



# BAT CONSERVATION IRELAND

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## **Child Protection Policy**

### **Bat Conservation Ireland**

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**October 2020**

### Purpose of the Child Protection Policy

Bat Conservation Ireland's Child Protection Policy sets out guidance for council members and Staff in identifying and responding to allegations and suspicions of child abuse or neglect. The document is based on, and adheres to, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs '*Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*', published in 2017. Please refer to the Staff Handbook for additional information on other policies and procedures of the organisation.

This policy sets out Bat Conservation Ireland's commitment to safeguarding the well-being of all the children and young people with whom our council members, staff, volunteers and interns come into contact.

### Scope of the Policy

The Policy applies to the council and all staff, volunteers and interns of Bat Conservation Ireland, including all those involved in County Bat Groups, and/or carrying out any activities on behalf of Bat Conservation Ireland. Bat Conservation Ireland does not usually work directly with children in its day-to-day activities, however it does engage with children on an occasional basis, as well as facilitate joint activities with organisations that work directly with children. For the purposes of this policy a Bat Conservation Ireland representative refers to a council member, staff member, volunteer, intern or any member of a local county bat group, carrying out an activity organised by Bat Conservation Ireland or any local County Bat Group that involves the attendance of children.

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

- safeguarding children who attend Bat Conservation Ireland activities, such as bat walks/talks, workshops other activities organised by Bat Conservation Ireland and/or county Bat Groups;
- safeguarding children at events in which Bat Conservation Ireland council members, staff, volunteers and interns participate;
- safeguarding children who attend talks in schools, facilitated by a representative from Bat Conservation Ireland; and
- reporting allegations/suspicions of abuse made to Bat Conservation Ireland council, staff or volunteers by telephone, email, and letter or in person.

Our policy on child protection is in accordance with '*Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*' (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2017) and Our Duty to Care.

### Key Principles of the Policy

The following principles underpin the Child Protection Policy:

- The welfare and best interests of children are of paramount importance. Bat Conservation Ireland is committed to respecting the right to dignity and bodily integrity of every child and to protecting those rights;
- All Bat Conservation council, staff members and volunteers have a responsibility to protect children and therefore have a duty to report child abuse as set out in the '*Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*' (2017);
- Bat Conservation Ireland will not knowingly engage with any person, organisation or fund any project that poses a risk to children or that does not meet the child protection and safeguards outlined in the '*Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*' (2017).;
- Bat Conservation Ireland is committed to ensuring that council, staff, volunteers and interns receive the appropriate training in child protection and welfare.

### Definition and Recognition of Child Abuse

Bat Conservation Ireland's Child Protection Policy is informed by the Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children document.

### Types of Child Abuse

In referring to the National Guidance, child abuse falls into four main categories as follows:

- neglect;
- emotional abuse;
- physical abuse; and
- sexual abuse.

For detailed definitions and examples of these types of abuse, please refer to Appendix 1: Types of Child Abuse and Symptoms of Abuse.

### Recognising Child Abuse

It can be difficult to recognise the signs and symptoms indicating that a child has suffered neglect or abuse. Moreover, in the case of neglect, a distinction can be made between 'wilful' and 'circumstantial' neglect. For a detailed description of the signs, symptoms and characteristics of abuse, please refer to Appendix 1: Types of Child Abuse and Symptoms of Abuse. There are commonly three stages in the identification of child neglect or abuse. If a Bat Conservation Ireland council member, staff member, volunteer or intern has identified the possibility that a child with whom they are in contact has suffered abuse (with or without disclosure by the child or a third party) then the following stages will normally occur.

- considering the possibility;
- looking out for signs of neglect or abuse; and
- recording of information.

If a council member, staff member, volunteer or intern has identified the need to contact TUSLA, the Child and Family Agency or An Garda Síochána, then it is important to obtain and record as much

information as possible (see Appendix 2) and then forward this information to the Designated Officer or delegated staff member. Observations should be accurately recorded, including the following, where applicable:

- dates;
- times;
- names,
- location; and
- context.

### **Responsibilities of Bat Conservation Ireland**

#### **Training and Supports**

The Designated Officer is responsible for ensuring that All Bat Conservation Ireland council members, staff, interns and volunteers and those involved in County Bat Groups receive induction training in the child protection policy and procedures.

- Bat Conservation Ireland is responsible for ensuring that the ongoing training needs of council members, staff, interns and volunteers and those involved in County Bat Groups in the area of child protection and welfare are fully addressed;
- All training and guideline documents will be regularly reviewed and updated as appropriate and council members, staff, interns and volunteers and those involved in County Bat Groups will be informed of these updates;
- When Bat Conservation Ireland is involved in organising or attending events involving the participation of children, the Designated Officer will ensure that Bat Conservation Ireland Representatives follow the procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour (see Appendix 6 Code of Behaviour).

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

Where a Bat Conservation Ireland council members, staff, intern or volunteer has reasonable grounds for concern (see below) that a child may have been, is being or is at risk of being abused or neglected, then the Bat Conservation Ireland representative with delegated responsibility (see 3.3 Designated Officer) must report their concerns to TUSLA (see Appendix 2, Child Protection Reporting Form). Anyone who suspects child abuse or neglect should inform the parents/carers if a report is to be submitted to TUSLA or to An Garda Síochána, unless doing so is likely to endanger the child.

