

Child Protection Policy 2021

The After School Club recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of after school life and must be reflected in all of the after school's policies, practices and activities. Accordingly, in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills' Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, the Board of Management of Belmayne After School Club has agreed the following child protection policy:

1. The After School has adopted and will implement fully and without modification the Department's Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools as part of this overall child protection policy.
2. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Karolina Wierzbinska
3. The Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) is Maeve McNeill.
4. In its policies, practices and activities, Belmayne After School will adhere to the following principles of best practice in child protection and welfare:

The after school will

- Recognise that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations.
- Fully co-operate with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters.
- Adopt safe practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and protect workers from the necessity to take unnecessary risks that may leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or neglect.
- Develop a practice of openness with parent.

Respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.

Protection Policy September 2020

- This policy was circulated to the staff where further amendments were made.
- This policy serves to give an outline only of the Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011. This Policy outlines policy and procedures that staff in Belmayne After School follow in light of concerns and reporting. This policy also outlines Parental Responsibility regarding concerns relating to same. The full document can be read on www.hse.ie.

Background Research and Key Principles:

Background:

Some parents, for a range of reasons, are not able to provide proper care for their children. These families need more intensive assessment, support and direct interventions to ensure the safety and well-being of their children. People working with children and the wider public should know that early action by them is very often the best way to protect children and to enable a family to stay together. Professionals also have an important part to play and their actions need to reflect the principles and objectives of the Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2011.

Professionals and others working with children need to pay particular attention to the needs of children who may be at risk of abuse. Research tells us that children whose parents misuse drugs or alcohol are more at risk of neglect or maltreatment. Parents who have a learning disability or mental illness may need particular support in carrying out their parenting role.

Research indicates that most abuse occurs in the family home. Children may be abused by persons other than those living in the immediate family. This may happen where a child is in contact with a relative, a family friend or acquaintance, or a person whose professional or voluntary activity brings them into contact with a child. In all instances, the best interests and safety of the child must be prioritised. Good practice at the front line is based on clear policies and principles (Children First: National Guidance 2011).

Key principles of best practice in child protection and welfare

The Key Principles of the National Guidance that should inform best practice in child protection and welfare are:

- (i) The welfare of children is of paramount importance.
- (ii) Early intervention and support should be available to promote the welfare of children and families, particularly where they are vulnerable or at risk of not receiving adequate care or protection. Family support should form the basis of early intervention and preventative interventions.
- (iii) A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents/carers and families. Where there is conflict, the child's welfare must come first.
- (iv) Children have a right to be heard, listened to and taken seriously. Taking account of their age and understanding, they should be consulted and involved in all matters and decisions that may affect their lives. Where there are concerns about a child's welfare, there should be opportunities provided for their views to be heard independently of their parents/carers.
- (v) Parents/carers have a right to respect and should be consulted and involved in matters that concern their family.
- (vi) Factors such as the child's family circumstances, gender, age, stage of development, religion, culture and race should be considered when taking protective action. Intervention should not deal with the child in isolation; the child's circumstances must be understood within a family context.
- (vii) The criminal dimension of any action must not be ignored.
- (viii) Children should only be separated from parents/carers when alternative means of protecting them have been exhausted. Re-union should be considered in the context of planning for the child's future.
- (ix) The prevention, detection and treatment of child abuse or neglect require a coordinated multidisciplinary approach, effective management, clarity of responsibility and training of personnel in organisations working with children.
- (x) Professionals and agencies working with adults who for a range of reasons may have serious difficulties meeting their children's basic needs for safety and security should always consider the impact of their adult client/patient's behaviour on a child and act in the child's best interests.

Belmayne After School Club in providing education and services for children should

- Acknowledge the rights of children to be protected, treated with respect, listened to and have their own views taken into consideration.
- Recognise that the welfare of children must always come first, regardless of all other considerations.
- Develop a child protection policy that raises awareness about the possibility of child abuse occurring and outlines the steps to be taken if it is suspected.
- Adopt the safest possible practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and protect workers from the necessity to take risks and leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or neglect.
- Adopt and consistently apply clearly defined methods of recruiting staff and volunteers.
- Develop procedures for responding to accidents and complaints.
- Remember that early intervention with children who are vulnerable or at risk may prevent serious harm from happening to them at a later stage.
- Remember that a child's age, gender and background affect the way they experience and understand what is happening to them
- Provide child protection training for workers. This should clarify the responsibilities of both organisations and individuals, and clearly show the procedures to be followed if child abuse is suspected.
- Develop a policy of openness with parents that involves consulting them about everything that concerns their children, and encouraging them to get involved with the organisation wherever possible.
- Co-operate with any other child care and protection agencies and professionals by sharing information when necessary and working together towards the best possible outcome for the children concerned.
- Make links with other relevant organisations in order to promote child protection and welfare policies and practices.
- Remember that valuing children means valuing workers as well; insisting on safe practices, eliminating the necessity for staff to take risks and providing them with support will make for a healthier and safer organisation.

