

Meath Women's Aid Housing Association CLG

39 Flowerhill Navan,

Co. Meath

Tel: 046 9022393

Email: mwrefuge@eircom.net

Designated Liaison Person(s): Deirdre Murphy- Joint Manager

Deputy DLP: Sinead Smith Joint Manager

Signature



Signature



Mandated Persons in the organisation: Deirdre Murphy, Sinead Smith, Claudia Harding, Lorraine Fagan and Imelda Fallon

Person (s) Responsible for MWRSS Child Safeguarding Statement: Deirdre Murphy and Sinead Smith

Date of Adoption of this Policy: Monday 12th March 18

Date of Adoption of review of this Policy: March 11th 2020

Child Protection and Welfare Policies and Procedures Handbook 2018

1 POLICY STATEMENTS, PRACTICE PRINCIPLES AND DEFINITIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

1.1 Child Safeguarding Statement

1. Name of service being provided: **Meath Women's Refuge and Support Services**

2. Nature of service and principles to safeguard children from harm (*brief outline of what our service is, what we do and our commitment to safeguard children*):

Meath Women's Refuge and Support services provide a wide range of services and supports to women and children including:

- 24 emergency refuge accommodation in a communal setting and the provision of one to one key working support through a care plan structure
- Outreach service to women experiencing domestic violence including one to one support, court accompaniment, assistance in the preparation of court paper work
- Provision of group peer to peer support groups, arts and crafts programme
- One to one counselling for women experiencing domestic violence
- Child play therapy on a one to one basis and in group settings
- Childcare provision for children of parents engaged in programmes or women in refuge attending meetings, appointments etc.
- Work with a wide range of external agencies to support the needs of women and children experiencing or at risk of domestic violence

We fully subscribe to *Children First* principles (1.3) and adopt the following additional principles to reflect the specialist nature of domestic violence services:

- We understand that domestic violence is a child protection and welfare issue. We are committed to communicating our child protection and welfare policy, in particular our organisational responsibilities and confidentiality policy, to women receiving our services at the earliest opportunity, preferably at their first point of contact with our service;
- We know that empowering and protecting women is often an effective method of child protection. We believe that in domestic violence situations the safety of a child is most often linked to the safety of their mother and we believe that by supporting a woman to secure protection and by providing support and advocacy to her, that the well-being of her children will often be promoted. This is what we understand as woman protection being an effective strategy in child protection;
- In our interactions with women it is our intention to be supportive, encouraging and open. We are committed to creating a supportive non-judgemental environment where women feel safe and can engage with our service at their own pace. We acknowledge that is never easy to address child protection concerns, particularly where a woman has turned to our service for support and safety as a result of her experience of abuse and violence. We understand that women sometimes have genuine anxieties in expressing concerns about their children for fear of sanctions and so may feel very challenged by us discussing possible child welfare and protection

Child Protection and Welfare Policies and Procedures Handbook 2018

concerns. We believe we can support women **and** maintain the paramountcy principle regarding child welfare

- We believe that child protection and welfare is primarily the responsibility of a child's parent(s). In our work with women we aim to support them in protecting their children and safeguarding their own well-being through service provision, support and advocacy (as appropriate) in the context of an ethos of partnership and in a way that ensures that choice and agency remains with the woman, where possible;
- We understand the need to recognise the possibility that a woman experiencing domestic violence and seeking support from our service may also be abusing her children;
- Being advocates for women is **always** central to our work. This means that in dealing with child protection issues internally and with statutory agencies, we will ensure in so far as possible that the mother has a central role (unless to do so puts a child at risk);
- The psychological welfare of children is most often inseparable from that of their mother's. We advocate that in child protection situations where the primary focus of concern is a child, responses take into account the context of domestic violence. We understand that the needs of women and children are interlinked and believe that child protection responses need to take account of this, so as not to focus on a child protection problem to the exclusion of a domestic violence problem;
- We respect the confidentiality of information entrusted to us, whilst understanding that this excludes any information needed for the protection and safeguarding of children;
- We believe that effective inter-agency work is essential in addressing the issue of domestic violence and in safeguarding of children in families in which such abuse occurs;
- We believe that children have the right to have their protection and welfare needs met in a culturally appropriate manner. We do not condone cultural 'norms' as a justification for abusive behaviour. We understand that children from diverse cultural, ethnic and social environments and backgrounds may have different experiences of abuse and may, in addition, experience racism and discrimination.

3. Risk Assessment

We have carried out an assessment of any potential for harm to a child while availing of our services. Below is a list of the areas of risk identified and the list of procedures for managing these risks.

