



CILL FLAINN

AG FÁS, AG FOGHLAIM, AG FORBAIRT

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Scoil Treasa Naofa is committed to the creation of a happy, secure environment conducive to the physical, emotional, spiritual and academic development of its pupils in all their individual uniqueness.

BACKGROUND

This policy document takes account of the provisions of the following legislation, guidelines and procedures:

- *Freedom of Information Act 1997*
- *The Education Act 1998*
- *The Child Welfare Act 2000*
- *Children First-National Guidance for the Protection & Welfare of Children 2011*
- *Children First' (Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2011)*
- *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (DES 2011)*
- *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023) Circular :0036/2023*

AIMS

This policy aims to

- create a safe, responsive and caring school environment;
- provide all pupils in the school with education in personal safety skills which specifically addresses abuse prevention;
- develop among the whole school community a sense of awareness and sense of responsibility regarding the area of child protection;
- put in place procedures for best practice to protect pupils and staff;

- ensure that all staff members are familiar with the documents outlined above.

Revised Procedures:

The revised procedures replace the 2017 procedures and take account of the Children First Act, 2015 and the "Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children" published by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in 2017 (hereinafter referred to as "Children First National Guidance 2017"), the Addendum to Children First (2019), General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures for Boarding Facilities associated with Recognised Schools (2023) and the Teaching Council (Information to be Furnished by Employer in Case of Dismissal or Resignation of Registered Teacher) Regulations (2023).

These procedures apply to all recognised primary and post-primary schools and to centres for education (as defined in the Education Act 1998), including boarding facilities associated with recognised schools, which are attended by children and young people under the age of 18 years.

It should be noted that all of the requirements of the revised procedures come into effect from 1 September 2023

The revised procedures have been brought to the attention of all school staff and board of management members. The board of management at the first meeting following the 1st September 2023 shall formally adopt the 2023 procedures.

Purpose of the Revised Procedures:

- The revised procedures continue to give direction and guidance to school authorities and to school personnel in relation to meeting their statutory obligations under the Children First Act 2015 and in the continued implementation of the best practice (non-statutory) guidance set out in Children First National Guidance 2017.
- The changes to the revised procedures are outlined in Appendix 5 of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023).

These changes include:

- Updated reporting procedures at section 9.5 of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023), which enable the Board of Management to undertake their oversight arrangements while not disclosing the identity of the member of school personnel against whom an allegation is made or disclosing the identity of the child to the board. This information must now be anonymised in the documents provided as part of the Child Protection Oversight Report.
- The protocol authorising immediate action continues to operate as previously, without anonymisation.
- Employers (boards of management) must familiarise themselves with the revised procedures and ensure that these are followed correctly for all Child Protection Oversight Reports presented to the board from 1 September 2023.
- Reference to the Commencement of the Teaching Council (Information to be Furnished by Employer in Case of Dismissal or Resignation of Registered Teacher) Regulations 2023, from 11 May 2023. Employers must familiarise themselves with these regulations.
- Clarification that the Child Safeguarding Statement always includes a Risk Assessment. It is one document and boards of management when next reviewing their Child Safeguarding Statement must use the most recent mandatory template provided.
- Reference to the recently published Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures for Boarding Facilities associated with Recognised Schools 2023, Reference to the Addendum to Children First (2019), Reference to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- It is the responsibility of each relevant school authority to put in place the necessary arrangements to ensure full compliance with the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023).

In particular:

- a) any documents provided as part of the Child Protection Oversight Report must now be anonymised to ensure that the identities of any children and any other parties, including the member of school personnel to whom the concern or report relates, are not disclosed.

b) Employers must notify the Teaching Council once a teacher stands dismissed from 11 May 2023 onwards (or resigns following upon the making of a complaint or the invoking of a disciplinary process).

c) Each relevant school authority when next reviewing their Child Safeguarding Statement should ensure that it is using the latest mandatory templates provided by the Department for the Child Safeguarding Statement (including a Risk Assessment), the annual review and notification of the annual review.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Board of Management (BoM)

The BoM of Scoil Treasa Naofa recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of school life and must be reflected in all school policies, practices and activities. Consequently, the Board has adopted and will fully implement without modification the Department of Education and Skills' Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2011 as part of this overall policy and revised in 2023.