Protecting and promoting children's rights in your organisation means

- Creating an environment, in which children are valued, encouraged and affirmed, have Their rights respected and are treated as individuals.
- Taking steps to ensure that children know their rights and responsibilities.
- Accepting that the welfare of the child is the most important consideration of any organisation providing services to children.
- Eliminating as far as possible any threatening, violent or degrading behaviour.
- Adopting a child protection policy to keep children as safe as possible.

Role of Parents and Guardians

Child Protection is not simply a after school staff issue. As Parents you also have a role to play in the context of Child Protection. Please do not feel you are interfering/over analysing/being nosey.

Calls can be made without giving your name if you feel that may compromise you or your family. A duty social worker is available to take your call. Often what is visible and a concern can be much worse behind closed doors.

What should I do if I am concerned about a child?

Society has a duty of care towards children and everyone should be alert to the possibility that children with whom they are in contact may be being abused or at risk of being abused.

This national guidance is designed to encourage people to report concerns or suspicions to Tusla.

As a member of the public, if you have concerns about a child's safety or welfare, you should contact your local Tusla Children and Family Service office for advice.

Professionals and those involved in organisations working with children who have concerns about a child should discuss these with the *Children First* designated liaison

person in their organisation, or contact the HSE Children and Family Services office for advice.

If you worried about a child's safety or welfare, you should contact the HSE Child and Family Services Social Work Service.

If you think a child is in immediate danger and you cannot contact the HSE Child and Family Services, you should contact the Gardaí at any Garda Station.

Aims of Children Protection within a Staff Context

- To raise awareness of the importance of child protection (emotional, physical, sexual and neglect) among all after school staff (including volunteers and substitute staff).
- To put in place clear procedures for all after school personnel dealing with suspicions and allegations of child abuse.
- To promote the welfare of all the pupils in our care.

Volunteers/Internship staff/camp staff

After school staff has a general duty of care to ensure that arrangements are in place to protect children and young people from harm. In this regard, volunteers (parents, lecturers) cannot have unsupervised access to after school children.

Any volunteer would need to bring to the attention of an after school staff member if a child needs correction.

Before activities starts a volunteer needs to be informed about the After School Child Protection Policy by Manager.

Any substitute staff having access to children attending After School Club need to be Garda Vetted.

Responsibilities of After School Management

It is the responsibility of the Board of Management of each school/childcare service:

- To have clear procedures, which after school staff must follow where they suspect, or are alerted to, possible child abuse or neglect, including where a child discloses abuse or neglect.

- To designate a senior member of staff to have specific responsibility for child protection cooperation. Our Designated Liaison Person is The Manager Karolina

Wierzbinska the Deputy DLP is The Deputy Senior Staff Maeve McNeill. We also have another member of Belmayne ETNS' school staff Viv Gaynor who updates staff on new policy or guidelines as required, ensuring staff remains up skilled.

- To monitor the progress of children considered to be at risk;
- To provide or access in-service training for after school childcare worker and the Board of Management
- To ensure that they have a good working knowledge of child protection issues and procedures;
- To have clear written procedures in place concerning action to be taken where allegations are received against school employees.

Role of the Childcare worker

Childcare workers are particularly well placed to observe and monitor children for signs of abuse and neglect. They are the main care-givers to children outside the family and school context and work regularly with children in the after school service.

After school staff has a general duty of care to ensure that arrangements are in place to protect children and young people from harm. In this regard, children need to be facilitated to develop their self-esteem, confidence, independence of thought and the necessary skills to cope with possible threats to their personal safety, both within and outside the school.

Responsibilities of after school staff

- If a child discloses to a staff member that he or she is being harmed by a parent/carer or any other person, including another child, the person who receives that information should listen carefully and supportively. This applies equally where the child implies that he or she is *at risk* of being harmed by a parent/carer or any other person. It also applies equally if a parent/carer or any other person discloses that he or she has harmed, or is at risk of harming, a child.
- The child should not be interviewed formally; the childcare worker or other staff member should obtain only necessary relevant facts if and when clarification is needed.
- Confidentiality must never be promised to a person making a disclosure subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Acts and the requirement to report to

the Tusla Children and Family Services must be explained in a supportive manner.

