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# Respond Support Child Welfare & Protection Policy

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Making Our Communities Safe  
for Children

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February 2017

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THIS POLICY IS EFFECTIVE AS AND FROM FEBRUARY 2017 AND WILL BE REVIEWED IN JANUARY 2018, OR SOONER, AND WILL BE INFORMED BY THE ORGANISATION'S RISK REGISTER, CRITICAL INCIDENT REVIEWS, ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES, DEVELOPMENTS IN BEST PRACTICE OR LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

AUTHOR – DAVID PARSLOW (FEB 2017)

\*POLICY REVIEWED WITHOUT ALTERATIONS 17/01/2018. NEXT REVIEW DATE JAN 2020, OR SOONER IF DEEMED NECESSARY

REVIEWED AND AMENDED MAY 2018

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## **Making Our Communities Safe for Children**

### **RESPOND SUPPORT CHILD PROTECTION POLICY STATEMENT**

#### **Introduction**

Respond Support is committed to promoting the highest standards of child protection in line with '*Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*' (2017) and the *Children First Act 2015*. Respond Support is committed to implementing this policy within the organisation. We believe that children and young people have a right to be brought up in a supportive and safe environment. We strive to provide such an environment within the organisation and promote it in our work where the safety of children and young persons is paramount.

All staff and volunteers are expected to implement this policy at all times; failure to do so will be seen as a breach under the organisation's disciplinary procedures. Staff are also informed that they have the right to report concerns directly to the appropriate authorities and are protected from civil liability under the '*Protection of Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998*' provided they do so '*reasonably and in good faith*'.

Respond Support adheres to the recommendations of the *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*, published by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2017) and to *Children First Act 2015*

This policy will be reviewed in January 2020, or earlier, if deemed necessary.

Staff Signature.....

Staff Name (Block Capitals) \_\_\_\_\_

Signed by.....  
(Designated Person/National Co-ordinator)

Date.....

## 2. Why have a Child Protection Policy?

Respond Support is committed to providing a high quality service to those with whom we work. This includes promoting our services as positive and safe environments for children and young people. This Child Protection policy sets out an approach to be followed within the organisation, and includes our Childcare Centres.

The policy aims to ensure that all staff and volunteers have clear procedures on how they are expected to respond to any suspicion or allegation of child abuse they may come across in the course of their work. The policy is developed in line with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs 'Children First- National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children' (2017), key principles which states that:

Furthermore, the criminal charge of 'reckless endangerment' was introduced by the Criminal Justice Act 2009 (section 176). This states that:

- The safety and welfare of children is everyone's responsibility.
- The best interests of the child should be paramount.
- The overall aim in all dealings with children and their families is to intervene proportionately to support families to keep children safe from harm.
- Interventions by the State should build on existing strengths and protective factors in the family.
- Early intervention is key to getting better outcomes. Where it is necessary for the State to intervene to keep children safe, the minimum intervention necessary should be used.
- Children should only be separated from parents/guardians when alternative means of protecting them have been exhausted.
- Children have a right to be heard, listened to and taken seriously. Taking account of their age and understanding, they should be consulted and involved in all matters and decisions that may affect their lives.
- Parents/guardians have a right to respect, and should be consulted and involved in matters that concern their family.
- A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents/guardians and families. Where there is conflict, the child's welfare must come first.
- Child protection is a multiagency, multidisciplinary activity. Agencies and professionals must work together in the interests of children

Furthermore, the criminal charge of 'reckless endangerment' was introduced by the Criminal Justice Act 2009 (section 176). This states that:

*'A person having authority or control over a child or abuser, who intentionally or recklessly endangers a child by:*

- a) causing or permitting any child to be placed or left in a situation which creates a substantial risk to the child of being a victim of serious harm or sexual abuse, or*
- b) failing to take reasonable steps to protect a child from such a risk while knowing that the child is in such a situation, is guilty of an offence.'*

**Any allegation or concern regarding abuse of a child must be taken seriously. For that reason it is essential for anyone with a concern to strictly follow the procedures outlined in this document. Particular care should be taken in regard to confidentiality and the sharing of information. The right of children to respect and protection from harm is paramount. At no time should children be put at further risk of harm by delay or inaction.**

### **3. Objectives of the Policy**

- To set out clear consistent guidelines for staff and volunteers within Respond Support in dealing with alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse or welfare concerns.
- To create awareness among staff and volunteers of the issues of child protection and abuse.
- To have a clear consistent system throughout Respond Support regarding the identification and response to allegations or suspicions concerning the safety and welfare of children and young persons
- To ensure clear guidelines on staff and volunteer behaviour that protects children, staff and volunteers

### **4. To whom does the Policy apply?**

The Policy applies in the first instance to all staff and volunteers who may be engaged by Respond Support and who are obliged to follow the guidelines and procedures set out herein.

The Children First Act 2015 has made provision for the appointment of ‘Mandated Persons’. Within Respond Support, ALL Childcare Staff are considered to be Mandated Persons, under the provisions of the Act.

### **5. What might be a cause for concern?**

‘Children First’ categorises four types of neglect or abuse: Neglect; Emotional Abuse; Physical Abuse; Sexual Abuse. The most commonly reported of these is Neglect. Further information on each category is attached in Appendix I (from ‘Children First’)

The following guidelines for recognition should be adhered to:-

*‘The ability to recognise child abuse can depend as much on a person’s willingness to accept the possibility of its existence as it does on their knowledge and information. There are commonly three stages in the identification of child neglect or abuse:*

- i. considering the possibility;*
- ii. looking out for signs of neglect or abuse;*
- iii. recording of information.*

#### **5.1 Stage 1: Considering the possibility**

The possibility of child abuse should be considered if a child appears to have suffered a suspicious injury for which no reasonable explanation can be offered. It should also be considered if the child seems distressed without obvious reason or displays persistent or new behavioural problems. The possibility of child abuse should also be considered if the child displays unusual or fearful

responses to parents/carers or older children. A pattern of ongoing neglect should also be considered even when there are short periods of improvement.

## **5.2 Stage 2: Looking out for signs of neglect or abuse**

Signs of neglect or abuse can be physical, behavioural or developmental. They can exist in the relationships between children and parents/carers or between children and other family members/other persons. A cluster or pattern of signs is more likely to be indicative of neglect or abuse. Children who are being abused may hint that they are being harmed and sometimes make direct disclosures. Disclosures should always be taken very seriously and should be acted upon. The child should not be interviewed in detail about the alleged abuse. This may be more appropriately carried out by a Social Worker or An Garda Síochána. Less obvious signs could be gently explored with the child, without direct questioning. Play situations, such as drawing or story-telling, may reveal information.

Some signs are more indicative of abuse than others. These include:

- i. disclosure of abuse by a child or young person;
- ii. age-inappropriate or abnormal sexual play or knowledge;
- iii. specific injuries or patterns of injuries;
- iv. absconding from home or a care situation;
- v. attempted suicide;
- vi. underage pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease;
- vii. signs in one or more categories at the same time. For example, signs of developmental delay, physical injury and behavioural signs may together indicate a pattern of abuse.

Many signs of abuse are non-specific and must be considered in the child's social and family context. It is important to be open to alternative explanations for physical or behavioural signs of abuse.

