car and notice a parent from your service walking unsteadily along the footpath. It appears he is under the influence of alcohol. His four-year-old child is trying to help him cross the road safely.

Questions to think about

- What are your initial concerns?
- How would you respond to this situation?
- What procedures will you follow?

Third Party Information

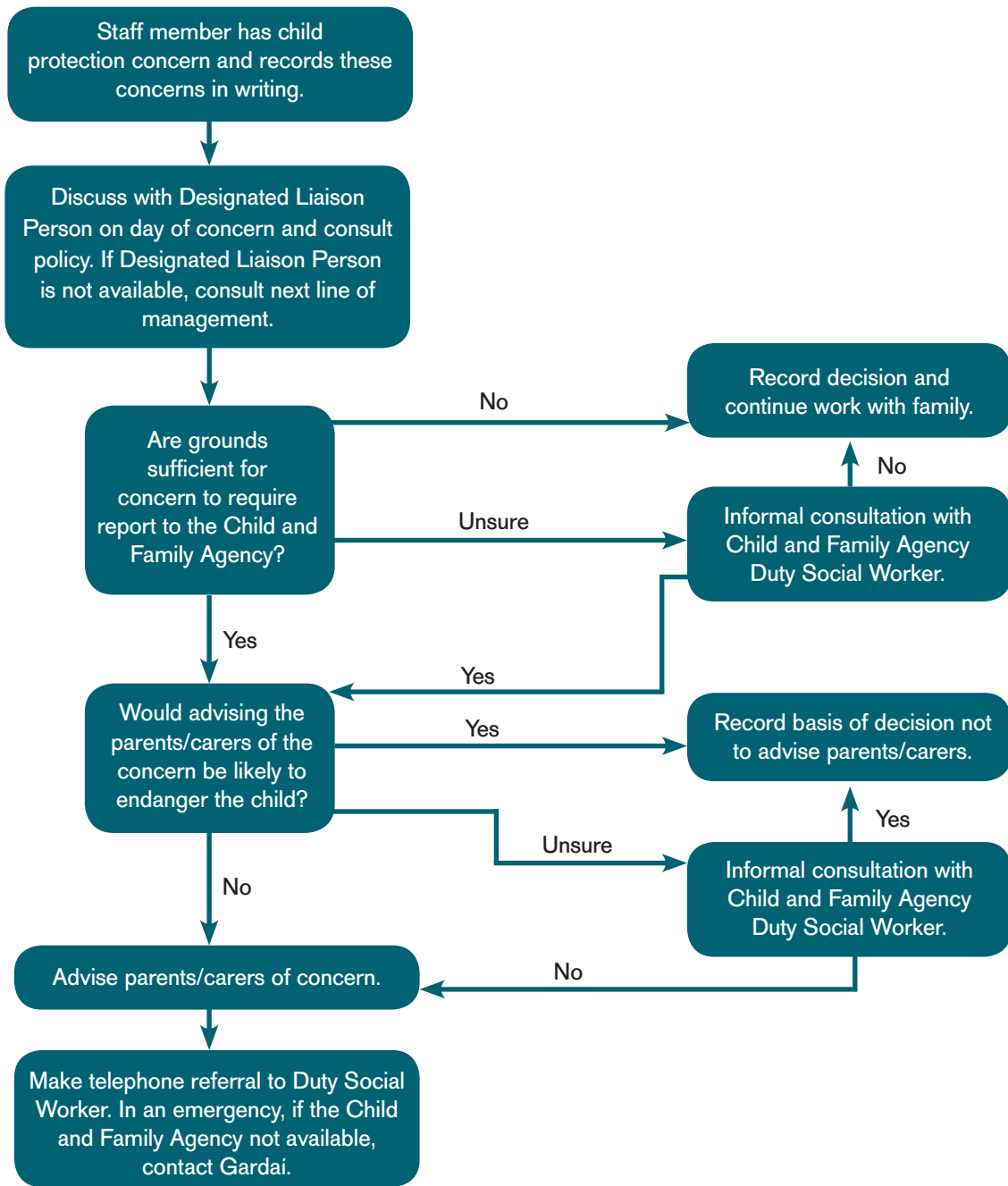
If a practitioner receives information regarding suspected or actual child abuse from a third party, for example, another parent, child or member of the public, the third party should be advised to report the concern directly to the Child and Family Agency and given the appropriate contact details. The practitioner should record details and discuss with their Designated Liaison Person. The Designated Liaison Person should confirm with the Child and Family Agency that the person who has the concern has contacted them. If they have not, the Designated Liaison Person should pass the concern on to the Child and Family Agency, referring to the source of information.

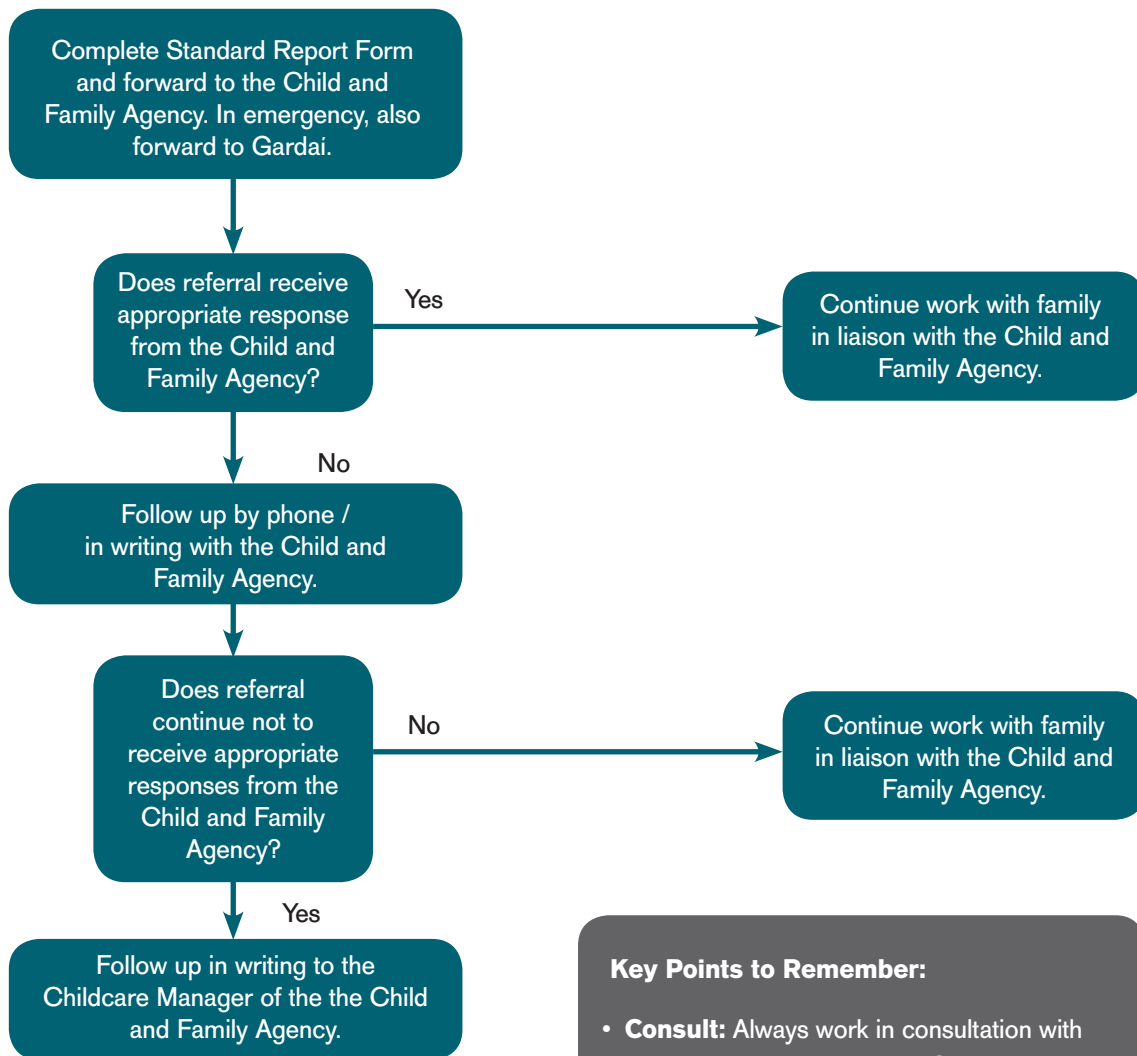


Procedures for Responding to Child Protection Concerns

The following flow chart summarises the above procedures and is a useful resource for childcare staff to have displayed for reference.

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Key Points to Remember:

- **Consult:** Always work in consultation with Designated Liaison Person. Seek advice and support from Manager and colleagues as required.
- **No concern is too small:** If in doubt, ask.
- **If in doubt,** consult Duty Social Worker.
- **Record** everything you do, including the basis on which decisions are made and attempted but unsuccessful contacts. Sign and date all records.
- **Child and Family:** Keep the child and family up to date with developments, unless this would endanger child. Continue providing services and support to the child and family – remember normal life goes on while concerns are being investigated.