The discussion should be recorded accurately and the record retained securely. The childcare worker or other staff member should then inform the Designated Liaison Person, Karolina Wierzbinska, who is responsible for reporting the matter to Tusla or in the event of an emergency and the unavailability of Tusla, to a Garda Síochána.

Within After School - Roles

Role of the Childcare worker

Childcare workers are particularly well placed to observe and monitor children for signs of abuse and neglect. They are the caregivers to children outside the family and school context and work regularly with children in the service setting.

Role of the HSCL

After School staff work in close contact with our Home School Community Liaison HSCL Colum Hayden. The Home School Community Liaison will visit families on the request of the School Management or/and the after school.

Childcare workers have a general duty of care to ensure that arrangements are in place to protect children and young people from harm. In this regard, children need to be facilitated to develop their self-esteem, confidence, independence of thought and the necessary skills to cope with possible threats to their personal safety, both within and outside the after school.

Child Safeguarding Responsibilities of After School Staff

After School staff are especially well placed to observe changes in children's behaviour, their lack of development or outward signs of abuse. In any situation where a staff of after school club receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused or neglected, is being abused or neglected, or is at risk of abuse or neglect, he or she shall, without delay, report the matter to the designated liaison person (DLP) Karolina Wierzbinska.

Where a childcare worker has any such concern, in addition to reporting it to the DLP, he or she must also consider whether the concern is at or above the threshold at which the childcare worker must make a **mandated report** to Tusla.

Childcare Workers - Mandated Person & Mandated Report

Registered childcare worker as mandated persons have two main statutory obligations under the Children First Act, 2015 and they are; **(a) to report any knowledge, belief or reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been harmed, is being harmed or is at risk of being harmed to Tusla, and (b) to assist Tusla in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report, if requested by Tusla in accordance with the Act.** The childcare worker shall liaise with the DLP in relation to determining if the concern in question is at or above the defined threshold of harm at which point the registered childcare worker must submit a mandated report to Tulsa.

Threshold of Harm for each category of Abuse are outlined below:

The defined threshold of "harm" in relation to a child is as follows: "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;" "ill-treatment" means, in relation to a child, to abandon or cruelly treat the child, or to cause or procure or allow the child to be abandoned or cruelly treated; "neglect" means, in relation to a child, to deprive the child of adequate food, warmth, clothing, hygiene, supervision, safety or medical care; "welfare" includes, in relation to a child, the moral, intellectual, physical, emotional and social welfare of the child." The threshold of harm for each category of abuse at which registered childcare workers as mandated persons have a statutory obligation to report concerns is outlined below.

Neglect

Neglect is defined as "to deprive the child of adequate food, warmth, clothing, hygiene, supervision, safety or medical care". The threshold of harm, at which a childcare worker as a mandated person has a statutory obligation to report to Tusla under the Children First Act, 2015 is reached when he or she knows, believes or has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child's needs have been neglected, are being neglected, or are at risk of being neglected to the point where the child's health, development or welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.

Emotional abuse (which includes Bullying) /ill-treatment

Ill-treatment is defined as: "to abandon or cruelly treat the child, or to cause or procure or allow the child to be abandoned or cruelly treated". Emotional abuse is covered in the definition of ill-treatment used in the Children First Act, 2015. The threshold of harm, at

which a childcare worker as a mandated person has a statutory obligation to report to Tulsa under the Children First Act, 2015 is reached when he or she knows, believes or has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being or is at risk of being ill-treated to the point where the child's health, development or welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is covered in the references to assault in the Children First Act, 2015. The threshold of harm, at which a childcare worker as a mandated person has a statutory obligation to report to Tulsa under the Children First Act, 2015 is reached when he or she knows, believes or has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being or is at risk of being assaulted and that as a result the child's health, development or welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.

Sexual Abuse

A childcare worker as a mandated person who knows, believes or has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being sexually abused has a statutory obligation to report this to Tulsa under the Children First Act, 2015. As all sexual abuse falls within the category of seriously affecting a child's health welfare or development, all concerns about sexual abuse must be submitted as a mandated report to Tulsa. There is one exception which deals with certain sexual activity between older teenagers which is outlined in section 4.7 of the procedures.

