



Childcare Policy: Child Protection

**Child Protection**

**Board Approval: December 2018**

**Due for Review: December 2020**

**Reviewed ; July 2022**

**Reviewed : September 2024**

**Responsibility of: Childcare Development Manager**

**Policy Statement**

Finglas Childcare Ltd. acknowledges the rights of children to be protected, treated with respect and listened to. We recognise that the welfare of children must always come first regardless of all other considerations. We have developed Child Safeguarding Statements and Childcare policies and procedures to help keep children safe within our organisation. These include supervising children in all activities, dealing with challenging behaviour and providing a safe environment for children. Our recruitment procedures include reference checks and Garda Vetting for all employees based in crèches. We have developed a Child Protection Policy that outlines steps to be taken if child abuse or neglect is suspected or disclosed.

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### **Rationale:**

We are obliged under The Children First Act 2015,(Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017) and the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 to put children's welfare first. From December 2017 we have a statutory obligation to report concerns that have reached a particular threshold to TUSLA and to co-operate with TUSLA in the assessment of mandated reports.



### **Scope of Policy**

Child abuse can often be difficult to identify and may present in many forms. Early detection is important and all of Finglas Childcare Ltd staff should be aware of signs and share their concerns about child protection or welfare with the Designated Liaison Person (DLP).

This policy considers all staff and Board of Management members as having a responsibility to follow the procedures outlined in this policy in the best interest of children attending all of our early years services.



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### **Policy & Procedure**

#### **Recognising Child Abuse**

A list of child abuse indicators is contained at the end of this policy. No one indicator should be seen as conclusive in itself of abuse it may indeed indicate conditions other than child abuse. All signs and symptoms must be examined in the total context of the child's situation and the family circumstances.

#### **Guidelines for recognition**

The ability to recognise child abuse depends as much on a person's willingness to accept the possibility of its existence as it does on their knowledge and information. Suspicions can often arise by someone feeling uneasy and concerned about a child and needing to find out more. There are commonly 3 stages in the identification of child abuse. These are

1. Considering the possibility-If a child has a mark or injury for which there is no reasonable explanation or displays persistent or new behavioural problems or if the child displays unusual or fearful responses to parents/carers.
2. Looking out for signs- These can be physical, behavioural or developmental. A cluster of signs is likely to be more indicative of abuse than a single one. Signs include disclosure of abuse or neglect, age inappropriate or abnormal sexual play or knowledge, specific injuries or patterns of injuries. Signs in one or more categories at the same time



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for example, signs of developmental delay, physical injury and behavioural signs may together indicate a pattern of abuse.

3. Recording the information-Observations about suspected child abuse should be recorded on concern sheets. These should be accurately recorded and should include dates, times, names, locations, contexts and any other information which may be relevant.

The staff member (including C.E. and mandated persons) must inform the Designated Liaison Person(DLP) or deputy Designated Liaison Person of all child protection concerns without delay. The DLP will assist in the recording of the initial concern/incident.

1. If the concern does not meet the criteria for mandated reporting it may meet “reasonable grounds for concern” for a report to TUSLA if so the DLP will make that report.
2. If the child protection concern reaches the threshold for harm it is a mandated report.

The DLP will act as a resource to any staff member who has a child protection concern. The DLP is responsible for ensuring that reporting procedures are followed correctly and promptly and they act as a liaison person with other agencies. The legal obligations under the Children First Act 2015 to report mandated concerns rest with the mandated person and not with the DLP, however mandated reports will be made jointly by the mandated person who raised the concern and the DLP. If the child protection concern requires a more urgent intervention to make the child safe the mandated person should alert TUSLA by phone or in person in advance of submitting a written report(report to follow within 3 days). The Early Years Development Manager should be provided with a copy of the report/ concern as soon as possible and will notify the Chairperson of the

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Board of Management. The child protection and welfare concerns that reach the threshold for mandated reports will be recorded using the TUSLA Child Protection and Report Form. All concern sheets are confidential and should be stored securely in a locked cabinet. The Early Years Development Manager will keep a central register of all Child Protection Concerns and Reports on a relevant document to be stored safely in a secure place.