Record Keeping

- All written reports relating to disclosures or suspicions of abuse should be undertaken as soon as possible after the event.
- Written records relating to child protection concerns should include dates, times, names, location, context and any other information which may be relevant, and should be signed and dated.
- Where a child makes a disclosure of abuse, it is advisable for practitioners to record at the earliest opportunity what the child has said, including, as far as possible, the exact words the child has spoken.
- All records should be filed securely and confidentially. Only the Designated Liaison Person and Deputy Designated Liaison Person should have access to these records.
- A copy of all correspondence should be kept on file.

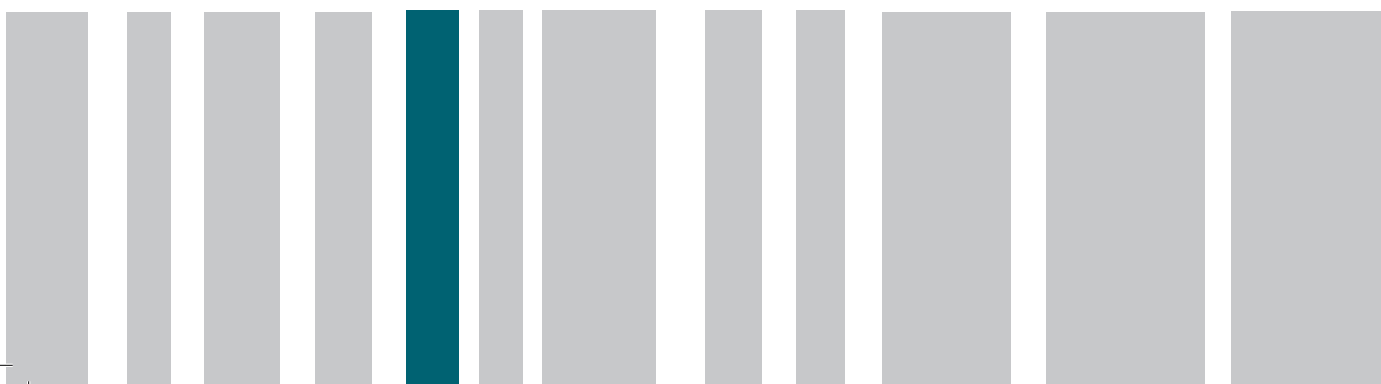
Remember, records have the potential to be read by others including children, parents, the courts, Child and Family Agency personnel and the Gardai.

According to Children First (2.7.6), if abuse is suspected, it is important to establish the grounds for concern by obtaining as much detailed information as possible. Observations should be accurately recorded and should include dates, times, names, locations, context and any other information that may be relevant. Care should be taken as to how such information is stored and to whom it is available.

74 Confidentiality

Children First (3.9) advises that:

- The effective protection of a child often depends on the willingness of staff in statutory and voluntary organisations to share and exchange relevant information.
- All information regarding concern or assessment of child abuse should be shared on a 'need to know' basis in the interests of the child.
- No undertaking regarding secrecy can be given. This is relevant to all children, parents and colleagues. Those working with a child and family should make this clear to all parties involved.
- Giving or exchanging information between different professional staff who have responsibility for child protection is not a breach of confidentiality.
- It must be clearly understood that information which is gathered for one purpose must not be used for another without consulting the person who provided that information.
- Each organisation should have a written policy regarding confidentiality. It should be part of staff training.



Response to Child Protection Reports

It is important to note that the ability of the Child and Family Agency and An Garda Síochána to respond to reports of suspected child abuse will depend on the quality and extent of information reported to them.

Our Duty to Care outlines the responses that might follow when the Child and Family Agency receives a suspected child abuse report.

Emergency action to protect a child

If it appears, on receipt of a report of suspected child abuse, that a child has been harmed or is at immediate risk of harm, emergency action will be taken by the Child and Family Agency or An Garda Síochána. This may involve having the child medically examined and/or removing the child to a safe environment such as a foster home or to the home of relatives. This intervention may be made voluntarily with the parents/carers' consent or may involve an Emergency Care Order under the Child Care Act 1991.

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Assessment and investigation

Where the perceived risk or harm to the child does not appear to warrant emergency action, the assessment/investigation will be carried out as quickly as possible in a co-ordinated manner in consultation with any other professionals who are involved with the child and parents/carers. This will involve interviews with the child and parents/carers, and possible referral to medical or specialist services for more detailed assessment. If appropriate, An Garda Síochána will prepare a file for the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Child protection meetings

Three types of meetings may be organised by the Child and Family Agency during the management of a case:

1. **A strategy meeting** – The main aims of this meeting are to facilitate the sharing and evaluation of information between professionals and to prepare a plan of action for the protection of the child and siblings if necessary.
2. **A child protection conference** – This is an interagency and interprofessional meeting, the aim of which is to facilitate the sharing and evaluation of all available information from the different professionals involved in the case as well as parents/carers, and to formulate a child protection plan. Practitioners working in an early years or school age childcare setting may be asked to attend a child protection conference if it is felt that they have relevant information about a child which would contribute to the child protection plan. **A child protection plan** is an interagency plan that outlines the action that professionals and agencies directly involved with the family need to take in order to ensure the child's continued protection and well-being.





What To Do If You Have a Child Protection Concern

3. **Child protection review conference** – The aims of a review are to consider the current situation, co-ordinate the views of participants and amend the child protection plan. Reviews are held at intervals not exceeding six months. They are attended by the core group of professionals involved in the case and each should submit a written report in advance.

Children First states that the successful implementation of a child protection plan will depend on four functions:

1. Interagency and interprofessional cooperation
2. Ongoing consultation with the child and his or her parents/carers
3. Ongoing assessment
4. Supervision and support

The Child Protection Notification System is a Child and Family Agency record of every child about whom, following assessment, there is a child protection concern.

Family Support Services

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Many children who come to the attention of the Child and Family Agency are living in difficult and stressful environments. Their families may be experiencing a variety of difficulties and problems such as domestic violence, alcohol or drug addiction, mental health issues or other sources of stress. This does not necessarily mean that children living in families with difficulties are being abused, but their needs for care and protection may not be adequately met in these circumstances and they may be at risk of future harm.

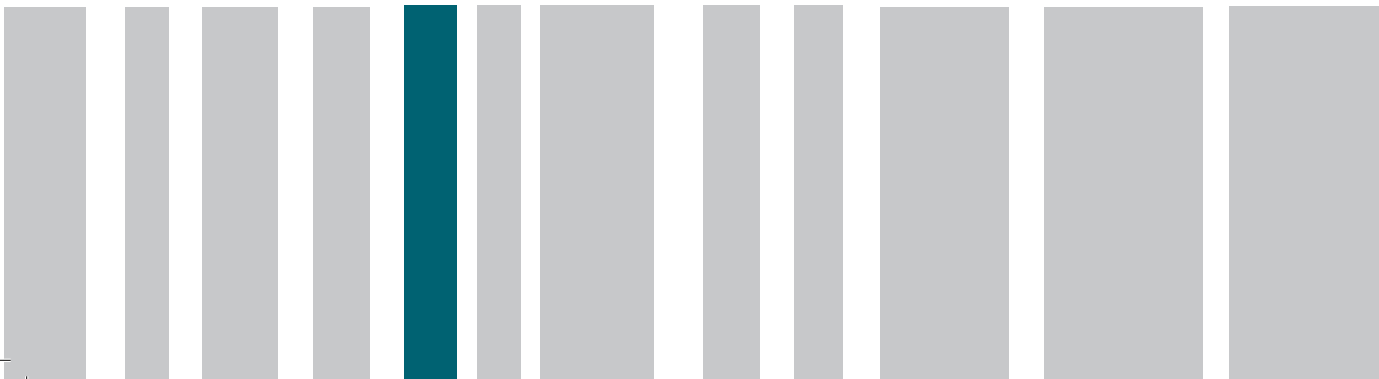
Providing family support as part of an early intervention strategy can help to prevent any worsening of current difficulties being experienced by families. The delivery of family support also enables the Child and Family Agency to track cases where risks exist but where the situation does not warrant a child protection assessment.

Feedback to Reporters

According to Children First (5.16.1), people who report their concerns about the care and protection of children with Child and Family Agency staff should be informed of the likely general steps to be taken by the professionals involved.

Other professionals involved should be kept updated and informed about the outcomes of any enquiry or investigation into the reported concern, where this is appropriate to their professional care/treatment of the child or the performance of their own duties and within limits of confidentiality.

In many cases there may be a delay in feedback to reporters and in some situations it may be appropriate for practitioners to follow up on reported concerns.



Section nine

Allegations Against Staff

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This section provides guidance in relation to responding to an allegation of child abuse against a staff member and includes an employer's responsibility regarding reporting concerns as well as their responsibilities towards their staff members.

Scenarios

This section includes scenarios concerning child protection concerns where a staff member is involved. They can be used for staff training, discussion at team meetings or for reflection by individual practitioners.