Important note for childcare worker: Every childcare worker should note that as a mandated person the statutory obligation under the Children First Act 2015 to make a mandated report to Tulsa rests with the individual childcare worker and this applies regardless of whether or not the DLP reports the concern in question. However, a registered childcare worker who makes a mandated report to Tulsa jointly with the DLP meets his or her statutory obligation to report to Tulsa under the Children First Act 2015.

Reporting Responsibilities within School

If any member of after school staff- receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused or neglected, is being abused or neglected, or is at risk of abuse or neglect he or she shall, without delay, report the matter to the DLP in the after school, who is responsible for ensuring that the reporting procedures are followed.

Mandated Assisting -i.e. assisting Tulsa with an investigation after a report has been made

Tusla may request a mandated person to provide any necessary and proportionate information and assistance to aid Tusla in assessing the risk to a child arising from a mandated report. The Act places a statutory obligation on all mandated persons to comply. Mandated assistance may include a request to supply further information over the phone, produce a verbal or written report or attend a meeting. Further information about mandated assistance, including Tusla's protocol for requesting such assistance, can be found on Tusla's website www.tusla.ie.

Section 17 of the Children First Act, 2015 **makes it an offence for a person to disclose information to a third party** which has been shared by Tusla during the course of an assessment arising from a mandated report, save in accordance with law, or unless Tusla has given that person written authorisation to do so. Failure to comply with this section of the Act is an offence liable to a fine or imprisonment for up to six months or both.

Joint Reporting

If the DLP and the childcare worker both agree that there are reasonable grounds for concern they shall then jointly consider whether the concern in question is at or above the defined threshold of harm at which a report must be submitted as a mandated report to Tusla. If the DLP and the childcare worker both agree that the concern is at or above the defined threshold of harm at which a mandated report must be made, the concern shall, as soon as practicable, be submitted as a mandated report to Tusla **jointly by the DLP and the registered childcare worker concerned** using the Tusla report form.

If a Mandated Person and DLP disagree on whether a concern warrants a report to Tusla

In this situation the childcare worker should ring Tulsa for advice and record the advice given. Then a report can be made to Tulsa. If the DLP disagrees with the childcare worker (whether or not they have received Tulsa advice) the DLP must provide the registered childcare worker with a written account explaining why a mandated report was not recommended.

Report based on reasonable grounds for concern i.e. not a Mandated Report

You should always inform Tusla when you have **reasonable grounds for concern** that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected. If you ignore what may be symptoms of abuse, it could result in ongoing harm to the child. It is not necessary for you to prove that abuse has occurred to report a concern to Tusla. All that is required is that you have reasonable grounds for concern. It is Tusla's role to assess concerns that are reported to it.

Reasonable grounds for a child protection or welfare concern include:

- 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 the child being abused

How to Handle a Disclosure of Abuse from a Child or a Retrospective Disclosure from a Child or Adult

An abused child is likely to be under severe emotional stress and a member of the after-school staff may be the only adult whom the child is prepared to trust. Great care shall be taken not to damage that trust.

It is important to deal with any allegation of abuse or neglect in a sensitive and competent way through listening to and facilitating the child to tell about the problem, rather than interviewing the child about details of what happened.

The following approach is suggested as best practice for dealing with these disclosures:

- React calmly
- Listen carefully and attentively
- Take the child seriously
- Reassure the child that they have taken the right action in talking to you
- Do not promise to keep anything secret
- Ask questions for clarification only. Do not ask leading questions
- Check back with the child that what you have heard is correct and understood
- Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser
- Ensure that the child understands the procedures that will follow
- Make a written record of the conversation as soon as possible, in as much detail as possible
- Treat the information confidentially, subject to the requirements of the Children First National Guidance 2017 and relevant legislation.

The after-school staff member should then inform the Designated Liaison Person, Karolina Wierzbinska of the disclosure. If reasonable grounds/threshold of harm has been established the **Mandated Childcare Worker can then submit a Mandated Report to Tulsa or then Karolina can submit a Joint Mandated Report to Tulsa.** Advice can always be sought from Tulsa in advance of making a Mandated Report.

In the event of an emergency and the unavailability of a Tulsa social worker a report

can be made to A Garda Siochana.

