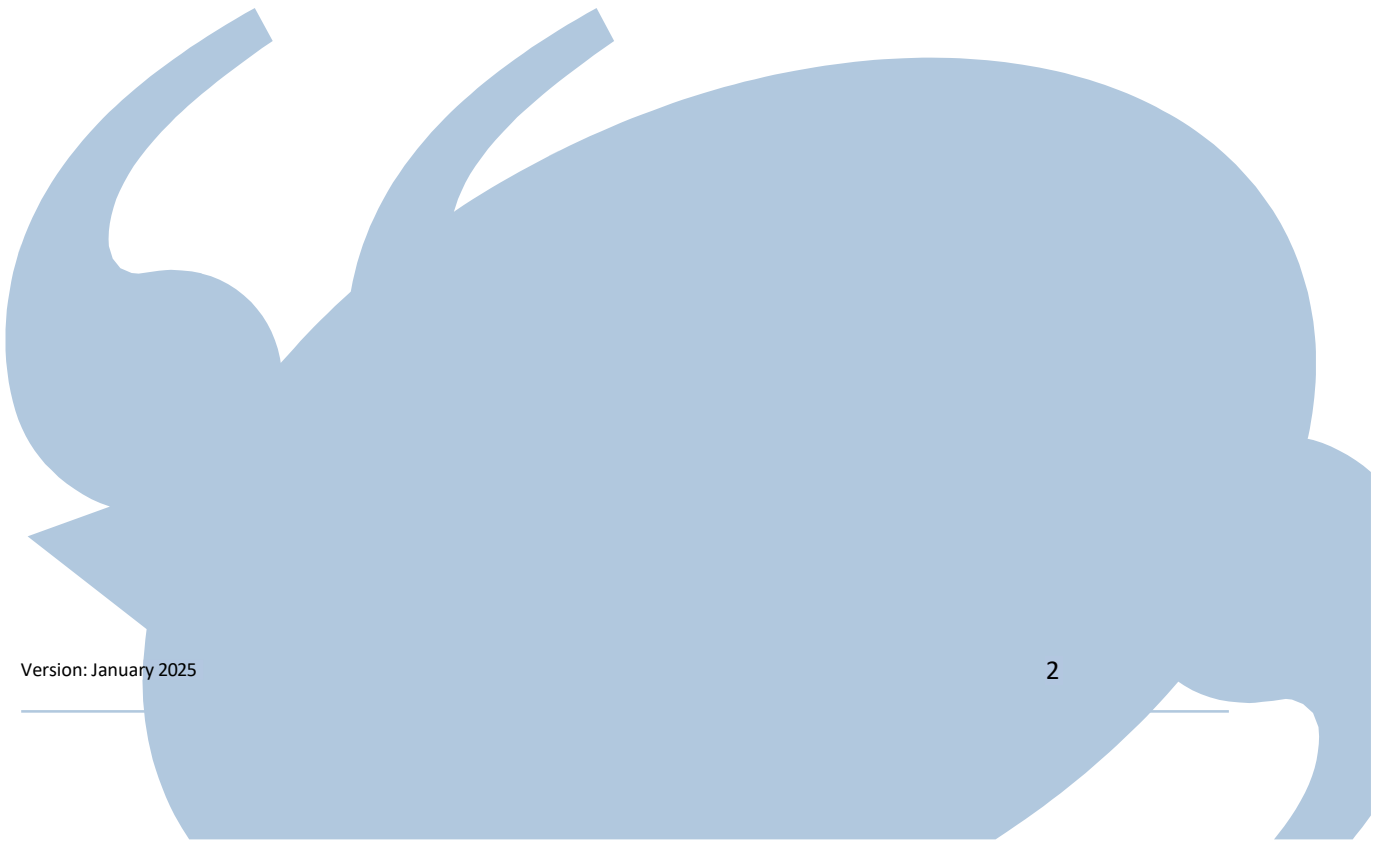


**Clare County Council Child
Safeguarding Statement January
2025**



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Introduction

This Child Safeguarding Statement is in compliance with the requirements of the Children First Act 2015 and of Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017. As such it sets out the services being provided by Clare County Council and the principles and procedures that are in place to ensure, as far as practicable, that a child availing of or in contact with Council services is safe from abuse or harm. This statement also includes an assessment of risk of “harm” to a child while availing of or in contact with Council services and procedures to manage such risks are specified.

This document has been developed with reference to the following:

Children First Act 2015

“Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children.” DYCA 2017.

Local Government Management Agency “Draft National Template, Policy and Procedures for the Protection and Safeguarding of Children” February 2018.

“Guidance on Developing a Child Safeguarding Statement” (tusla.ie)

“What is a risk assessment?” (tusla.ie)

Legislative basis for Clare County Council completing a Child Safeguarding Statement

Under Section 10 of the Children First Act 2015 a **provider of a relevant service** “shall ensure, as far as practicable, that each child availing of the service from the provider is safe from harm while availing of that service.”

Provider means in relation to a relevant service, a person

“(a) who provides a relevant service, and

(b) who, in respect of the provision of such relevant service—

- i. employs (whether under contract of employment or otherwise) one or more than one other person to undertake any work or activity that constitutes a relevant service,
- ii. enters into a contract for services with one or more than one person for the provision by the person of a relevant service, or
- iii. permits one or more than one person (whether or not for commercial or other consideration and whether or not as part of a course of education or training, including an internship scheme) to undertake any work or activity, on behalf of the person, that constitutes a relevant service.”