We know that a small number of adults in trusted positions with power and authority over children do abuse children, sometimes over long periods of time. It is essential that a service's Child Protection Policy acknowledges the possibility of child abuse occurring within the service. This is also important in giving a message to staff and to parents that in the event of a problem, the service is prepared to deal with it. It also signals to staff that they should raise any concerns about fellow staff members and that they will be dealt with appropriately.

Having a clear Child Protection Policy and procedures, staff training and safe practices in place in an early childcare and school age setting are important for the prevention of child abuse. Likewise, operating best practice will decrease the likelihood of a false allegation and will protect staff.

Dealing with an allegation of child abuse against a member of staff can be extremely stressful for practitioners and can have an impact on people's emotional well-being. It is very challenging for staff to come to terms with the possibility of a child they care about being abused by a colleague. They may also have to deal with conflict and anger from parents/carers.

Practitioners should actively seek support from their Designated Liaison Person and from colleagues, within the bounds of confidentiality. Equally, managers dealing with such a situation should seek support for themselves, within the limits of confidentiality, from the Child and Family Agency or another professional childcare organisation for example.

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While it is important for workers to be alert to signs of abuse, it is also important not to create an environment of intense anxiety where everyone is suspicious all the time. A good rule of thumb for all workers is to talk to someone if any concern arises about a child's safety or their welfare. The best way for organisations to reach a balance is to provide training to give workers information about the nature of child abuse and its effects, and a clear and supportive structure for dealing with suspicions and concerns. This will give them the confidence to respond effectively and help them to deal with feelings of anxiety that they might experience.

Our Duty to Care



Example scenario

You overhear a colleague humiliating Jason, who is 8 years old, in front of other children during the school age childcare session. She says that he is the 'most stupid child she has ever come across'.

Questions to think about

- How do you feel about hearing this information?
- What do you think you should do?

Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Child Abuse Against Staff

The guidance in this section is drawn from Children First and Our Duty to Care.

In the event of an allegation of child abuse against a staff member, the service has a dual responsibility to both the child and the worker. Dual procedures need to be followed, i.e. protecting the child and reporting the allegation, which was dealt with in earlier Sections, and the procedure for dealing with the staff member, which is set out below. Two different people should be assigned to carry out the separate procedures.

All childcare services should have agreed procedures for dealing with allegations of child abuse against workers.

Our Duty to Care recommends the following guidelines:

- Any necessary steps should be taken to ensure the protection of the child. At all times the principle that the welfare of the child is paramount must apply.
- Different persons have responsibility for dealing with the reporting issues and the worker issues.
- Workers may be subject to malicious or unfounded allegations, therefore any allegations should be dealt with sensitively and support provided for the staff member, including counselling where necessary.
- Management should report the allegation to the Child and Family Agency and the Gardai and liaise with both regarding the investigation.

Our Duty to Care identifies several other factors which management will need to consider:

- Possible reactions of other members of staff within the service including anger, disbelief, doubt, fear, guilt, shock, anxiety and confusion.
- The effects on the alleged abuser of the service's own internal disciplinary proceedings, the child protection investigation and the criminal investigation.
- The reactions of other staff and volunteers and the other children towards a child who has been abused or whose allegation is being investigated.
- The reactions of parents/carers and other family members of the child.



Allegations Against Staff

- It is extremely valuable to have thought through and discussed with staff and volunteers in as objective a way as possible what could happen and how people might feel if an allegation of abuse is made or a suspicion reported. This could happen during training and at reviews. Rehearsing the issues will give everyone concerned the confidence to face what will inevitably be a very difficult situation, particularly if an allegation is made against a staff member.

Employers' Responsibility to Report to Statutory Authorities

Where an employer becomes aware of an allegation of abuse by an employee, the standard procedure for reporting allegations to the Child and Family Agency should be followed without delay. Action taken in reporting an allegation of child abuse against an employee should be based on an opinion formed reasonably and in good faith. When an allegation is received it should be assessed promptly and carefully. It will be necessary to decide whether a formal report should be made to the Child and Family Agency and the Gardai and this decision should be based on reasonable grounds for concern.

Procedures for Dealing with Employees and Employers' Duty of Care to Children

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When an allegation is made against an employee, the following steps should be taken:

- The first priority should be to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk.
- The agreed procedures, the applicable employment contract and the rules of natural justice should be followed. An allegation should be treated as such until the facts are established.
- The person to whom the allegation is disclosed should immediately record the nature and content of the allegation. Recording should be factual and completed on the day the allegation is received.
- Where possible, the person making the complaint should be encouraged to make a written complaint.
- The Chairperson (or equivalent head of organisation) should be informed as soon as possible.
- The parents of the child should be informed of the allegation and what actions have been taken and are planned. The manager or other competent practitioner should be assigned to provide support to the family and to liaise with them.
- The employer should, as a matter of urgency, take any necessary protective measures proportionate to the level of risk and should not unreasonably penalise the worker, financially or otherwise, unless necessary to protect children. Where protective measures, such as suspension, do penalise the worker, it is important that early consideration be given to the case. Suspension should be on full pay while an investigation is ongoing.
- Any action following an allegation of abuse against an employee should be taken in consultation with the Child and Family Agency and An Garda Síochána. An immediate meeting should be arranged with these two agencies for this purpose.
- After these consultations referred to above have taken place and when pursuing the question of the future position of a worker, the Chairperson (or equivalent head of organisation) should advise the person accused of the allegation and the agreed procedures should be followed.

- Employers/managers should take care to ensure actions taken by them do not undermine or frustrate any investigations being conducted by the Child and Family Agency or An Garda Síochána. It is strongly recommended that employers maintain a close liaison with these authorities to achieve this.
- All meetings and discussions in relation to the allegation should be recorded, including any decisions reached and the reasons why clearly noted.

There will be situations in which suspicions or allegations may turn out to be unfounded. It is very important that everyone in the service knows that if they raise a concern which, through the process of investigation, is not validated, they have not in any way been wrong in their initial action unless it has been proven to have been done maliciously. Responsible action should be encouraged and 'whistle-blowers' enabled to feel confident of support.

Employers' Responsibility Towards Staff

When an employer becomes aware of an allegation of abuse of a child or children by an employee during the carrying out of that employee's duties, the employer should privately inform the employee of the following unless advised not to by the Gardai:

- The fact that the allegation has been made against him or her.
- The nature of the allegation.

The employee should be given an opportunity to respond. The employer should note the response and pass on this information when making the formal report to the Child and Family Agency.

Expectations of the Child and Family Agency in Regard to Allegations against Staff

Children First (6.2.3) recommends that the Child and Family Agency put arrangements in place to provide feedback to employers in regard to the progress of a child abuse investigation involving an employee.

Efforts will be made by the Child and Family Agency to investigate complaints against employees promptly and to complete their assessment as quickly as possible, bearing in mind the serious implications for innocent employees. Employers/persons-in-charge should be notified of the outcome of an investigation.

Consider how your service could:

- Draw up a policy for dealing with allegations against workers.
- Ensure that everyone is treated fairly in the event of an allegation being made.



Example scenario

An allegation of child abuse has been made against a male practitioner within your team. The colleague has been accused of abusing an 11-year-old girl by touching her inappropriately. Management has taken steps to respond to the allegation.

Questions to think about

- How do you think you might feel on being informed of this allegation by your manager?
- How do you think your team might feel?
- What support might the team need?

In 2010 Barnardos published a comprehensive guide *Human Resource Management for Early Years Services* in which readers will find further materials on staff management/HR related issues.



Section ten

Providing Support to Parents and Staff

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The aim of this section is to highlight what supports parents/carers and practitioners need when a child protection issue arises.

Supporting Parents

In the event of practitioners needing to discuss a child abuse concern with a parent(s), some practical arrangements need to be put in place in order to manage the situation more effectively.

A room needs to be available where a meeting can take place without interruptions, and where the conversation cannot be overheard by other parents or children.

As child protection concerns need to be addressed on the day the concern arises, parents will need to be contacted and a meeting arranged at short notice.

A practitioner may need to be available to mind the child while the Designated Liaison Person is meeting with parent(s). The child should not be in the same room or be able to overhear the conversation.

It is helpful if two practitioners are available to meet with the parents. This will facilitate better record keeping and provide staff support.

Dealing with a concern can be very difficult and challenging for those involved. There is always an element of practitioners having to use their own experience and judgement about a concern. However, it should always be remembered that advice can be sought from the Duty Social Worker of the Child and Family Agency Social Services before having to meet with parents.

If a good relationship has been built up with parents, it is much easier to talk to them about a child protection issue. Reminding parents that the service has a Child Protection Policy and that practitioners have a duty to report any concerns about child protection issues to the Child and Family Agency can help parents understand why they have been called in to discuss their child.

Explaining that the service always works towards the best interests of the child can assure parents that their child's welfare is what is most important in this situation.

Meeting with parents

A meeting with a parent(s) is never about making judgements or accusations.

