

Child Safeguarding Policy



TABLE OF CONTENTS

SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT	2
DECLARATION OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES	3
Léargas	3
Our guiding principles	3
DESIGNATED LIAISON STAFF	4
Roles and Responsibility of DLP and Deputy DLP	4
PRINCIPLES FOR BEST PRACTICE IN CHILD PROTECTION	5
Children’s First Principles	5
CODE OF CONFIDENTIALITY	6
ALLEGATIONS AGAINST AN EMPLOYEE/VOLUNTEER/TRAINER.....	7
The reporting procedure in respect of the child.....	7
The reporting procedure in respect of the worker/volunteer.....	7
RECORDING PROCEDURE	8
Reporting Procedure.....	8
PROCEDURE FOR OFFSITE WORK.....	10
TRAINING	12
RECRUITMENT.....	13
Appendix 1: Referral Flow Chart.....	14
Internal Referral Procedure Chart flow	14
Allegations against a Staff Member/Trainer/Volunteer flow	14
Allegations against the Executive Director flow	14
Appendix 2: code of Behaviour for Staff, Trainers and Volunteers	15
Appendix 3: Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse.....	17

SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT

Our Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the Children first Act 2015, the Children First; National Guidance and Tusla's Child Safeguarding; A guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice.

In addition to the procedures listed in our risk assessment the following procedures support our intention to safeguard children while they are availing of our service:

- Management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers in respect of a child/young person availing of our service
- Appointing and maintaining a list of the persons in the relevant service who are Designated Liaison Persons (DLPs)
- Offsite Work (*e.g.* Monitoring Visits, Site Visits, Residentials *etc.*)
- Safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers to work with children/young people.
- Provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm

DECLARATION OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Léargas

Léargas is a not-for-profit organisation that operates under the aegis of the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The Executive Director of Léargas reports to the Léargas Board, which is appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills.

Léargas manage European, national and international exchange and cooperation programmes in school education, vocational education and training, adult education, volunteering and youth work. These programmes connect people in different communities and countries, and bring an international dimension to the work of organisations across Ireland. We are the National Agency for Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps in the fields noted above

Our guiding principles

We believe that the best interests of children, young people and vulnerable adults accessing our services are paramount. Our guiding principles are underpinned by:

- Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children
- Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Current legislation, such as:
 - Children First Act 2015
 - Child Care Act 1991
 - Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998
 - National Vetting Bureau Act 2012

Our guiding principles apply to all paid staff, trainers, committee/board members and students on work placement within our organisation. All committee/board members, staff, trainers and students must sign up to and abide by these guiding principles and our child safeguarding procedures.

We will review our guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures every two years or sooner if necessary due to service issues or changes in legislation or national policy.

DESIGNATED LIAISON STAFF

We have appointed a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and a Deputy DLP. The DLP liaises with statutory agencies responsible for child protection and welfare and is the resource person for any worker or volunteer who has child protection concerns. When the DLP is not available (*e.g.* due to annual leave, sick leave, *etc.*), a Deputy DLP is delegated responsibility.

Our **Designated Liaison Person** is:

Lorraine Gilligan
01 887 1205
lgilligan@leargas.ie

Our **Deputy Designated Liaison Person** is:

Emma Grainger
01 887 1209
egrainger@leargas.ie

Roles and Responsibility of DLP and Deputy DLP

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and the Deputy DLP must:

- be fully familiar with duties of Léargas in relation to the safeguarding of children
- have a good knowledge of our guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures
- ensure that our reporting procedure is followed, so that child protection and welfare concerns are referred promptly to Tusla
- receive child protection and welfare concerns from workers and volunteers and consider if reasonable grounds for reporting to Tusla exist
- consult informally with a Tusla Duty Social Worker if necessary
- where appropriate, make a formal report of a child protection or welfare concern to Tusla on behalf of Léargas, using the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form
- inform the child's parents/guardians that a report is to be submitted to Tusla or An Garda Síochána, unless:
 - informing the parents/guardians is likely to endanger the child or young person
 - informing the parents/guardians may place the reporter at risk of harm from the family
 - the family's knowledge of the report could impair Tusla's ability to carry out an assessment
- record all concerns or allegations of child abuse brought to their attention as well as any action/inaction taken in response to these concerns
- provide feedback to the referrer, as appropriate
- ensure that a secure system is in place to manage confidential records
- act as a liaison with Tusla and An Garda Síochána, as appropriate
- where requested, jointly report with a Designated Liaison Person.

