



## Child Protection

### Introduction

SLÍ accepts that it has a duty of care regarding the young people and children with whom we work. SLÍ is dedicated to creating a safe and healthy environment for them and strives to always ensure their safety and welfare. SLÍ is dedicated to the principle that the welfare of the child is paramount, and must always come first, and that child safeguarding and child protection is everyone's responsibility. We are also committed to promoting the rights of the child to be protected, treated with respect, be listened to, and have their views taken into consideration, including the participation of children/young people, in matters that affect them. In accordance with that belief, SLÍ has adopted the following guidelines for staff and volunteers based on the *Children First Act 2015*, the *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017)* and *Túsla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy Procedure and Practice*. We require that all staff, Management Committee, and volunteers read and agree to the following:

- Our duty of care acknowledges that the welfare and well-being of young people and children is our first duty when working with young people.
- Safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers to work with children/young people. All SLÍ staff and volunteers must undergo Garda vetting procedures as carried out by the Garda Central Vetting Unit. References of all applicants will be duly checked with regard to child protection issues.
- SLÍ will appoint one member of staff to serve as the 'Designated Liaison Person (DLP)' to deal with any issues or complaints arising which concern the safety or welfare of any child/young person who attends/participates in SLÍ events/activities. The current designee is Jennifer Harris.
- If a member of staff or a volunteer suspects abuse, s/he will report it immediately to the Children First designee. If the staff member/volunteer feels that the child is in imminent danger, s/he will report it immediately to Garda.
- The Children First designee will follow reporting procedures as described in *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*.
- Teachers and group leaders must be present at all times during workshops given by SLÍ staff and volunteers. SLÍ staff and volunteers are at no time to be alone with the young people we serve.
- Keeping parents/guardians informed including through the use of consent forms.
- Young people and children are not allowed in staff or volunteer vehicles.
- There should be no physical contact between staff/volunteers and the children with whom we work.
- Dealing with discipline/behavioural issues should be deferred to the teacher/group leader.
- Procedure for the management of allegation of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child availing of our service
- Health and Safety Policy; an anti-bullying policy; a complaints procedure.

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, and clients of SLÍ.

### Procedure

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) will follow reporting procedures as described in *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*.

1. Regardless of how a concern comes to a worker/volunteer's attention, if a member of staff or a volunteer suspects harm/abuse, s/he will report it immediately to the DLP or manager responsible for child safeguarding in the organisation. If the staff member/volunteer feels that the child is in imminent danger, s/he will report it immediately to Túsla or the Garda.
2. Notes of the concern/s raised are to be taken, including time, dates, person/s present, details.



3. The DLP, in consultation with the person who raised the concern, will decide if reasonable grounds for concern exist. This should be recorded.
4. If reasonable grounds for concern exist, the Designated Liaison Person will report to Túsla through either the Túsla Web Portal or relevant Dedicated Contact Point. If the DLP decides not to make a report, the worker/volunteer with the reasonable concern is still entitled to make a report to Túsla should they wish to do so. In reporting to Túsla, the individual worker has protections under the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998, should they report independently.
5. Reporting of concerns should be recorded internally.

If the DLP decided **not** to report a concern to Túsla, the following steps should be taken:


1. The reasons for not reporting are to be recorded.
2. If any actions are taken as a result of the concern, these should be recorded.
3. The worker or volunteer who raised the concern should be given a clear written explanation of the reasons why the concern is not being reported to Túsla.
4. The worker or volunteer should be advised that if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free, and protected by law, to make a report to Túsla or The Garda Síochána.

### When dealing with a disclosure all staff/volunteers will:

- » Stay calm and listen to the child/young person, allowing them enough time to say what they need to say and demonstrate that you are taking what they say seriously.
- » Do not ask the child questions but try to encourage them to speak. If they mention incidences do not interrupt. Do not force the child to repeat what they have said.
- » Ensure records are factual.
- » You will have to explain to the child what you have to do. Remember to take into account the age of the child when speaking with them and ensure that they understand you.
- » You can never promise the child that you will keep the story a secret. You have a responsibility to safeguard the welfare of the child and disclose information to those people who need to know.
- » You will need to write up a record of what the child has told you. This needs to be done as quickly as possible and definitely within 24 hours. If you can, use the exact words said by the child.
- » You will need to report your concerns to the Designated Liaison Person. Do not delay in reporting concerns.
- » Do not take things into your own hands and question the person suspected of abuse.
- » Remember that you will need to record the date, time and place and the names of the people present during the discussion.

For queries, please contact Jennifer Harris, Designated Liaison Person (DLP) under the Children First Act 2015.

The Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed in June 2025, or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

Signed:  (John Hawkes, SLI Board Chair)

This policy was approved by SLI's Management Committee, June 2023.