Grounds for Concern include:

- a specific indication from the child that he or she was abused;
- an account by a person who saw the child being abused;
- evidence, such as an injury or behaviour, that is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused in another way;
- an injury or behaviour that is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation, but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse. An example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse and/or dysfunctional behaviour; and
- consistent indication, over a period of time, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

A suspicion that is not supported by any objective indication of abuse or neglect would not constitute a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern. The guiding principles in regard to reporting child abuse or neglect may be summarised as follows:

1. The safety and well-being of the child must take priority;
2. All Bat Conservation Ireland council members, staff, interns and volunteers have a responsibility to ensure that all allegations and suspicions of child abuse are treated seriously and with the utmost professional integrity, and must therefore be familiar with and adhere to the Child Protection Policy;
3. Reports should be made without delay to TUSLA.

### Designated Officer

[Insert Name Here], acts as the Designated Child Protection Officer. The function of the Designated Officer is as follows:

- Ensure that the Bat Conservation Ireland Child Protection Policy is followed;
- The Designated Officer can delegate responsibility to the appropriate member(s) of staff or council member;
- The Designated Officer remains responsible for all cases of abuse or neglect reported to Bat Conservation Ireland ensuring that details of all such cases are reported (using the Child Protection Reporting Form, Appendix 2) to TUSLA or An Garda Síochána;
- The Designated Officer will ensure that Bat Conservation Ireland child protection policies and documents implement the principles and procedures of the National Guidance and Children First legislation;
- The Designated Officer is responsible for reviewing and updating the Bat Conservation Ireland child protection policies and procedures;
- The Designated officer acts as a resource person to the council, staff, volunteers and interns of Bat Conservation Ireland, providing support and guidance in matters relating to child protection;
- The Designated Officer is responsible for ensuring that a detailed record of all persons working on behalf of Bat Conservation Ireland who have access to children is kept by the organisation includes the following: full contact name and address, description of their role, confirmation that they have been vetted (if necessary), and any other relevant information, such as training or qualifications;
- The Designated Officer ensures that all council members, staff, interns and volunteers who have access to children have received sufficient training in accordance with guidance and standards set down by TUSLA under '*Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice*'. At a very minimum all council members, staff members, volunteers and interns should be encouraged to take the TUSLA children protection introductory 45-minute presentation (available here: <https://childrenfirstuniversal.hseland.ie/en>), complete the questionnaire at the end and receive the certificate to say they have completed the training. A copy of this certificate should then be forwarded to Bat Conservation Ireland central repository, so an accurate record is kept of those who have completed the training;
- Where an allegation or concern is not reported to TUSLA, a Designated Officer's records should clearly indicate the basis of his/her decision not to report and any actions taken by him/her;

- All notes and email correspondence relating to the report are kept in electronic form by the Designated Officer and the delegated staff or council member. No other persons, including staff or other council members are permitted to access this information (see Appendix 4).

## Safeguarding Children and Reporting Procedure

### General Procedures for Safeguarding Children

The following procedures are adhered to on occasions when Bat Conservation Ireland Council members/staff/volunteers/interns engage with children at events or while working with or meeting with children at educational activities organised by Bat Conservation Ireland or other events organised by other organisations, at which Bat Conservation Ireland participates.

Bat Conservation Ireland endeavours to ensure that council members/staff /volunteers or interns are not left alone with a child at an event or any activities such as giving talks in schools or running workshops. However, this may not always be feasible and Bat Conservation Ireland ensures that, on all occasions, an appropriate balance is maintained between meeting the needs of the child, and the discharging of our professional responsibilities;

- A risk assessment needs to be completed for any event organised by Bat Conservation Ireland. In the case of events where children attend, or that are specifically for children, special attention needs to be given to the risks which such event present. These will be clearly outlined in the risk assessment and need to be completed fully in order to mitigate any risks posed to children;
- On all occasions where Bat Conservation Ireland runs an event where children may attend, it is a requirement of their attendance, that they be accompanied by a legal guardian or parent. If they are not accompanied by a parent or guardian, they will not be able to attend the event. This is advertised well in advance on all promotional materials for activities such as bat walks/talks. It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to ensure supervision and safety of the child at these walks/talks (Please refer to Bat Conservation Ireland's policy document on 'Bat Walks');
- Where Bat Conservation Ireland hosts an event for children, such as an arts and crafts workshop, a parental consent form (Appendix 3) will be forwarded to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of each child seeking formal permission for them to attend and participate in the event. Failure to return a completed parental consent form, will result in the child/children not being able to attend the event;
- Where Bat Conservation Ireland participates in an event attended by children that is run by another organisation, it will engage with the organisation around their Child Protection Policy, Child Safeguarding Statement and carry out a risk assessment to ensure correct procedures are being followed. If the Bat Conservation Ireland representative is not happy that correct safeguarding procedures are in place, they must withdraw Bat Conservation Ireland's participation;
- Where Bat Conservation Ireland hosts events that involve the participation of children, any supervision of children carried out by Bat Conservation Ireland council members, staff, interns or volunteers will be done at a ratio of no more than **five children per one adult**;
- Bat Conservation Ireland runs a website 'Learn About Bats', which is primarily aimed at 6-12 year olds. This website is for information purposes only and does not facilitate any way for

children to engage directly with any Bat Conservation Ireland council members, staff, volunteers or interns;

- Where Bat Conservation Ireland runs any online competitions, such as an art competition or educational competition, all correspondence is conducted directly with the parent/guardian of the child participating in the competition and this is outlined clearly in the terms and conditions of the competition. There is no engagement with children directly online.