The following key personnel have been identified and ratified by the BoM:

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP): Nora Falvey

The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP): Maria Cunningham

The BoM will

- undertake an annual review of this policy and its implementation by the school;
- ensure that an action plan is put in place by the school should any areas for improvement be identified by the review;
- inform school personnel, via the Principal, that the review has been undertaken;
- inform the Parents' Association in writing that the review has been undertaken;
- provide a record of the review and its outcome to the Patron and DES, if requested;
- ensure that the school policies, protocols and practices listed below are monitored and reviewed by staff in light of experience.

The specific policies listed hereunder are key elements of this overall document and must be referred to in the context of this policy:

- Attendance & Participation Policy
- Admissions Notice/Policy
- Code of Behaviour/ Anti-Bullying Policy
- Supervision Policy
- Health & Safety Statement
- Enrolment Policy
- Swimming Policy
- Intimate Care & Toileting Policy
- Data Protection and Record Keeping Policy
- Special Education Needs Policy
- School Tours/Educational Outings Policy
- Critical Incident Policy
- Internet Acceptable Use Policy
- School Visitors Policy
- Substance Use Policy
- Child-Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment

2. School Staff

The school staff will:

- co-operate fully with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters;
- adopt safe practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and protect workers from the necessity to take unnecessary risks that may leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or neglect;
- develop a practice of openness with parents and encourage parental involvement in the education of their children;
- implement the Stay Safe Programme which is the primary resource used in this school to educate the pupils on abuse prevention. The formal lessons of the programme will be taught in their entirety every second year in accordance with the SPHE two-year cycle plan; and
- fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.

DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON (DLP)

The Principal is the Designated Liaison Person (DLP). Should circumstances warrant it, the Deputy Principal shall take on this role. The DLP has specific responsibility for Child Protection Procedures and will represent the school in all correspondence with the HSE, An Garda Síochána and other parties in connection

with allegations of abuse. All matters pertaining to child abuse concerns should be processed through the DLP.

In addition to informing the BoM of those cases where a report involving a child in the school has been submitted to the HSE, the DLP shall also inform the Board of cases where the DLP sought advice from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report was made. At each BoM meeting, the Principal's Report shall include the number of all such cases and this shall be recorded in the minutes of the subsequent BoM meeting.

REPORTING CASES OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE:

Cases of reported, suspected or disclosures of abuse as defined in section/Chapter 2 of Child Protection Procedures in Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised in 2023) to any staff member are to be reported in accordance with section/Chapter 5 of procedures outlined in Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised in 2023).

<https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/12bee3-child-protection-procedures-in-schools/#child-protection-procedures-for-schools>

Every registered teacher should note that as a mandated person the statutory obligation under the Children First Act 2015 to make a mandated report to Tusla rests with the individual teacher and this applies regardless of whether or not the DLP reports the concern in question.

However, a registered teacher who makes a mandated report to Tusla jointly with the DLP meets his or her statutory obligation to report to Tusla under the Children First Act 2015.

Section 14 (1) of then Children First Act, 2015 states that: "where a mandated person knows, believes or has reasonable grounds to suspect, on the basis of information that he or she has received, acquired or becomes aware of in the course of his or her employment or profession as such a mandated person, that a child -(a) has been harmed,(b) is being harmed, or(c) is at risk of being harmed, he or she shall, as soon as practicable, report that knowledge, belief or suspicion, as the case may be, to the Agency."

All reports shall be submitted to Tusla in accordance with section/Chapter 5 of procedures outlined in Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised in 2023).