A meeting may be held with parents to:

- Enquire about or seek an explanation for a mark such as a bruise, burn or bite that practitioners have noticed on a child.
- Discuss ongoing concerns regarding issues, particularly around neglect such as persistent head lice, the child being hungry or wearing inappropriate clothing for the weather.
- Inform parents and discuss a disclosure that has been made by their child, except where doing so may likely endanger the child.
- Discuss an allegation made against a staff member.
- Inform parents that a decision has been made to inform the Child and Family Agency regarding a child protection concern that has arisen, and that the service will be sending a child protection referral to the Child and Family Agency. The reasons for this decision should be explained to the parents.

A meeting in which a parent may feel that their ability to parent is being called into question can provoke a strong reaction. They may become angry or very upset. It may be the first time it has been brought to their attention that all is not well for their child.

Whatever the reaction is of parents, it is important to reassure them that a decision has not been made that child abuse has taken place but that a child protection concern has been passed on to the Child and Family Agency who will then assess the situation further.

Supporting Staff

Child protection work, by its nature, can provoke high levels of stress at certain times.

Many childcare practitioners grow to care very much for the children they work with. It can be very distressing for practitioners to be confronted by the realisation that a child who they see daily in their service is not receiving the care and protection that they need or that a child may be subjected to abuse of one kind or another. It can be difficult and emotionally distressing to deal with.

A supportive work environment with good supervision structures are essential to help practitioners to cope when child protection issues arise.

Best practise for supporting staff

Barnardos Child Protection Best Practice Standards suggests that:

- Practitioners receive sufficient support throughout the process from their Designated Liaison Person.
- Managers are aware of the emotional impact on practitioners working in child protection.
- The support needs of practitioners are a standing item on the agenda for supervision.
- Practitioners should be given an opportunity to debrief and avail of management support in child protection cases.

Challenges for staff

Practitioners need to be aware that their own value systems and attitudes to race, class, culture, gender and religion may influence their judgement and response to child protection.

For example, if a practitioner experienced being slapped as a child and feels that 'it didn't do me any harm', their own attitude to slapping may differ from someone who never experienced being slapped and feels that all physical punishment is totally unacceptable. Similarly, what one culture might see as neglect, another culture might have a much higher level of tolerance for.

It is essential, however, that an understanding of another person's culture does not supersede the service's own child protection best practice standards.





Providing Support to Parents and Staff

For practitioners living and working in the same community, other challenges might arise. Maintaining a professional relationship with parents may be more difficult. Making a decision to report or not report a child protection concern should not be influenced by what one knows or has possibly heard about a family living in the same neighbourhood.

The perceived negatives outcomes for a child by practitioners, such as the possibility of the child being taken out of the family, for example, must not interfere in the decision to make a referral to the Child and Family Agency. Only a minority of cases referred to the child protection services require a child to be removed from the family home. The majority of cases are associated with poor parenting skills, domestic violence, addiction etc. and are responded to by social services providing increased family support.

Children First states that the removal of children from their parents can be very stressful and requires sensitive handling. The likely effects of separation must be balanced against the danger of leaving the child in the home. All means of protecting the child at home must be considered first.

Another outcome for service providers that may follow parents being confronted by a child protection concern is the possibility that the child will be withdrawn from the service, particularly if the situation has been confrontational. A threat to remove or the actual removal of a child from a service must not interfere with a decision to make a referral to the Child and Family Agency. If a child is withdrawn from the service following a report to the Child and Family Agency, the Duty Social Worker must be made aware of the withdrawal.

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Good supervision should allow practitioners opportunities to discuss their fears and attitudes which should ensure that decisions are always made according to best practice standards.



Section eleven

Child Protection Audits

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How do services know whether their child protection policy and procedures are being implemented? This section focuses on the audit process and explores how it might be applied as a means of monitoring and supporting effective child protection practice.

Definition and Purpose of an Audit

An audit is a systematic check or assessment of the efficiency or effectiveness of an organisation or a process. Audits involve taking a 'snapshot' of practice at a given moment in time.

The purpose of an audit is to check that practice is compliant with agreed organisational systems and to highlight any deficiencies, either with the systems or practice.

Siolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education, which was introduced in Section 5, encompasses a self assessment approach such that early years services are encouraged to assess the quality of their own service and professional practice against a comprehensive quality framework. Appendix 8 includes a copy of the Siolta Template for Self Assessment with reference to child protection.

A Child Protection Audit

Child protection issues can include obvious signs and symptoms of abuse and also more subtle child welfare concerns. Good child protection practice is about managing both high and low levels of concern effectively and having systems in place for noticing if they cease or persist. The purpose of an audit of child protection practice in your service is to examine the implementation of your service's Child Protection Policy.

An audit of child protection practice will highlight areas of good practice as well as areas for development. Audits cannot guarantee good practice, but they can make recommendations which can be monitored to support the implementation of good practice. Audits can be carried out in two ways:

1. Self-administered review by an organisation to see if it is effective in meeting its objectives (these are advisory, informal and flexible).
2. Review of compliance by an independent third party (these are formal, highly structured, systematic and detailed).

A child protection audit will assess adherence to the services' Child Protection Policy, including support and supervision and record keeping. The audit will focus on the following:

1. Assessing current practice.
2. Identifying and learning from current good practice.
3. Identifying concerns and areas for improvement.
4. Devising improvement action plans where necessary.
5. Identifying training needs.



Barnardos has identified key issues to consider in carrying out a child protection audit, which would include:

- If the service was vigilant and acted immediately and appropriately in relation to child protection concerns.
- If staff and managers were familiar with, and understood, the content of key child protection documents and the implications of them on their practice.
- If roles and responsibilities for taking action and reporting on concerns were understood in line with the service's Child Protection Policy.
- If concerns were communicated to the Designated Liaison Person and if these were acted on appropriately in line with the service's Child Protection Policy.
- That the Designated Liaison Person was aware of and understood his or her responsibilities and knew how to deal with non-compliance with the policy in the service.
- How differences of opinion were managed between staff, managers, family and/or other professionals.
- That the manager facilitated discussion and practice development by engaging with the practitioner in joint analysis and reflection on all child protection matters through supervision and active case management⁶.
- That supervision happened regularly and provided opportunities for the consideration of staff's child protection skills and training needs and also an opportunity to debrief about the emotional impact of child protection work.
- That child protection issues were recorded in the child's file appropriately (for example, they were up-to-date, legible and distinguished between facts and professional opinion). That the child's records reviewed demonstrated, where relevant, effective partnership with other agencies in the assessment, planning and delivery of the service and in all child protection matters.

Gathering the Evidence

Different methods are used during a child protection audit in an attempt to obtain a comprehensive view of child protection practice. In order to uphold the principle of confidentiality, information about clients should only be accessed on a need-to-know basis as is relevant to the purpose of the audit.

⁶ Active case management provides a framework to ensure that work with children and families is managed effectively. It is a key mechanism for planning and reviewing work. It ensures that services are planned in relation to children's needs in order to achieve planned outcomes.

Active case management also helps to keep work focused, bringing it through a process of beginning, middle and end, and so reduces the likelihood of drift and dependency. It plays a key role in ensuring that children and families receive a quality service.

A case manager is the key worker's line manager and the person responsible for the supervision of the case.



Paper reviews

Paper reviews could include:

- Key Child Protection Policy documents within the service to ensure they are accessible for all staff.
- Children's records to see if child protection concerns or observations are noted and handled appropriately.
- Supervision notes to assess the frequency of child protection discussions and analysis held during supervision over the preceding 12 months.
- Team meetings minutes to ascertain if there are opportunities to share learning about child protection during these meetings. These could take the form of case discussions, reflection on child protection issues in terms of learning for the service, presentations, articles, new policies, etc.
- Staff training records to ascertain the number of staff who had attended child protection training.

Interviews

Interviews with the manager of the service and a number of practitioners would focus, for example, on:

- Their understanding of their role and responsibilities around child protection issues as they relate to the child, the service, the parents, other agencies and to the Child and Family Agency.
- If they had read and understood the service's Child Protection Policy and procedure and Children First, and what guidance they were given to integrate these into their practice.
- What they thought impacted on their own and the service's response to child protection and welfare issues.
- What training they had received in relation to child protection. What skills or knowledge gaps did they or their project have in the area of child protection.
- How they explained the services' Child Protection Policy and procedure to parents and children.
- What supports they received in relation to their child protection practice.

A copy of the Review of Child Protection Practice Template developed by Barnardos is attached in Appendix 9.

Final Thoughts

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Final Thoughts

We all have a responsibility for the protection and welfare of children, and early years and school age childcare services have particular responsibilities, which have been outlined in this book.

In 2013, approximately 96% of pre-school children participated in the free pre-school year (and other schemes) before starting primary school. More than ever before, therefore, it is essential that managers and practitioners understand their responsibilities in terms of safeguarding all of the children in their care as well as being aware of and responding to concerns about individual children.