## **5.3 Stage 3: Recording of information**

If neglect or abuse is suspected and acted upon, for example, by informing Tusla, it is important to establish the grounds for concern by obtaining as much information as possible. Observations should be accurately recorded and should include dates, times, names, locations, context and any other information that may be relevant. Care should be taken as to how such information is stored and to whom it is made available.

## **5.4 Children with additional vulnerabilities**

Certain children are more vulnerable to abuse than others. Such children include those with disabilities, children who are homeless and those who, for one reason or another, are separated from their parents or other family members and who depend on others for their care and protection. The same categories of abuse – neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse – are applicable, but may take a slightly different form. For example, abuse may take the form of deprivation of basic rights, harsh disciplinary regimes or the inappropriate use of medications or physical restraints.

## 6. Procedure to follow if you observe, suspect or are made aware of an allegation of child neglect or physical, emotional or sexual abuse.

Staff and volunteers are expected to note/report any signs of possible neglect, physical, emotional or sexual abuse. However, detailed explanations should **not** be sought as to do so may place the child/young person at further risk or may jeopardise an investigation

Tusla should always be informed when a person has **reasonable grounds for concern** that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected. Child protection concerns should be supported by evidence that indicates the possibility of abuse or neglect.’

Note that the most common cause of concern relates to **neglect** of children.

All staff should record the following information in relation to any concerns regarding the welfare of children and young people. All incidents should be recorded and dated and reported to the Designated or Deputy Designated Liaison Person. (Note that in passing on a concern, you are not alleging abuse.)

- Suspicions
- Concerns
- Worrying observations
- Behavioural changes
- Allegations

## 7. Steps to be followed by Non Mandated Persons and Volunteers in reporting a concern regarding Child Welfare:

Figure 1 below summarises the procedure to be followed in reporting a Child Welfare concern

- You need to be aware of who the Designated Liaison Person (and Deputy Designated Liaison person) is in your region. See Section 12.8 for contact details of the Designated and Deputy Designated Liaison Persons in your region.
- Inform the Designated Liaison Person (or deputy) as soon as possible of your concerns. Do this immediately in the case of immediate danger to a child (see below) and within two working days in other cases.
- You should record the incident in an internal ‘Incident Form’. (see Appendix V) and post hand deliver or email (using respond support email addresses only) to the DLP.
- When the staff person and/or the Designated Liaison Person feels reasonable grounds for concern exist a formal report on the allegation / suspicion should be made to Tusla using the standard Child Protection and Welfare report Form available at <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/publications-and-forms/#SRP> (See earlier section ‘**What might be a cause for concern**’). This report may be completed by the individual staff / volunteer or by the Designated Liaison Person. In reaching this decision, the Designated Liaison Person may engage in informal, confidential discussions with relevant Tusla personnel.



- The parent/guardian should be informed regarding a formal referral being made to Tusla/Gardaí, unless this is likely to further endanger the child.
- The Designated Liaison Person will inform, in writing, the staff member who reported the incident of what action has been taken. Note: under the 'Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998' a staff member is entitled to report a concern directly to Tusla should they feel that insufficient action is being taken. They are also protected from penalization by their employer for so doing.
- Should you consider a child's safety to be at immediate risk contact the Garda Síochána immediately. A child should not be left in a dangerous situation. This can mean staying with the child until Tusla or the Gardaí arrive (note: it is not appropriate to bring a child to another location).
- Inform the Designated Liaison (or Deputy) as soon as possible.
- If a child or young person makes a disclosure of abuse directly to you, please refer to section 10 below.
- In the interest of confidentiality staff are not to discuss allegations / suspicions with others outside of this process, other than on a 'need-to-know' basis for the purposes of Child Protection.

## **8. Procedures to be followed by staff in Respond Support Childcare & Early Education Centres:**

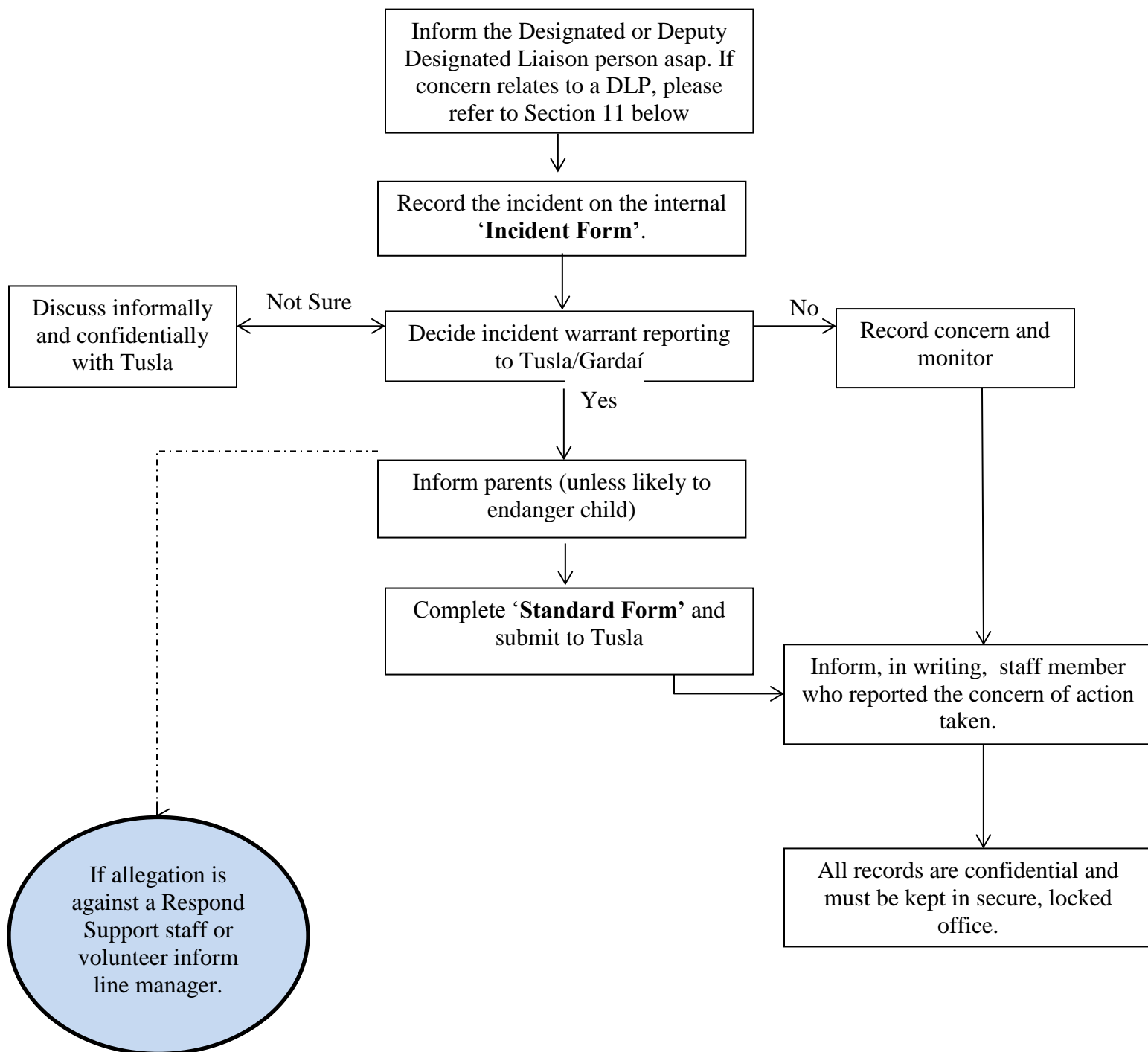
Each Respond Support Childcare Centre has its own Designated and Deputy Designated Liaison Person, with their own procedures specific to Childcare Centres – including that at least one of the Designated or Deputy Designated Liaison Persons must be on site at all times. These personnel will also follow the procedures set out in this document. In addition they will inform the Respond Support National Designated Liaison Person of any referrals made to Tusla. In the case where an allegation is against a fellow member of staff please see section 11, below.