- A Child Protection and Welfare Report Form is in the appendices of this Child Safeguarding Statement. Generally, all reports are now made online to Tulsa and uploaded. Procedures on how to handle a disclosure and note take are on the shared server and step by step instructions are outlined further in this document.
- Karolina will forward the disclosure to Sinead (School DLP) and the child`s teacher as both parties can access Aladdin and will upload the report on the child`s file.
(See Record Keeping Procedure on Aladdin stated in the School Safeguarding Statement)
- After School staff do not have access to Aladdin software

Aladdin

Aladdin is software that is used in many Irish schools to record data about the pupils in the school. For example, the child's date of birth, parent's contact details, addresses, next of kin, siblings in the school, attendance, punctuality, the results of standardised tests and behavioural incidents etc. Aladdin helps schools to produce statistics for the Department of Education and eases the burden of lengthy and time-consuming administration tasks. Aladdin gives teachers the full educational history of a child and a snapshot of where they are at academically and socially. It is also a very useful tool for collating information of a more sensitive nature and is especially useful for enabling the school to meet its obligation to roll out the most effective Child Safeguarding strategies. Teachers are asked to now log CP disclosures of harm and one-off incidences (monitoring) on Aladdin. To ensure that confidentiality, privacy and dignity of the child and family are preserved, it is suggested that the following members of staff will have access to Aladdin with restrictions in place for some staff members.

In the interests of best practice ISM members (Joe Kavanagh and Viv Gaynor)
will not
have

Procedure regarding an allegation against a Staff Member

- The DLP, Karolina Wierzbinska must write down the concerns by the parent/child and must immediately inform the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

- In the event that either the DLP or the Chairperson are under scrutiny then it is the Deputy DLP who takes the place of the DLP
- The Board of Management Handbook, Appendix 56-Guideline for dealing with Allegations or Suspicions of Child Abuse and the Child First National Guidelines must be followed.
- A full investigation is followed.
- The DLP and staff member are both advised to seek legal advice immediately.

Procedures

The procedures for dealing with allegations /suspicions/disclosures of Child Abuse are set down in the Children First Guidelines and will be followed.

Substitute After School Workers

In the event that a staff member is absent from after school and a substitute staff member is employed to cover for the absent staff member. They will be told to inform the DLP or DDLP immediately if any child makes a disclosure and they will be briefed on the steps to take.

Behaviour

Children are to be encouraged at all times to play co-operatively and to show respect for themselves and others. Our Positive Behaviour Policy clarifies this. The after school will promote value and reward good behaviour.

Toilets

It is after school policy that only one child is permitted to enter the toilet at a time.

TOILETING during YARD TIME.

All children should be encouraged to use the toilet before they are brought outside into the yards.

Any child over Senior Infants age will be sent in pairs to the toilet by the PE Hall

YARD TIME (sport equipment/personal belongings)

- THE FRONT DOOR SHOULD BE CLOSED AT ALL TIME!!!
- All children need to bring all sport equipment needed to outdoor play while they are preparing to going outside.
- All children need to bring their jackets/jumpers when they are going outside.
- Any child over Senior Infants age will be sent in pairs to get his/her jacket and youngers children will be brought in to school building with staff member.

Wetting/Soiling Accidents

1. If a child has a wetting accident during the after school club, a staff member will assist them to change into dry clothes. Before assisting the child the staff member will inform a second staff member and the second person will remain in the room adjoining the toilet area.
2. It is after school policy to call a Parent/Guardian if a child soils themselves in after school and requires intimate care.

In the unlikely event of failing to make contact staff will follow the procedures as for (1) above. All accidents of this nature will be reported to Parents/Guardians

After School Tours/Trips

After School staff accompanying children on tours/trips (including after school sporting events) will deliver a duty of care commensurate with the trip/venue. The higher the risk factor the higher the number of workers involved. As per After School Tour Policy, hired buses/vehicles must provide safe transportation and a functioning seatbelt for every child/adult.

Where children are attending football matches/sports day etc. and parents are giving children other than their own children lifts, this is a local arrangement between parents and is nothing to do with the after school.

If school is organising football matches/sports day and children need to be brought back to the after school club parents will be asked to sign a permission slip week before such an event if they want their child traveling on the bus provided by After School Club.

If a parent did not sign the permission slip a child won't be collected by after school staff and will be left under their teacher's care.

When after school staff arrives to the event and a teachers are handing children over to after school staff, children will be asked to wear safety vests with the after school sign on the back including the after school phone number. Roll will be called before children board the bus and their seatbelt will be fastened once again.

More details about trips in Outings Policy available in After School.