### **Policy on Disclosure**

Disclosures should always be believed. If a child makes a disclosure directly or indirectly always take it seriously. Stay calm, support the child, listen carefully to what the child is saying. Do not probe or push the child for details. Never promise to keep it a secret. Any disclosure must be reported to the DLP directly.

### **Reporting Procedure**

Where there are grounds for suspected or actual abuse the DLP will

- Inform the parent/guardian of the concern and of the intention to inform TUSLA (unless it is considered that this would put the child at further risk).
- Inform TUSLA of the concerns /suspicions, this can be done by phone, writing or in person. However every report should be accompanied by a completed TUSLA Child Protection Report Sheet.
- In the event of an emergency, or the non-availability of TUSLA staff, the report should be made to An Garda Siochana. This may be done at any Garda station.

“Giving information to others for the protection of the child does not constitute a breach of confidentiality” Dept of Health & Children

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Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998

Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 do not prevent the sharing of information on a reasonable and proportionate basis for the purpose of child protection.

Children's First Act 2015 (section 16)(3) protects mandated persons from civil liability if they are required to share information with TUSLA when assisting in a risk assessment to a child.

### **Procedures for allegations against workers**

If an allegation of abuse is made against a member of Finglas Childcare Ltd staff the organisation will follow two separate procedures, one for dealing with the staff member and the other in respect of the child. The procedure in respect of the child will be followed as outlined above. The procedure in respect of the staff member is as follows

1. The allegation will be assessed promptly and carefully. Then a decision will be made on whether a formal report is to be forwarded to TUSLA.
2. Whether it is to be forwarded or not, the Chairperson or equivalent will be immediately informed.
3. The organisation will privately inform the staff member of the following:
  - The fact that the allegation has been made against him/her.
  - The nature of the allegation.
4. The staff member should be afforded an opportunity to respond. The response will be noted and this information will be passed on when/if making a formal report.



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5. As the first priority is to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk, the staff member will be suspended with pay until a full investigation takes place through the appropriate bodies.
6. Any action following an allegation of abuse against a staff member should be taken in consultation with TUSLA.
7. Workers may be subjected to erroneous or malicious allegations. Therefore, any allegation of abuse will be dealt with sensitively and the organisation will provide counselling if necessary to the staff member concerned.

This child protection policy was compiled with reference to the 'Children First, National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017' and 'Our Duty To Care' Government publications.

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### **Statutory Bodies Contact Details**

Duty Social Work Service, Wellmount Clinic, Wellmount Park, Finglas West,

Ph: 8567700 ex 2, 8567708(09)(10)(13),

Fax: 8567702

Finglas Gardai Station, Mellowes Road, Finglas West

Ph: 6667500

### **Finglas Childcare Ltd Contact Details**

The designated Liaison Persons and deputy Liaison persons for Finglas Childcare Ltd are

Olwyn Teeling, Betsy Burdis (8640994, Willow Tree Creche)

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Paula Bradley, Marion Spratt (8641992, Fionn Ghlas Early Years Hub)

Deirdre Killeen, Betsy Burdis (8362024 Oak Tree)

### **Definitions**

Definition & Recognition of Child Abuse

#### **Neglect**

Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of care, food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, medical care, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults.

#### **Emotional**

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationships between a caregiver and a child rather than in a specific event or patterns of events. It occurs when a child's needs for attention, affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms.

#### **Physical**

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or injuries which results from willful or neglectful failure to protect a child. The defence of reasonable chastisement in court proceedings has been abolished.

#### **Sexual**

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others.

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### Appendix 1

#### Standard form for recording child protection and/or welfare concerns

Please note that Finglas Childcare Ltd's Child Protection Policy must be followed when completing a concern sheet.

Childs Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date concern arose \_\_\_\_\_

Details of concern (please detail in full)

Signature of Person reporting concern

Date

Name of mandated staff/ designated liaison person to whom concern was reported to:

To be completed by mandated person and/or designated liaison person who will also forward concern to the Early Years Development Manager (EYDM), who will add it to the central register: Action to be taken (eg observations, talking to parent, report to Health

Board etc) Signed

Date

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**I acknowledge that I had read and understand the Policy Document.**

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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