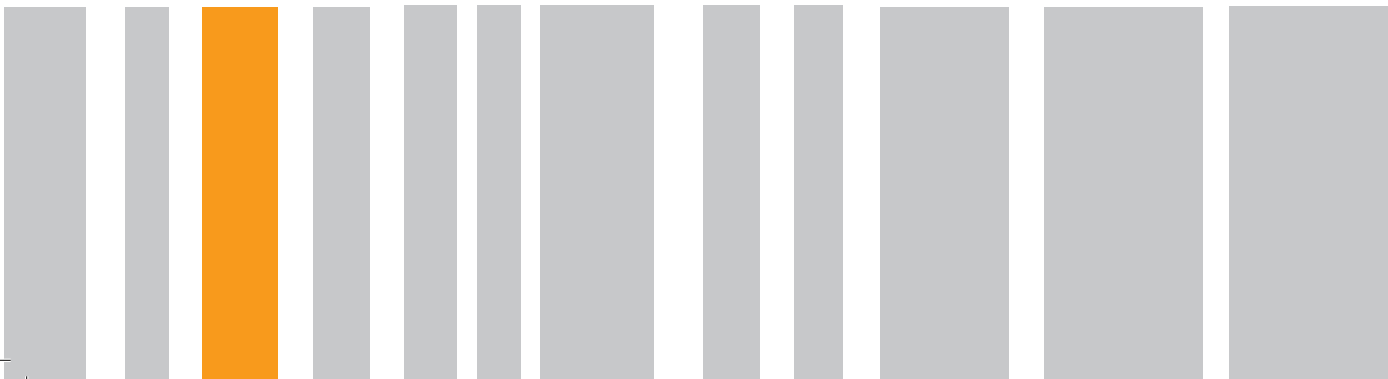
This guide has sought to provide those working with children in early years and school age childcare with more understanding and knowledge about child protection and welfare. It has given information on various aspects of these including how to recognise child abuse, how to report child abuse concerns to the Child and Family Agency, developing child protection policies and procedures, child protection and staff issues, good practice guidelines in relation to working with children and parents, and child protection audits. Good practice principles have underlined all of the information given.

Practitioners can develop close relationships with the children in their care, which gives practitioners a unique opportunity to play an important role in identifying child protection and welfare concerns if they arise in the course of their work.

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Practitioners in an early years or school age childcare settings are one link in the chain between all those professionals working with children and the Child and Family Agency who are the statutory child protection agency.

Providing more information and training to practitioners will encourage them to respond to child protection and welfare concerns with greater confidence and should lead to more effective child protection practice and better outcomes for children.



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References and Useful Reading



Appendices

Appendix 1 Standard Job Application Form

Position applied for:	
Surname:	First Name:
Address:	Telephone (home):
	Telephone (work):
	Telephone (mobile):

Education And Training

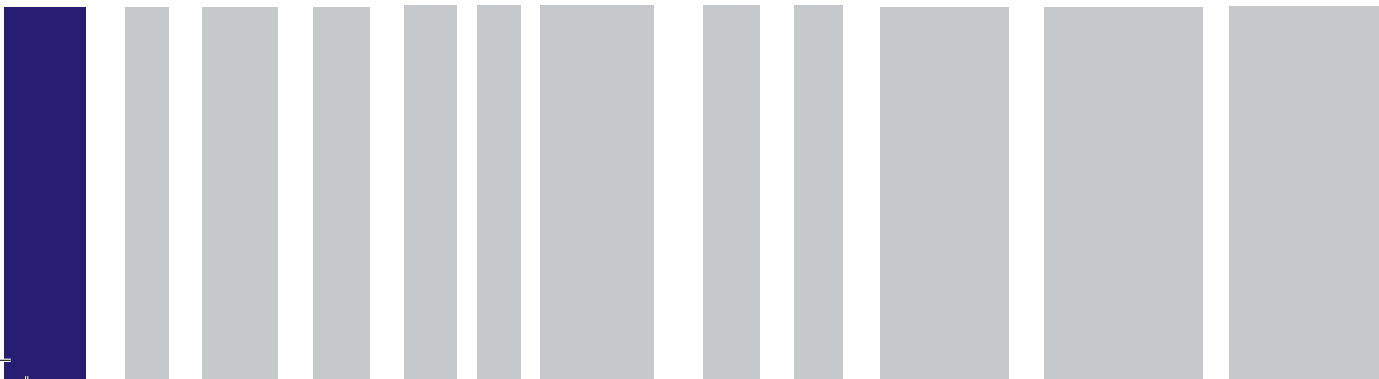
Secondary Education

Dates		Name of School or College	Give details of examinations taken and results
From	To		

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Third Level Education

Dates		Name of college/university or other institution (indicate part-time/full-time/correspondence or other)	Give details of examinations taken and results
From	To		



Employee History

Give details of all positions held since completing your full-time education. Start with your present or most recent position.

Dates	From	To
Name of employer, address and nature of business		
Position and duties		
Reason for wanting to leave		
Salary and any other benefits		

Dates	From	To
Name of employer, address and nature of business		
Position and duties		
Reason for wanting to leave		
Salary and any other benefits		

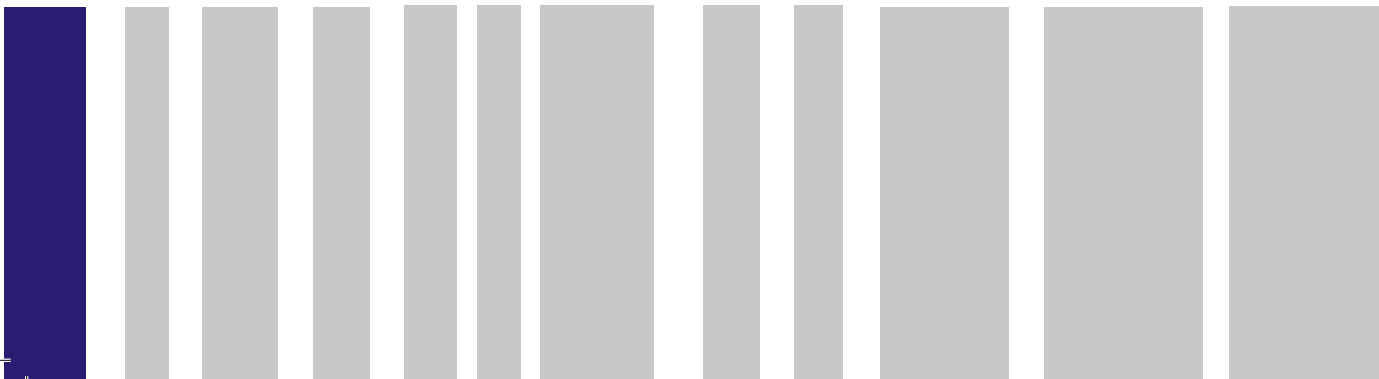


Appendices

Dates	From	To
Name of employer, address and nature of business		
Position and duties		
Reason for wanting to leave		
Salary and any other benefits		

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Dates	From	To
Name of employer, address and nature of business		
Position and duties		
Reason for wanting to leave		
Salary and any other benefits		



Training

Give details of any specialised training received and/or courses attended.

Disclosure Of Convictions

Has any action been taken against you or have you been subject of an investigation in regard to a child/ children under the age of 18?

Are you at present the subject of criminal charges or investigation?

Is there anything in your background that would render you unsuitable to work with children?

If the answer is 'yes' to any of the above questions, please give details.

Interests

Please outline your interests/hobbies



Appendices

References

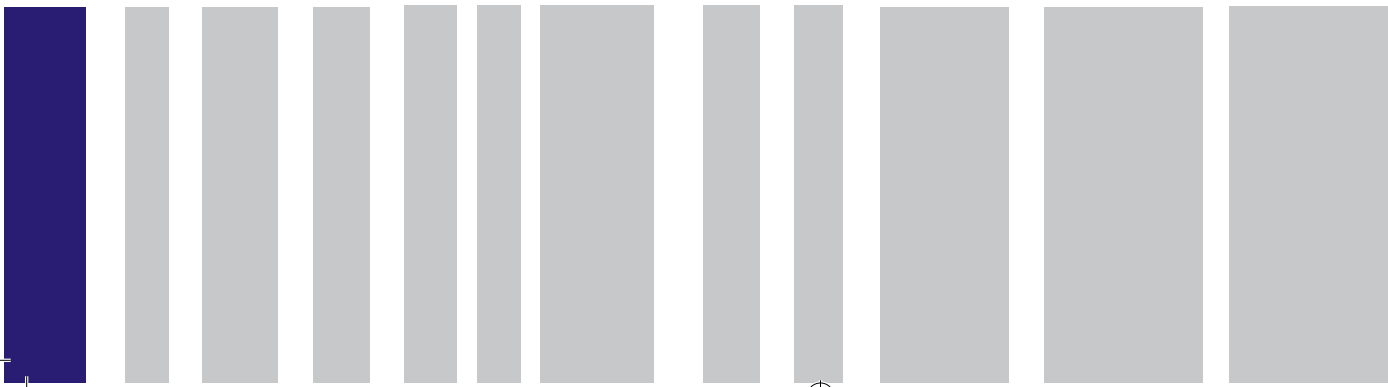
Please give the names, addresses and phone numbers of two persons who are in a position to comment on your professional/work ability. (References will not be taken up without clarification/confirmation with you in the first instance.)