Every member of staff in a Childcare setting is a Mandated Person and, as such must report harm (above a defined threshold) to a child, to TUSLA. The threshold is outlined at <http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/mandated-persons/what-is-the-threshold-for-making-a-mandated-report/>. If staff are unsure as to whether or not their concern reaches the Threshold, they may discuss their concern with a TUSLA Social Worker or their DLP. The reporting of a concern is the responsibility of the individual Mandated person. Concerns can be reported on line via TUSLA Web Portal or by completing a Child Welfare Report Form. Reports may be made jointly with another Mandated Person or with the DLP. If you feel your concern does not reach the Threshold you may report it under Children First

Mandated Persons can make out of office reports by phoning 0818-776315

## **9. Procedures to be followed by staff in other Respond Support services.**

Each Respond Support Special Project and Day-care Service has its own Designated and Deputy Designated Child Protection Liaison Persons. Staff in these services will follow the procedures set out in this document, reporting to their respective Designated Liaison Persons. Designated Liaison Persons for these services will liaise as appropriate with the Regional Designated Liaison Persons.

**Fig 1. Steps to be followed when a Child Welfare concern is raised:**

## 10. Dealing with Disclosures of Abuse

A disclosure is when a child informs an adult directly of their experience of abuse. The handling of a disclosure is an extremely delicate and sensitive issue. It is important to realise that the child/young person is likely to be under severe emotional stress and is depending on an adult for help. Great care must be taken not to damage that trust.

In an event of disclosure

- Stay calm; do not panic
- Listen- do **not** ask leading questions or ask the child to repeat what they are saying unnecessarily. Your role is to support the child – not investigate the incident.
- Accept- believe what they are saying and tell them so.
- Reassure- emphasise that they are not at fault
- Stay in control- initial response is crucial
- Be honest about what will happen next- don't make unrealistic promises
- Record the disclosure in writing as carefully as possible and as soon as possible (within 24 hours and using the language of the child)
- Notify the local designated person immediately
- Information sharing should be in accordance with Respond Support's confidentiality policy and only on a need to know basis as required to safeguard the children in question.
- Where appropriate, parents/guardians should be informed and involved in the process
- Probing questions or explanations should **not** be sought- they may place the child/young person at further risk and may jeopardise any subsequent investigation.

### 10.1 Retrospective Disclosure

A disclosure may also involve an adult making a retrospective disclosure concerning abuse experienced by them as a child. There are two main areas of concern here:-

- The adult making the disclosure
- The potential for further / continuing child abuse perpetrated by that adult's alleged abuser.

Upon receiving such a retrospective disclosure the staff member will offer the adult disclosing, the contact details for the relevant DLP, or to make a referral to the DLP for the disclosing adult. On receiving a referral, the DLP will provide assistance. The HSE National Counselling Service provides a professional, confidential counselling and psychotherapy service and is available free of charge, countrywide. It can be accessed on 1800 477477. In the case of an employee making a disclosure to a colleague, they may be directed to the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) which is available 24 hours per day, 365 days per year on Freephone 1800 650138

Where a retrospective disclosure has been made it is essential to establish whether there is any current risk to any child who may be in contact with the alleged abuser in the adult's disclosure. Where any risk is deemed to exist to a child who may be in contact with an alleged abuser, the allegation should be reported to the DLP without delay. The DLP will then make a referral to TUSLA.

Mandated Persons should make referrals directly using TUSLA's Retrospective Abuse Report Form (RARF) <http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/publications-and-forms/#SRP>

## 11. Allegations against Staff and Volunteers

Where allegations are made against staff or volunteers, Respond Support has a dual duty of care to the child and to the staff/volunteer, (however where there appears to be a conflict of duty, care to the young person or child must always take precedence). Therefore two parallel procedures are needed. The allegation of abuse will be overseen by the Designated Liaison Person. The employment / contractual issues will be managed by the Line Manager and the HR Department. Both the Designated Liaison Person and the Line Manager will co-operate closely with each other and with the statutory authorities, keeping the welfare of children paramount.

The following steps will be taken:

- The person to whom the complaint is made should hear the complainant in a respectful and confidential manner. The complainant should be informed of Respond Support's mandatory policy in relation to reporting child protection concerns. Wherever possible, the complainant should be immediately referred to the Designated (or Deputy) Liaison Person. If this is not possible, the person hearing the complaint must alert the Designated Liaison Person (or Deputy) at the earliest opportunity (not more than one working day). The Designated Liaison Person (or Deputy) will inform the Line Manager of the person against whom the complaint has been made at the earliest opportunity. The General Manager also needs to be informed at the earliest opportunity.
- The person hearing the complaint / allegation should immediately record the nature, setting and content of the complaint. Recording should be factual and completed on the day the complaint is heard.
- Where possible the person making the complaint should be encouraged to make a written complaint.
- The Human Resources Department will arrange support mechanisms to be put in place for staff against whom the allegation has been made.
- The Human Resources Department will consult with Tusla and the Garda Síochána on the follow-up of an allegation of abuse against an employee and consider and agree a plan which recognises and responds to the needs and rights of the alleged victims of abuse and their families. The initial consultation will take place by telephone followed by a face-to-face meeting within 48 hours.
- Unless advised to do otherwise by the Gardaí, the HR Department should advise the employee that an allegation has been made against him/her, and the nature of the allegation. The employee will be afforded an opportunity to respond. The HR Department will note the response and pass this information to the Designated Liaison Person who will include this information, if a formal report is being made to Tusla. The employee should be informed of this unless advised to do otherwise by the Gardaí.
- The Designated Liaison Person (or Deputy) and the HR Department will assess the level of risk to any children with whom the employee is in contact.
- Where it is decided that protective measures are necessary to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk the Chief Executive Officer can decide to place the member of staff on administrative leave. Where appropriate the CEO can also reassign the staff person in question to alternative work areas – always ensuring Child Protection is paramount. The HR Manager will be notified and will ensure that employment legislation issues are fully complied with.

- All meetings and discussions in relation to the allegation should be recorded with the decisions reached and the reasons why clearly noted.
- Care must be taken to ensure that actions taken by Respond Support Management do not undermine or frustrate any investigation being conducted by Tusla or An Garda Síochána on this.
- In the case that an allegation is made against a Designated Liaison Person in a Childcare Centre or other regional service, the Child Protection / Welfare Role will be managed by the Regional DLP. In the case that an allegation is made against a Regional DLP, the Child Protection / Welfare role will be managed by the Family Support Team leader. In both of these cases the support role for the staff person against whom the allegation has been made will continue to be a matter for HR and line management.