### Reporting Alleged/Suspected Abuse

The following procedures apply to all Bat Conservation Ireland staff who engage in work involving contact with children or to whom allegations or suspicions of child abuse are made. These procedures are also appropriate in the case of anonymous reports, or reports from adults who experienced childhood abuse. The same procedures also apply in relation to reporting allegations of abuse made against a Bat Conservation Ireland council member, employee, volunteer or intern (see Section 4.3, Reporting Alleged/Suspected Abuse by An Employee/Volunteer/Intern). For additional information and guidance, see Appendix 5, Guidelines for Responding to Disclosures.

The following steps must be adhered to by the Bat Conservation Ireland council member, staff member, volunteer or intern, reporting an allegation or disclosure of abuse. These steps apply to a disclosure made in person, in writing (post or email) or by telephone.

- Any allegation, concern, suspicion or disclosure of abuse or neglect made to a Bat Conservation Ireland council member, staff member, volunteer or intern is reported to the Designated Officer. Staff are obliged to report such concerns and no council member, staff member, volunteer or intern will guarantee confidentiality to anyone alleging, reporting or disclosing abuse or neglect, unless by doing so, exposes a child or puts a child at risk of harm. However, Bat Conservation Ireland will guarantee that professional confidentiality is maintained at all times and that identifying information shared with statutory agencies is done so in confidence;
- If an allegation or disclosure is made to a Bat Conservation Ireland council member, staff member, volunteer or intern, it is the responsibility of the individual to contact the Designated Officer immediately. If the Designated Officer cannot be contacted, then that individual must assess the risk (for example, if it seems that a child is facing an immediate risk) and make an immediate referral to the TUSLA, the Children and Family Agency or (if a report is made outside of office hours) An Garda Síochána, with follow-up contact with TUSLA in the morning;
- If a report is made outside of office hours, and TUSLA cannot be contacted, the Designated Officer or delegated staff member will contact An Garda Síochána;
- The contact details of the Designated Officer may be given to the person alleging or disclosing abuse if they request it;
- The Designated Officer or delegated staff member will determine whether it is appropriate or not to make a formal report. In such a case, the Designated Officer or delegated staff member may discuss their concerns with TUSLA in advance of making a formal report. Notes are taken using the Child Protection Reporting Form (Appendix 2) detailing as much information as possible to include: the name and contact details of the person reporting, the name of the child(ren) (if provided), the relationship of the reporting person to the child, the names and addresses of the parent(s)/carer(s), a detailed account of the reason for the

report and any other relevant information. The notes are emailed to the Designated Officer, who must be informed immediately of the concern.

- All notes and email correspondence relating to the report are kept in electronic form by the Designated Officer and the delegated staff member. No other persons and staff members are permitted to access this information (see Appendix 4).
- The Designated Officer or delegated staff member reports to the appropriate social work duty service in the area where the child lives (if known), by telephone and by email. A request is made of the appropriate social work duty service contact to send an email to the Designated Officer or delegated staff member acknowledging receipt of the report. Alternatively a report can be made online on TUSLA's website here: <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/web-portal/>.
- The Designated Officer will identify if any follow-up reporting is necessary.

### **Reporting Alleged/Suspected Abuse by a Council Member/Employee/Volunteer/Intern**

In the case of an allegation of abuse by a council member, employee, volunteer or intern, the Designated Officer (on receiving the complaint) will immediately ensure that no child is or continues to be exposed to unnecessary risk. The Designated Officer will then seek legal advice and will liaise with the Deputy Director who, acting on behalf of the council member, employee, volunteer or intern will:

- inform the individual that an allegation has been made against them;
- explain to the individual the details of the allegation;
- tell the individual whether or not a report has been made to TUSLA;
- perform a risk assessment (see Appendix 4, Risk Assessment Form) to identify whether or not suspension of the individual is appropriate;
- give the individual copies of any written records relating to the allegation;
- offer the individual an opportunity to respond to the allegation within a specific time frame; and
- forward the individual's response to TUSLA (if appropriate).

If an allegation is made against the Designated Officer, then the Chair of the Board, or a person nominated by him/her will carry out the above steps.

### **Recruitment and Training**

It should be noted that Bat Conservation Ireland does not usually work directly with children in its day-to-day activities, but does engage with children on an occasional basis (for example as when they attend bat walks/talks) as well as liaise with organisations that work directly with children. The following procedures are observed by Bat Conservation Ireland when engaging paid staff or long term volunteers:

- Prospective positions within Bat Conservation Ireland are advertised widely;
- Advertised positions include a job/role description and person specification, detailing attributes identified as being associated with the position;
- Ideally, interviews are undertaken by at least two representatives of the organisation who are suitably qualified and/or have proven experience to undertake such interviews;
- At least two verbally confirmed references are required;
- Employment contracts are written so as to include an employment probationary period;

- Newly employed staff members are required to agree to the terms and conditions of employment, as well as all codes and policies, as outlined in the Staff Handbook.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### Types of Child Abuse and Symptoms of Abuse

The following information has been reproduced from Chapter 2 of *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*, published in 2017.