Name	_____	Name	_____
Address	_____	Address	_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
Telephone No	_____	Telephone No	_____
Position	_____	Position	_____

I confirm that the information given on this application form is correct.

Signature of applicant: _____

Date: _____



Appendix 2 Staff Appraisal Form

The purpose of the appraisal is to enable you to discuss with your manager your job performance, plan work objective for the future and your future development within the service

Name of Employee:
Name of Manager:
Date of Appraisal:

Current Performance – suggested headings

Both the Appraisee (Employee) and the Appraiser (Manager) should comment on the following:

1. Outline the key areas of your job

Employee:

2. What do you believe are your key achievements over the last 12 months?

Employee:

3. What were the objectives for last year? Have they been achieved?

Employee:

4. What strengths and skills have contributed to your achievements?

Employee:

5. Could anything have worked better?

Employee:

6. Was there anything that held you back from delivering any aspects of your job?

Employee:

7. How, in your view could things be improved?

Employee:

Manager's comments



Future Performance – suggested headings

8. What objectives do you plan to achieve in the coming year? (remember objectives should be specific, measureable, attainable, relevant and within a timeframe, please also specify how these fit with your role)

Employee:

9. What support might you need to achieve these objectives – from your colleagues, manager, others?

Employee:

10. Consider and detail what you have learnt over the last year (for example learning from support and supervision sessions, team meetings, training, etc)

a. What have you learnt and how did it help you?

b. How might you apply this learning in the future?

Employee:

Manager's comments

Agreed objectives for the coming year (please list)



Relationships – suggested headings

11. In your view how do you think your relationships are with (please comment on each):

- a. The Children?

- b. The Parents?

- c. The Staff?

- d. The Employer (Owner/Board of Directors)?

- e. The Community?

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Other areas – suggested headings

12. What is your view on your:

- a. Sickness absence?

- b. Compliance with the dress code/uniform?

- c. Timekeeping?

- d. Understanding of the services policies and procedures?



Since your last appraisal, has any action been taken against you or have you been the subject of an investigation in regard to a child/children under the age of 18?

Are you at present the subject of criminal charges or investigation?

If the answer is 'yes' to either of the above questions, please give details.

Employee - Any other comments that you would like to make?

Manager – Any other comments that you would like to make?

Agreed action to be taken for the forthcoming year

Signed (appraisee/employee) _____ Date: _____

Signed (appraiser/employer) _____ Date: _____



Appendix 3 Síolta Principles

The following are the 12 Principles of Síolta – The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education:

1. Early childhood is a significant and distinct time in life that must be nurtured, respected, valued and supported in its own right.
2. The child's individuality, strengths, rights and needs are central in the provision of quality early childhood experiences.
3. Parents/carers are the primary educators of the child and have a pre-eminent role in promoting her or his well being, learning and development.
4. Responsive, sensitive and reciprocal relationships, which are consistent over time, are essential to the well being, learning and development of the young child.
5. Equality is an essential characteristic of quality early childhood care and education.
6. Quality early childhood settings acknowledge and respect diversity and ensure that all children and families have their individual personal, cultural and linguistic identity validated.
7. The physical environment of the young child has a direct impact on her or his well-being, learning and development.
8. The safety, welfare and well-being of all children must be protected and promoted in all early childhood environments.
9. The role of the adult in providing quality early childhood experiences is fundamental.
10. The provision of quality early childhood experiences requires cooperation. Communication and mutual respect.
11. Pedagogy in early childhood is expressed by curricula or programmes of activities which take a holistic approach to the development and learning of the child and reflect the inseparable nature of care and education.
12. Play is central to the well-being, development and learning of the young child.



Appendix 4 Síolta Standards

Standard 1: Rights of the child

Ensuring that each child's rights are met requires that she/he is enabled to exercise choice and to use initiative as an active participant and partner in her/his own development and learning.

Standard 2: Environments

Enriching environments, both indoor and outdoor (including materials and equipment) are well maintained, safe, available, accessible, adaptable, developmentally appropriate, and offer a variety of challenging and stimulating experiences.

Standard 3: Parents and Families

Valuing and involving parents and families requires a proactive partnership approach evidenced by a range of clearly stated, accessible and implemented processes, policies and procedures.

Standard 4: Consultation

Ensuring inclusive decision-making requires consultation that promotes participation and seeks out, listens to and acts upon the views and opinions of children, parents and staff, and other stakeholders, as appropriate.

Standard 5: Interactions

Fostering constructive interactions (child/child, child/adult and adult/adult) requires explicit policies, procedures and practice that emphasise the value of process and are based on mutual respect, equal partnership and sensitivity.

Standard 6: Play

Promoting play requires that each child has ample time to engage in freely available and accessible, developmentally appropriate and well-resourced opportunities for exploration, creativity and 'meaning making' in the company of other children, with participating and supportive adults and alone, where appropriate.

Standard 7: Curriculum

Encouraging each child's holistic development and learning requires the implementation of a verifiable, broad-based, documented and flexible curriculum or programme.

Standard 8: Planning and Evaluation

Enriching and informing all aspects of practice within the setting requires cycles of observation, planning, action and evaluation, undertaken on a regular basis.



Standard 9: Health and Welfare

Promoting the health and welfare of the child requires protection from harm, provision of nutritious food, appropriate opportunities for rest, and secure relationships characterised by trust and respect.

Standard 10: Organisation

Organising and managing resources effectively requires an agreed written philosophy, supported by clearly communicated policies and procedures to guide and determine practice.

Standard 11: Professional Practice

Practising in a professional manner requires that individuals have skills, knowledge, values and attitudes appropriate to their role and responsibility within the setting. In addition, it requires regular reflection upon practice and engagement in supported, ongoing professional development.

Standard 12: Communication

Communicating effectively in the best interests of the child requires policies, procedures and actions that promote the proactive sharing of knowledge and information among appropriate stakeholders, with respect and confidentiality.

Standard 13: Transitions

Ensuring continuity of experiences for children requires policies, procedures and practice that promote sensitive management of transitions, consistency in key relationships, liaison within and between settings, the keeping and transfer of relevant information (with parental consent), and the close involvement of parents and, where appropriate, relevant professionals.

Standard 14: Identity and Belonging

Promoting positive identities and a strong sense of belonging requires clearly defined policies, procedures and practice that empower every child and adult to develop a confident self- and group identity, and to have a positive understanding and regard for the identity and rights of others.

Standard 15: Legislation and Regulation

Being compliant requires that all relevant regulations and legislative requirements are met or exceeded.

Standard 16: Community Involvement

Promoting community involvement requires the establishment of networks and connections evidenced by policies, procedures and actions which extend and support all adult's and children's engagement with the wider community.



Appendix 5 Sample Complaints Form

Please complete all sections of this form using block letters.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Date of incident: _____

Name of person you were dealing with: _____

Details of Complaint: _____

Please continue on an additional sheet if required.

Signed _____ Date: _____

Please return to: [Name], **Manager** [insert service name and address]

Read by Manager

Signed _____ Date: _____



Response and Actions

Issue/s

Actions (Include dates)

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Communication with the person/s who made the complaint

(include copies of all correspondence including emails, letters, dates & times of phone calls)

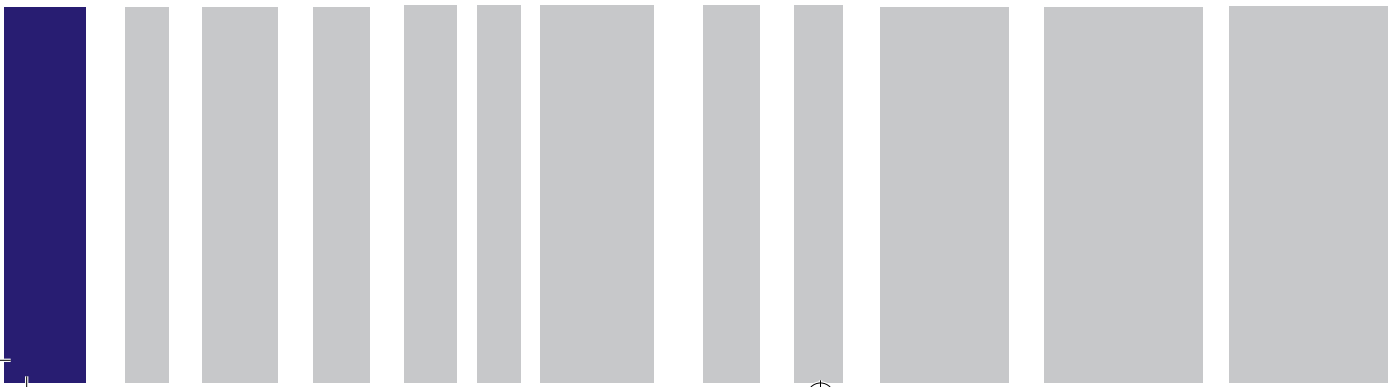
Evaluation

Issues and Policies/Procedures that require owner/management committee review:

Signed Manager: _____ Date: _____

Owner/Committee Member: _____ Date: _____

(Barnardos, 2010a)



Appendix 6 Child Protection Policy Template

1. Policy Title

(Policy Number) **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

2. Introduction/Reasons for the Policy/Purpose/Objective

Include requirements under Children First and the Child Care (Pre-school Services) Regulations, 2006.