Intimate Care

if any child in our school requires intimate care the procedures involved with such care will be agreed in consultation with the pupil, their Parents/Guardians and any other personnel involved in the care of the pupil. This is in keeping with best practice, keeps the best interests of the child to the fore and maintains the child's personal dignity. Such procedures, when agreed will be communicated to all parties involved and recorded.

Points to remember for Staff:

- The severity of a sign does not necessarily equate with the severity of the abuse. Severe and potentially fatal injuries are not always visible. Neglect and emotional and/or psychological abuse tend to be cumulative and effects may only be observable in the longer term. Explanations that are inconsistent with the signs should constitute a cause for concern.
- Neglect is as potentially fatal as physical abuse. It can cause delayed physical, psychological and emotional development, chronic ill-health and significant long-term damage. It may place children a serious risk of harm. It may also proceed, or co-exist with, other forms of abuse and must be acted upon.
- Experiencing recurring low-level abuse may cause serious and long-term harm. Cumulative harm refers to the effects of multiple adverse circumstances and events in a child's life. The unremitting daily impact of these circumstances on the child can be profound and exponential, and diminish a child's sense of safety and well-being.
- Child abuse is not restricted to any socio-economic group, gender or culture. All signs must be considered in the wider social and family context. Serious deficits in child safety and welfare transcend cultural, social and ethnic norms, and must elicit a response

- Challenging behaviour by a child or young person should not render them liable to abuse. Children in certain circumstances may present management problems. This should not leave them vulnerable to harsh disciplinary measures or neglect of care.
- Exposure to domestic violence is detrimental to children's physical, emotional and psychological well-being. The adverse effects of domestic violence have been well established.
- While the impact of neglect is most profound on young children, it also adversely affects adolescents. Neglect renders young people liable to risk-taking behaviours, such as running away, early school leaving, anti-social behaviour, and mental health and addiction problems, including the risk of suicide.
- It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between indicators of child abuse and other adversities suffered by children and families. Deprivation, stress, addiction or mental health problems should not be used as a justification for omissions of care or perpetration of harm by parents/carers. The child's welfare must be the primary consideration.
- Neglectful families may be difficult to engage. Research shows that families may be reluctant to seek help in response to experiencing the factors associated with neglect. HSCL should attempt to engage and have some links with home in a supporting role
- Families where neglect and abuse are prevalent may go to considerable lengths to deceive professionals. It is important for professionals to approach cases with a wary trustfulness, seek evidence to substantiate claims of improvement and speak with the children concerned individually.
- Social workers need good observation and analytical skills in order to be able to understand the nature of the relationship between a parent and child, to understand signs of non-compliance, to work alongside a family and to come to safe and evidence-based judgements about the best course of action.
- Working in the area of child abuse and neglect is dealing with uncertainty. Social workers and other professionals should adopt a 'respectful uncertainty' on parental reporting of improvement until supported by clear evidence.

Children with additional vulnerabilities

Certain children are more vulnerable to abuse than others. Such children include those with disabilities, children who are homeless and those who, for one reason or another, are separated from their parents or other family members and who depend on others for their care and protection. The same categories of abuse - neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse - are applicable, but may take a slightly different form. For example, abuse may take the form of deprivation of basic rights, harsh disciplinary regimes or the inappropriate use of medications or physical restraints (*see Chapter 8 National Guidance 2011*).

Synopsis of Staff Responsibility

- Each member of staff has a duty of care to all the children in the after school.
- Staff must familiarise themselves with the Child First National Guidelines
- Staff must act within the Child First and DES guidelines and each staff member should familiarise themselves with these documents.
- Childcare workers must keep adequate notes and documentation regarding incidents, disclosure and conversations/comments with children/adults concerned/parents/guardians. Often isolated incidents may not appear a concern but when many areas of concern are documented, this can often highlight concerns. Log and note take anything of concern.
- Standard disclosure forms are available in Karolina's cabinet in the after school room . See appendices.
- Staff should note any children, who are particularly withdrawn, upset, become angry/ volatile or use inappropriate language behaviour. Sudden changes in behaviour should also be noted.
- Staff should not probe children or ask leading questions. If a child discloses information the staff should write information down straight away or as soon as possible in order to ensure accuracy. Reports should not include a staff opinion on a situation. Facts need only to be recorded.
- Staff should never, ever promise a child that they will keep the information a secret.
- Any concerns should be directed to the DLP/Deputy DLP when the DLP is not available. If the DLP and Deputy DLP are not in the building, the next most senior member of staff takes on the relevant role. This is Maeve McNeill.
- If a staff member believes that the concern has not been followed that prior to this occurring if possible that the staff would inform the DLP/Deputy DLP of their ongoing concerns as often further information may be available to the Manager that may not have been shared with all staff members.
- Children must be handed over to parents unless the *Garda Síochána* is present and have informed the school not to do so. However staff can contact the *Garda Síochána* where concerned to follow up on this
- Supports should be put in place or sought by the Board of Management for staff/families/children where necessary, appropriate and available.
- Educate Together Head Office have personnel available should the Board of Management, Parents, Staff or pupils have concerns or wish to have clarity regarding a situation.