***If any member of staff or volunteer is inhibited for any reason in reporting an incident or allegation of child abuse against another member of staff or volunteer internally, or if they are dissatisfied with the internal response, they should report the matter independently to Tusla and An Garda Síochána.***

## **12. Structure for responsibility/accountability**

All Respond Support staff and volunteers are expected to:

- Have read and understood this policy document.
- Attend such training and induction in Child Protection as determined by Respond Support Management.
- Support Child Protection Designated Liaison Persons in their role.
- Maintain confidentiality on all Child Welfare concerns except in the interests of protecting children. Refer to Confidentiality Policy (Appendix II)

### **12.1 Role of the HR department**

- Ensure staff, volunteers, youth leaders, etc. are appropriately vetted and trained in Child Protection. Garda Vetting will be required as per the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 to 2016. The Act stipulates that Vetting is required for those involved in ‘relevant work or activities’ and defines that as follows:-  
“The Act defines “relevant work or activities” as relevant work or activities relating to children or to vulnerable persons, but does not apply to any work or activities undertaken in the course of:  
1. family relationship,  
2. personal relationship, and for no commercial considerations,  
3. giving the assistance by an individual on an occasional basis and for no commercial consideration.  
....“at a school, sport or community event or activity, other than where such assistance, includes the coaching, mentoring, counselling, teaching or training of children or vulnerable persons”. (Section 3 (1) of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Bill 2012)

## **12.2 Role of Childcare & Early Education Centre Designated Liaison Person**

Receive and process concerns/allegations relating to Child Protection from staff and volunteers in their Child Care Centre.

- Make referrals on allegations and suspicions of Child Abuse and welfare concerns directly to Tusla/the Gardaí and liaise with them.
- Inform and liaise with parents / carers where appropriate. Ensure all parents / guardians are aware of the Child Protection policy.
- Liaise with Respond Support Regional Designated Liaison Person, ensuring they are aware of any Child welfare concerns from the Child Care Centre.
- Inform their line manager/Regional Manager of any allegations against staff or volunteers (see section 11 above)
- Ensure policy and procedures are followed in their Child Care Centre.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers are appropriately trained and informed on Child Protection issues.
- Keep confidential individual records on suspected or actual cases of child abuse regarding the allegation, referral, action taken, liaison with other agencies and monitor outcomes.
- Keep records dated and kept locked and secure in the office of the designated person.

## **12.3 Role of Childcare Practitioners / Staff**

- Be familiar with their role and responsibilities as Mandated Persons.
- Be familiar with this policy and attend training as appropriate
- Inform the onsite DLP / Assistant DLP of any concerns
- Follow procedure as outlined in this Policy

## **12.4 Role of the Departmental Designated Liaison Person**

(It is advisable that a deputy designated liaison person is also named for each region to ensure consistency and efficiency in the absence of the designated person.)

- Receive and process concerns/allegations relating to Child Protection from staff and volunteers.
- Make referrals on allegations and suspicions of Child Abuse and welfare concerns directly to Tusla/the Gardaí and liaise with them.
- Ensure policy and procedures are followed at a regional level.
- Provide information, advice and induction training to staff and volunteers within the respective region.
- Keep confidential individual records on suspected or actual cases of child abuse regarding the allegation, referral, action taken, liaison with other agencies and monitor outcomes.
- Ensure effective channels of communication are maintained with the national co-ordinator for child protection.
- Keep records dated and kept locked and secure in the office of the designated person.
- Inform and liaise with parents/carers where appropriate.
- Liaise with the regional senior members of community services, who are responsible for child protection, Tusla, etc.

- Offer support and information on child protection to staff and volunteers within the region, including involvement in induction training.
- Report on a monthly basis to the National Child Protection Co-ordinator. These reports will maintain the confidentiality of individual cases and will provide overviews of the number, nature and locations of incidents.
- It is important that the Designated Liaison Person is accessible to all staff.

### **12.5 Role of the Family Support Team Leader**

- Provide information and advice on child protection throughout Respond Support.
- Ensure consistency of approach throughout Respond Support.
- Ensure quality standards are upheld.
- Respond to training needs.
- Organise supportive systems and meetings for the named designated persons.
- Ensure the effectiveness of the child protection policy as a working document, through monitoring, evaluation and annual renewals.
- Report on Child Protection issues to Senior Management Team,
- Line Manage DLPs as appropriate

### **12.6 Links to other Respond Support Strategies.**

Other Respond Support strategies, such as the Family Support Strategy, may overlap with child protection and welfare issues. All staff must follow the guidelines in the Child Protection Policy.

When these strategies are already engaging with families where there are welfare or protection concerns staff must take due cognisance of this Child Protection Policy. Tusla should be informed of such on-going work and any subsequent support work should be done in consultation with Tusla.

### **12.7 Contact Details for Reporting Child Welfare Concerns:**

Contact details for Tusla (the Child and Family Agency) are available on [www.tusla.ie](http://www.tusla.ie).

Contact for County Designated and Deputy Designated Liaison Persons can be obtained by calling the National Special Services Manager on 087-7848025. Contact details are also available at [www.respondsupport.ie](http://www.respondsupport.ie)

### 13. Good Practice Guidelines

By developing good practice guidelines the organisation aims to protect both young people and members of staff/volunteers. The following are guidelines on what Respond Support considers to be good practice relating to Child Protection.

#### 13.1 Good Practice

- Staff and volunteers will respect and value children as individuals. Children should be listened to, praised and encouraged and involved appropriately in decision-making.
- Staff should never give lifts in their cars to individual children and young people. Parents and management should be kept informed of transport arrangements for children at all times.
- In cases of disclosures, never promise to keep secrets, the child/ young person needs to be aware that you will have to pass on any serious information regarding the protection and welfare of children.
- Never let allegations made by a child go unaddressed or unrecorded.
- Avoid spending time alone, away from others with a child or young person.
- Always address children and young people in positive terms. Avoid disparaging remarks, sarcasm, etc.

#### 13.2 Inappropriate Behaviour

- Avoid time alone with children/young people.
- Staff will not hit, push, physically chastise or undermine any young person.
- Staff should be sensitive to the possibility of developing favouritism, or becoming over-involved or spending a great deal of time with any one child.

#### 13.3 Health and Safety

- Children/young people should not be left unattended or unsupervised.
- A safe environment will be provided.
- Appropriate Risk Assessments will be carried out for all outings, trips etc. organised for children / young people (see Appendix IX for Risk Assessment Guidelines).
- Staff / volunteers / parents will be made aware of the policy and procedures, to which Respond Support is committed.
- All allegations by children or young people will be reported to the Designated Person.
- The appropriate staff (volunteer) to child ratio for safe supervision should be followed.

This is recommended as:

Age	Ratio
0-2 years	1 staff for 3 children
2-3 years	1 staff for 4 children
3-7 years	1 staff for 8 children (6 outdoors)
8 years +	2 staff for 20 children (15 outdoors) and one



additional staff for every further 10 children.

