



# Let's Grow Together! Infant & Childhood Partnerships CLG

## Child Safeguarding Policy

### DOCUMENT CONTROL

#### Document Number

LGTPOL002/20
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#### Document Location

COMPANY/Governance/Policy Bank/Child Safeguarding Policy
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#### Policy Origins

New	Legacy
	✓

#### Revision History

Version	Issue Date	Author/editor	Description/Summary of Changes
1.0	September 2020	Infant Mental Health Specialist	New
1.01	January 2021	Company Secretary	Update to staffing information
1.02	September 2021	Programme Manager	Update to staffing information

#### Reviewed by

Version	Name	Position	Review Date

#### Approvals

Version	Issue Date	Approval Body	Approval Date	Effective Date
1.0	September 2020	Board of Directors	24 September 2020	01 January 2021
1.01	January 2021	Board of Directors	14 January 2021	14 January 2021
1.02	September 2021	Board of Directors	29 September 2021	29 September 2021

# Child Safeguarding Policy

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***Mandatory reporting of suspected child protection issues came into effect in Ireland on 11/12/2017***

## **1) Guiding Principles**

Let's Grow Together! Infant & Childhood Partnerships CLG (hereafter LGT) believe that the welfare of children is paramount and are committed to keeping children and young people safe from harm. LGT is committed to protecting and promoting the rights of children and young people accessing our programme, including their right to be protected, treated with respect, listened to and to have their own views taken into consideration in all decisions affecting them. LGT seeks to ensure that no child or young person is disadvantaged or treated differently because of gender, social or ethnic background, family status, sexual orientation, religion or disability. LGT intend to create an environment in which children are safe from abuse and in which any suspicion of abuse is promptly and appropriately responded to.

LGT's child protection policy complies with national policy, current legislation and guidance (Tusla's *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* and *Child Safeguarding: A guide for policy, procedure and practice 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 2019*) LGT's child protection policy outlines our duty to ensure the safety and well-being of all children engaged with and known to our programme.

Please see Appendix 15 for further information and references for child safeguarding legislation documentation. (Tusla Child Safeguarding: A guide for policy, procedure and practice 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 2019)

### **Who must adhere to the Policy?**

- Governance Structures
- Managers
- Staff
- Students
- Volunteers

All of the above listed will abide by their requirements and intent in respect of safeguarding children and young people in accordance with this policy.

LGT will review its guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures yearly, or sooner if necessary due to service issues or changes in legislation or national policy

## Declaration of Guiding Principles

Name of organisation: **Let's Grow Together! Infant & Childhood Partnerships CLG**

We provide the following services/activities to children, young people and their families:

IMH Home Visiting prebirth-3 years

Consultations

Babbling Babies

Infant Massage Group

Elklan "Let's Talk with your Baby" Group

Peep Parent-Toddler Group

Storytime in the Library

Hanen 'Learning Language & Loving It' Programme

LGT believes that the best interests of children and young people attending our services are paramount. LGT is committed to protecting and promoting the rights of children and young people accessing our programme, including their right to be protected, treated with respect, listened to and to have their own views taken into consideration in all decisions affecting them. Our guiding principles are underpinned by *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 2019*, the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* and current legislation such as the *Children First Act 2015*, *Child Care Act 1991*, *Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998* and the *National Vetting Bureau Act 2012*.

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

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

Our Designated Liaison Person is: Trish Hurley

Contact details: 086 1854977

Our Deputy Designated Liaison Persons are: Marian Clifford-Cronin 086 6003472

Suzanne Rigby 086 8142190

## **2) Key roles in Safeguarding**

### **Dedicated Liaison Persons (DLP):**

All organisations that provide services to children should develop specific policies and procedures on how to create a safe environment. To assist with this, organisations should consider appointing a named person to develop their guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures.

This person is responsible for leading the development of guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures and for ensuring that policies and procedures are consistent with best practice as detailed in this Guide. They should liaise with all key workers and volunteers who have relevant roles and responsibilities.

The named person can also assist with the review process.

### **Appointed DLP: Trish Hurley**

This person will liaise with statutory agencies responsible for child protection and welfare and will be the resource person to any worker or volunteer who has child protection concerns.

### **Appointed Deputy DLP: Marian Clifford-Cronin / Suzanne Rigby**

In the event that the DLP is not available (e.g. due to annual leave, sick leave, etc.), a Deputy DLP should be delegated responsibility. Contact details for the DLP and Deputy DLPs should be displayed.

### **Roles and responsibilities of DLP/Deputy DLP:**

- Be fully familiar with your organisation's duties in relation to the safeguarding of children.
- Have good knowledge of your organisation's guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures.
- Ensure that the organisation's reporting procedure is followed, so that child protection and welfare concerns are referred promptly to Tusla.
- Receive child protection and welfare concerns from workers and volunteers and consider if reasonable grounds for reporting to Tusla exist.
- Consult informally with a Tusla Duty Social Worker if necessary.
- Where appropriate, make a formal report of a child protection or welfare concern to Tusla on behalf of their organisation, using the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form.
- Inform the child's parents/guardians that a report is to be submitted to Tusla or An Garda Síochána, unless:
  - Informing the parents/guardians is likely to endanger the child or young person;

- Informing the parents/guardians may place you as the reporter at risk of harm from the family;
- The family's knowledge of the report could impair Tusla's ability to carry out an assessment.
- Record all concerns or allegations of child abuse brought to your attention as well as any action/inaction taken in response to these concerns.
- Provide feedback to the referrer, as appropriate.
- Ensure that a secure system is in place to manage confidential records.
- Act as a liaison with Tusla and An Garda Síochána, as appropriate.
- Where requested, jointly report with a mandated person.

