



# **Child Protection Policy**

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# 1. Introduction and Scope

## Purpose of the Policy

This policy has been adopted by Dublin Business School to promote best practice in child protection within the College and to inform employees and learners of Dublin Business School who for research, teaching or other reasons have contact with children of their obligations to recognise child protection and welfare concerns and to respond appropriately.

This policy is intended to ensure compliance with the *Children First Act 2015* and is based on *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017*.

Primarily the children referred to in this document will be the small number of learners in Dublin Business School that are under 18, and children who come onto the Dublin Business School campus for purposes related to the activities of the organisation, such as Open Events. However, it is also noted that employees and learners in Dublin Business School may also come into contact with children through activities related to their employment or learning with the College, such as through research or placements, and this policy is also intended to provide guidance for those situations, insofar as appropriate.

## General Principles Governing this Policy

- A child is a person under the age of 18, excluding a person who is or has been married.
- The protection of children must always come first.
- Children should be protected, treated with respect, listened to and have their own views taken into consideration.
- Employees and learners of Dublin Business School have a duty to raise concerns about the behaviour of others which may be harmful to children.
- Tusla should be informed without delay when there are reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being or is at risk of being abused or neglected.
- Best practices should be adopted to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children.
- This policy is not intended to replace the existing structures within the College such as the Learner Code of Conduct Policy or the Code of Professional Conduct which exist in parallel.

While due regard will be paid to the principles above and the guidelines in this policy, it is to be noted that interactions with learners in Dublin Business School who are under 18 years of age will generally be on the basis of the normal rules applying to all learners.

## 2. Responsibilities

### Responsibilities of Dublin Business School

#### General

It is the responsibility of Dublin Business School to implement this policy, appoint a Child Protection Officer and generally ensure the promotion of the protection of children within Dublin Business School.

#### Garda Vetting

Garda vetting is part of Dublin Business School's recruitment process. Please see the Garda Vetting Policy for more details.

Garda vetting is also required for learners on a small number of Dublin Business School programmes which require learners to undertake activities that will bring them into contact with children or vulnerable adults. Please see the Garda Vetting Policy for Learners for more detail.

#### Training and Informing Employees and Learners

This policy will be circulated to all employees and learners. Those joining the organisation will receive it as part of their induction. The Child Protection Officer and the Designated Child Protection Officer will be required to attend specialised training in the area and keep up to date.

Any employees or learners who have contact with children as part of research or placement activities, or any other occupational activities, will also be required to undertake further training in the area, as organised by the Child Protection Officer.

#### Placement of Learners in Third Party Organisations

As part of some degree programmes, learners may have contact with children due to their placement with other organisations for education and training purposes.

Any agreement or arrangement entered into by Dublin Business School for the placement of learners as part of their formal education in circumstances in which the learners may encounter children must be subject to the conditions that:

- The organisation providing the placement has full responsibility for ensuring that appropriate child protection policies and practices complying with national guidelines are in place; and
- The organisation will notify the Dublin Business School Child Protection Officer of any complaints of which the organisation is aware made against a learner in Dublin Business School concerning child welfare issues.

In addition, learners in this situation will have the responsibility to:

- Familiarise themselves with the child protection policy of Dublin Business School and that of the organisation where they are being placed.
- Comply with all National Vetting Bureau policy requirements of Dublin Business School and those of the organisation where they are being placed.

- Attend any child protection and welfare training provided by Dublin Business School and by the organisation where they are being placed.

If a learner has a suspicion or concern about child protection issues while on work placement, then the learner should follow the procedures in relation to reporting concerns on child protection issues in the organisation where the work placement is taking place. However, if the learner is unclear of the procedure or requires further guidance, he or she should contact the Dublin Business School Child Protection Officer for advice. The Child Protection Officer should assist the learner in following the procedures in the other organisation in the first instance. However, if the situation involves immediate risk of harm to a child or the situation is not resolved in the other organisation to the satisfaction of the learner, the Child Protection Officer should guide the learner to the appropriate reporting mechanisms, or make a report to Tusla or An Garda Síochána his/her self, as appropriate.

### Research with Children

Research involving children must be approved in advance by the College's research ethics process. Further information can be obtained from the Dublin Business School Research Ethics Committee.