**In this *Guidance*, 'a child' means a person under the age of 18 years, who is not or has not been married.**

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time. Abuse and neglect can occur within the family, in the community or in an institutional setting. The abuser may be someone known to the child or a stranger, and can be an adult or another child. In a situation where abuse is alleged to have been carried out by another child, you should consider it a child welfare and protection issue for both children and you should follow child protection procedures for both the victim and the alleged abuser.

The important factor in deciding whether the behaviour is abuse or neglect is the impact of that behaviour on the child rather than the intention of the parent/carer.

The definitions of neglect and abuse presented in this section are not legal definitions. They are intended to describe ways in which a child might experience abuse and how this abuse may be recognised.

#### Neglect

Child neglect is the most frequently reported category of abuse, both in Ireland and internationally. Ongoing chronic neglect is recognised as being extremely harmful to the development and well-being of the child and may have serious long-term negative consequences. Neglect occurs when a child does not receive adequate care or supervision to the extent that the child is harmed physically or developmentally. It is generally defined in terms of an omission of care, where a child's health, development or welfare is impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, medical care, intellectual stimulation or supervision and safety. Emotional neglect may also lead to the child having attachment difficulties. The extent of the damage to the child's health, development or welfare is influenced by a range of factors. These factors include the extent, if any, of positive influence in the child's life as well as the age of the child and the frequency and consistency of neglect.

Neglect is associated with poverty but not necessarily caused by it. It is strongly linked to parental substance misuse, domestic violence, and parental mental illness and disability. A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when neglect becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer. This may become apparent where you see the child over a period of time, or the effects of neglect may be obvious based on having seen the child once.

The following are features of child neglect:

- Children being left alone without adequate care and supervision;
- Malnourishment, lacking food, unsuitable food or erratic feeding;
- Non-organic failure to thrive, i.e. a child not gaining weight due not only to malnutrition but also emotional deprivation;

- Failure to provide adequate care for the child's medical and developmental needs, including intellectual stimulation;
- Inadequate living conditions – unhygienic conditions, environmental issues, including lack of adequate heating and furniture;
- 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;
- Abandonment or desertion.

### Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment of a child as part of the overall relationship between a caregiver and a child. Once-off and occasional difficulties between a parent/carer and child are not considered emotional abuse. Abuse occurs when a child's basic need for attention, affection, approval, consistency and security are not met, due to incapacity or indifference from their parent or caregiver. Emotional abuse can also occur when adults responsible for taking care of children are unaware of and unable (for a range of reasons) to meet their children's emotional and developmental needs. Emotional abuse is not easy to recognise because the effects are not easily seen.

A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when the behaviour becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer.

Emotional abuse may be seen in some of the following ways:

- Rejection;
- Lack of comfort and love;
- Lack of attachment;
- Lack of proper stimulation (e.g. fun and play);
- Lack of continuity of care (e.g. frequent moves, particularly unplanned);
- Continuous lack of praise and encouragement;
- Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming of the child;
- Bullying;
- Conditional parenting in which care or affection of a child depends on his or her behaviours or actions;
- Extreme overprotectiveness;
- Inappropriate non-physical punishment (e.g. locking child in bedroom);
- Ongoing family conflicts and family violence;
- Seriously inappropriate expectations of a child relative to his/her age and stage of development.

There may be no physical signs of emotional abuse unless it occurs with another type of abuse. A child may show signs of emotional abuse through their actions or emotions in several ways. These include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, risk taking and aggressive behaviour. It should be noted that no one indicator is conclusive evidence of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is more likely to impact negatively on a child where it is persistent over time and where there is a lack of other protective factors.

### Physical abuse

Physical abuse is when someone deliberately hurts a child physically or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents. A reasonable concern exists where the child's health and/or development is, may be, or has been damaged as a result of suspected physical abuse.

Physical abuse can include the following:

- Physical punishment;
- Beating, slapping, hitting or kicking;
- Pushing, shaking or throwing;
- Pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling;
- Use of excessive force in handling;
- Deliberate poisoning;
- Suffocation;
- Fabricated/induced illness;
- Female genital mutilation

The Children First Act 2015 includes a provision that abolishes the common law defence of reasonable chastisement in court proceedings. This defence could previously be invoked by a parent or other person in authority who physically disciplined a child. The change in the legislation now means that in prosecutions relating to assault or physical cruelty, a person who administers such punishment to a child cannot rely on the defence of reasonable chastisement in the legal proceedings. The result of this is that the protections in law relating to assault now apply to a child in the same way as they do to an adult.

### 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. It includes the child being involved in sexual acts (masturbation, fondling, oral or penetrative sex) or exposing the child to sexual activity directly or through pornography.

Child sexual abuse may cover a wide spectrum of abusive activities. It rarely involves just a single incident and in some instances occurs over a number of years. Child sexual abuse most commonly happens within the family, including older siblings and extended family members. Cases of sexual abuse mainly come to light through disclosure by the child or his or her siblings/friends, from the suspicions of an adult, and/or by physical symptoms.