Also include need to ensure that a service is provided where everyone can feel safe and secure and no one suffers abuse of any kind.

The welfare of the child is the first and paramount consideration.

3. Definitions/Glossary

Include definitions of Neglect, Emotional Abuse, Physical Abuse and Sexual Abuse here.

For definitions, refer to *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*.

You should also include a definition of Confidentiality.

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4. Policy Statement

State clearly the specific means you will use to achieve your objective (as outlined in 1. above).

Include areas such as:

- Safe recruitment and selection practices
- Garda vetting
- Induction, Training and Staff supervision
- Environment
- Training
- Responsibilities around reporting child abuse
- Communication with parents
- Designated Liaison Person and Deputy Designated Liaison Person
- Recording information
- Confidentiality

Make it clear that it is not the responsibility of the childcare service or its staff to carry out assessments/investigations. This is the role of the Child and Family Agency and the Garda Síochána.

5. Procedures & Practices/Code of behaviour

Outline the steps to be undertaken to ensure your objective.

Include procedures around the following:

- *Recruitment and selection*
- *Keeping children safe*
- *Child protection (covering dealing with a disclosure from a child; responding to concerns; Designated Liaison Person; reporting to Child and Family Agency)*
- *Communicating with parents*
- *Allegations against staff*
- *Record keeping*
- *Confidentiality*
- *Accidents and incidents*
- *Outings*

Include the contact details for your local Child and Family Agency office here.

Include contact details for your local Garda Station here.

6. Communication Plan [For staff & families]

This should include general statements about sharing information and involving parents in activities and general communication. It will also cover specific means of communicating the Child Protection Policy to parents and to new members of staff.

State where copies of the policy will be kept and that parents/carers may receive a copy of the policy at any time upon request.

7. Review Date

State when the Policy will be reviewed and by whom.

8. Related Policies, Procedures and Forms

List of all related Policy documents the service has.



9. References/Supporting Documents/Related Legislation

List any relevant Legislation and Best Practice Guides referred to in drafting the Policy. This could include:

- Child Care (Pre-school Services) Regulations, 2006 and Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) (Amendment) Regulations, 2006
- Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children
- Our Duty to Care
- Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook
- Siolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education
- Aistear – The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework
- National Standards for Pre-school Services
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The Child Care Act, 1991
- Domestic Violence Act, 1996
- Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998
- The Data Protection Act, 1988 and 2003
- The Education Act, 1998
- The Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act, 1997
- Freedom of Information Act, 1997
- Parents Who Listen Protect Campaign Child and Family Agency 2007

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10. Contact Information

Who to contact for more information.

11. Policy Created

Give date.

12. Signatures



Appendix 7 Children First Standard Report Form



An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

FORM NUMBER: CC01:01:01

STANDARD REPORT FORM

(For reporting CP&W Concerns)

A. To Principal Social Worker/Designate: _____

1. Date of Report

2. Details of Child

Name:	<input type="text"/>	Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Address:	<input type="text"/>	DOB	<input type="text"/>		Age	<input type="text"/>
		School	<input type="text"/>			
Alias	<input type="text"/>	Correspondence address (if different)	<input type="text"/>			
Telephone	<input type="text"/>	Telephone	<input type="text"/>			

3. Details of Persons Reporting Concern(s)

Name:	<input type="text"/>	Telephone No.	<input type="text"/>
Address:	<input type="text"/>	Occupation	<input type="text"/>
		Relationship to client	<input type="text"/>
Reporter wishes to remain anonymous	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reporter discussed with parents/guardians	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Parents Aware of Report

Are the child's parents/carers aware that this concern is being reported	- Mother	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	- Father	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comment	<input type="text"/>		

5. Details of Report

(Details of concern(s), allegation(s) or incident(s) dates, times, who was present, description of any observed injuries, parent's view(s), child's view(s) if known.)





FORM NUMBER: CC01:01:01

STANDARD REPORT FORM

(For reporting CP&W Concerns)

6. Relationships

Details of Mother		Details of Father	
Name:		Name:	
Address: (if different to child)		Address: (if different to child)	
Telephone No's:		Telephone No's:	

7. Household composition

Name	Relationship	DOB	Additional Information e.g. School/ Occupation/Other:

8. Name and Address of other personnel or agencies involved with this child

	Name	Address
Social Worker		
PHN		
GP		
Hospital		
School		
Gardaí		
Pre-School/ Crèche/YG		
Other (specify):		

9. Details of person(s) allegedly causing concern in relation to the child

Relationship to child:		Age		Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name:			Occupation				
Address:							

10. Details of person completing form

Name:		Occupation:	
Address:		Telephone No's:	
Signed		Date:	



Appendix 8 Síolta Template for Self Assessment

Section A: Síolta Standard and Component
Insert Standard Number and Title: <i>Standard 9: Health and Welfare</i> <i>Promoting the health and welfare of the child requires protection from harm, provision of nutritious food, appropriate opportunities for rest, and secure relationships characterised by trust and respect.</i>
Insert Component Number and Title: <i>Component 9.3</i> <i>The setting has implemented the guidelines from Children First and Our Duty to Care in relation to child protection.</i>

Section B: Level of Practice			
<input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 No evidence of Quality	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 Some evidence of Quality	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 Significant evidence of Quality but some issues still outstanding	<input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 Comprehensive evidence of Quality

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Section C: Quality Practices With regard to the level indicated, please describe practice within your setting	
Section D: Supporting Documentation Please provide a list of the evidence you plan to attach to support your narrative	



Appendix 9 Barnardos' Review of Child Protection Practice

Region	
Project	
Length of time in operation	
Date	
Reviewer(s)	

Evidence reviewed	Tick
Two service user records picked at random	
Staff training records	
Supervision records	
Team meeting minutes	
Manager interview (list name)	
Staff interview (list names, post held and length of time in post)	
Other (please list)	

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Contextual factors - Please identify any contextual factors that you think are relevant to child protection practice in this service

Are these available and accessible within the project:	Yes	No
Barnardos' <i>Child Protection Policy</i> and practice guidelines		
Barnardos <i>Child Protection Practice Standards</i>		
<i>Children First</i>		
<i>Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook</i>		
<i>Our Duty to Care</i>		
Flow chart from Barnardos <i>Child Protection Policy</i>		
Barnardos <i>Taking Responsibility and Whistle Blowing Policy</i>		
Barnardos <i>Record Keeping Policy and Practice Guidance</i>		
Key contacts section from the <i>Child Protection Policy</i> complete		



Appendices

Child Protection Training:

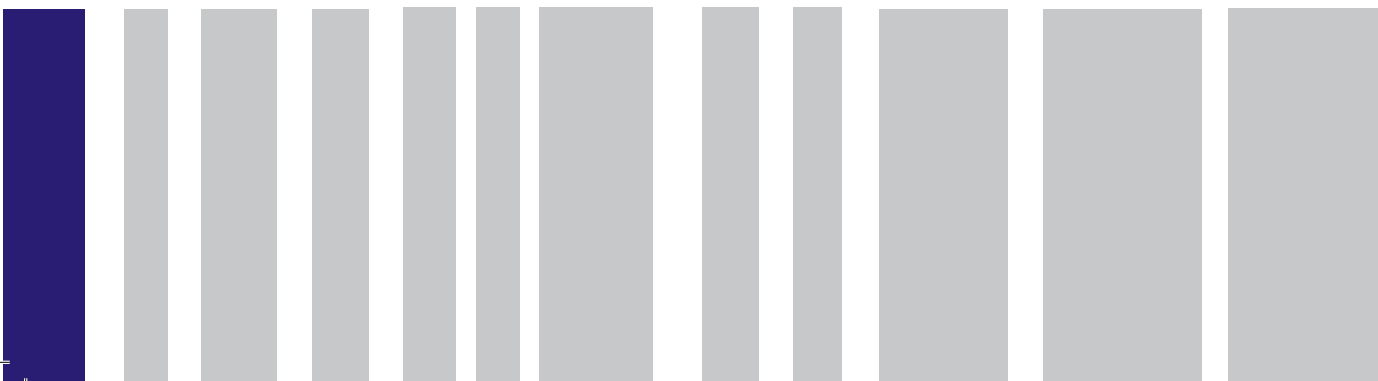
	Yes	No
How many staff have received training on child protection (please insert number in appropriate box)?		