Guidance on undertaking research with children is provided in the recently published Department of Children and Youth Affairs *Ethical Review and Children's Research in Ireland* (2010) and in the associated guidance document *Guidance for developing ethical research projects involving children* (2012).

Research involving children must comply with the above documents (as updated, replaced and/or amended from time to time).

### Admissions

Certain activities carried out by the Admissions Office employees will involve contact with children who are second level students. These activities include employees in the Admissions Office visiting schools, attending education fairs or inviting second-level students to specifically organised Dublin Business School events.

When an Admissions Office employee attends a second level school, the employee should ensure that the school teacher remains present in the classroom. The school is responsible for the safety and wellbeing of their students at all times.

When events take place within Dublin Business School, these events should be clearly public in nature and there should not be private or one-to-one mentoring sessions away from the public areas. If a second level student under the age of 18 wishes to meet an employee of the Admissions Office, this should not be done on a one-to-one basis except in a public space.

## Responsibilities of Employees and Learners

### Read and Comply with Policy

It is the responsibility of Dublin Business School employees and learners to read and comply with the contents of this Policy.

## Best Practice for Contact with Children

- Be visible when working with children whenever possible. In relation to learners who are under 18, it is recognised that a one-to-one situation might be necessary to protect the learner's right to privacy and confidentiality. Employees should use their professional judgement when in such a situation and should try, where reasonably possible to avoid being alone with a child.
- Treat all children equally and with respect and dignity.
- Listen to what children say and involve them in decision making where appropriate.
- Provide encouragement, support and praise.
- Adopt the safest possible practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children.
- Demonstrate exemplary behaviour in the presence of children.
- Never use physical punishment.
- Never make unnecessary physical contact with a child.
- Never exchange personal details with a child such as phone numbers, e-mail, Facebook, Twitter or other social media accounts.
- Always refer child abuse, welfare and safety issues to the Child Protection Officer. If an employee or learner is inhibited for any reason in reporting the incident internally to the Child Protection Officer or where they are dissatisfied with the response, they should contact Tusla - Child and Family Agency or An Garda Síochána.

## Duty to Report

Employees and learners must be alert to the possibility that children with whom they are in contact could be victims of abuse.

A report should be made to Tusla when there are reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being or is at risk of being abused or neglected. Employees and learners should report their concerns to the Child Protection Officer in the first instance. 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

All employees and learners are encouraged to discuss any concerns with the Child Protection Officer.

If the Child Protection Officer, or his/her Deputy, is not available, employees and learners should report reasonable concerns directly to Tusla, or if the child is in immediate danger, to An Garda Síochána.

## 3. Reporting Framework

### Making a Report to the Child Protection Officer

Any employee or learner who suspects child abuse should report this to the Child Protection Officer. Such a report should contain:

1. Details of the child and the suspected abuse.
2. Enough information to establish the basis of the concerns.
3. An accurate record of their observations and/or the conversation with the child or other person (if any).

The Child Protection Officer will receive and assess all such reports. The role of the Child Protection Officer is not to investigate or interview relevant parties, but to assess whether the information available demonstrates a reasonable concern of abuse or neglect. Once the Child Protection Officer is satisfied that a report meets the required threshold, he or she will report it to Tusla without delay.

In those cases where the Child Protection Officer decides not to report concerns to Tusla or An Garda Síochána, the employee or learner who raised the concerns should be given a clear written statement of the reasons why the Child Protection Officer is not taking such action. The employee or learner should be advised that if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free as individuals to consult with, or report to, Tusla or An Garda Síochána.

The Child Protection Officer should record the full details of all concerns or allegations of child abuse brought to his or her attention and the actions taken in relation to a concern or allegation of child abuse.

### Making a Report to Tusla

#### When should a report be made

The Child Protection Officer must report to Tusla as soon as possible if he/she knows, believes or has reasonable grounds to suspect, on the basis of information he/she has received, acquitted or become aware of in the course of his or her employment that a child has been, is being or is likely to be harmed. A report must also be made where a child has disclosed to the Child Protection Officer that the child believes that he/she has been, is being or is likely to be harmed.

Harm is defined here as follows:

1. 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
2. Sexual abuse of the child.

A Child Protection Officer should also report to Tusla if he or she has a reasonable concern that a child may have been, is being or is at risk of being abused or neglected.