	Risk identified	Procedure in place to manage identified risk
1	Physical, emotional, psychological or sexual abuse perpetrated by another service user	Medium Risk: This risk is addressed by ensuring that children are adequately supervised at all times while using services (Supervising Children 4.4); that there is a mechanism for children to

		<p>highlight incidents of concern (Feedback and Complaints Policy) and that all highlighted concerns are addressed (Allegation against a young person using our service 5.11 and Allegations against a woman using our service 3.11)</p> <p>[One to one key working sessions, staff available on a 24 hour basis to report incidences.]</p>
2	Physical, emotional, psychological or sexual abuse perpetrated by a staff member	<p>Low Risk: This risk is addressed initially by our comprehensive Recruitment procedure (7.1). The goal of our recruitment procedure is to identify competent applicants who are suitable for the post. We believe that best practice in our organisation starts with the appointment of suitably qualified, skilled and appropriately vetted individuals who have the desired competencies to deliver a quality service to our service users. The processes used, whether recruiting voluntary workers, full or part-time staff members will be clear, unambiguous, equitable and in the best interest of children and women alike.</p> <p>It is our policy to ensure that all staff employed within our organisation are properly vetted and checked by An Garda Síochána (and other appropriate vetting bodies) and that our recruitment practices adhere to best practice, in all areas, and in particular child protection and welfare. Volunteers, students and associated personnel will also be subject to appropriate vetting.</p> <p>Our employment and other practices further address this risk e.g., Induction (6.3), Probation (6.4), Support and Supervision (6.5), Staff Safety (6.7), Working with Children (4) Our Code of behaviour (4.4).</p> <p>Our Feedback and Complaints Policy (6.9) provides a mechanism for children and young people to highlight concern or abuse and our Allegations made against a staff member procedure (4.11) ensures that all concerns highlighted are addressed.</p>
3	Failure to recognise and respond effectively to child abuse	<p>Low Risk: This risk is addressed is primarily by Child Protection Training (6.2) which promotes ongoing training and professional development encompassing recognition and response to child</p>

Child Protection and Welfare Policies and Procedures Handbook 2018

		abuse and training in relation to the roles and responsibilities of staff, including mandated persons and designated liaison persons. SI Child Protection and Welfare Handbook provides guidance to staff in relation to Guidelines for Recognising Child Neglect of Abuse (2.7), Recognising Child Abuse (4.7), Reporting Child Abuse (2.10), Receiving a Disclosure of Child Abuse (4.8), Mandated Persons (2.5), Designated Liaison Person (2.6) and Evaluating our Child Protection and Welfare Policies (6.13)
4	Failure to safeguard children's right to privacy and confidentiality	Low Risk: This risk is addressed primarily by our Confidentiality (2.14) and Record Keeping (2.15) procedures. This ensures that everyone on the team shares a clear understanding of their responsibility with regard to confidentiality and the exchange of information and that information is recorded and stored securely. We will comply with Data Protection legislation with a new Data Protection Policy which complies with GDPR.
5	Failure to respond effectively to the support needs of children in relation to their experiences of Domestic Violence.	Low Risk: This risk is addressed by procedures in relation to Working with Children (4) which encompasses a Child-Centred Approach (4.1), Children Living with Domestic Violence (4.2), Addressing Children's Welfare Needs (4.3), Safety Planning for children (4.6) and Access and Contact Issues (3.11) . All of our procedures are underpinned by our Additional Principles (1.4)

4. Procedures

Our Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017)*, and *Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice*. In addition to the procedures listed in our risk assessment, the following procedures support our intention to safeguard children while they are availing of our service:

- **Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child availing of our service;**

The relevant procedure, Allegations made against a staff member, is located at points 4.11 to 4.16 of SI Child Protection and Welfare Handbook.

- **Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers to work with children;**

The relevant procedure, Recruitment Procedure is located at point 6.1 of SI Child Protection and Welfare Handbook.

Child Protection and Welfare Policies and Procedures Handbook 2018

- **Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm;**

The relevant procedures, Child Protection Training and Induction are located at 6.2 of SI Child Protection and Welfare Handbook.

- **Procedure for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla;**

The relevant procedure, Reporting Child Abuse, is available at point 2.10 of SI Child Protection and Welfare Handbook.

- **Procedure for maintaining a list of the persons (if any) in the relevant service who are mandated persons;**

The details of the mandated person are displayed on the title page and at point 2.5, Mandated Persons, of SI Child Protection and Welfare Handbook.

- **Procedure for appointing a relevant person.**

The details of the relevant person are displayed on the title page and at point 5.6, Designated Information Person, of SI Child Protection and Welfare Handbook.

All procedures listed are available upon request.

5. Implementation

We recognise that implementation is an on-going process. Our service is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while availing of our service.

This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed in March 2020 or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

Signed: *Leresa McGilker* (Chairperson)
[Meath Women's Refuge and Support Services]

For queries, please contact Deirdre Murphy/Sinead Smith, Relevant Person under the Children First Act 2015.