Examples of child sexual abuse include the following:

- Any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child;
- An invitation to sexual touching or intentional touching or molesting of a child's body whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification
- Masturbation in the presence of a child or the involvement of a child in an act of masturbation
- Sexual intercourse with a child, whether oral, vaginal or anal
- Sexual exploitation of a child, which includes:
  - Inviting, inducing or coercing a child to engage in prostitution or the production of child pornography [for example, exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, videotape

- or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of an image by computer or other means]
- Inviting, coercing or inducing a child to participate in, or to observe, any sexual, indecent or obscene act
- Showing sexually explicit material to children, which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse
- Exposing a child to inappropriate or abusive material through information and communication technology
- Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person

An Garda Síochána will deal with any criminal aspects of a sexual abuse case under the relevant criminal justice legislation. The prosecution of a sexual offence against a child will be considered within the wider objective of child welfare and protection. The safety of the child is paramount and at no stage should a child's safety be compromised because of concern for the integrity of a criminal investigation.

In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that in criminal law the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years for both boys and girls. Any sexual relationship where one or both parties are under the age of 17 is illegal. However, it may not necessarily be regarded as child sexual abuse. Details on exemptions for mandated reporting of certain cases of underage consensual sexual activity can be found in Chapter 3 of this *Guidance*.

### **Circumstances which may make children more vulnerable to harm**

If you are dealing with children, you need to be alert to the possibility that a welfare or protection concern may arise in relation to children you come in contact with. A child needs to have someone they can trust in order to feel able to disclose abuse they may be experiencing. They need to know that they will be believed and will get the help they need. Without these things, they may be vulnerable to continuing abuse.

Some children may be more vulnerable to abuse than others. Also, there may be particular times or circumstances when a child may be more vulnerable to abuse in their lives. In particular, children with disabilities, children with communication difficulties, children in care or living away from home, or children with a parent or parents with problems in their own lives may be more susceptible to harm.

The following list is intended to help you identify the range of issues in a child's life that may place them at greater risk of abuse or neglect. **It is important for you to remember that the presence of any of these factors does not necessarily mean that a child in those circumstances or settings is being abused.**

### **Parent or carer factors:**

- »» Drug and alcohol misuse;
- »» Addiction, including gambling;
- »» Mental health issues;
- »» Parental disability issues, including learning or intellectual disability;
- »» Conflictual relationships;
- »» Domestic violence;
- »» Adolescent parents.

**Child factors:**

- »» Age;
- »» Gender;
- »» Sexuality;
- »» Disability;
- »» Mental health issues, including self-harm and suicide;
- »» Communication difficulties;
- »» Trafficked/Exploited;
- »» Previous abuse;
- »» Young carer.

**Community factors:**

- »» Cultural, ethnic, religious or faith-based norms in the family or community which may not meet the standards of child welfare or protection required in this jurisdiction;
- »» Culture-specific practices, including:
  - Female genital mutilation;
  - Forced marriage;
  - Honour-based violence;
  - Radicalisation.

**Environmental factors:**

- »» Housing issues;
- »» Children who are out of home and not living with their parents, whether temporarily or permanently;
- »» Poverty/Begging;
- »» Bullying;
- »» Internet and social media-related concerns.

**Poor motivation or willingness of parents/guardians to engage:**

- »» Non-attendance at appointments
- »» Lack of insight or understanding of how the child is being affected
- »» Lack of understanding about what needs to happen to bring about change
- »» Avoidance of contact and reluctance to work with services
- »» Inability or unwillingness to comply with agreed plans

You should consider these factors as part of being alert to the possibility that a child may be at risk of suffering abuse and in bringing reasonable concerns to the attention of TUSLA.

**BULLYING**

It is recognised that bullying affects the lives of an increasing number of children and can be the cause of genuine concerns about a child's welfare.

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression – whether it is verbal, psychological or physical – that is conducted by an individual or group against others.

It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating, and occurs mainly among children in social environments such as schools. It includes behaviours such as physical aggression, cyberbullying, damage to property, intimidation, isolation/exclusion, name calling, malicious gossip and extortion. Bullying can also take the form of abuse based on gender identity, sexual preference,

race, ethnicity and religious factors. With developments in modern technology, children can also be the victims of non-contact bullying, via mobile phones, the internet and other personal devices.


While bullying can happen to any child, some may be more vulnerable. These include: children with disabilities or special educational needs; those from ethnic minority and migrant groups; from the Traveller community; lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) children and those perceived to be LGBT; and children of minority religious faiths.

There can be an increased vulnerability to bullying among children with special educational needs. This is particularly so among those who do not understand social cues and/or have difficulty communicating. Some children with complex needs may lack understanding of social situations and therefore trust everyone implicitly. Such children may be more vulnerable because they do not have the same social skills or capacity as others to recognise and defend themselves against bullying behaviour.

Bullying in schools is a particular problem due to the fact that children spend a significant portion of their time there and are in large social groups. In the first instance, the school authorities are responsible for dealing with such bullying. School management boards must have a code of behaviour and an anti-bullying policy in place. If you are a staff member of a school, you should also be aware of your school's anti-bullying policy and of the relevant guidelines on how it is handled.