Where the Child Protection Officer remains uncertain, he or she should contact the Tusla for informal advice relating to the allegation, concern or disclosure.

### Making a Report

All reports made by the Child Protection Officer to Tusla should be on the Child Protection and Welfare Form (a link is found in Appendix 4) and contain all necessary information, unless the risk is immediate requiring the report to be made without delay.

In making a report on suspected actual child abuse, the Child Protection Officer must ensure that the priority is always for the safety and welfare of the child and that no child is ever left in a situation that could place the child/young person in immediate danger. If there is a serious and imminent risk to the child and it is not possible to make contact with Tusla, the Child Protection officer should report it to An Garda Síochána.

### Other Obligations when Making a Report

When reporting a suspicion or allegation of child abuse to Tusla, the Child Protection Officer should also report to the Human Resource Manager in the case of an allegation against an employee, and to the Head of Faculty and School Operations in the case of an allegation against a learner.

Where the Child Protection Officer is making a report to Tusla, he or she should, where appropriate, also inform the child's family regarding the concern and the report. This is not appropriate where doing so would place the child at further risk, where the family's knowledge could impair Tusla's ability to carry out a risk assessment or if it is reasonably believed that this might put the person making the report at risk of harm from the family.

It is not the role of the Child Protection Officer to investigate whether the allegations or complaints are valid. This investigation is the responsibility of Tusla and An Garda Síochána.

### Allegations of Child Abuse against an Employee or Learner

When an allegation of child abuse arises in relation to an employee or learner, Dublin Business School holds a dual responsibility in its duty of care in:

- *Safeguarding children:* This must at all times take priority. The College will ensure that all appropriate procedures are followed in relation to reporting suspected child abuse to the civil and (as necessary) criminal authorities and do what is within its power to ensure that no child continues to be exposed to the risk of being abused.
- *Dealing with the person accused:* The College must ensure that proper procedures are followed in relation to the person against whom the complaint has been made, in line with fair procedures, natural justice and a presumption of innocence until the contrary is proven.

In case of any allegation of child abuse made against an employee or learner, the reporting framework procedures outlined above must first be followed and the Child Protection Officer informed immediately. Any necessary protective measure should be taken.

In addition to that, in cases where an allegation of child abuse is made against an employee, the issue will be also dealt with in accordance with the DBS Investigation Policy and DBS Disciplinary Policy. In cases where an allegation of child abuse is made against a learner the issue will also be dealt with in accordance with the Learner Disciplinary Policy. The application of these policies is the responsibility of the persons stated therein and is not part of the role of the Child Protection Officer.

### Retrospective Disclosure of Child Abuse by an Adult

If an adult makes a disclosure to a Dublin Business School employee or learner of abuse suffered during their childhood, and it is believed there may be a current risk to any child who may be in contact with the alleged abuser, the Child Protection Officer should be informed. If a risk is deemed to exist, then the Child Protection Officer must inform Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána.

In addition to the reporting requirement, if a Dublin Business School employee or learner makes a disclosure of abuse suffered during their childhood, the Child Protection Officer should ensure he/she is provided with the contact information for relevant support service. Employees should be given details of the VHI EAP scheme. Learners should be given details of the counselling referral service operated by Student Services.

### Disclosure of Child Abuse to Employee or Learner

#### Disclosure by a Child

A child may make a disclosure of abuse to an employee or learner of Dublin Business School. The best practice for dealing with these disclosures is to:

- 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 this Guidance and legislation

When a disclosure of abuse or neglect from a child is received, a report must be made to the Child Protection Officer as soon as possible.

## Disclosure from Another Person

If a complaint is made to an employee or learner from Dublin Business School to the effect that there is reasonable suspicion that abuse is alleged to have taken place against a child, the employee or learner should:

- Request the complainant to make a written statement.
- If the complainant is unknown to the employee or learner, ask the person making the allegation for their name and contact number or address.
- Tell the complainant that there is a procedure in place for dealing with such allegations and that the person responsible will be in contact with them as soon as possible.
- Ensure the information is reported as soon as possible to the Child Protection Officer. Once the information is provided to the Child Protection Officer, he or she is then responsible for ensuring that the suspicions or allegations are managed in accordance with the reporting framework.