<https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/12bee3-child-protection-procedures-in-schools/#child-protection-procedures-for-schools>

Accordingly, when reporting a concern to TUSLA under these procedures, the Tusla portal should be used wherever possible.

After the report has been submitted via the Tusla portal, a copy of the report must be printed and retained in accordance with the requirements of the procedures.

Further information in relation to the use of the portal is available at <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/web-portal/>

COMMUNICATION:

- This policy has been made available to all school personnel and the Parents' Association and is readily accessible to parents in the school foyer. It is also available in hard copy in each classroom.
- This policy has been made available for viewing on the school website.
- A copy of this policy is available for the attention of the DES and the patron if requested.
- An information letter regarding Child Protection is also circulated to parents of junior infants.

MONITORING & REVIEW:

This policy will be monitored on an on-going basis. It will be reviewed by the Board of Management each year using the *Checklist for Annual Review*. Should the review indicate matters to be addressed, the Board of Management will do so without delay.

RATIFICATION AND COMMUNICATION:

This policy was circulated and communicated to members of the school community following its ratification by the Board of Management (BoM).

Signed.....
Caroline Lynch
Chairperson

Date:.....2024

Checklist for Annual Review of the Child Protection Policy

The Board of Management must undertake an annual review of its Child Protection Policy and the following checklist shall be used for this purpose.

Date:.....

1.	As part of the overall review process, Boards of Management should also assess other school policies, practices and activities vis a vis their adherence to the principles of best practice in child protection and welfare as set out in the school's Child Protection policy	YES	NO
2.	Has the Board formally adopted a child protection policy in accordance with the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	YES	NO
3.	As part of the school's child protection policy, has the Board formally adopted, without modification, the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	YES	NO
4.	Are there both a DLP and a Deputy DLP currently appointed?	YES	NO
5.	Are the relevant contact details (HSE and An Garda Síochána) to hand?	YES	NO
6.	Has the DLP attended available child protection training? Both DLP & Deputy DLP have completed tusla training	YES	NO
7.	Has the Deputy DLP attended available child protection training?	YES	NO
8.	Have any members of the Board attended child protection training? All members to complete training when available	Yes	NO
9.	Has the school's child protection policy identified other school policies, practices and activities that are regarded as having particular child protection relevance?	YES	NO
10.	Has the Board ensured that the Department's 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools' are available to all school personnel?	YES	NO
11.	Does the Board have arrangements in place to communicate the school's child protection policy to new school personnel?	YES	NO
12.	Is the Board satisfied that all school personnel have been made aware of their responsibilities under the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools'?	YES	NO
13.	Since the Board's last annual review, was the Board informed of any child protection reports made to the HSE/An Garda Síochána by the DLP?	YES	NO
14.	Since the Board's last annual review, was the Board informed of any cases where the DLP sought advice from the HSE and as a result of this advice, no report to the HSE was made?	YES	NO
15.	Is the Board satisfied that the child protection procedures in relation to the making of reports to the HSE/ An Garda Síochána were appropriately followed? N/A	YES	NO
16.	Were child protection matters reported to the Board appropriately recorded in the Board minutes? N/A	YES	NO
17.	Is the Board satisfied that all records relating to child protection are appropriately filed and stored securely?	YES	NO
18.	Has the Board ensured that the Parents' Association has been provided with the school's child protection policy?	YES	NO



Dear Parents/Guardians,

In recent years, as a society, we have become very aware of the problem of child abuse through neglect, emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

Each one of us has a duty to protect children and Children First, the National Guidelines, for the Protection and Welfare of Children noted that teachers, who are the main care givers to children outside the family, are particularly well placed to observe and monitor children for signs of abuse.

In response to this, the Department of Education and Skills published procedures for all schools in relation to child protection and welfare. These guidelines promote the safety and welfare of all children and are to be welcomed.

