



**AN OIFIG UM CHOSAINT IDIRNÁISIÚNTA
INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION OFFICE**

Child Safeguarding Statement

**Policy No.: IPO (PP) 48
Effective date: 11 March, 2018
Date last revised: N/A**

Child Safeguarding Statement

1. Name of service being provided

The International Protection Office (IPO) is an office within the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) which is responsible, inter alia, for examining and processing applications for international protection as well as considering whether there are grounds for a person to be granted permission to remain by the Minister for Justice and Equality. The Chief International Protection Officer and International Protection Officers are independent in the performance of their international protection functions under the International Protection Act, 2015.

2. Nature of service and principles to safeguard children from harm

The application of the *Children First Procedures* in the IPO is based on the following key principles:

- (i) The welfare of the child/minor is paramount.
- (ii) All children/minors whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to safeguarding from abuse or neglect.
- (iii) While it is not the responsibility of staff in the IPO to determine whether or not abuse has taken place (this is undertaken by TUSLA child protection social workers), it is everybody's responsibility to report any concerns to the IPO Children First Designated Liaison Person or, as appropriate, to the Deputy Designated Liaison Person.
- (iv) All incidents of suspected poor practice and any allegations made will be treated seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- (v) Confidentiality should be upheld in line with best practice and relevant legislation (e.g. International Protection Act, 2015, data protection and freedom of information legislation). However, the safety of a child/minor is paramount (as outlined in the Child Care Act 1991 and Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children) and will take precedence over all other considerations. *Confidentiality may not be maintained if the withholding of information will compromise a child's/minor's welfare.*
- (vi) Staff who make disclosures about suspected child abuse or neglect will be protected by relevant legislation such as the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 which makes provision for the protection from civil liability of persons who have communicated child abuse or neglect "reasonably and in good faith" to designated officers of the TUSLA or any

member of An Garda Síochána. This protection applies to organisations as well as to individuals. Staff should be aware that they are correct to raise concerns even if they are not validated in a subsequent investigation by the TUSLA or An Garda Síochána. Responsible action is encouraged.

3. Risk Assessment

The IPO has 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 risk identified
1.	Need for organisational ownership and accountability for the protection of children and young people availing of the services of the IPO	<p>Appropriate levels of training will be provided to IPO staff (including at the time of induction) to ensure they are made aware of their responsibilities in relation to Children First.</p> <p>All Staff and Panel Members receive appropriate Garda Clearance prior to commencing work with the organisation.</p> <p>The IPO Child Safeguarding Statement will be distributed to staff as well as other documentation.</p> <p>Notices will be displayed in the IPO Reception and Fingerprinting Unit and adjacent to interview areas confirming the availability of the IPO Child Safeguarding Statement.</p>
2.	Staff are unaware of their responsibilities under the Children First Act, 2015	Appropriate levels of training will be provided (including at the time of induction) to ensure IPO staff are made aware of their responsibilities in relation to Children First. An audit will be conducted to ensure that staff have received training.
3.	Failure to take appropriate action where concern about the welfare of a child (a minor or an unaccompanied minor) comes to the	The roll out of training will provide staff with the information required to enable them to take action should a concern come to their attention. A

	attention of IPO staff either directly (eg. observing an incident on the IPO premises) or indirectly (eg. through information received in connection with an application) in the international protection process in the IPO.	<p>written internal Guidance Procedure will also be provided to staff.</p> <p>A Designated Liaison Person and a Deputy Designated Liaison Person have been appointed in the IPO to support staff in this regard.</p> <p>The Designated Liaison Person is Paul Hegarty, HEO in the Reception and Fingerprinting Unit and the Deputy Designated Liaison Person is Laura Brady, HEO in the Single Procedure Case Processing Unit.</p>
4.	Failing to make an immediate report to the Designated Liaison Person or Deputy Designated Liaison Person, as appropriate	All staff will be made aware of their reporting responsibilities under the Children First Act, 2015 through the online training module. All staff will be provided with the IPO Child Safeguarding Statement as well as access to procedures and reporting documentation.
5.	Failing to make a referral to the Child and Family Agency – Tusla, or An Garda Síochána within an appropriate period	As well as being provided with the appropriate levels of training, a copy of the IPO Child Safeguarding Statement and access to procedures and reporting documentation, staff will have the support of the IPO Designated Liaison Person or the Deputy Designated Liaison Person, as appropriate.
6.	Failing to ensure that any child on the IPO premises is, at all times, accompanied by a responsible adult, guardian or social worker.	All staff and panel members to be provided with appropriate training to ensure that staff are aware of their responsibilities in this regard. Notices will be put on display in the Reception and Fingerprinting Unit (as well as adjacent to interview areas) to alert members of the public to the requirement for children to be supervised by a responsible adult at all times. The Designated Liaison Person or Deputy Designated Liaison Person, as appropriate, will be available as a support to staff.
7.	Another child’s behaviour places the child or other children at risk	All staff and panel members to be provided with appropriate training to

		<p>ensure that staff and panel members are aware of their responsibilities in this regard. Notices will be put on display in the public office to alert members of the public to the requirement for children to be supervised by a responsible adult at all times. The Designated Liaison Person or Deputy Designated Liaison Person, as appropriate, will be available as a support to staff.</p>
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4. Procedures

4.1 The IPO has also prepared internal Guidance for staff in relation to their Children First obligations.

4.2 Our Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act, 2015, the *Children First: National Guidance*, and Tusla's *Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice*. All the relevant procedures supporting our intention to safeguard children while they are availing of our service are outlined in our risk assessment.

4.3 The IPO Case processing Panel will also be provided with briefing on their responsibilities and obligations under Children First.

4.4 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 services:

- Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers / Volunteers of a child availing of our service;
- Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers to work with children;
- Procedure for the provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm;
- Procedure for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla;
- Procedure for appointing a relevant person.

5. Implementation

We recognise that the implementation is an ongoing process. The IPO 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 services. This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed **by end of first quarter of 2020**,

or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

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