**Child Safeguarding Statement** 

**Nature of service**

We are an independent statutory organisation established under the Ombudsman for Children Act, 2002, as amended. Our remit extends to all children and young people under the age of 18 in Ireland. We engage directly with children and young people in a variety of ways in carrying out our two core functions. These functions are:

* Investigating complaints made by or on behalf of children regarding the actions or inactions of a range of public bodies.
* Promoting the rights and welfare of children and young people.

The activities we undertake that may bring child protection and welfare concerns to our attention are:

* Meetings with individual children and young people;
* Group events, such as school visits and consultations, with children and young people;
* Work experience placements with young people
* Processing of information concerning children received through our Complaints and Investigations function
* Commissioning external third party contractors to organise or host events and undertake research and consultations with children and young people

**Our safeguarding principles**

* We provide a safe environment for the children that engage with us. Our recruitment practices for staff and individuals contracted for services adhere to best practice. Staff and individuals contracted for services are appropriately trained in child protection and are vetted by the National Vetting Bureau.
* Our staff members and individuals contracted for services are committed to safeguarding children and aware of their duty to report concerns of harm to children as set out in the Children First Act 2015 and *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* 2017[[1]](#footnote-1) and comply with our Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

**Risk assessment**

We have carried out an assessment of risk of any potential for harm to a child while engaging with us. We have identified five potential areas of risk. The procedures for managing these risks are contained in our Child Protection Policy and Procedures, (updated October 2020).

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| **Risk identified** | **OCO Child Protection Procedure**  |
| **Risk 1: Children are harmed by adults or peers while attending OCO events/meetings or by staff representing the OCO at external events** | Section 1: Responsibility of Staff; Section 2: Reporting and decision-making procedures; Section 3: Reporting procedure in relation to allegations of abuse against a member of staff; Section 4: Reporting procedure in relation to allegations of abuse against a third party contractor employed by an external institution; Section 5: Confidentiality and the exchange of information; Section 6: Reasonable grounds for concern; Section 8: Role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Relevant Person; Section 7: Legal protections for those reporting child protection concerns; Section 8 Role of the DLP and Relevant person; Section 9: Receiving allegations of harm from children and young people; Section 10: Safeguarding practices when meeting children and young people; Section 11; Safe recruitment and selection procedures; Section 12: Child protection and welfare training and vetting procedures |
| **Risk 2: Children are harmed by third parties (adults or peers) while participating in an OCO-commissioned project or research** | Section 1: Responsibility of Staff; Section 2: Reporting and decision-making procedures; Section 3: Reporting procedure in relation to allegations of abuse against a member of staff; Section 4: Reporting procedure in relation to allegations of abuse against a third party contractor employed by an external institution; Section 5: Confidentiality and the exchange of information; Section 6: Reasonable grounds for concern; Section 8: Role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Relevant Person; Section 7: Legal protections for those reporting child protection concerns; Section 8 Role of the DLP and Relevant person; Section 9: Receiving allegations of harm from children and young people; Section 10: Safeguarding practices when meeting children and young people; Section 11; Safe recruitment and selection procedures; Section 12: Child protection and welfare training and vetting procedures |
| **Risk 3: Children are harmed (by adults or peers) during meetings/events held by external organisations in OCO offices** | Section 1: Responsibility of Staff; Section 2: Reporting and decision-making procedures; Section 4: Reporting procedure in relation to allegations of abuse against a third party contractor employed by an external institution; Section 5: Confidentiality and the exchange of information; Section 6: Reasonable grounds for concern; Section 8: Role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Relevant Person; Section 7: Legal protections for those reporting child protection concerns; Section 8 Role of the DLP and Relevant person; Section 9: Receiving allegations of harm from children and young people; Section 10: Safeguarding practices when meeting children and young people; Section 11; Safe recruitment and selection procedures; Section 12: Child protection and welfare training and vetting procedures |
| **Risk 4: OCO staff do not recognize a report of potential abuse, ill treatment or neglect** | Section 6: Reasonable grounds for concern; Section 11: Safe recruitment and selection; Section 12: Child Protection training and vetting procedures  |
| **Risk 5: OCO staff do not follow the necessary policy and procedures required in the case of alleged abuse** | Section 1: Responsibility of staff; Section 2: Reporting and decision-making procedures; Section 3: Reporting procedure in relation to allegations of abuse against a member of staff; Section 12: Child protection and welfare training and vetting procedures |

**Procedures**

Further information on our Child Protection Policy and Child Protection Procedures 2020 is available on request or on our website at [www.oco.ie](http://www.oco.ie).

**Implementation**

We are committed to implementing this child safeguarding statement in line with reflective and best practice. We will review our safeguarding statement in January 2022 or following any changes to relevant policy/procedure.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **If you have any queries please contact our DLPs at 01-8656800 or** [**www.oco.ie**](http://www.oco.ie)

Relevant Person, Ombudsman for Children’s Office

1. <https://www.dcya.gov.ie/documents/publications/20171002ChildrenFirst2017.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)