DLP - their role

The DLP must furnish a child protection report to the Principal Sinead O Meara and Chair Carol Norton. The report consists of - reporting to the board the number of cases in the school for that period and where advice was sought. This needs to be recorded into the minutes of the meeting but no other details need to be released.

Appendices

Monitoring Suggestions

After School staff are the professionals who are in regular day to day contact with school-aged children and, because of that, we have a key role in situations where there are suspicions that a child is being abused. When there are such concerns, it is essential to keep an objective and factual record of all the information available (*DES Procedures, p. 21/22, paragraph 3.6*). We may also be requested, following a child protection conference, to keep a child under observation in a manner that is not inconsistent with our existing duties (*DES Guidelines, p. 28, paragraph 4.5.7*). This hand-out has been created to assist teachers in this regard.

Incident record and report by after school staff;

- Incident should be recorded using the child(ren) initials
- The report should be send to child(ren) teacher(s)
- Tusla should be called to ask for advice
- call should be recorded with details ; time, name of the deputy social worker, advice given and follow up and report making if any
- Sinead O'Meara should be notified immediately about the incident and action taken
- If advised by the social worker report to Tusla should be made. Details of the report; child name, DOB, home address, parents/guardians details and any information that is relevant to report making

DISCLOSURE - Steps to be taken by after school staff

- If a child discloses to a after school staff or to other school staff that he or she is being harmed by a parent/carer or any other person, including another child, the person who receives that information should listen carefully and

supportively. This applies equally where the child implies that he or she is *at risk* of being harmed by a parent/carer or any other person. It also applies equally if a parent/carer or any other person discloses that he or she has harmed, or is at risk of harming, a child.

- The child should not be interviewed formally; the after school staff or other staff member should obtain only necessary relevant facts if and when clarification is needed.
- Confidentiality must never be promised to a person making a disclosure subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Acts and the requirement to report to the HSE Children and Family Services must be explained in a supportive manner.
- The discussion should be recorded accurately on the standard disclosure form and the record retained securely. The staff member should then inform the Designated Liaison Person, Karolina Wierzbinska, who is responsible for reporting the matter to Tusla , or in the event of an emergency and the unavailability of the Tusla , to An Garda Siochana.
- Karolina Wierzbinska, should immediately inform the Principal and Chairperson. In the event of these not being available staff must be informed in order of seniority-
 - Sinead O'Meara
 - Gearoid O Flatharta
 - Joe Kavanagh
 - Viv Gaynor

Useful Hint: Enter your observations under the various headings as appropriate. This will help to categorise your observations and enable you to note an emerging pattern or a deteriorating situation.

Possible Areas for Monitoring	Best Practice Suggestions
<p>Name of Service</p> <p><i>Using agreed record form ensure school standard is applied</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record observations using code to protect anonymity of child Keep in secure place Strictly confidential
<p>Attendance</p> <p><i>Dates and times are important, since patterns or absence or lateness can be very revealing. If late, note if brought to school by parent/carer/older sibling and record any explanation offered. E.g. Child is absence from school but arrives to after school club in the afternoons only</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remember to sign and date each entry
<p>Appearance, Hygiene and Care</p> <p><i>Record observations of the child's appearance, for example, poor hygiene, inappropriate clothing, no lunch.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record observations in chronological order
<p>Physical Injury</p> <p><i>Give detailed description including, in the child's or carer's own words, if any explanation is offered.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include sketch of injury, if appropriate
<p>Child's Behaviour</p> <p><i>A child may become increasingly aggressive, tense, and unresponsive or show other signs of distress. Any sexualised behaviour should be noted.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe what you have observed factually