PRINCIPLES FOR BEST PRACTICE IN CHILD PROTECTION

The national guidance for social workers, professionals, organisations and individuals to help keep children safe and protected from harm is *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children*, first published in 1999 and most recently revised in 2017. In addition to these guidelines, the *Children First Act 2015* places a number of statutory obligations on specific groups of professionals and on particular organisations providing services to children. The revised National Guidelines include information on the statutory obligations for those individuals and organisations under the Act. They also set out the best practice procedures that should be in place for all organisations providing services to children.

Children's First Principles

The following Set of Children's First Principles should be applied:

- Principle 1.** The safety and welfare of children is everyone's responsibility.
- Principle 2.** The best interests of the child should be paramount.
- Principle 3.** The overall aim in all dealings with children and their families is to intervene proportionately to support families to keep children safe from harm.
- Principle 4.** Interventions by the State should build on existing strengths and protective factors in the family.
- Principle 5.** Early intervention is key to getting better outcomes. Where it is necessary for the State to intervene to keep children safe, the minimum intervention necessary should be used.
- Principle 6.** Children should only be separated from their parents or carers when alternative means of protecting them have been exhausted.
- Principle 7.** Children have a right to be heard, listened to and taken seriously. Taking into account their age and understanding, children should be consulted and involved in all matters and decisions that may affect their lives.
- Principle 8.** Parents and carers have a right to respect, and should be consulted and involved in matters that concern their family.
- Principle 9.** 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.
- Principle 10.** Child protection is a multiagency, multidisciplinary activity. Agencies and professionals must work together in the interests of the children

Léargas is also aware of the intention of the provision of the Act to

- raise awareness of child abuse and neglect
- provide for mandatory reporting by key professionals
- improve child safeguarding arrangements in organisations providing services to children
- provide for cooperation and information-sharing between agencies when Tusla (Child and Family Agency) is undertaking child protection assessments.

CODE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

This section outlines and provides guidance on our Code of Confidentiality. Confidentiality is about managing sensitive information in a manner that is respectful, professional and purposeful. All information provided to Léargas by a child or young person, volunteer or staff member must be treated in a confidential manner. All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to handle all sensitive information in line with the code of confidentiality.

1. All information regarding a Child Protection concern or suspected case of Child Abuse must be shared only on a **'need to know basis'** and always in the best interests of the child's general welfare and safety. The subject should never be discussed with other persons in the organisation—including staff, volunteers or young people—if they are not directly involved.
2. In the case of a Child Protection concern, no member of staff or trainer should promise a person disclosing information that the information will be kept secret. The person receiving the information should also never state that they would keep a secret if the organisation did not have a policy on this. This could give the person who made the disclosure the impression that the information is not that serious or infer a range of mixed messages. It must be made clear to the person(s) making the disclosure that **secrets cannot be kept** but that the information will only be shared with the appropriate person who will handle the information sensitively.
3. **Sharing information with an appropriate/designated person** for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality. Codes of confidentiality do not intend to prevent the exchange of information between individuals who have a responsibility to protect children.
4. Personal information, which is gathered for a specific purpose, **should never be used for any other purpose** without consulting the person who provided that information.
5. All staff working with children/young people must have some **training** on understanding of the importance of confidentiality and the limitations of confidentiality in relation to Child Protection issues.

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST AN EMPLOYEE/VOLUNTEER/TRAINER

On receiving an allegation, the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) will notify the Executive Director of Léargas.

If the allegation relates to the Executive Director, the DLP will notify the Léargas Board of the allegation.

If the allegation relates to the DLP, then the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) will notify the Executive Director.

When an allegation is made to the DLP or the Deputy DLP, there are two parts to the process:

1. Dealing with the allegation of abuse
2. Dealing with the employee/volunteer

Where possible these two pieces should be dealt with by two different people.

The reporting procedure in respect of the child

- The safety of the child is the first priority of Léargas and all necessary measures will be taken to ensure that the child and other children/young people are safe.
- The Designated Liaison Person will deal with the procedure involving the child/young person and the reporting to the Child and Family, Tusla.