**(a) Mandated persons:**

The Children First Act 2015 contains a list of classes of mandated persons. The full list can also be found in Appendix 16 of this document.

Under the Children First Act 2015, mandated persons have a statutory obligation to report concerns which meet or exceed a particular threshold and to cooperate with Tusla in the assessment of mandated reports, where requested to do so.

List of mandated persons in LGT:

Trish Hurley

Marian Clifford-Cronin

Grace Walsh

Sally O' Sullivan

Jennifer Harte

Maeve Donegan

Suzanne Rigby

Workers who are mandated persons should be made aware of their responsibilities under the legislation at commencement of their employment. Mandated persons may make joint reports with the DLP in their organisation, however, a mandated person cannot discharge their statutory responsibility to report by reporting to another person (e.g. by reporting to their DLP).

### **3) Responding to and reporting of child protection and welfare concerns**

#### **(a) Roles and responsibilities**

All workers and volunteers (including students on placement or work experience) have a responsibility to safeguard children and young people and to report any concerns they may have for the protection or welfare of a child/young person.

*Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* refers to the role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Deputy DLP. In accordance with best practice in child safeguarding LGT appointed Trish Hurley as DLP to be the resource person to any team member or volunteer who has child protection concerns and to liaise with outside agencies. The role of the DLP is to receive child protection and welfare concerns from workers/volunteers and to report concerns which meet the threshold of 'reasonable grounds for concern' to Tusla.

Under the *Children First Act 2015* mandated persons have a statutory obligation to report concerns which reach or exceed a legally defined threshold (see section 14 of the *Children First Act 2015*) and to cooperate with Tusla in the assessment of mandated reports, where requested to do so.

#### **(b) Identifying reasonable grounds for concern**

There are many reasons a worker/volunteer may be concerned about the welfare or protection of a child or young person. *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* states that "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".

Children/young people are sometimes abused by members of their own family, by peers or by others outside the family environment such as strangers, workers or trusted adults. *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* lists the following as reasonable grounds for concern:

- Evidence, for example an 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 a child being abused.

Wherever appropriate, any issues should be checked with the parents/guardians when considering whether a concern exists, unless doing so may further endanger the child or the person considering making the report.

Abuse is not always committed through personal contact with a child or young person, sometimes it is perpetrated through social media or the use of information and communication technology. Internet and Online Safety must be considered in relation to keeping children and young people safe (please see Appendix 7 – Online Safety and Appendix 8 – Cyberbullying in *Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 2019*) and should be specifically accounted for in procedures to safeguard children.

### **(c) Categories and indicators of abuse**

*Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* defines four categories of abuse: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child/young person may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time. Please see *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* for more information.

#### Emotional abuse

“Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a parent/carer and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child’s developmental need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms”

#### Sexual Abuse

“Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others”

#### Physical Abuse

“Physical abuse of a child is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction, or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents”

#### Neglect

“Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, and/or medical care”

(From *Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook, 2011*)

**(d) Complicating factors and circumstances which may make children more vulnerable to harm**

Alongside the signs and symptoms of the four types of abuse (physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect), *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* and the *Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook* identifies a number of known complicating factors and circumstances which may make children more vulnerable to harm that need to be considered when identifying, responding to and assessing child protection concerns.

Complicating factors are features of the child or young person's circumstances that are known to be associated with heightened risk to health, development and welfare.

**Tip box**

**Complicating factors in child protection**

Complicating factors in child protection are identified in *Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* under the following five headings:

1. Parent or Carer Factors
2. Child Factors
3. Community Factors
4. Environmental Factors
5. Poor Motivation or Willingness of Parents/Guardians to Engage.

For more information and detail, see the *Tusla Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook 2*, available on the Tusla website.

Some children/young people may be more vulnerable to abuse than others and there may be particular times or particular circumstances when a child or young person may be more vulnerable to abuse in their lives. *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* also identifies a number of circumstances which may make children and young people more vulnerable to harm. It provides a list of issues in a child/young person's life that may lead to a heightened concern that they may be at risk. It is important to remember that identifying additional vulnerability to risk of abuse does not mean that any specific child in those circumstances or settings is being abused. Please see *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* for more information.

With the use of new technologies and smart phones being a feature of everyday life it is important to consider the internet and online safety in relation to safeguarding

children (see Appendix 7 – Online Safety and Appendix 8 – Cyberbullying in *Tusla’s Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 2019*)

### **(e) Responding to concerns**

All workers and volunteers (including students on placement or work experience) have a responsibility to safeguard children and young people and to report any concerns they may have for the protection or welfare of a child/young person.

Regardless of how a concern comes to a worker/volunteer’s attention, it must be reported to the Designated Liaison Person (Trish Hurley).