## **Appendix 1:**

### **Signs and symptoms of child abuse** (from 'Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children' (2017))

#### **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.

## **APPENDIX II**

### **Confidentiality Policy**

This policy is underpinned by the premise that you: Do not promise to keep secrets.

In recognition of the respect and dignity of the human person, all Respond Support staff and volunteers will maintain strict confidentiality with regard to any matters pertaining to any individual staff member, parent / carer, child or Respond Support associate.

Information should be shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis in order to safeguard a child.

As set out in 'Children First' - giving information to others for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality.

No undertaking regarding secrecy can be given. Those working with a child and family should make this clear to all parties involved.

Any concerns a staff member may have with regard to a child, parent/carers or staff member should be shared initially with the regional Designated Liaison Person.

Concerns with regard to any child or family should not be discussed openly when other children or adults are in attendance.

Should staff / volunteers have a concern, they have a duty to share this with the Designated Liaison Person.

Staff / volunteers / tenants making disclosures should be assured that matters would be dealt with sensitively, efficiently and strictly under Respond Support's Policy and Procedures.

All written records must be kept in a confidential manner, locked securely in the office of the designated person.

All staff and volunteers within Respond Support are expected to act professionally and to observe strict confidentiality in all matters.

### **APPENDIX III**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Criminal Record Vetting Policy</b>
<b>Policy</b>	It is the policy of Respond Support to vet current and potential Employees and volunteers against the National Criminal Records Database.
<b>Scope</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Employees, volunteers or potential Employees/volunteers in a position of trust as outlined in the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 to 2016. The Act stipulates that Vetting is required for those involved in ‘relevant work or activities’ and defines that as follows:-  “The Act defines “relevant work or activities” as relevant work or activities relating to children or to vulnerable persons, but does not apply to any work or activities undertaken in the course of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. family relationship,</li> <li>2. personal relationship, and for no commercial considerations,</li> <li>3. giving the assistance by an individual on an occasional basis and for no commercial consideration.</li> </ol> ....“at a school, sport or community event or activity, other than where such assistance, includes the coaching, mentoring, counselling, teaching or training of children or vulnerable persons”. (Section 3 (1) of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Bill 2012)</li> </ul>
<b>Rationale</b>	The aim of the policy is to provide a robust protection system by assessing, managing and auditing the risks associated with employing people in positions of trust.
<b>Procedure</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A criminal record will not necessarily prevent a person from working within the Company. However, the Company will consider criminal records where the nature of the offence has a relevance to the post. This includes any successful, unsuccessful or pending prosecutions and / or convictions.</li> <li>2. A Criminal Record Check is requested after a risk assessment has indicated that the post places a proportionate and relevant position of trust on the individual by giving access, or potential access, to residents, children, vulnerable adults or direct responsibility for any finances or items of value.</li> <li>3. For those positions where a Criminal Record Check is required, all job descriptions and adverts will contain a</li> </ol>

statement that a Criminal Record Check will be requested in the event of the individual being offered the position.

4. Where a Criminal Record Check is to form part of the recruitment process, all candidates will be encouraged to disclose their criminal records during the recruitment process. However, should a candidate fail to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position, this will be regarded as a breach of trust and may lead to a withdrawal of an offer of employment or subsequent dismissal.
5. Prior to commencing employment or voluntary work, the Company will also require successful candidates to provide details of any criminal records on a *Garda Vetting Application Form*, which will include a signed authorisation for An Garda Síochána to disclose information to the Company. This will then be checked for the Company against the National Criminal Records Database by An Garda Síochána.
6. Employees / volunteers in positions of trust will be re-vetted every 3-years. However, the Company reserves the right to re-vet an Employee / volunteer, at any time where, at the sole discretion of the Company, it is deemed necessary.
7. Where a person does not give the Company authorisation to perform a Criminal Record Check, this may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal or the withdrawal of a job offer or voluntary work.
8. Should a Criminal Record Check raise any record of concern, the Employee / candidate / volunteer will be invited to discuss this in private with the HR Manager. During this meeting the nature of the record and its significance to the position will be outlined. The Employee / candidate / volunteer will also be offered the opportunity to respond to the disclosed criminal record.
9. The suitability of the Employee / candidate / volunteer will be assessed on the basis of the potential risks involved in employing the individual in the position of trust by considering:
  - If the nature of the offence will create an unacceptable risk to the Company, residents, other employees, clients, suppliers or service users
  - Any legal constraints, e.g. employing a person with motoring conviction as a driver
  - If the post involves direct contact with members of the public
  - If the post involves any direct responsibility for finances or items of value
  - If the nature of the job will present a realistic opportunity for the individual to re-offend



- The seriousness of the offence, length of time since the offence, rehabilitation of the offender and any pattern of offending behaviour
  - If there are any reasonable safeguards that could be taken to eliminate the perceived risk, e.g. increased supervision
  - Any extenuating circumstances surrounding the offence and the explanation offered by the candidate / Employee
  - Any other relevant information
10. If the risk assessment shows that the Employee / candidate / volunteer cannot perform the job without exposing the Company to an unacceptable level of risk, the Company reserves the right to withdraw any offer of employment or dismiss the employee.
  11. All Criminal Record Checks will be managed by the HR & Training Department. With disclosures been securely stored in a sealed envelope in the relevant Employee's HR file. Information regarding offences will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed to any person not authorised to receive it.
  12. Employees under the age of 18 years of age will not be vetted against the National Criminal Records Database. However, employees under the age of 18 will likewise not work directly with children, vulnerable adults or have direct responsibilities for finances or items of value.
  13. Where a candidate / Employee / volunteer has resided outside the Island of Ireland (including the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland) a signed affidavit in front of a Commissioner of Oaths may be sought declaring the Employee's / candidate's / volunteer's full criminal record, if any. These candidates / Employees / volunteers will also be re-vetted after 1-years service with the Company.
  14. Police Certificates will not be accepted in lieu of Criminal Record vetting by An Garda Síochána.
  15. Where an individual disputes the accuracy of their disclosed Criminal Record, the exact basis of the dispute should be made in writing to the HR Manager within 2 weeks of the date of disclosure. A report detailing the basis of the dispute and a new *Vetting Application Form* will then be submitted to An Garda Síochána for re-checking. Where, after re-checking, an individual still disputes the data, further identification procedures such as fingerprinting will be arranged by An Garda Síochána.
  16. All matters relating to Criminal Record Vetting are strictly confidential. Any breaches of this confidentiality may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

## **APPENDIX IV**

### **Respond Support Public Internet and Computer Usage**

To fulfil its mission of providing public access to information of all types in a wide range of formats, Respond Support provides access to Internet and/or computer resources *in* **(ENTER ESTATE OR CD BUILDING NAME)**. The Internet offers access to many valuable local, national and international sources of information. However, some information found on the Internet may be inaccurate, incomplete, dated, or offensive to some individuals.

#### **Public Users' Security**

Users should be aware that the Internet is not a secure medium and that third parties may be able to obtain information regarding users' activities. However, Respond Support will not release information on the use of specific Internet or computer resources by any user of the public except as required by law or necessary for the proper operation of the service.