In cases of serious instances of bullying where the behaviour is regarded as possibly abusive, you may need to make a referral to TUSLA and/or An Garda Síochána.

## Appendix 2: TUSLA Child Protection and Welfare Report Form



An Ghníomhaireacht um  
Leannai agus an Teaghlach  
Child and Family Agency

## Child Protection and Welfare Report Form

**MANDATED PERSONS AND NON MANDATED PERSONS**  
(Children First Act 2015 & Children First National Guidance)

Use block letters when filling out this form.  
Fields marked with an \* are mandatory.

<b>1. Tusla Area (this is where the child resides)*</b>	
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<b>2. Date of Report*</b>	
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**3. Details of Child**

<b>First Name*</b>		<b>Surname*</b>	
<b>Male*</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Female*</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Address*</b>		<b>Date of Birth*</b>	
		<b>Estimated Age*</b>	
		<b>School Name</b>	
		<b>School Address</b>	
<b>Eircode</b>			

**4. Details of Concerns\***

Please complete the following section with as much detail about the specific child protection or welfare concern or allegation as possible. Include dates, times, incident details and names of anyone who observed any incident. Please include the parents and child's view, if known. Please attach additional sheets, if necessary


Please see 'Tusla Children First – A Guide for the Reporting of Child Protection and Welfare Concerns' for additional assistance on the steps to consider in making a report to Tusla

**5. Type of Concern**

Child Welfare Concern	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Emotional Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	Physical Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neglect	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sexual Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>

**6. Details of Reporter**

<b>First Name</b>		<b>Surname</b>	
<b>Address</b> if reporting in a professional capacity, please use your professional address		<b>Organisation</b>	
		<b>Position Held</b>	
		<b>Mobile No.</b>	
		<b>Telephone No.</b>	
<b>Eircode</b>		<b>Email Address</b>	



An Ghníomhaireacht um  
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach  
Child and Family Agency

## Child Protection and Welfare Report Form

**MANDATED PERSONS AND NON MANDATED PERSONS**  
(Children First Act 2015 & Children First National Guidance)

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<b>Is this a Mandated Report made under Sec 14, Children First Act 2015?*</b>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Mandated Person's Type</b>				

**7. Details of Other Persons Where a Joint Report is Being Made**

<b>First Name</b>		<b>Surname</b>	
<b>Address</b> if reporting in a professional capacity, please use your professional address		<b>Organisation</b>	
		<b>Position Held</b>	
		<b>Mobile No.</b>	
		<b>Telephone No.</b>	
<b>Eircode</b>		<b>Email Address</b>	

<b>First Name</b>		<b>Surname</b>	
<b>Address</b> if reporting in a professional capacity, please use your professional address		<b>Organisation</b>	
		<b>Position Held</b>	
		<b>Mobile No.</b>	
		<b>Telephone No.</b>	
<b>Eircode</b>		<b>Email Address</b>	

**8. Parents Aware of Report**

<b>Are the child's parents/carers aware that this concern is being reported to Tusla?*</b>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>If the parent/carer does not know, please indicate reasons:</b>				

**9. Relationships**

**Details of Mother**

<b>First Name</b>		<b>Surname</b>	
<b>Address</b>		<b>Mobile No.</b>	
		<b>Telephone No.</b>	
		<b>Email Address</b>	
		<b>Eircode</b>	

**Is the Mother a Legal Guardian?\***

	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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**Details of Father**

<b>First Name</b>		<b>Surname</b>	
<b>Address</b>		<b>Mobile No.</b>	
		<b>Telephone No.</b>	
		<b>Email Address</b>	
		<b>Eircode</b>	



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## Child Protection and Welfare Report Form

**MANDATED PERSONS AND NON MANDATED PERSONS**  
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Is the Father a Legal Guardian?*	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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### 10. Household Composition

First Name	Surname	Relationship	Date of Birth	Estimated Age	Additional Information e.g. school, occupation, other


### 11. Details of Person(s) Allegedly Causing Harm

First Name*		Surname*	
Male*	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female*	<input type="checkbox"/>
Address		Date of Birth	
		Estimated Age	
		Mobile No.	
		Telephone No.	
Eircode		Email Address	
Occupation		Organisation	
Position Held			

Relationship to Child	
Address at time of alleged incident	
If name unknown please indicate reason	

First Name*		Surname*	
Male*	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female*	<input type="checkbox"/>
Address		Date of Birth	
		Estimated Age	
		Mobile No.	
		Telephone No.	
Eircode		Email Address	
Occupation		Organisation	
Position Held			

Relationship to Child	
Address at time of alleged incident	
If name unknown please indicate reason	



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## Child Protection and Welfare Report Form

**MANDATED PERSONS AND NON MANDATED PERSONS**  
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**12. Name and Address of Other Organisations, Personnel or Agencies Known to be Involved Currently or Previously with the Family**

Profession	First Name	Surname	Address	Contact Number	Recent Contact e.g. 3/6/9 months ago
Social Worker					
Public Health Nurse					
GP					
Hospital					
School					
Gardaí					
Pre-school/ crèche					
Other					

**13. Any Other Relevant Information, Including any Previous Contact with the Child or Family**

**Please ensure you have indicated if this is a mandated report in section 6.**

Thank you for completing the report form.