List other child protection training needs identified by the project staff.	
---	--

Summary of findings from child protection review:

What to look for:	Evidence (where did I see this):	Score ⁷
a. The service is vigilant and acts immediately and appropriately in relation to child protection concerns.		
b. Roles and responsibility for taking action and reporting on concerns in line with Barnardos' policy are understood by staff who are clear on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • child protection reporting pathway • how differences of opinion are managed between staff / managers / family / professionals 		
c. Concerns are communicated to the Designated Liaison Person who acts appropriately on any concerns in line with Barnardos' Child Protection Policy and practice standards		
d. The Designated Liaison Person is aware of and understands his or her responsibilities and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understands how to deal with non compliance of the policy within the project • facilitates discussion and practice development in the area of child protection 		

⁷ Score in terms of whether standard is: fully met (4); partly met (3); starting out (2); not met (1).



What to look for:	Evidence (where did I see this):	Score
e. Staff and managers are aware of issues which may impact on their child protection practice and are mindful of these not affecting their child protection response		
f. The manager and staff engage in joint analysis, and reflection of all child protection and welfare practice issues through supervision and active case management		
g. Supervision happens regularly and in supervision there are opportunities for the considerations of child protection skills and training needs and also to debrief about the emotional impact of child protection work		
<p>h. Staff and managers are familiar with and have an understanding of the content of the following and the implications of these on their practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Barnardos' Child Protection Policy and practice guidance</i> • <i>Barnardos' Child Protection Practice Standards</i> • <i>Children First</i> • <i>Our Duty to Care</i> • <i>Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook</i> • <i>Barnardos' Taking Responsibility and Whistle Blowing Policy</i> 		
i. Records are kept in accordance with <i>Barnardos' File and Record Keeping Policy and practice guidance</i>		
j. Child protection issues are recorded in the file appropriately (up-to-date, legible, distinguish between facts and professional opinion, etc)		
k. The service user records reviewed demonstrate, where relevant, effective partnership with other agencies in the assessment, planning and delivery of the service and in all child protection matters		



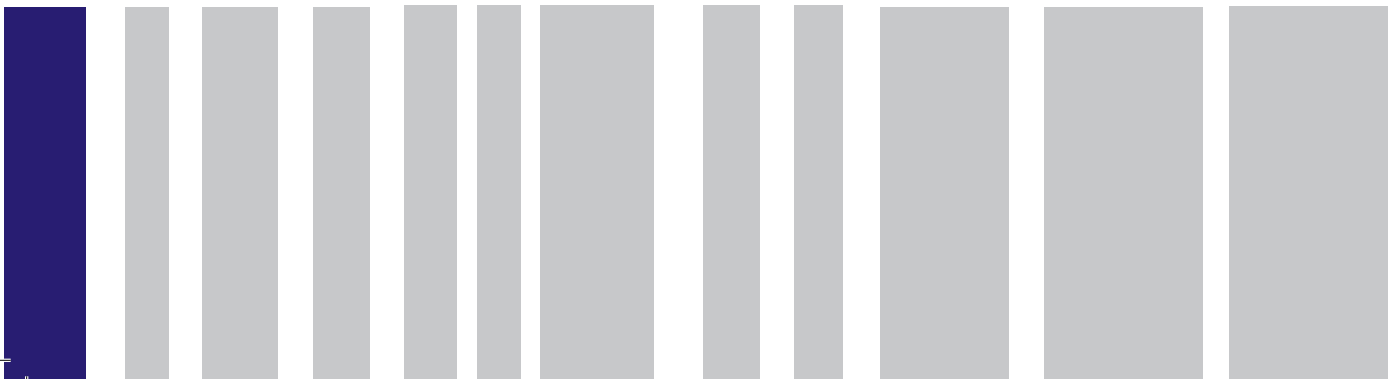
Appendices

Summary of findings

Strengths
Developmental Needs

Key improvement actions

What	Priority Level	Action



Sources of Further Information

Barnardos

Christchurch Square, Dublin 8
T: 01 4549699 F: 01 4530300
E: resources@barnardos.ie or
training@barnardos.ie
www.barnardos.ie

Barnardos Garda Vetting Service

Blackmore House, Meade St, Cork
T: 021 4547060

CARI Foundation –

Children at Risk in Ireland

National Office:
110 Lower Drumcondra Rd, Dublin 9
T: 01 8308529
Lo-call 1890 924 567 (Lines are open from
Monday to Friday 9:30am to 5:30pm)
E: helpline@cari.ie / info@cari.ie
www.cari.ie

St Clare's Unit, Temple Street Hospital

Children's University Hospital,
Temple Street, Dublin 1
T: 01 8745214

Early Childhood Ireland

Hainault House, Belgard Square,
Tallaght, Dublin 24
T: 01 4057100
E: info@earlychildhoodireland.ie

Early Years Education and Policy Unit

43-49 Mespil Rd, Dublin 4
T: 01 6473050 / 6473250
E: earlychildhood@education.gov.ie

Health and Safety Authority

The Metropolitan Building,
James Joyce Street, Dublin 1
LoCall: 1890 289 389
E: wcu@hsa.ie
www.hsa.ie

Mayo Children's Initiative (re. Domestic Violence)

20 Sean Bhaile, Castle Street,
Castlebar, Co. Mayo
T: 094 9286407
E: olivia@mciireland.ie
www.mciireland.ie

PDST Technology in Education

Dublin City University, Dublin 9
T: 01 700 8200
www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)

35 Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin 2
T: 01 6617177
E: info@ncca.ie
www.ncca.ie

Department of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs

43-49 Mespil Road, Dublin 4
T: 01 6473000
E: contact@dcya.gov.ie
www.dcya.gov.ie

St Louise's Unit, Our Lady's Children's Hospital

Crumlin, Dublin 12
T: 01 409 6200

- Contact details for Child and Family Agency Social Workers in your area can be found on <http://www.tusla.ie/services/child-protection-welfare/contact-a-social-worker/>
- You can find contact details for your local Garda station on <http://www.garda.ie/stations/default.aspx>
- Contact details for City/County Childcare committees can be found on <https://www.pobal.ie/FundingProgrammes/EarlyEducationandChildcare/Pages/CCCs.aspx>

Children First Information and Advice Officers

The following list is correct at time of printing. An up-to-date list can be found on

<http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/roles-and-responsibilities/organisations/children-first-training>

Area	Contact Address	Contact Numbers
Dublin Mid Leinster Dublin South City, Dublin South West, Dublin West, Kildare, West Wicklow	Children First Information and Advice Officer, Child and Family Agency, Training and Development Unit, Brickfield House, Brickfield Drive, Crumlin, Dublin 12	Phone: (01) 4156969 or (01) 4156967
Dublin Mid Leinster Dublin South (Dun Laoghaire), Dublin South East, Wicklow	Children First Information and Advice Officer, Child and Family Agency, Block B, Civic Centre, Main St, Bray, Co Wicklow	Phone: (01) 2744273 Fax: (01) 2744287
Dublin Mid Leinster Longford, Westmeath, Laois, Offaly (Midlands Area)	Children First Information and Advice Officer, Child and Family Agency, Top Floor, Primary Care Unit, St Loman's Campus, Springfield, Mullingar, Co Westmeath	Phone: (044) 9395510 Fax: (044) 9395560
Dublin North East Cavan/Monaghan	Children First Information and Advice Officer, Child and Family Agency, Castleblaney Wellbeing Centre Bree, Castleblaney, Co Monaghan	Phone: ((042) 9795623 Fax: (042) 9795628

Dublin North East Meath	Children First Information and Advice Officer, Child and Family Agency, Enterprise Centre, Trim Road, Navan, Co Meath	Fax: (046) 9097900
Dublin North East Louth	Post Vacant	Phone: (01) 6352854
Dublin North East Dublin North, Dublin North City	Post Vacant	Phone: (01) 6352854
South Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford, Waterford, South Tipperary	Children First Information and Advice Officer, Child and Family Agency, Community Care Offices, Athy Road, Carlow	Phone: (059) 9136546
South Cork, Kerry	Children First Information and Advice Officer, Child and Family Agency, Block 36, St Finbar's Hospital Douglas Road, Cork.	Phone: (021) 4923220
West Roscommon, Galway	Children First Information and Advice Officer, Child and Family Agency, Bridge St, Boyle, Co Roscommon	Phone: (091) 775314 Fax: (091) 755632
West Mayo	Children First Information and Advice Officer, Child and Family Agency, 2nd Floor St Mary's Headquarters, Castlebar, Co Mayo	Phone: (094) 9042579 Fax: (094) 9020452

Sources of Further Information

Area	Contact Address	Contact Numbers
West Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal, West Cavan	Children First Information and Advice Officer, Child and Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack Street, Sligo	Phone: (071) 9155181 Fax: (071) 9155131
West Clare	Children First Information and Advice Officer, Child and Family Agency, River House, Gort Road, Ennis, Co Clare	Phone: (065) 6863919 Fax: (065) 6863983
West Limerick	Children First Information and Advice Officer, Child and Family Agency, Ballycummin Ave, Raheen Business Park, Raheen, Limerick	Phone: (061) 483520 Fax: (061) 468902
West Tipperary North	Children First Information and Advice Officer, Child and Family Agency, Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co Tipperary	Phone: (067) 46652 Fax: (067) 46693