The Designated Liaison Person, in consultation with the person who raised the concern, will decide if reasonable grounds for concern exist. If reasonable grounds for concern exist, the Designated Liaison Person will report to the Tusla through either the Tusla Web Portal or relevant Dedicated Contact Point (e.g. duty social worker). If the DLP decides not to make a report, the worker/volunteer with the reasonable concern is still entitled to make a report to Tusla under *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*, should they wish to do so. The individual worker has protections under the *Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998*, should they report independently.

In addition, LGT has a procedure for recording certain concerns which, following consideration, do not initially meet reasonable grounds for concern. These concerns are recorded on a specific child protection form within an individual’s case notes on the IPS drive. Only those persons with access rights to the IPS drive can access these records. Interdisciplinary team members and Team Lead have responsibility for reviewing these records. Concerns which do not initially meet reasonable grounds for concern may, upon review, show patterns or clusters which may heighten the level of concern.

#### Mandated persons:

Under the *Children First Act 2015*, certain classes of professionals are designated as mandated persons. Please see section 2 (b) for list of mandated persons in LGT.

In this section the term ‘harm’ is used as defined in the *Children First Act 2015* :

“‘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, whether caused by a single act, omission or circumstance or a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances, or otherwise”.

Section 14(1) of the *Children First Act 2015* states:

“...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 [Tusla].”

Also, Section 14(2) of the *Children First Act 2015* places obligations on mandated persons to report any disclosures made by a child:

“Where a child believes that he or she (a) has been harmed, (b) is being harmed, or (c) is at risk of being harmed, and discloses this belief to a mandated person in the course of a mandated person’s employment or profession as such a person, the mandated person shall, ... as soon as practicable, report that disclosure to [Tusla].”

Best practice requires that the DLP, Trish Hurley, is informed of all such reports.

### **Remember**

#### **Deciding to make a mandated report**

If you are in doubt about whether your concern reaches the legal definition of harm for making a mandated report, Tusla’s Dedicated Contact Point can provide advice and guidance in this regard. You can find details of who to contact to discuss your concern on the Tusla website, [here](#). If your concern does not reach the threshold of harm for mandated reporting, but you feel it is a **reasonable concern** about the welfare or protection of a child, you should report it to Tusla under *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*.

**While Tusla can provide advice, the decision to classify a report as a mandated report under the *Children First Act 2015* or a report of a reasonable concern under *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* rests with the individual mandated person.**

#### **(f) Guidance on persons’ responsibility to report child protection concerns:**

Through this policy LGT provides clear guidance to all workers and volunteers on the actions to be taken when they are concerned about the safety or welfare of a child or young person.

### **LGT Reporting Procedure**

**Who to pass the concern to** – all workers/volunteers must consult with and report any concerns internally to the Designated Liaison Person, Trish Hurley.

**Mandated persons** – need to consider whether the concern reaches or exceeds the threshold for ‘harm’ as defined in the Act.

**Recording** – Your obligation to record the details of the concern and the decisions and actions taken.

**Immediate risk to the child** – Action to be taken where there is thought to be an immediate risk to the child.

**Allegations of abuse by a child** – Where the person allegedly causing harm to a child is another child (peer abuse), reports should be made to Tusla for both children.

**Talking to parent(s)** – The process for discussing a concern with parents/guardians before reporting and the circumstances in which this is not advised. It is best practice to inform parents/guardians that you are reporting a concern about a child, however, they do not need to be informed that a report is being made if by doing so the child will be placed at further risk or if the family's knowledge of the report could impair Tusla's ability to carry out an assessment. Also, it is not necessary to inform the family if the person making the report reasonably believes it may place them at risk of harm from the family. Consideration should be given to who is the most appropriate person to talk to parents/guardians. ***Parents will be introduced to and required to sign LGTs' consent form at the beginning of their relationship with the service; this consent details: That LGT's child protection policy requires the reporting to the Child and Family Agency (CFA) child protection concerns. Where child protection concerns arise, team will inform parents of these concerns before reporting them to the CFA, where possible.***

**Informal consultation** – The process for seeking advice and guidance from the Tusla Dedicated Contact Point in the child/young person's area when the Designated Liaison Person or worker/volunteer is unsure whether a report should be made.

**Reasonable grounds for concern** – The circumstances in which the requirement to report to Tusla where reasonable grounds for concern exist is triggered.

**The actions to be taken by mandated persons** – The organisation may require that the mandated person informs the organisation's DLP that a mandated report has been made and provide the DLP with a copy of the report. Alternatively, the organisation may state a preference that mandated reports are made jointly between the mandated person and the DLP, except where there is disagreement and the mandated person is obliged to discharge their duty to report.

**Dedicated Contact Point** – You should include the contact details for the Tusla Dedicated Contact Point for your area in your reporting procedure. You can find details of your local Dedicated Contact Point here.

**Tusla Web Portal** – A web portal has been developed to allow professionals to securely submit Child Protection and Welfare Report Forms to Tusla. To use the portal, you will need to create an account. You can print off a copy of the report you submit via the portal for your records. The web portal can be accessed to create an account or make a report through the Tusla website, here. The Tusla Web Portal is Tusla's preferred pathway for receiving child protection or welfare concerns and retrospective abuse reports.