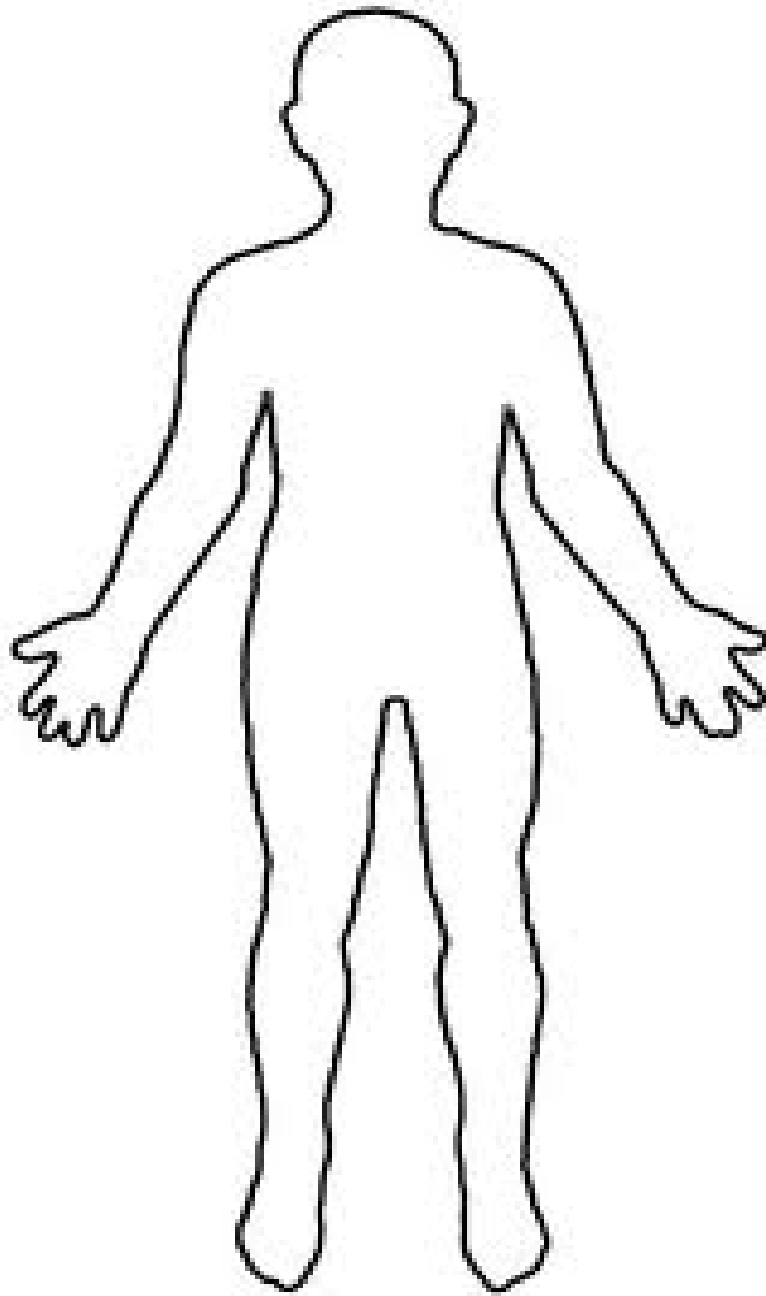
<p>Child's Language</p> <p><i>The child may not have the language/be afraid to verbalise clearly what is happening. They may however drop hints or refer to what is happening obliquely.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record child's exact words, not the adult equivalents
<p>Child's Drawings, Writing or Play</p> <p><i>A young child may show few signs of abuse when he/she experiences a sense of security in a busy, structured classroom setting therefore careful observation of the child in less formal or unstructured settings are important. Always include the context in your record e.g. "when returning from the PE Room", "during small break", "when lining up for home time."</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember context can be very important
<p>Mood Changes</p> <p><i>Child may, for example, become quiet and tense towards end of day or if collected by a certain adult. This might also happen on certain days or before or after certain activities. Again, remember to include the context in your recording.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note time, context and situation - facts only

Remember monitoring should be systematic, continuous and requires perseverance

Initials of Child /DOB		
Date	Observation	Signed

Code:	Date:
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below:



Contact Phone Numbers

H.S.E. DUBLIN NORTH	Health Centre, Cromcastle, Coolock, Dublin 5	(01) 816 4200 (01) 816 4244
An Garda Síochána	Oscar Traynor Road, Coolock, Dublin 5	(01)6664200

This policy was adopted by: After School Club

Date: _____

Signed by: _____ on behalf of Management

This policy will be reviewed on (date) _____ in
collaboration with staff and parents