#### **Access by Minors**

Parents or legal guardians must assume responsibility for deciding which Internet or Computer resources are appropriate for their own children. Parents or legal guardians should guide their children in use of the Internet and inform them about materials they should not use. While Respond Support affirms and acknowledges the rights and responsibilities of parents and guardians to monitor and determine their children's access to any educational materials and resources, including those available through the Internet, Respond Support has taken certain measures designed to assist in the safe and effective use of these resources by all minors.

- a. Access to any Respond Support provided Internet or Computer resource for minors (under the age of 14) must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Any children under the age of 18 must have provided a signed parental/guardian release in order to access the Internet or use a computer independently on the premises.
- b. All computer equipment is designed to reduce the possibility on unwanted software being installed. To guard against the deliberate or unknowing introduction of computer viruses or questionable content onto any Respond Support provided computer, files may not be downloaded or saved onto computer hard drives.

Although Respond Support utilizes virus-checking software, this is not a guarantee that everything will be completely protected from viruses. Information downloaded from the Internet may contain a virus. Respond Support is not responsible for any loss or damage to personal disks when downloading information. Further, Respond Support is not responsible for any loss of data, damage, or liability that may occur from a user's use of the Internet and/or computer/s.

All Internet access is filtered to a certain level.

#### **Filtering**

Respond Support takes the security and well-being of all users of the service seriously. As a result, an Internet Filtration service has been provided for all Internet-accessible computers in the building. This filtering protects against access to visual depictions of obscenity, child pornography, etc.

Respond Support cannot and does not guarantee that the filtering service will block all obscenity, child pornography, or materials that are harmful to minors. Nor can Respond Support guarantee that the filtering software will not restrict access to sites that may have legitimate research or other value. If this is the case, please us the contact details on the blocking page detailing the issue.

All Internet pages accessed are logged by this filtration service. The information contained here is used to ensure that a level of protection is adequate, for monitoring browsing trends in order to help us improve local services/profiling and in the event there are any legal actions taken against Respond Support or any individual. This information will not be shared or provided to the public except as required by law or necessary for the proper operation of the service.

### **Rules Governing Use**

Due to the limited resources available for provision of public access to the Internet and computer usage, Respond Support may set limits, for example, on use of large files of still or moving images or sound, or on downloading files in any medium. Respond Support also reserves the right to limit the amount of time an individual user can devote to a single session. The public must comply with all applicable laws, including laws governing the transmission and dissemination of information while accessing the Internet.

Users may not:

- Use the network to make unauthorized entry into other computational, informational or communication services or resources.
- Distribute unsolicited advertising.
- Invade the privacy of others.
- Make any attempt to damage computer equipment or software.
- Engage in any activity that is harassing or defamatory.
- Use the Internet for any illegal activity, including violation of copyright or other rights of third parties.

### **Compliance**

Respond Support reserves the right to take appropriate action to insure compliance with this policy.

**Violations of this policy may result in suspension or loss of privileges to use the computer and/or Internet resources. Any illegal activity involving the use of the Respond Support provided equipment, including the Internet, will be subject to prosecution by the appropriate authorities.**

**I, the undersigned agree to the policy and procedures outlined in this document.**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*(User, Parent/Guardian, third party)*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*(On Behalf Of Respond Support)*

Position in Company: \_\_\_\_\_

**Names of minors who are being granted access to this service, if any.**

--

**I nominate the following person/s to act on my behalf in a supervisory capacity if necessary. (must be over 18 years of age). Maximum of two allowed.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Privacy Notice**

*Any information we receive from this policy will be kept on record by Respond Support for the purpose of demonstrating understanding and agreement with said policy. The information will be stored securely and will not be passed onto any third party nor used for any other purpose. It will be kept for the duration of the service provision or for one year after the service is not required by the user.*

## APPENDIX V

### Respond Support Internal Child Protection Incident Reporting Form

#### PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

**Date of incident:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location of incident:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Reporting:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Details of Child:** Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Male ☐ Female ☐

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

**Details of the incident (concerns, incidents, dates, times, people present, injuries, etc.)**

**Mother:** Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel no: \_\_\_\_\_

**Father:** Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel no: \_\_\_\_\_

*To be submitted ONLY to the Designated Child Protection Worker (or Deputy) in your region*

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Staff Signature**

**FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:**

***Have there been previous incidents relating to this child/children) that caused you concern. Give details if not previously reported.***

***Have previous reports been submitted related to the same child(ren)? Give approximate dates of these reports.***

***Have the parents/guardians of the child(ren) in question been informed?***

## Appendix VI

### What is the threshold for making a mandated report?

As a mandated person, under the legislation you are required to report any knowledge, belief, or reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed, to the Authorised Person within Tusla.

Definition of Harm:

The threshold of harm for each category of abuse at which mandated persons have a legal obligation to report concerns is outlined below.

“Harm” means, in relation to a child:

- (a) assault, ill-treatment or neglect of the child in a manner that seriously affects or is likely to seriously affect the child’s health, development or welfare, or
- (b) sexual abuse of the child

### NEGLECT

Neglect is defined as ‘to deprive a child of adequate food, warmth, clothing, hygiene, supervision, safety or medical care’. The threshold of harm, at which you must report to Tusla under the Children First Act 2015, is reached when you know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child’s needs have been neglected, are being neglected, or are at risk of being neglected to the point where the child’s health, development or welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.

### EMOTIONAL ABUSE/ILL-TREATMENT

Ill-treatment is defined as ‘to abandon or cruelly treat the child, or to cause or procure or allow the child to be abandoned or cruelly treated’. Emotional abuse is covered in the definition of ill-treatment used in the Children First Act 2015. The threshold of harm, at which you must report to Tusla under the Children First Act 2015, is reached when you

know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being ill-treated to the point where the child's health, development or welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.

## **PHYSICAL ABUSE**

Physical abuse is covered in the references to assault in the Children First Act 2015. The threshold of harm, at which you must report to Tusla under the Children First Act 2015, is reached when you know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being assaulted and that as a result the child's health, development or welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.

## **SEXUAL ABUSE**

If, as a mandated person, you know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being sexually abused, then you must report this to Tusla under the Children First Act 2015.

Sexual abuse to be reported under the Children First Act 2015 [as amended by section 55 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017] is defined as an offence against the child, as listed in Schedule 3 of the Children First Act 2015.

A full list of relevant offences against the child which are considered sexual abuse is set out in Appendix 3 of [Children First: Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children](#).

As all sexual abuse falls within the category of seriously affecting a child's health, welfare or development, you must submit all concerns about sexual abuse as a mandated report to Tusla. There is one exception, which deals with certain consensual sexual activity between teenagers, which is outlined here.

## Appendix VII

### Parental consent form

Please complete this form and return it to  
Respond Support

(A signed consent form is a condition  
of participation in this activity for those  
under the age of 18).

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_

GP name \_\_\_\_\_

GP telephone number \_\_\_\_\_

I am willing for \_\_\_\_\_  
to participate in \_\_\_\_\_  
and confirm that s/he is willing to  
participate as fully as possible.

Furthermore (please tick one of the  
following):

I permit \_\_\_\_\_  
to only travel on transport that has been  
designated as official for the purpose of  
this event (e.g. minibus/coach)

YES ☐      NO ☐

Or, I permit \_\_\_\_\_  
to travel in either private vehicles or any  
other transport that has been designated  
official for the purposes of this event.