**Child Protection and Welfare Report Form or Retrospective Abuse Report Form** – As an alternative to the Tusla Web Portal, the DLP or mandated persons can complete the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form or the Retrospective Abuse Report Form and forward it to the Tusla Duty Social Worker through the relevant Dedicated Contact Point. Where mandated persons are making a report under the

Children First Act 2015 they can make a joint report with their DLP. Reports to Tusla should be made without delay. The form is available on Tusla's website, here.

**Out of Hours Social Work Service** – Mandated persons can access Tusla's emergency out-of-hours social work service. If you are a mandated person and wish to make a mandated report, contact the out-of-hours social work service on 0818 776 315 between 6pm and 6am every night and between 9am and 5pm on Saturdays, Sundays and bank holidays. For non-mandated persons, in an emergency, you should contact The Garda Síochána (Gurrabraher Garda Station: 021-4946207).

**What to do if you do not report to Tusla** – Where it is decided by the Designated Liaison Person and the team member that the information does not constitute sufficient grounds for concern, the information and the basis of this decision should be recorded on the family's file in the Child welfare and Protection form.

### **Procedure following a report to Tusla Children and Family Agency**

- After a report is made the team member and Designated Liaison Person should agree to timescales for follow-up phone calls to Tusla CFA. If the report is not being responded to appropriately, a higher level within the CFA should be contacted to discuss concerns and for further consultation.
- The outcomes of the report should be followed up by the team member.
- LGT will continue to provide support to the family.
- LGT will attend relevant meetings that they are invited to by Tusla CFA i.e. Family Welfare Conferences, Child Protection Case Conferences etc.

### **What if you do not agree with the outcome of the report?**

- Discuss concerns with the designated liaison person.
- Make a clear record on the family's file about your concerns.
- Put concerns formally in writing to Tusla Children and Family Services, outlining why you do not agree with the decided course of action.

### **Impediments to reporting**

- There may be a tendency by workers/volunteers to deny, minimise or explain away any signs that a child/young person is being harmed. Sympathy for families in difficult circumstances can sometimes dilute personal concerns about the safety or welfare of children/young people. Workers/volunteers may be afraid of repercussions, being thought insensitive, breaking a confidence or being thought of as disloyal. Reporting child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla is about supporting the best outcomes for children and young people.
- The worker or volunteer who raised the concern should also be reassured that if they do choose to further pursue the matter, they are covered by the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998.

### **Talking to parents/guardians about child protection or welfare concerns**

Workers/volunteers may feel uncomfortable approaching a parent about a concern. You may have to discuss a concern about the welfare or protection of a child/young person or an issue which relates to the child/young person's developmental needs. The following best practice tips may be useful:

- Make sure parents/guardians have prior awareness of your guiding principles, procedures and duties to safeguard children.
- Be straightforward and clearly explain the nature of the concern or issue, e.g. by using facts and records of observations made.
- Think about the time and place to have the conversation. Find a time when parents/guardians are not in a hurry.
- Find a place that is quiet and allows privacy.
- Consider arranging to meet parents/guardians.
- Consider with the DLP who is best placed to have the conversation with the parents/guardians.
- Use a calm and gentle tone, consider the language used.
- Start with positive comments and observations about the child/young person. Ensure that the parents/guardians know that you care about the welfare of their child and recognise their strengths.
- Refer to how the situation may be affecting the child/young person. x Start with positive comments and observations about the parents/guardians. Most parents/guardians are trying to do their best for their children and will appreciate your acknowledgement of how challenging parenting can be at times.
- Give the parents/ guardians an opportunity to talk; ask them for an explanation and acknowledge their feelings.
- Take the approach that you are working together to address any issues in the best interests of the child/young person.

- Don't blame, don't get defensive and don't take things personally.
- Ensure that you are supportive but also address the issue.
- Refer to your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures for support.
- Offer possible solutions, where appropriate.
- Advise parents/guardians how you plan to follow up and keep them informed and involved, where appropriate. Where it is not possible to contact the parents/guardians to discuss a concern you may need to discuss the concern with the DLP or Tusla duty social worker through the Dedicated Contact Point.

### **Responding to a child/young person who discloses abuse**

Be as calm and natural as possible.

Remember that you have been approached because you are trusted and possibly liked. Do not panic.

Do not promise to keep secrets

Be aware that disclosures can be very difficult for the child/young person.

Remember, the child or young person may initially be testing your reactions and may only fully open up over a period of time.

Listen to what the child/young person has to say. Give them the time and opportunity to tell as much as they are able and wish to.

Do not pressurise the child/young person. Allow him or her to disclose at their own pace and in their own language.

Conceal any signs of disgust, anger or disbelief.

Accept what the child or young person has to say – false disclosures are very rare.

It is important to differentiate between the person who carried out the abuse and the act of abuse itself. The child/young person quite possibly may love or strongly like the alleged abuser while also disliking what was done to them. It is important therefore to avoid expressing any judgement of, or anger towards the alleged perpetrator while talking with the child/young person

It may be necessary to reassure the child/young person that your feelings towards him or her have not been affected in a negative way as a result of what they have disclosed.

Reassure the child/young person that they have taken the right action in talking to you. Questions should be supportive and for the purpose of clarification only. Do not ask leading questions.