The Board of Management of Scoil Treasa Naofa has adopted these guidelines as school policy. Consequently, if school staff suspect or are alerted to possible child abuse, they are obliged to refer this matter to the Health Service Executive (HSE). The HSE will then assess the situation and provide support for the child concerned.

Children First, the National Guidelines for the Protection of Children may be assessed on the website of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (www.dcyu.ie) and the Department of Education and Skills Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised in 2023) can be read on the Department's website (www.education.ie) or <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/12bee3-child-protection-procedures-in-schools/#child-protection-procedures-for-schools>

Parents/Guardians are also welcome to look through the guidelines here at the school or on the school's website.

Yours sincerely,

Principal

Definition and Recognition of Child Abuse as outlined in Chapter 2: Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised in 2023)

<https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/268613/39868a39-1de4-4890-97a0-2fa388a8a2a9.pdf#page=null>

2.1 Purpose

This chapter applies to all school personnel who come in contact with children. Everyone must be alert to the possibility that children with whom they are in contact may be experiencing abuse or neglect. This chapter contains guidance (based on chapter 2 of Children First National Guidance 2017) on the four main types of abuse and how abuse and neglect can be recognised.

2.2 Reasonable grounds for concern

The Children First National Guidance 2017 requires that Tusla should always be informed where a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected. If the signs of abuse are ignored, it could result in ongoing harm to the child. It is not necessary for a person to prove that abuse has occurred to report a concern to Tusla. All that is required is that the person has reasonable grounds for concern. It is Tusla's role to assess concerns that are reported to it. Where a concern is reported, the information will be carefully considered with any other information available and a child protection assessment will be carried out where sufficient risk is identified.

Reasonable grounds for a child protection or welfare concern include:

- Evidence (e.g. injury or behaviour) that is consistent with abuse and is unlikely to have been caused in any other way.
- 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

2.3 Types of Child Abuse and how they might be recognised:

In Children First National Guidance 2017 and in these procedures, "a child" means a person under the age of 18 years, excluding a person who is or has been married. All school personnel should be familiar with signs and behaviours that may be indicative of child abuse.

This chapter describes the four main types of abuse: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse and outlines how abuse and neglect can be recognised. 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 a 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, it should be considered a child welfare and protection issue for both children and child protection procedures should be adhered to for both the alleged victim and the alleged abuser. Children First National Guidance 2017 states that the important factor in determining whether the behaviour is abuse or neglect is the impact of that behaviour on the child rather than the intention of the parent/carer/other person.

The definitions of neglect and abuse presented in this chapter are not legal definitions. They are intended to describe ways in which a child might experience abuse and how this abuse may be recognised. The procedures for reporting child abuse or neglect can be found in chapter 5 of these procedures. If it is considered that a child is in immediate danger and Tusla cannot be contacted, An Garda Síochána should be contacted without delay.

2.3.1 Neglect

Children First National Guidance 2017 outlines that 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 wellbeing 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, supervision and safety. Emotional neglect may also lead to the child having difficulties of attachment. 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 the child is seen 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

2.3.2 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 the children's emotional and developmental needs. Emotional abuse is not easy to recognise because the effects are not always 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

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- Conditional parenting in which care or affection of a child is made contingent on his or her behaviours or actions
- Extreme over-protectiveness
- 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 or 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.

2.3.3 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. Since 1982 corporal punishment has been banned in schools.

2.3.4 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 many 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.

It should be remembered that sexual activity involving a young person may be sexual abuse even if the young person concerned does not themselves recognise it as abusive.

Examples of child sexual abuse include the following:

- Any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of the 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:
 - o 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]
 - o Inviting, coercing or inducing a child to participate in, or to observe, any sexual, indecent or obscene act
 - o 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 the exemptions for mandated reporting of certain underage sexual activity can be found in section 4.7.1 of these procedures.

Where a school becomes aware of underage sexual intercourse the school should take appropriate steps to inform the child's parents.