YES ☐      NO ☐

\_\_\_\_\_ has the  
following medical condition and requires  
the following medication (give details)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to child: \_\_\_\_\_

Consent must be provided by the  
person with parental responsibility or  
guardian

## APPENDIX VIII



### Photograph and Publicity Release Form

---

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give my permission to use my likeness, image, voice, and/or appearance as such may be embodied in any pictures, photos, video recordings, audiotapes, digital images, and the like, taken or made on behalf of Respond Support I agree that Respond Support has complete ownership of such pictures, etc., including the entire copyright, and may use them for any purpose consistent with the Respond Support ethos and mission. These uses include, but are not limited to illustrations, bulletins, exhibitions, videotapes, reprints, reproductions, publications, advertisements, and any promotional or educational materials in any medium now known or later developed, including the Internet.

I have read and understood this consent and release.

***I give my consent*** to Respond Support to use my likeness to promote the program, its fiscal agent, and/or their activities.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent / Legal Guardian (if under age 18)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## **APPENDIX IX: Risk Management (from 'Keeping Safe')**

### **Guidance on Risk Management for:**

- 1.** Planning & Managing Activities
- 2.** Preparation for a Day Trip
- 3.** Preparation for a Residential Visit
- 4.** Considerations for Different Types of Residential

## **Planning and managing activities**

### **PLANNING ACTIVITIES**

This can be achieved by:

- 1. Knowing the children**
  - Have some defined criteria for membership.
  - Have a registration form for members on which you could record, for example: medical details; any special needs/consent for medical attention - especially in relation to children with a disability; emergency contact numbers of nearest relative or person with 'parental responsibility'.
- 2. Knowing your staff and volunteers**
  - Follow a thorough recruitment procedure.
  - Keep secure records of details provided at the time of recruitment.
  - Have a work schedule which should be clearly displayed so that everyone knows who is on duty.
  - Keep a record of any complaints/incidents about or involving workers, children/young people or parents.
  - Acknowledge stress and help staff through it.
  - It is important that parents are subject to the same recruitment and supervision procedures as other staff and volunteers if they are acting in the role of a volunteer. Unrestricted access by parents is also a risk.

### **MANAGING ACTIVITIES**

Activities such as rock climbing, athletics, swimming and other sports require clear guidelines to prevent an adult from using their position to initiate activities with children outside the scope of the programme. Both parents and children should be made aware of the programme content. When managing recreational activities remember:

- 1. Practical matters**
  - Always work openly with children. Avoid situations where a worker and an individual child are completely unobserved.
  - If manual support is required, it should be provided openly. Some parents are sensitive about manual support and their views should always be carefully considered.
  - If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, always ensure staff and volunteers of appropriate gender work in pairs. Encourage an open environment with children, i.e. no secrets.

- Where there are mixed groups away from home, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff or volunteer.

**2. Supervision of children** To ensure the safe management of activities children *must* be supervised at all times. We can do this by firstly being aware of:

- number of participants;
- age and age range;
- type of activity;
- environment where the activity is undertaken;
- particular needs of individual participants, e.g. disabilities; and
- organising programmes well in advance.

There are a number of basic guidelines for supervision:

- children should not normally be left unattended;
- you should know where children are and what they are doing;
- dangerous behaviour by children should not be allowed, for example horseplay;
- children will be safer if supervised by two or three adults; your organisation should have clear guidelines for ratios of staff and children for all activities;
- children should only be permitted, supervised and restricted access to the Internet.

Having clearly defined supervision arrangements will not only minimise the occurrence of accidents but also contribute to the protection of children from intentional harm from either adults or peers.

Some children with behavioural problems may require special attention. Most crises can be avoided if prior preparations have been made e.g. training for staff and volunteers on clearly identified procedures.

**3. Keeping records**

Accurate and up to date records in relation to all activities involving children and young people, should be kept at all times. These should include:

- attendance register;
- accidents and incidents; and
- authorisation/parental consent form.

**GENERAL SAFETY**

Organisations should give consideration to:

- required standards for premises and equipment;
- heating and ventilation;
- sanitation facilities;
- fire precautions;
- first aid facilities;
- regular checking of equipment; and
- providing adequate insurance cover for children, staff, volunteers and third parties.

## **Preparation for a day trip**

### **Checklist**

#### **PROGRAMME PLANNING**

If possible, consult with children/young people, staff/volunteers and parents when drawing up a programme of activities to ensure that everyone will gain the maximum benefit from the programme.

- Venue.
- Activities.
- Insurance for groups and leaders.
- Equipment needed.
- Are the activities planned suitable for your group in terms of age, ability, gender, race, culture etc?
- Consider alternative programme in the event of bad weather or other unexpected occurrences.

#### **PARENTS**

- Who has parental responsibility?
- Ensure consent forms/health forms are completed.
- Transport issues to and from venue.
- Provide information on relevant policies i.e.
  - child protection;
  - discipline;
  - health and safety;
  - drugs and alcohol etc; and
  - food/clothing/money.

#### **LEADERS**

- Discuss programme and roles and responsibilities.
- Adequate supervision ratios for specific activities.
- Ensure staff and volunteers have received appropriate training and have relevant experience.
- Ensure leaders are familiar with:
  - accident and emergency procedures (including contact numbers);
  - child protection policy and procedures; and
  - code of behaviour.

#### **TRANSPORT**

##### **Private cars**

- Never carry groups of children in your car unless you are sure that your insurance covers this.

- Avoid transporting a child or young person alone. If absolutely necessary, ensure that the child is in the back seat, and that other leaders are aware of this.
- Encourage parental assistance in transporting their own children to and from a venue where possible.

### **Public transport**

- Check timetable as they are updated/changed regularly.
- Check that the company caters for group travel and book in advance.
- Exercise good supervision on all forms of public transport.
- Inform transport company of specific requirements for members of groups with disabilities.
- Ensure parents know pick up points/times.

### **Minibuses**

- Does the centre provide a minibus or do you need to hire one?
- Check how many people are allowed to travel on the minibus.
- Do you need to provide a driver?
- Check that the vehicle is fitted with seat belts.

## **Preparation for a residential visit**

### **Checklist**

### **PROGRAMME**

If possible consult with children / young people, staff / volunteers and parents when drawing up the programme of activities to ensure that everyone will gain the maximum benefit from the programme.

When planning your programme take account of the following:

- Objectives of your programme
- Do you need any special materials, equipment?
- What facilities are available at the centre to help carry out your programme?
- Are the activities suitable for your group in terms of age, ability, gender, culture etc.?
- Allow some time off during the residential for each of the leaders.
- Make emergency plans for bad weather or other unexpected occurrences.

### **PRE-VISIT TO CENTRE**

It is essential that at least one group leader visits the accommodation in advance of the trip. It is advisable that this person is the nominated leader in charge and keeps a record of the pre-visit.

The following should be discussed on a pre-visit:

- Specific entry requirements e.g. minimum / maximum numbers, age range, age limit etc.
- Agree catering arrangements.

- Are your intended ratios of adults to children/young people acceptable to centre staff?
- Staff ratios may need to be higher for disabled children, depending on their needs.
- Does the centre have any special rules e.g. out of bound areas?
- Does the centre have a complaints procedure?
- Are you aware of all the costs e.g. extra costs for programme, transport etc?
- Is there an emergency contact number (either at the centre or a mobile telephone number if staff are not available 24 hours a day)?