The reporting procedure in respect of the worker/volunteer

- The Designated Liaison Person and the Executive Director will work in close co-operation with each other and Tusla and An Garda Síochána
- If a formal report is being made, the Executive Director will notify the employee that an allegation has been made and what the nature of the allegation is. The employee has a right to respond to this and this response should be documented and retained. Furthermore, Léargas will ensure that the principle of 'natural justice' will apply whereby a person is considered innocent until proven otherwise.
- The Executive Director will suspend the employee/volunteer with pay (where appropriate). In the case where the worker is not suspended, the level of supervision of the worker will be increased.
- The Executive Director will liaise closely with Tusla/An Garda Síochána to ensure that the actions taken by the childcare service will not undermine or frustrate any investigations.
- The protective measures that can be taken to ensure the safety of children and young people can include the following:
 - suspension of duties of the person accused
 - re-assignment of duties where the accused will not have contact with children/young people or vulnerable adults
 - working under increased supervision during the period of the investigation
 - other measures as deemed appropriate

Please see *Appendix 1: Referral Flow Chart* on page 14

RECORDING PROCEDURE

It is the responsibility of the DLP to oversee all Recording and Reporting Procedures and to:

- ensure records are factual and include details of contracts, consultations and any actions taken
- cooperate with Tusla in the sharing of records, where a child protection or welfare issue arises
- store records on child protection concerns, allegations and disclosure securely and safely
- use records for the purpose for which they are intended only
- share records on a need to know basis only in the best interests of a child/young person or vulnerable adult.

Reporting Procedure

Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against staff by a child, young person or vulnerable adult availing of Léargas services. If an allegation is made against a Léargas staff member, action will be guided by the 2015 Act, the 2017 Guidance, the agreed procedures and the rules of natural justice.

1. The DLP shall be informed as soon as possible.
2. The first priority should be to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk.
3. The DLP shall, as a matter of urgency, refer the matter to the Executive Director of Léargas who may take any necessary protective measures, including, where necessary, immediately placing the staff member on administrative leave.

These measures should be proportionate to the level of risk and should not unduly penalise the staff member, financially or otherwise, unless necessary to protect children.

Any allegation must be dealt with sensitively and the staff member treated fairly. This includes the right not to be judged in advance of a full and fair enquiry.

4. The DLP will advise the Executive Director who should advise the person against whom the allegation of child abuse is being made of the following:
 - the fact that an allegation has been made against him/her; and the available details of the nature of the allegation.
 - a follow-up of allegations of abuse against a Léargas staff member should be made in consultation with Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána. Immediate contact should be made with these two agencies for that purpose.

It is important to note that if an allegation is made against a Léargas staff member, there are two procedures to be followed:

- following the relevant HR procedures applicable to the staff member
- reporting the allegation in accordance with this Child Protection Policy, to Tusla and An Garda Síochána.

In general, the same person should not have the responsibility of dealing with both procedures.

The DLP is responsible for reporting the matter to Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána, while the Executive Director (or his/her nominee) is responsible for addressing the relevant procedural issues applicable in respect of a Léargas staff member.

To download a copy of the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form, visit either of these links on the Tusla website:

https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Child_Protection_and_Welfare_Report_Form_FINAL.pdf

or

https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Child_Protection_and_Welfare_Report_Form_FINAL.docx

PROCEDURE FOR OFFSITE WORK

This procedure covers the following activities that form part of the normal work of Léargas:

- Monitoring Visits
- On the Spot Checks
- Site Visits
- Events
- Day Trips and Residentials with Young People

The safety and well-being of children and young people is a top priority. It is essential to have a clear code of practice for protecting their safety and welfare and for ensuring that child protection requirements are met. When inviting young people on day trips and residential activities, a minimum of two young people supported by a youth worker from each individual group is

Léargas staff and trainers should always be attentive to such matters as:

- Standard **registration** forms are required
- Where required, additional **consent for photography and video** during events must be obtained outlining the nature of purpose of media and distribution afterward
- **Safety:** activities, buildings, transport *etc.*
- **Insurance:** ensure that it is adequate to cover all aspects of the trip
- **Parental consent:** staff/trainers must ensure that written consent from parent(s)/guardian(s) is requested before children or young people engage in day trips or residential activities. They must also have permission for the young person to receive medical treatment in the event of an emergency
- Staff/trainers should ensure that they are made aware of any specific **medical** information which may be relevant *e.g.* allergies.
- **Sleeping arrangements:** sleeping areas for males and females should be in separate and supervised quarters and supervised by at least two people
- Young people over 18 should be **accommodated separately** to children under 18
- There is a **no-drug-or-alcohol** policy for all activities involving children and young people under 18
- **Adequate supervision** should be available for the duration of the residential. Provisions should be made for any emergencies that may arise, *e.g.* should a young person take ill or become homesick then transport should be at hand and there should be enough staff/volunteers present to deal with the situation and also to supervise the other young people.
- Staff/volunteers should **respect the privacy** and never enter the bedroom or bathroom of a young person without knocking or letting the young person know they are entering. Time should never be spent alone with a young person during a residential activity.
- If in an **emergency situation** an adult considers it necessary to enter a young person's bedroom/bathroom without another adult present, they should:
 - keep the door open
 - immediately inform another adult in a position of responsibility
 - make a written record of the circumstances