Explain to the child/young person that this information will only be shared with people who can help.

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

At the earliest possible opportunity:

Record in writing, in a factual manner, what the child/young person has said, including, as far as possible, the exact words used by the child/young person.

Inform the DLP immediately and agree measures to protect the child/young person, e.g. report the matter directly to Tusla.

Maintain appropriate confidentiality.

### **On-going support**

Following a disclosure by a child/young person, it is important that the worker/volunteer continues in a supportive relationship with the child/young person. Disclosure is a huge step for a child/young person. Workers/volunteers should continue to offer support, particularly by:

Maintaining a positive relationship with the child/young person;

Keeping lines of communication open by listening carefully to the child/young person;

Continuing to include the child/young person in the usual activities.

Any further disclosure should be treated as a first disclosure and responded to as indicated above. Where necessary, immediate action should be taken to ensure the child/young person's safety.

### **Responding to adults who disclose childhood abuse**

There are an increasing number of adults disclosing abuse that took place during their childhood. Often such disclosures come to light when people attend counselling. They also sometimes arise in adult services and services which work with parents/guardians and families. Where such a disclosure is made it is essential to establish whether there may be current risk to any child or young person who may be in contact with the person subject to an abuse allegation (PSAA) revealed in the disclosure. This is important even where the children/young people about whom there may be a concern are still to be identified. If any risk is deemed to exist to a child/young person who may be in contact with a PSAA, follow your organisation's child protection and welfare reporting procedure; reports should be made to Tusla without delay (see Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children for further information). For mandated persons, the obligation to make a mandated report applies where you have knowledge or belief that a child has been, is being or may be harmed.

### **Procedure for Allegations of Abuse against Team, Volunteer or Student**

In the event of an allegation being made against an employee, the following steps will be taken:

- Management must be alerted to the allegation by the reporter, whether mandated person or DLP;
- The first priority is for the safety of the child/young person; management must make sure no child or young person is exposed to unnecessary risk;
- Parents/guardians should be informed of any action planned while having regard to the rights to confidentiality of others, such as the person against whom the allegation has been made. Tusla will follow relevant policy when assessing allegations of abuse made against workers or volunteers.

- The Manager will inform the LGT Chairperson. The Manager will inform the employee of the fact that an allegation has been made and of the nature of the allegation, and will be given an opportunity to respond.
- These measures will be proportionate and will not unreasonably penalise the employee, unless necessary to protect children.
- The Chairperson will advise the employee and agreed procedures will be followed.
- Close liaison will be maintained with all parties to ensure that all possible assistance is given to their investigations.
- Disciplinary procedures as outlined in Employee/Volunteer Handbook will be invoked if an allegation is upheld.

## **Confidentiality**

It is essential that there is a clear understanding of professional and legal responsibilities with regard to confidentiality and the exchange of information.

- Where child protection and welfare concerns arise, information must be shared on a 'need to know' basis in the best interest of the child/young person with the relevant statutory authorities and with parents/guardians.
- No undertakings regarding secrecy can be given. Those working with children/young people and families and in adult services should make this clear to parents/guardians and to the child/young person.
- The proportionate provision of information to the statutory agencies necessary for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality or data protection.
- Parents/guardians and children/young people have a right to know if personal information is being shared, unless doing so could put the child/young person at further risk or may put the reporter at risk.

## **Information sharing and record-keeping**

LGT Programme strives to ensure that good quality information is gathered and shared with Tusla and enables team to be clear on their responsibility. Information about concerns for the welfare or protection of a child/young person is gathered early and shared as soon as possible with the appropriate person within the organisation (DLP). This facilitates early warning signs being picked up and interventions being put in place at the earliest opportunity.

- Records should be factual and include details of contacts, consultations and any actions taken.
- All agencies dealing with children must cooperate in the sharing of records with Tusla where a child protection or welfare issue arises. An example of this could be information needed for a Child Protection Conference or Strategy Meeting or information important for the assessment of risk to a child

- Ensure that records on child protection concerns, allegations and disclosures are kept securely and safely within the organisation on the IPS drive or in the secure, locked filing cabinet in the office.
- Records should only be used for the purpose for which they are intended.
- Records should only be shared on a need to know basis in the best interests of the child/young person.
- Only interdisciplinary team members and students on placements have access to case records/notes.
- Records are kept for the period of time as stated under the LGT programme's record retention policy.
- Child protection records should be updated as required and reviewed regularly by the Designated Liaison Person.
- You must be aware of and abide by any regulations specific to your sector or area of work with regard to record-keeping.

#### **4) Working safely with children and young people**

##### **Safe recruitment and selection for workers and volunteers**

LGT takes all reasonable steps to ensure that only suitable people are recruited to work with children and families by adopting and consistently applying a safe and clearly defined method of recruiting team and volunteers.

Best practice in the recruitment and management of workers and volunteers includes providing information relevant to the post, seeking information from the applicant, access to Garda vetting, taking up of references, good HR practices in interviewing, induction, training, probation and on-going supervision and management.

LGT's procedures include the following;

- Recruitment and selection;
- Application of Garda Vetting;
- Induction including induction on your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures;
- Supervision and support for workers and volunteers.