## Persons Reporting Possible Child Abuse

The provisions of the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 provide immunity from civil liability to persons who make reports reasonably and in good faith to the HSE or An Garda Síochána.

It is a criminal offence to withhold information about a serious offence against a person under 18 years or a vulnerable person under the Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012.

## 4. Child Protection Officer

### Role and Appointment

The Child Protection Officer will have responsibility for the promotion and implementation of this policy. This role is described in this section and shall be the Designated Liaison Person for the purposes of the Children First Act 2015. There will also be a Deputy Child Protection Officer appointed for times when the Child Protection Officer is not available.

The role of the Child Protection Officer is to liaise with outside agencies and to be a resource person for any employee or learner who has child protection concerns. The Child Protection Officer is responsible for ensuring that reporting procedures within Dublin Business School are followed so that child welfare concerns are referred promptly to Tusla.

The Child Protection Officer and Deputy Child Protection Officer will be appointed by the Executive Dean. The Child Protection Officer should be accessible to all employees and learners in the College.

### Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Child Protection Officer are:

- To undertake relevant training and keep up to date on child protection policy and practice.

- To provide support and information to employees and learners who are dealing with/have dealt with a child protection concern or disclosure.
- To receive reports of alleged or suspected or actual child abuse, process these without delay and decide on the appropriate action, in line with the guidance in previous sections.
- To report suspected child abuse to Tusla in appropriate cases.
- To build a working relationship with the Child and Family Agency Tusla, An Garda Síochána and other agencies, as appropriate.
- To assist Tusla in assessing a concern, where requested.
- To ensure that supports are put in place for the child, employee or learner in case of allegations being made.
- To liaise with the Executive Dean, Human Resources Manager, Registrar, Head of Faculty and Academic Operations and the Head of Student Experience as appropriate.
- To liaise with the Designated Liaison Persons in other organisations where learners or employees of Dublin Business School are on work placement or are doing research.
- To ensure that systems are in place for recording and retaining all relevant documentation in relation to child protection issues.
- To ensure the circulation of this policy among all employees and learners of Dublin Business School, existing and new, and ensure further training of employees and learners where appropriate.
- To be consulted if any new services or activities involving children are developed and to ensure relevant training and procedures are in place.
- To review the Dublin Business School policy and procedure on child protection every two years and ensure their continued relevance and appropriateness.

## 5. Confidentiality

### No guarantee of secrecy

In matters of child abuse, an employee or learner should never promise to keep secret any information which is divulged. It should be explained to the child that this information cannot be kept secret but that only those who need to know in order to safeguard the child will be told.

### Confidentiality of information and data protection

It is essential in the reporting of any case of alleged or suspected abuse that the principle of confidentiality applies. The information should only be shared with persons who have a need to know in order to safeguard a child and the number of people that need to be informed should be kept to a minimum. It must be noted that the provision of information to the statutory agencies for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality or data protection.

All data in relation to child protection records must comply with Data Protection legislation and must be stored in a safe and confidential manner.

### Photographs and images

Where Dublin Business School employees and learners wish to take or use photographs, film or video of children, the consent of the children and their parents/guardians/carers must be obtained, and all such media must be stored safely.

## Appendices

### 1. Types of abuse and identification of abuse

These descriptions of the different types of abuse and how to identify them are taken from *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017*.

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time. Abuse and neglect can occur within the family, in the community or in an institutional setting. The abuser may be someone known to the child or a stranger and can be an adult or another child. In a situation where abuse is alleged to have been carried out by another child, you should consider it a child welfare and protection issue for both children and you should follow child protection procedures for both the victim and the alleged abuser.

The important factor in deciding whether the behaviour is abuse or neglect is the impact of that behaviour on the child rather than the intention of the parent/carer.

The definitions of neglect and abuse presented in this section are not legal definitions. They are intended to describe ways in which a child might experience abuse and how this abuse may be recognised.

#### Neglect

Child neglect is the most frequently reported category of abuse, both in Ireland and internationally. Ongoing chronic neglect is recognised as being extremely harmful to the development and well-being of the child and may have serious long-term negative consequences.

Neglect occurs when a child does not receive adequate care or supervision to the extent that the child is harmed physically or developmentally. It is generally defined in terms of an omission of care, where a child's health, development or welfare is impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, medical care, intellectual stimulation or supervision and safety. Emotional neglect may also lead to the child having attachment difficulties. The extent of the damage to the child's health, development or welfare is influenced by a range of factors. These factors include the extent, if any, of positive influence in the child's life as well as the age of the child and the frequency and consistency of neglect.