- Staff/volunteers should always be aware of **avoiding compromising situations** with young people

Maintaining standards and good youth work practice is essential for residential activity; please ensure that procedures in relation to Appendix 2: Code of Behavior for Staff, Trainers and Volunteers on page 20 are followed.

TRAINING

Léargas staff are not directly involved in service provision to children/young people or vulnerable adults, however through our relationships with beneficiaries they are frequent participants in our operational activities. Once recruited, all staff and volunteers of the Léargas will be informed of Child Protection guidelines and legislation and relevant staff and trainers will be trained, supervised and supported, so that they are less likely to become involved in actions which can lead to harm, or can be misunderstood.

It is the responsibility of all staff/trainers, together with the management of the Léargas, to identify both individual and common training needs of staff and trainers. We strive to meet the training needs of all staff/volunteers where possible. We also encourage staff and trainers to identify any gaps in training and to discuss them with a line manager.

The Child Protection training standard of Léargas is the *NYCI Child Protection Awareness Programme* (CPAP). We are committed to having all relevant personnel trained and kept up to date at this level. Further training is available for Designated Liaison Persons and for experienced trainers wishing to offer the CPAP course. Training also includes staff meetings and briefings and cascade of information. We hope that further training will be developed to support the different demands on staff and to support the different roles and responsibilities within the organisation.

RECRUITMENT

All advertisements, screening and recruitment for vacant posts within Léargas will reflect our commitment to equality. We will ensure that interviewers conduct interviews in a non-discriminatory way. Interviews will be undertaken by a minimum of two representatives using an agreed set of questions. All assessments and workplace tests, including psychometric testing for job applicants and performance assessments for employees, will be conducted in a fair and non-discriminatory way, bearing in mind the principles of equality of opportunity. Advertisements will be posted on the Léargas website, recruitment websites and newspapers (national or local) as appropriate.

The following apply during our recruitment process:

- We provide a Job Description and Personal Specification and outline our application process.
- A minimum of two references (one from the most recent employer) will be taken up followed by a telephone reference check.
- No references from family or relatives will be accepted.
- Successful candidates will be offered a Contract of Employment in accordance with Employment legislation requirements; each contract will include a probationary period.
- The induction process includes signing up to this Léargas Child Protection Policy, included in the Employee Handbook.
- These guidelines will apply both to the recruitment of new employees and to the selection of internal candidates for promotion or job change.
- All workers employed, contracted to work, or volunteering to work with children through Léargas will be required to grant permission for vetting from An Garda Síochána.
- Léargas will not employ, contract or involve as a volunteer, any person to work with children or young adults who has a criminal conviction for violent crime, sexual crime, drugs-related offences, or any other offences deemed inappropriate in relation to our work with children, young people or vulnerable adults.

APPENDIX 1: REFERRAL FLOW CHART

Internal Referral Procedure Chart flow

Staff Member/Trainer/Volunteer



Designated Liaison Person



TÚSLA and/or Gardaí

Allegations against a Staff Member/Trainer/Volunteer flow

Referral



Designated Liaison Person



Executive Director



TÚSLA and/or Gardaí

Allegations against the Executive Director flow

Referral



Designated Liaison Person



Chairperson of the Léargas Board



TÚSLA and/or Gardaí

APPENDIX 2: CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR STAFF, TRAINERS AND VOLUNTEERS

We respect the rights of young people as individuals in society. Through training and education we endeavour to ensure that young people know their rights and responsibilities and are respected in all our interactions with them.

The following code of behaviour is established to provide a clear understanding of the standards of behaviour of all staff/volunteers/trainers and students who work with Léargas for the purpose of the safe care of children, young people and vulnerable adults. It will help foster an environment where participants feel secure and are treated with dignity and respect.