The implementation of thorough recruitment and selection procedures will help to keep children and young people safe within LGT. Good practice in management and supervision of workers and volunteers after appointment is a further essential safeguard to help keep children/young people safe.

LGT's recruitment and selection procedure includes:

- Job/role descriptions for each paid or unpaid position. Job/role descriptions should describe the range of duties required by each role, accompanied by a person specification that describes the type of attributes you require the post holder to have (e.g. their experience, qualifications and other requirements).

- Advertisements of paid/volunteer roles. Roles working with children should be circulated as widely as possible through the most appropriate method for your organisation.
- The use of an application form and a declaration form. An application form ensures all prospective workers/volunteers provide the information the organisation deems appropriate to the role they are applying for. It also makes comparing individual candidates easier and better equips the organisation to select the best candidate for the post. The application form should contain a declaration section which allows individuals to self-declare any relevant information in relation to their suitability to work with children or young people.
- Consent to Garda Vetting. All prospective candidates should consent to Garda Vetting which should be processed only for successful candidates. Garda Vetting is helpful in gathering information about the preferred applicant's history to help determine suitability. Under the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016, it is a crime to employ someone in certain work or activities without undertaking Garda Vetting.
- The use of interviews. Ensuring workers or volunteers are interviewed by at least two representatives of the organisation helps to get a sense of the candidates' attitudes, values, knowledge and skills. This is also an opportunity to explore with applicants any gaps in their employment history or voluntary work identified on the application form.
- Gathering of references. A minimum of two written references should be sought for preferred applicants. References should include their last employer and all references should be followed up either by phone or in person. Referees should be asked specific questions regarding the suitability of the preferred applicant and their history of working with children and young people. x Seeking evidence to verify qualifications and experience.
- Requesting identification. Checking that the identity of the preferred candidate is confirmed against some official documentation (such as driver's license or passports) is an essential part of ensuring a safe recruitment and selection procedure.
- Sign-off. For organisations governed by a board of management or management committee all appointments must be approved by the Board or committee, not by any individual member/s of the organisation.

Following LGT's selection of the preferred candidate and signing of appropriate contracts, there are further steps taken to ensure that the most appropriately skilled candidate for the post has been selected. These include:

- Induction for new workers/volunteers on LGT's policies and procedures, in particular LGT's guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures.
- A probationary/trial period (usually six months). Every new appointee is reviewed within an agreed period of time. The length of time will vary depending on the nature of the post. A review will be held at the end of the probationary/trial period.

## **Vetting by the National Vetting Bureau**

Under the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016 all people working with children and vulnerable adults are required to undergo vetting. LGT vets applicants who will be working directly with children with the National Vetting Bureau prior to appointment and commencement of work.

LGT is responsible for deciding on the suitability of individuals, based on the information received under a vetting application, giving due regard to the organisation's needs, client group and ethos. LGT sets out clear criteria which would rule out an applicant.

Information received about applicants should be treated as highly sensitive and confidential and are stored securely and accessible only to specified individuals within LGT. Where information arising from a vetting application leads LGT to exclude a particular applicant, they will be informed of the reason for the decision and afforded an opportunity to appeal. Further information on vetting can be accessed from the National Vetting Bureau's website, <https://vetting.garda.ie/>.

In line with data protection legislation, information from the National Vetting Bureau is only retained by LGT when necessary and is stored securely with secured access. Where information is destroyed, LGT includes a note on any personnel file stating that a vetting check was carried out and that the person's conditional offer of appointment was confirmed/withdrawn as a result. LGT includes criteria for re-vetting in its organisation's vetting policy.

## **Child safeguarding training for team**

LGT management is responsible for ensuring that all workers and volunteers are trained in the recognition of the signs of abuse, understand their responsibilities to safeguard children and know the procedures to follow. All workers complete the online Tusla Children's First training module.

Child safeguarding training includes;

Induction training to introduce new workers/volunteers to the organisation's guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures;

In-house training is used to ensure workers and volunteers are familiar with the organisation's guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures;

Mandated persons will be provided with specific training in relation to their statutory responsibilities under the Children First Act 2015, through Tusla CFA training programmes locally or online;

Specific training for those with additional responsibilities, such as DLPs/Deputy DLPs or members of management are sourced through Tusla CFA training programmes locally or online;

The content of any training accessed or delivered is consistent with Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, the Children First Act 2015 and this Guide. Tusla's Best Practice Principles for Organisations in Developing

Children First Training Programmes (available at [www.tusla.ie](http://www.tusla.ie)) is used to review and develop training for LGT team. Tusla provides a universal Children First e-learning programme, called Introduction to Children First. It covers recognising and reporting child abuse, the role of mandated persons, including mandated assisting, and the responsibilities of organisations working with children to safeguard children using their services. The e-learning programme can be completed on the Tusla website ([www.tusla.ie](http://www.tusla.ie)). All LGT team are requested to complete this online training.

### **Keeping training records**

LGT workers gather and retain a record of training information including:

- Date and name of training programmes delivered;
- Names of worker/volunteers who attended and their position within the organisation;
- Details of workers/volunteers who did not receive training but need to complete it;
- Number of workers/volunteers trained;
- Training programmes completed by each worker/volunteer (e.g. induction into the organisation's guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures, child safeguarding training, DLP training, refresher training, etc.);
- The names of the trainers who delivered the programme and the organisation they were from.
- A signed receipt of all workers/volunteers who have been given a copy of LGT's declaration of guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures (can be done at induction or In-house training).

