

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. Contracted organisations must provide a copy of their Child Safeguarding Statement.

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 February 2022).

| Risk identified | Procedure in place to manage risk identified |
|---|---|
| Children are harmed by adults or peers while attending OCO events/meetings or by staff representing the OCO at external events | OCO Child Protection Policy 2022 and OCO Child Protection Procedures 2022 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 8: Role of the Designated Liaison Person (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 |
| Children are harmed by third parties (adults or peers) while participating in an OCO-commissioned project or research | OCO Child Protection Policy 2022 and OCO Child Protection Procedures 2022 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 8: Role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Relevant Person; |
| Children are harmed during meetings/events held by external organisations in OCO offices | OCO Child Protection Policy 2022 and OCO Child Protection Procedures 2022 Section 4: Reporting procedure in relation to allegations of abuse against a third party contractor employed by an external institution |
| OCO staff do not recognize a report of potential abuse for what it is | OCO Child Protection Policy 2022 and OCO Child Protection Procedures 2022 Section 1: Responsibility of Staff; Section 2: Reporting and decision-making procedures; Section 8: Role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Relevant Person |
| OCO staff do not follow the necessary policy and procedures required in the case of alleged abuse | OCO Child Protection Policy 2022 and OCO Child Protection Procedures 2022 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 8: Role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Relevant Person |

Procedures

- Further information on our Child Protection Policy and Child Protection Procedures 2022 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 2024 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.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/20171002ChildrenFirst2017.pdf>