- Staff/trainers are not permitted to give lifts in their cars to individual young people.
- Staff/trainers must be sensitive to the possibility of becoming over involved or spending a great deal of time with any one young person. We need to be clear about the purpose and nature of the relationship with any young person e.g. is the relationship constructive in building up the independence and autonomy of the person or is it being used to satisfy our own agenda.
- Staff/trainers should ensure, in so far as possible, that buildings or facilities, which they use, for activities with young people are safe and secure for the people in it. All occupied parts of the building should be monitored and parts not in use should be isolated or secured.
- For experienced workers, the member/worker ratio should be minimum 8:1 plus 1, for new workers, the ratio should be less i.e. no more than 5:1+1.
- When dealing with young people with challenging behaviour, it is recommended, where possible, that more than one worker is present.
- When dealing with group members of mixed gender it is important that workers have sufficient leaders of both gender to properly manage all activities and areas of any premises in use.
- Staff/trainers should always be respectful of the privacy of young people in dormitories, changing rooms, showers and toilets. When present in such areas workers are advised not to spend time alone with a young person.
- Staff/trainers should be sensitive to the risks in participating in some activities, energisers, simulations and contact sports with young people and ensure that the young people are treated with dignity and respect.
- Staff/trainers should never physically punish or be in any way verbally abusive to a child, nor should jokes of a sexual nature be told to or in the presence of a young person.
- Under no circumstances give alcohol, tobacco or drugs to children or young people.
- Do not use alcohol, tobacco or drugs in the company of children or young people.
- Use only age-appropriate language, media products and activities in working with children and young people.
- Do not take pictures of children or young people unless you have prior parental consent to do so.
- All staff/volunteers are required to maintain a positive attitude towards young people that respects the personal space, safety and privacy of individuals.
- If taking a group of young people away on a day trip, or sporting activity, you must ensure you have proper transport, adequate insurance cover, enough supervision and written parental consent. Facts must also be obtained of any specific medical conditions a young person suffer

from and plans in place to deal with such, should the need arise. (See guidelines for Residential Trips)

- Never do anything of a personal nature for children and young people which they can do for themselves.
- Personal contact outside of youth work business should not be made with children and young people.

All staff and volunteers are required to follow the above code of behaviour, thus providing a safe, comfortable and positive environment for staff/trainers and young people.

APPENDIX 3: SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CHILD ABUSE

Although Léargas staff do not work directly with children, young people or vulnerable adults, should a member of staff be concerned about the welfare of a child, these 4 steps will guide you through the process of making a decision to report or not:

1. What are you worried about?

- What have you seen or heard that worries you about the child?
- If nothing changes, what are you most worried about that will happen to the child?
- What are the adults who are caring for the child doing that is bad for or harming the child?
- What has been the impact of their behaviour on the child?
- What would the child say they are most worried about?

2. What's working well?

- Who helps or supports the family and child?
- How do they help?
- Thinking about the problems you are worried about, who has helped the child and family deal with these problems in the past?
- What do you like about the child/parents?
- What would the child say are the best things about their life?

3. What needs to happen?

- What do you think needs to happen to make the situation better?
- Who do you think is best placed to help this family?
- What services do you think this family/parent/children need most?

4. How worried are you on a scale of 1 to 10?

- Is there anyone else supporting you at the moment? Do you mind if I speak to them?
- Is there any other support that you feel you need at the moment?
- What would you ideally like to see happen next?
- Have you told anyone about this before?
- Has this happened before?
- Do you feel that professionals understand your concerns?

Remember that most organisations have a Designated Liaison Person in place. It may help to discuss your concerns with your Designated Liaison Person.

What are reasonable grounds for a child protection or welfare concern?

- Evidence that is consistent with abuse and unlikely to have been caused in any other way. This evidence, for example, could be in the form of an injury or behaviour.
- Any concern about possible sexual abuse.
- Consistent signs that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.
- A child saying or indicating by other means that he or she has been abused.
- Admission or indication by an adult or a child of an alleged abuse they committed.
- An account from a person who saw the child being abused.

You can make the report to Tusla in person, by telephone or in writing to the local Child Protection and Welfare Duty Social Work Service in the area where the child lives. Contact details for Tusla Child Protection and Welfare Duty Social Work Services can be found on the Tusla website, www.tusla.ie

If you make the report verbally, you should follow it up by completing the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form. To download a copy of the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form, visit either of these links on the Tusla website:

https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Child_Protection_and_Welfare_Report_Form_FINAL.pdf

or

https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Child_Protection_and_Welfare_Report_Form_FINAL.docx

Delegated Liaison Persons must make mandated reports on the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form.