

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 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 four potential areas of risk. The procedures for managing these risks are contained in our Child Protection Policy and Procedures, (updated January 2020).

| Risk identified | Procedure in place to manage risk identified |
|---|--|
| Children/adults report alleged harm to children by third parties/OCO staff <i>that occurs</i> while attending OCO events/meetings, including potential exposure to harm through access to the OCO's wifi service | OCO Child Protection Policy 2020 and OCO Child Protection Procedures 2020 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 7: Role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Relevant Person; Section 8: Safeguarding practices when meeting children and young people; Section 9: Safe recruitment and selection procedures |
| Children/adults report alleged harm to children by third parties when attending OCO events/meetings or through letters, telephone, email etc. | OCO Child Protection Policy 2020 and OCO Child Protection Procedures 2020 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 7: Role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Relevant Person; Section 8: Safeguarding practices when meeting children and young people |
| Children/adults report alleged harm to children to, or by, commissioned third parties while participating in OCO research/projects | OCO Child Protection Policy 2020 and OCO Child Protection Procedures 2020 Section 4: Reporting procedure in relation to allegations of abuse against a third party contractor employed by an external institution |
| Children/adults report alleged harm to children by third parties or OCO staff witness harm by a third party while children attend events/meetings held by external organisations in OCO offices | OCO Child Protection Policy 2020 and OCO Child Protection Procedures 2020 Section 1: Responsibility of Staff; Section 2: Reporting and decision-making procedures; Section 7: Role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Relevant Person |

Procedures

- Further information on our Child Protection Policy and Child Protection Procedures 2017 is available on request or on our website at 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: _____
Relevant Person, Ombudsman for Children's Office

Date: _____

If you have any queries please contact our DLPs at 01-8656800 or www.oco.ie

¹ <https://www.dcya.gov.ie/documents/publications/20171002ChildrenFirst2017.pdf>