In completing this report form you are providing details on yourself and on others. Details such as name, address and date of birth fall under the definition of 'Personal Data' in the Data Protection Acts, 1988 & 2003. Tusla has a responsibility under these Acts in its capacity as a Data Controller to, amongst other things, obtain and process this data fairly; keep it safe and secure; and to keep it for a specified lawful purpose. That purpose is to fulfil our statutory responsibility under the Child Care Act 1991 to promote the protection and welfare of children. Tusla may, during the course of the assessment of this report disclose such Personal Data to other agencies including An Garda Síochána. Further details about Tusla's responsibilities as a Data Controller and your rights as a Data Subject can be found on our website, [www.tusla.ie](http://www.tusla.ie). As you are providing Personal Data on others, you are a Data Processor. We ask that you only provide those details that are necessary for the report and that you keep this report and the Personal Data contained in it secure from unauthorised access, disclosure, destruction or accidental loss.

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**14. For Completion by Tusla Authorised Person on Receipt of Report**

Report Received by				
First Name		Surname		Date

Mandated Report Acknowledgement by

 <b>TUSLA</b>					
An Ghníomhaireacht um Leanai agus an Teaghlach Child and Family Agency					
<b>Child Protection and Welfare Report Form</b>					
<i>MANDATED PERSONS AND NON MANDATED PERSONS (Children First Act 2015 &amp; Children First National Guidance)</i>					
First Name		Surname		Date Sent	
Authorised Person Signature*					
Date*					
Child Previously Known	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Allocated Case No					

## Appendix 3: Parental Consent Form

Parental Consent Form	
Name of Child/Young Person	
Address of Child/Young Person	
Date of Birth of Child/Young Person	
Contact Phone Number (parents or guardians) for Child/Young Person	
Gender (tick as appropriate)	Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>
Relevant Information (Please mention any medical conditions, allergies, special needs or dietary requirements):	
<b>Please Tick as Appropriate</b>	
<b>Please tick one of the following boxes: I give permission for the young person named above to attend this event:</b>	
On their own <input type="checkbox"/>	With a friend <input type="checkbox"/> Name of Friend: _____
With an organisation: <input type="checkbox"/>	Name of organisation: _____
<b>Consent</b>	
<p>I agree to allow the young person named above to attend XXX on XXX 20XX. I understand that there will be suitable supervision for the event and that those attending will not be allowed to leave the premises during the event. I understand that the proceedings may be photographed/filmed and that this may be used for promotional purposes.</p> <p><b>Signed (Parent / Guardian):</b> _____</p> <p><b>Signed (Child / Young Person):</b> _____ <b>Date:</b> _____</p>	

## Appendix 4: Risk Assessment Form

## RISK ASSESSMENT FOR SUSPENSION

**Suspension should only be considered if the following apply:**

- A child or children are at risk of significant harm
- The allegation warrants investigation by the Gardai
- The allegation is so serious that dismissal/gross misconduct is possible

A plan to manage risk may be a suitable alternative; police/social care/Local Authority Designated Officer view should be taken into account where involved

The following factors need to be considered

<b>CONTENT OF ALLEGED INCIDENT</b> Duration and frequency of Alleged incident Degree of threat or cohesion Extent of premeditation Degree and nature of alleged harm	<b>CONSIDERATION</b>
<b>INFORMATION RE ACCUSED ADULT</b> Previous Concerns Previous Allegations Attitude to Allegation Contact with Child	
<b>INFORMATION RE. CHILD</b> Age and level of understanding Special needs and vulnerability Impact on health and development Previous allegations	
<b>INFORMATION RE PARENT/CARER</b> Attitude towards allegation Expectations Previous allegation	
<b>ESTABLISHMENT AGENCY PROCEDURES/POLICY</b> Policy/procedures in place? Degree of compliance Training	

Risk identified and action plan

Decision to suspend                      Yes ☐                      No ☐

Name and Signature of Responsible Manager

## Appendix 5: Guidelines for Responding to Disclosures

This information is adapted taken from TUSLA's website - <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/mandated-persons/how-should-i-deal-with-a-disclosure-of-abuse-from-a-child/> outlines advice on what to do if a child discloses that they are being abused, ill-treated or neglected. It should be noted that this is general advice, and is no substitute for proper training in dealing with child abuse. It outlines for council members, staff, volunteers and interns the initial steps that must take in such a situation. It must not be seen as constituting a comprehensive assessment or investigative interview, as these are the responsibility of specialist staff in the Health Service Executive and/or Gardaí.

If you are dealing with children, you need to be alert to the possibility that a welfare or protection concern may arise in relation to children you come into contact with. A child needs to have someone they can trust in order to feel able to disclose abuse they may be experiencing. They need to know they will be believed and will get the help they need. Without these things they may be vulnerable to continuing abuse.

If you receive a disclosure of harm from a child, you may feel reluctant to report this for a number of reasons. For example, the child may say that they do not want the disclosure to be reported, or you may take the view that the child is now safe and that the involvement of TUSLA may not be desired by either the child or their family. However, you need to inform TUSLA of all risks to children above the threshold, as the removal of a risk to one child does not necessarily mean that there are no other children at risk. The information contained in a disclosure may be critical to TUSLA's assessment of risk to another child either now or in the future.