Neglect is associated with poverty but not necessarily caused by it. It is strongly linked to parental substance misuse, domestic violence, and parental mental illness and disability.

A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when neglect becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer. This may become apparent where you see the child over a period of time, or the effects of neglect may be obvious based on having seen the child once.

The following are features of child neglect:

- Children being left alone without adequate care and supervision
- Malnourishment, lacking food, unsuitable food or erratic feeding
- Non-organic failure to thrive, i.e. a child not gaining weight due not only to malnutrition but also emotional deprivation
- Failure to provide adequate care for the child's medical and developmental needs, including intellectual stimulation
- Inadequate living conditions – unhygienic conditions, environmental issues, including lack of adequate heating and furniture
- Lack of adequate clothing
- Inattention to basic hygiene
- Lack of protection and exposure to danger, including moral danger, or lack of supervision appropriate to the child's age
- Persistent failure to attend school
- Abandonment or desertion

### Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment of a child as part of the overall relationship between a caregiver and a child. Once-off and occasional difficulties between a parent/carer and child are not considered emotional abuse. Abuse occurs when a child's basic need for attention, affection, approval, consistency and security are not met, due to incapacity or indifference from their parent or caregiver. Emotional abuse can also occur when adults responsible for taking care of children are unaware of and unable (for a range of reasons) to meet their children's emotional and developmental needs. Emotional abuse is not easy to recognise because the effects are not easily seen.

A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when the behaviour becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer.

Emotional abuse may be seen in some of the following ways:

- Rejection
- Lack of comfort and love
- Lack of attachment
- Lack of proper stimulation (e.g. fun and play)
- Lack of continuity of care (e.g. frequent moves, particularly unplanned)
- Continuous lack of praise and encouragement
- Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming of the child
- Bullying
- Conditional parenting in which care or affection of a child depends on his or her behaviours or actions
- Extreme overprotectiveness
- Inappropriate non-physical punishment (e.g. locking child in bedroom)

- Ongoing family conflicts and family violence
- Seriously inappropriate expectations of a child relative to his/her age and stage of development
- There may be no physical signs of emotional abuse unless it occurs with another type of abuse.

A child may show signs of emotional abuse through their actions or emotions in several ways. These include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, risk taking and aggressive behaviour.

It should be noted that no one indicator is conclusive evidence of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is more likely to impact negatively on a child where it is persistent over time and where there is a lack of other protective factors.

### Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is when someone deliberately hurts a child physically or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents. A reasonable concern exists where the child's health and/or development is, may be, or has been damaged as a result of suspected physical abuse.

Physical abuse can include the following:

- Physical punishment
- Beating, slapping, hitting or kicking
- Pushing, shaking or throwing
- Pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling
- Use of excessive force in handling
- Deliberate poisoning
- Suffocation
- Fabricated/induced illness
- Female genital mutilation

### Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or arousal, or for that of others. It includes the child being involved in sexual acts (masturbation, fondling, oral or penetrative sex) or exposing the child to sexual activity directly or through pornography.

Child sexual abuse may cover a wide spectrum of abusive activities. It rarely involves just a single incident and in some instances occurs over a number of years. Child sexual abuse most commonly happens within the family, including older siblings and extended family members.

Cases of sexual abuse mainly come to light through disclosure by the child or his or her siblings/friends, from the suspicions of an adult, and/or by physical symptoms.



Examples of child sexual abuse include the following:

- Any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child
- An invitation to sexual touching or intentional touching or molesting of a child's body whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification
- Masturbation in the presence of a child or the involvement of a child in an act of masturbation
- Sexual intercourse with a child, whether oral, vaginal or anal
- Sexual exploitation of a child, which includes:
  - Inviting, inducing or coercing a child to engage in prostitution or the production of child pornography [for example, exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, videotape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of an image by computer or other means]
  - Inviting, coercing or inducing a child to participate in, or to observe, any sexual, indecent or obscene act
  - Showing sexually explicit material to children, which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse
- Exposing a child to inappropriate or abusive material through information and communication technology
- Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person

## 2. Role of Tusla and An Garda Síochána

### Tusla – Child and Family Agency

On 1 January 2014, Tusla - Child and Family Agency, became an independent legal entity. It merged portions of three former statutory bodies: the Health Service Executive's Children and Family Services, the Family Support Agency, and the National Educational Welfare Board. Tusla has responsibility for child welfare and protection services, family support, educational welfare and a range of other services, including those relating to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.