2.3.5 Circumstances which may make children more vulnerable to abuse and neglect

School personnel dealing with children need to be alert to the possibility that a welfare or

protection concern may arise in relation to children with whom they come in contact. 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 that they 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 abuse.

The following list is intended to assist in identifying the range of issues in a child's life that may place them at greater risk of abuse or neglect. It is important 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 and poor 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

These factors should be considered 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. If it is considered that a child is in immediate danger and Tusla cannot be contacted, An Garda Síochána should be contacted without delay.

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.

Children First National Guidance 2017 outlines that bullying can be defined as repeated aggression - whether it be verbal, psychological or physical - that is conducted by an individual or group against others. Children First National Guidance 2017 describes bullying as 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, cyber bullying, damage to property, intimidation, isolation/exclusion, name calling, malicious gossip and extortion. Bullying can also take the form of identify abuse based on gender, 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;

those 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 amongst 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. Research suggests that children with disabilities and with special educational needs are more likely to be bullied than others. Homophobic and transphobic bullying (bullying targeted at those who are or who are perceived to be LGBT) has also been found to be prevalent with evidence that such pupils have particular difficulty in speaking up or reporting the bullying behaviour.

Children First National Guidance 2017 states that bullying in schools can be 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 school authorities are responsible for

dealing with school based bullying behaviour. School authorities are required to have a code of behaviour and an anti-bullying policy in place in accordance with the Department's "AntiBullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools" (the Anti-Bullying Procedures) and Circular 0045/2013.

The Anti-Bullying Procedures define bullying as "unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time". In the context of the Anti- Bullying Procedures "placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people" is also regarded as bullying behaviour. School personnel should be aware of their school's anti-bullying policy and the procedures to be followed in relation to any alleged bullying incidents.

Children First National Guidance 2017 and the Anti-Bullying Procedures provide that in cases of serious instances of bullying where the behaviour is regarded as possibly abusive, a referral may need to be made to Tusla or An Garda Síochána as appropriate. Where school personnel have concerns about a child arising from alleged bullying behaviour but are not sure whether to report the matter to Tusla, the designated liaison person shall seek advice from Tusla in accordance with the procedures set out in chapter 5 of these procedures.

2.3.6 Concerns in relation to an adult who may pose a risk to children:

Children First National Guidance 2017 states that while in most cases concerns for the welfare or safety of a child develop from one's own observation or knowledge of a particular child or his or her family, sometimes concerns arise in relation to whether an adult may pose a risk to children, even if there is no specific child named in relation to the concern. For example, on the basis of known or suspected past behaviour, a concern could exist about the risk an individual may pose to children with whom he or she may have contact. Any such reasonable concerns should be reported to Tusla, who will try to establish whether or not any child is currently at risk from the individual in question. Where school personnel have concerns as to whether an adult may pose a risk to children, even if there is no specific child named in relation to the concern but are not sure whether to report the matter to Tusla, the designated liaison person shall seek advice from Tusla in accordance with the procedures set out in chapter 5.

Children First National Guidance 2017 states that while Tusla will make every effort to examine such cases, it is a very complex area involving the accused's constitutional rights to their good name, privacy and the right to earn a living, as well as the requirements of natural justice. Tusla must work within the Constitution, the law, the legal system and the demands of natural justice to balance the conflicting rights of those involved. This may limit how much feedback Tusla can provide to the person who reported the concern on the progress or outcome of the case. Tusla's examination can be greatly improved if the alleged victim feels able to co-operate with Tusla in its assessment or investigation.

Helpline Numbers

ORGANISATION	ADDRESS	PHONE NO:
National Adult Counselling Service		1800 477 477
INTO Employee Assistance		1800 411 057
One In Four		01 6624070
Rape Crisis Centre		1800 778888
HSE Community Services Kerry	Social Work Dept. Rathass, Tralee,	066 7121566
HSE Community Services Kerry	Social Work Dept. Margaret's Road, Killarney	064 6636030