You should deal with disclosures of abuse sensitively and professionally. The following approach is suggested as best practice for dealing with these disclosures.

- ✓ React calmly;
- ✓ Listen carefully and attentively;
- ✓ Take the child seriously;
- ✓ Reassure the child that they have taken the right action in talking to you;
- ✓ Do not promise to keep anything secret;
- ✓ Ask questions for clarification only. Do not ask leading questions;
- ✓ Check back with the child that what you have heard is correct and understood;
- ✓ Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser;
- ✓ Ensure that the child understands the procedures that will follow;
- ✓ Make a written record of the conversation as soon as possible, in as much detail as possible;
- ✓ Treat the information confidentially, subject to the requirements of Children First Guidance and legislation

It is important to remember that dealing with child disclosures of neglect and abuse is stressful, and can have an impact on one's emotional well-being. Therefore, anyone in Bat Conservation Ireland who finds themselves in this situation, should actively seek out support from peers and line management. Bat Conservation Ireland is committed to making available such support systems as required in these situations.

**Appendix 6: Code of Behaviour between Workers and Children**

Bat Conservation Ireland recognises that physical contact with children is often a valid way to offer comfort and reassurance to children. In particular, children who have suffered significant trauma in their lives may seek out such contact and it is important that individuals representing Bat Conservation Ireland can offer appropriate support in such circumstances. Bat Conservation Ireland ensures that council members, staff, volunteers and interns exercise vigilance in their relationship with children, ensuring that the appropriate balance between the needs of the child and the discharge of professional responsibility is reached. No physical contact will take place unless it is acceptable to all parties concerned.

The following procedures apply to all Bat Conservation council members, staff, volunteers and interns.

**Bat Conservation Ireland will:**

- ensure all children are treated equally as defined under the Equal Status Act 2000 to 2004;
- respect a child's dignity and their right to privacy;
- if necessary, discuss boundaries on behaviour with children and young people, particularly in the unlikely event when a representative of Bat Conservation Ireland is working one-to-one with a child;
- ensure that council members, staff, volunteers and interns are vigilant to the signs of abuse as defined in Bat Conservation Ireland's protection policy and report such concerns as well as any concerns regarding a colleague's behaviour with regard to a child(ren);
- ensure appropriate intimate care supports are provided by suitably qualified third-parties to child(ren) with special needs attending Bat Conservation Ireland events.

**Bat Conservation Ireland will not:**

- engage in rough physical interaction, such as 'horseplay';
- develop sexual, or inappropriately intimate, relationships with children;
- engage in sexually provocative games or exercises;
- allow or engage in any inappropriate touching of any form;
- spend excessive time alone with a child;
- do things of a personal nature for a child, that they can do themselves;
- socialise with children outside of structured Bat Conservation Ireland or interagency activities;
- permit staff, volunteers and interns or council members to favour one child or children over others;
- engage in sexually provocative activities, jokes or make suggestive comments;
- shame, humiliate or single-out a child in a degrading way;
- hit, physically chastise or verbally abuse children.

**Bat Conservation Ireland will:**

- ensure that at Alliance sponsored events and activities involving children, the appropriate staff supervision ratio of one adult to five children is maintained;
- ensure that a parental/guardian consent form has been completed for all participating children;
- ensure that at events, being organised by Bat Conservation Ireland or other agencies, in which the Bat Conservation Ireland is participating, that those organisations have in place

adequate child protection procedures to which Bat Conservation Ireland representatives can adhere and that representatives of Bat Conservation Ireland are made aware of their obligations to report any child protection concerns using the procedures of that organisation.

## Appendix 7: Information and Training Resources in Child Protection

As a first port of call, the TUSLA website should be used as a resource for gathering information on child protection and staying up to date on any developments to changes in regulation. The TUSLA website is accessible here: <https://www.tusla.ie/>.

An introductory 45-minute presentation on child protection, including a questionnaire and certificate awarded on completion is available here: <https://childrenfirstuniversal.hseland.ie/en>

The Children First Act 2015 is available to read and download here: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bill/2014/30/>

‘Children First - National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017’ – is available to read and download here: [https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Children\\_First\\_National\\_Guidance\\_2017.pdf](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Children_First_National_Guidance_2017.pdf)

Additional publications and documents relating to child protection are available on the TUSLA website here: <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/publications-and-forms/>.

### Training Programmes

The Children First E-Learning Programme can be accessed here: <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/children-first-e-learning-programme/>

Barnardos run a number of different child protection-related training webinars, which can be accessed here: [https://www.barnardos.ie/learning-development/training/training-events-courses?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIgJb57q\\_F6wIVgrTtCh0YJQaXEAAAYAAEgl-hvD\\_BwE](https://www.barnardos.ie/learning-development/training/training-events-courses?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIgJb57q_F6wIVgrTtCh0YJQaXEAAAYAAEgl-hvD_BwE)

The National Youth Council of Ireland run a number of different training programmes related to child protection, which can be accessed here: <https://www.youth.ie/programmes/child-protection/>

Volunteer Ireland run a number of online e-learning events, some of which include training in garda vetting and child protection, which can be accessed here: <https://www.volunteer.ie/event/>

\*Disclaimer – this list is not exhaustive and represents resources available at time of writing this policy document. These resources may be subject to change.