## **ACCOMMODATION**

When selecting accommodation for the visit the following should be considered:

- Is the accommodation suitable for the type of residential you wish to run?
- What equipment does the centre provide e.g. recreational and games equipment?
- Clarify whether the centre staff or your staff will keep a record of where children sleep in case of fire.
- Is your group expected to share facilities with another group e.g. beds, mattresses, lockers, wardrobes etc?
- Are the facilities suitably adapted for young people with disabilities?
- Is there sufficient clean bedding?
- What do you need to bring?
- Are there separate sleeping, washing and toilet areas for males and females, staff and young people, different age groups?
- Is leaders' accommodation within earshot of young people?

## **LEADERS**

- Arrange a meeting to discuss programme and exchange information with: (a) leaders/parents; (b) leaders/young people.
- Provide leaders/staff/volunteers with rotas, programme etc.
- Ensure that leaders/staff/volunteers are familiar with accident and emergency procedures.
- Have child protection policy and health and safety policy in place.
- A code of behaviour should be drawn up for staff/volunteers as well as young people, and staff/volunteers familiarised with this code.
- Adequate insurance cover should be obtained for the whole group, including leaders.
- The group leader should have a contact number for a senior member of the organisation in case of emergencies.

## **STAFFING**

Clarify and agree how much responsibility for supervision lies with centre staff and how much lies with visiting staff:

- Do you have an induction and training programme for all new staff/ volunteers?
- Do you have a probationary period?
- Have staff and volunteers been given a range of training on child protection and residential issues?

- Is there at least one female leader travelling with the group?
- Are staff/volunteers medically fit to undertake tasks/responsibilities of the job in hand?
- Are your leaders adequately qualified and insured for all the activities they will be involved in?
- Are you happy with the qualifications and experience of centre staff?

### **CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE**

Staff/volunteers/leaders should have at least one meeting with group members to discuss and agree:

- Code of behaviour.
- Programme.
- Cooking and cleaning rotas.
- Accident, emergency and complaint procedures.
- Centre/areas to be visited - rules and regulations.

If travelling abroad, children/young people should have medical and dental check-ups prior to the trip. Issues about keeping safe should also be discussed with children.

### **PARENTS**

- Arrange a parents meeting to explain and agree all arrangements for the residential.
- Obtain parental consent and medical information at this meeting.
- Explain your policy on discipline, child protection, drugs/alcohol, smoking and pocket money.
- Discuss arrangements in case of emergencies such as injury, sickness, fatality.
- Obtain emergency contact numbers from the parents.

### **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Policies and procedures which should be considered:

- Equal opportunities.
- Child protection.
- Drugs/alcohol.
- Bullying.
- Control and discipline.
- Health and safety.

Inform host centre staff of your policies and procedures and check out the centre's policies and procedures. Agree which procedures will be followed in the event of an incident.

### **TRANSPORT**

Transport is a central element of any visit and it is important to check out all aspects of this thoroughly. Safety should be considered a priority at all times, regardless of cost.

#### ***Private Cars***

- Never carry groups of children in your car unless you are sure that your insurance covers this.
- Avoid transporting a child or young person alone. If you do have to transport a child alone, ensure that other leaders are aware of this and that the child is in the back seat.

### ***Public transport***

- Check timetables as they are updated/changed regularly.
- Check that the company caters for group travel and book in advance.
- Exercise good supervision on all forms of public transport.
- Inform transport company of special requirements for members of groups with disabilities.

### ***Minibuses***

- Does the centre provide a minibus or do you need to hire one?
- If hiring, hire from a reputable company.
- Check how many people are allowed to travel on the minibus.
- Does the centre provide a driver, or do you need to provide one?
- If you are providing a driver, check they have the necessary driving qualifications.
- Check that the vehicle is fitted with seat belts.

## **Considerations for different types of residentials**

There are different types of residentials and particular considerations for each.

### **HOST FAMILIES**

- Ensure there is an **exchange of information** between host family/young person/parents regarding:
  - information on cultural differences in food, language etc;
  - religious differences and locate appropriate place of worship if necessary.
- Check any **specific requirements** e.g. dietary concerns, medical requirements, disabled access etc.
- Ensure there is an **escort** known to the young person staying in the same area as them and that they visit the young person on a regular basis. You should ensure that they can talk in private during this meeting.
- Clarify roles and responsibility regarding reporting procedures for dealing with **child protection concerns**.
- **Police record check** host families where possible and ensure they are interviewed by at least two people connected to your organisation.
- Take up references from people who have known the family for at least five years, but who are not relatives.

### **OUTDOOR PURSUITS**

- Check that all members of staff/volunteers to be involved in outdoor pursuits are adequately **qualified** and **insured**.

- Ensure you have **emergency procedures** in place.
- Check the **safety of the equipment** at the centre.
- Ensure that life-jackets or buoyancy aids are available for **water based activities** e.g. canoeing, sailing, rowing, rafting etc.
- Ensure you have a sufficient **ratio** of staff to young people for all activities. Additional staff may be needed for risky sports.

## **CROSS CULTURAL RESIDENTIALS**

- When **planning** the programme, discuss with leaders the aim, objectives and problems involved in cross cultural work. Consider what type of programme it is going to be e.g. physical, educational, spiritual, cross cultural workshop.
- Ensure the **venue** is both safe and accessible for all.
- Encourage full **participation** in icebreaker/encounter sessions for both leaders and young people, and that everyone has an equal input into the planning of the programme.
- Ensure you **share information** with parents/leaders/young people regarding the cross cultural nature of the programme.
- Ensure that leaders/volunteers are fully **trained** to deal with culturally sensitive issues.

## **TRAVELLING ABROAD**

**Information sharing** is essential. At a pre-programme meeting information should be provided to parents on:

- itinerary;
- travel arrangements;
- emergency contact numbers; and
- parental consent obtained.

Group members should be advised to allow extra money for unexpected expenses.

Ensure that all participants obtain travellers cheques and local currency before travelling.

Ensure you allow enough time for completion of visas, passports etc before travel.

Ensure that parents and young people are aware of and agree to ground rules, in particular circumstances under which a young person may be sent home. Pre-travel meetings should also enable members to discuss fears and expectations of the trip.

Ensure the group has adequate travel and health **insurance**.

Check **medical requirements** of all those who are travelling. Check medicines are carried with the group.

- Immediate return home travel should be available in the event of serious illness or crisis.
- Check that vaccinations are carried out before you leave.



Planning your **travel** for each step of the way, taking into account delays at airports, refreshments and comfort stops, travel sickness etc.

- Ensure you have adequate supervision ratios for travel to and from destinations.

Explore attitudes in relation to **cultural issues** i.e. age, sex, safety, religious beliefs and practices.

- Be aware of policies regarding race, disability etc. and in particular child protection procedures.

Check that all **activities** are conducted in accordance with the standards of safety and supervision laid down by your own organisation, and or relevant governing body both at home and abroad.

- Check that any activities planned are appropriate for the climatic conditions at the time of your visit, and that the group are advised of appropriate clothing required.