The key functions of Tusla, as set out in the Child and Family Agency Act 2013, are to:

- Support and promote the development, welfare and protection of children, and the effective functioning of families.
- Offer care and protection for children in circumstances where their parents have not been able to, or are unlikely to, provide the care that a child needs. To fulfil these responsibilities, Tusla is required to maintain and develop the services needed to deliver these supports to children and families, and provide certain services for the psychological welfare of children and their families.
- Be responsible for ensuring that every child in the State attends school or otherwise receives an education, and provide education welfare services to support and monitor children's attendance, participation and retention in education.
- Ensure that the best interests of the child guide all decisions affecting individual children.
- Consult children and families to help shape Tusla's policies and services.
- Strengthen interagency cooperation to ensure seamless services that respond to needs.
- Undertake research relating to its functions, and provide information and advice to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs about those functions.
- Commission child and family services.

The specific role of Tusla is to promote the welfare of children who are at risk of not receiving adequate care and protection. Under the Child Care Act 1991, Tusla is obliged to coordinate information from all relevant sources about a child who may not be receiving adequate care and protection. If it is found that a child is not receiving adequate care and protection, Tusla has a duty to take appropriate action to promote the welfare of the child. This may include supporting families in need of assistance in providing care and protection to their children.

It is accepted that in general a child fares best within his or her own family. If at all possible, support will be offered to the child and the family to overcome any difficulties and to ensure that the child is safe. A child is only removed from his or her family as a last resort, and only if it is not possible to keep the child safe within the family setting. With the assistance of community or family support services, most families can make the necessary changes to ensure the safety of their child, and will not need social work intervention.

Tusla operates through duty teams of social workers that receive child protection reports, assess and prioritise referrals and provide protective interventions to children and their families. Each team deals

with the concerns that arise in its specific geographical area by reference to the home address of the child.

Tusla has the statutory responsibility to assess all reports of child welfare and protection concerns. Assessments are carried out by Tusla social workers. If concerns are found after the initial checks, further evaluation involving a detailed examination of the child and family's circumstances will follow. If concerns about a child's welfare are found, but do not involve a child protection issue, then the family may be referred to community or family support services. If no concerns are found, then the information gathered is recorded and kept on a confidential file where it will be examined if further concerns or more information comes to light.

### [An Garda Síochána](#)

The involvement of An Garda Síochána in cases of alleged child abuse and neglect stems from its primary responsibility to protect the community and to bring offenders to justice. Where it is suspected that a crime has been committed, An Garda Síochána has overall responsibility for the direction of any criminal investigation. It is the function of An Garda Síochána to interview and take any statements that will form part of the criminal investigation file. The role of An Garda Síochána is to investigate alleged crimes and it is the responsibility of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) to decide on and carry out prosecutions.

The National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána issues vetting disclosures to organisations employing people who work on a full-time, part-time, voluntary or student placement basis with children and/or vulnerable adults. The National Vetting Bureau does **not** decide on the suitability of any person to work with children and vulnerable adults. Rather, in response to a written request for vetting, the National Vetting Bureau releases criminal history and other specified information on the person to be vetted to the prospective recruiting organisation. Decisions on suitability for recruitment rest at all times with the recruiting organisation, and the results of vetting should form only one part of the recruitment decision.

### 3. Useful Contacts

Tusla Local Duty Social Work Team:  
Dublin South Central

Child and Family Agency,  
Bridge House,  
Cherry Orchard Hospital,  
Dublin 10

076 6955749

Details for all other Social Work Teams can be found here: <http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/contact/>

Local Garda Station  
Pearse Street Garda Station  
1-6 Pearse Street  
Dublin 2

01 6669000  
Emergency: 999/112

### 4. Child Protection and Welfare Report Form

The Child Protection and Welfare Form is to be used when reporting a concern to Tusla. It can be found here: <http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/publications-and-forms>