### **Safe management of activities**

Part of keeping children and young people safe and reducing the likelihood of harm is having clear guidelines in place regarding how activities are organised and run. When planning and running activities, in order to minimise opportunities for accidents or harm to children/young people engaged with LGT the following procedures are followed;

### **LGT's register of children and young people**

- Have criteria for LGT registration (registration leaflet);
- Have a registration system for each child/young person (LGT database);
- Keep a record on each child/young person, including address and family contact numbers (LGT database);
- Keep medical details, any individual needs and emergency contact telephone numbers accessible.

### **Maintaining good record-keeping**

LGT keeps up-to-date records of the following:

- Attendance;
- Accidents;

- Incidents;
- Consent forms;
- Any complaints or grievances.

### **Health and safety responsibilities**

LGT ensures that:

- Any buildings being used are safe and meet required standards;
- There is sufficient heating and ventilation;
- Food preparation areas, where they exist, are sanitary and meet food safety requirements;
- Toilets, shower areas and washing facilities are to standard and meet the accessibility requirements of all members;
- Fire precautions are in place;
- First aid facilities and equipment are adequate;
- There is access to a phone;
- Equipment is checked regularly;
- Insurance cover is adequate.

### **Accidents and incidents**

There are a number of related policy areas which impact on the overall safety and wellbeing of children and young people in organisations. For example it is essential that organisations meet their obligation in relation to the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005.

Accidents and incidents procedures will help to ensure an appropriate, open response when something occurs within LGT.

### Safety issues

LGT ensures that:

- Activities being undertaken are suitable for the abilities, ages and experience levels of the participants; children or young people should not be excluded from any activities.
- Equipment and facilities meet appropriate safety and quality standards and are appropriate to the needs of the participants.
- Activities are risk assessed and that appropriate responses to identified risks are planned and implemented.
- Where protective equipment is deemed necessary, it should be used.
- Any injuries should be recorded with a note of the action taken. LGT maintains an accident/incident book with a specific incident form for completion by workers/volunteers (see appendices 17 and 12). Due regard must be given to confidentiality.

- Parents/guardians should be notified by the appropriate person of injuries/illnesses which occur while children/young people are participating in an activity.
- Insurance cover is adequate to the organisation's needs.

### **Recording accidents and incidents**

LGT has appropriate recording mechanisms in place to detail any accidents or incidents which may occur. In differentiating between the two it is useful to note that an incident does not usually involve any casualty or the loss of life, while an accident will involve some form of injury.

Incidents are recorded separately from accidents as they may need to be referred to when considering suspected child abuse or neglect.

### **Working with other organisations/using external facilities**

When using facilities or services provided by another organisation, and when collaborating with other organisations, LGT team will follow the LGT guidelines for reporting procedures for child protection or welfare concerns.

### **Use of Photography, Video and/or Social/Digital Media**

Information and communication technology (ICT) forms an important platform for communication which is commonly used by adults and children/young people alike. It is important when working with children and young people to ensure that the use of digital media and ICT is consensual, ethical and that it is not misused to cause harm to an individual. LGT has established a code of conduct for the use of digital media and ICT that sets out guidelines in respect of:

- Consent for filming and photography and use of same (See LGT consent form for photos and/ video recording);
- Use of the organisation's information, including information about children, on social media sites;
- Expectations around the conduct of team when using social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, etc.;
- Use of mobile phones, i.e. calling, photographing, filming, texting while in the service.

### **Managing Workers and Volunteers**

LGT's policies, procedures and issues related to the management of workers and volunteers are in place to help create a safe, child-centred environment for children and young people. These include:

- A code of behaviour for workers and volunteers which provides guidance on acceptable and unacceptable practice and how workers/volunteers are to respond if they have concerns about the conduct of a colleague;
- Safe management practices which include supervision and support of workers/volunteers as well as reviews of work or professional development planning to ensure that practice remains child-centred and aligned with the aims of the organisation.

### **Code of Behaviour for workers and students**

Having a code of behaviour in place helps workers and students to focus on supporting children and young people's rights and child-centred practice in their everyday work.

It also assists an organisation in trying to focus on the child/young person and the child/young person's needs. All organisations should establish a code of behaviour. The code should be drawn up by representatives of management, workers and volunteers with input from children and young people. It should set out the boundaries which workers/volunteers are expected to adhere to when working with children or young people. It should take account of best practice principles as well as the specific activities and programmes delivered by the organisation and should be based on a 'common sense approach'.

The code of behaviour establishes acceptable boundaries of behaviour for workers/volunteers and clarifies how to communicate/work with children and young people in a way which respects their right to be listened to, treated with respect and treated fairly.

The code of behaviour should also clarify the boundaries for acceptable physical contact between workers/volunteers and children/young people based on the needs of the children/young people and the nature of the service provided.

These elements within a code of behaviour limit the risk of child abuse, misinterpretation or unintentional harm occurring.

Where appropriate get the children/young people involved in discussing and drawing up the code of behaviour for workers and volunteers.

- Display the code of behaviour in your organisation or place of activity.
- Ensure the code is visible for workers, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, young people and visitors to see.
- Make a copy available to parents, guardians, children, young people and visitors.
- Ensure workers/volunteers are clear that the organisation's expectations of their behaviour with children and young people make them less vulnerable to erroneous allegations of abuse.
- Be clear on what happens if there is a breach of the code of behaviour.

## **Supervision and Support of Workers and Volunteers**

Management and supervision of workers and volunteers after appointment is equally important to keep children safe. Supervision of workers/volunteers helps maintain best practice and safeguards children availing of your service.

All workers/volunteers have regular reviews of their practice to ensure that they improve over time. An annual appraisal of work is also conducted to allow for the recognition of good work and to help to develop skills further; this is a formal, recorded process.

### Functions of Supervision

Supervision provides a regular, structured opportunity to discuss work, review practice and progress, and plan for future development. The main functions of supervision are:

- Management to hold the worker accountable for practice to ensure safe, quality, care for children and families
- Support for the individual team member in what is a demanding and potentially stressful working environment. This may involve debriefing which addresses the emotional impact of such work.
- Learning and development of each individual to identify their knowledge base, attitude, learning style and skills; to identify learning needs and the strengths and weaknesses of the worker; and to plan and set targets for on-going development including outing of and review of learning objectives.
- Mediation to ensure healthy engagement with, and communication between, the individual and the organisation.

## **Models of Supervision**

LGT utilises a formal individual supervision model that is in line with the Michigan Reflective Practise/Consultation IMH Alliance model of supervision (see document which is stored in LGT office for further details). All workers and students are offered reflective practise supervision.

Formal reflective practise supervision involves meeting with an individual practitioner on a regular basis (approximately every two weeks), notes are made of the meeting and kept confidentially in a secured cabinet. Formal supervision is agreed, contracted (there is an agreement on the purpose, content and frequency), regularly scheduled and recorded. In addition professional supervision meetings occur approximately every 6 weeks which incorporates work planning, projected activities, administration duties, annual leave and TOIL.

Supervision reviews are offered on a 6-12 monthly basis.

Good supervision and review arrangements allow an opportunity to assess a worker's competence in performing their tasks. They also give an opportunity to be mindful of the types of relationships between workers/volunteers, and between

workers/volunteers and children/young people. It is good practice for managers to be aware of the attitudes of workers/volunteers and the interactions that take place between them and with children/young people.

### **Dealing with a concern about another worker/volunteer**

It is important that if a worker or volunteer has a concern about the behaviour of another worker/volunteer that they report these concerns to the Designated Liaison Person. Where the concern relates to the DLP, reports should be made to another senior manager within the organisation.

LGT creates an open and supportive environment where workers feel comfortable and safe to pass on these types of concerns. Concerns about colleagues' behaviour may relate to:

- Breaches of the organisation's code of behaviour;
- Conduct which may breach professional standards or codes of ethics;
- Suspected or witnessed abuse.

The concern about another worker/volunteer may also come to LGT's attention through the complaints procedure. Please see procedure for responding to allegations of abuse against workers/volunteers in previous section.

Where a worker/volunteer has a concern about a colleague they should:

- Bring it to the attention of the DLP or a senior manager. If the concern relates to poor practice it should be discussed with the relevant manager. If the concern involves suspected or witnessed abusive behaviour, this should be reported without delay to the DLP (following the organisation's reporting procedure).
- Keep a record of the concern. The DLP or senior manager will consider if the concern constitutes a child protection concern, if so he/she must follow the organisation's reporting procedures for child protection or welfare concerns. It will also be necessary to follow the organisation's procedure for responding to allegations of abuse against workers and volunteers.

### **Disciplinary procedures**

Disciplinary procedures are essential in the overall response to a failure by a worker/volunteer to meet the expected standard of work or behaviour in their working practice. Disciplinary procedures are written, step-by-step procedures which an organisation commits itself to follow in every case where a worker/volunteer may have to be warned, reprimanded, or dismissed as a result of a complaint or failure on the worker's part to meet the expected standards.

Disciplinary procedures may be instituted when:

- There is a complaint made about a worker or volunteer;
- There is an alleged breach of the code of behaviour;

- There is an allegation of abuse made against a worker or volunteer.

The disciplinary procedures will need to work alongside and be consistent with your complaints procedures, code of behaviour and procedure for managing allegations of abuse against workers/volunteers.

When dealing with employees, procedures must comply with employment law. When dealing with volunteers, in the absence of employment law, procedures must adhere to the principles of natural justice, good practice and should not unfairly discriminate against the volunteer. Organisations may wish to seek legal advice when developing/reviewing their procedures to ensure that they are robust and reasonable.

### Rights of workers

Any person subject to disciplinary procedures is entitled under fair procedure to:

- Have clear information in respect of the complaint;
- Copies of any documentation used in decision making;
- An opportunity to provide their account and for this to be considered before any conclusions are drawn;
- Have conclusions and decisions set out in writing;
- A right of appeal.

### **Appeals against disciplinary action**

If the worker/volunteer feels that the disciplinary action taken against them is wrong or unjust they have the right to appeal against the decision. An appeals procedure should be developed as part of the disciplinary procedure.