(Reference Schedule 1 Children First Act for a full definition and list of relevant services and Appendix 8 in Clare County Council Policy and Procedures for the Protection and Safeguarding of Children 2025)

Such relevant services are **required** under Section 11 (2) of the Act to ensure to:

- a. Undertake an assessment of any risk including the potential for harm to a child while availing of the service
- b. Prepare in accordance with subsection (3) a child safeguarding statement, and
- c. Appoint a relevant person as the first point of contact in relation to the Child Safeguarding Statement.

Section 11(3) of the act states that such a “child safeguarding statement shall include a written assessment of the risk and, in that regard, specify the procedures that are in place:

- a. To manage any risks identified
- b. In respect of any member of staff (employee) who is the subject of any investigation (howsoever described) in respect of any act, omission or circumstance in respect of a child availing of the relevant service
- c. For the selection or recruitment of any person as a member of staff (employee) of the provider with regard to that person’s suitability to work with children
- d. For the provision of information and, where necessary, instruction and training, to members of staff (staff members) of the provider in relation to the identification of the occurrence of harm
- e. For reporting to the Agency (Tusla, Child and Family Agency) by the provider or a member of staff (staff member) of the provider (whether a mandated person or otherwise) in accordance with this act or the guidelines issued by the Minister under Section 6 (Children First National Guidelines, 2017)
- f. For maintaining a list of persons (if any) of the relevant service who are mandated persons, and
- g. For appointing a relevant person for the purposes of this part of the Act.”

The relevant person for Clare County Council is Jason Murphy, Director of Social Development.

Note Children First national guidance also states that relevant services should appoint a named person to lead the implementation of guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures. This person is also responsible for ensuring that the policies and procedures are aligned with best practice as set out in Children First national guidance 2017. In view of their organisational structure Clare County Council has established a Named Persons Group, representative of the Directorates, with overall governance responsibility for Children First implementation, monitoring and review.

The Organisation

Clare County Council services cover an area of 3,400 square kilometres and at the last national census (2022) had a population of 127,938 people living within its boundaries, of which 25,588 were under 18 years.

The services are provided in multiple locations across County Clare with the headquarters of the local authority located in Ennis. The local authority employs approximately 990 staff members delivering services in teams and/or as lone workers e.g. some library locations are lone worker sites.

Nature of Service

Clare County Council directly provides and also resources a wide range of services and activities including housing, roads, parks, libraries, sports/ leisure centres, museums, lifeguards, community groups and grant aided bodies.

The level of contact with children for some of these services is daily during working hours, while for others it may be occasional or unplanned contact. There is also a level of funding that is provided to community groups and grant aided bodies who provide services and activities for children either directly or indirectly such as through public events.

Clare County Council has completed this corporate child safeguarding statement to cover all Council services. Each Directorate has also completed a safeguarding children risk assessment. In addition individual service based safeguarding children risk assessments and additional staff guidance have been completed by those Council services with regular and/or planned contact with children.

As part of the 2022/2023 Children First compliance audit all the above risk assessments were reviewed . The content of the Policy and Procedures document was also revised where necessary. Any identified challenges in the implementation process have been reported back to the authority.

It will be the responsibility of the providers of relevant services who are working either in partnership with the Council and/or are supported by the local authority through the provision of resources, to have in place Children First compliant policy and procedures. These should include in particular: a safeguarding children risk assessment, a Child Safeguarding Statement and the appointment of a relevant person.

Principles to Safeguard Children and keep them safe from harm

Clare County Council is committed to a child centred approach in the provision of services and related funded activities. The authority has an overall corporate responsibility to safeguard the children accessing the authority's services and activities. The authority makes every reasonable effort to ensure, as far as practicable, that such children and young people are safe and that any risk of protection or welfare concerns is minimised, as far as practicable.

Clare County Council is committed to the following principles in safeguarding children and maintaining child centred services

- That the safety and welfare of children is everyone's business
 - That the promotion of the welfare, health and safety of children is paramount
 - That all children have an equal right to attend Council services or use Council facilities that will respect them as individuals and will encourage them to reach their potential, regardless of background
 - That children/young people raising welfare or abuse concerns will be treated equally and listened to by staff members and/or volunteers
 - That any identified protection or welfare concern of a child that becomes known to Clare County Council staff members will be managed appropriately by the Council and in compliance with best practice as set out in Children First national guidance (2017) and within Clare County Council's Policy and Procedures for the Protection and Safeguarding of Children document
- That safe management procedures are in place for all staff members and volunteers, covering in particular recruitment selection, Garda vetting and a person's ability to work with children
 - That designated persons and mandated persons in respect of child safeguarding are identified, trained and are known to all staff members and volunteers
 - That procedures are in place to respond to an allegation of abuse of a child/young person against an employee/volunteer
 - That procedures are in place to respond to an allegation of abuse of a child by another child/young person
 - That a specific safeguarding children training plan is in place to ensure that all staff members/volunteers are aware of their role in keeping children safe and to raise organisational awareness of this issue
 - That Clare County Council has developed and is maintaining clear record keeping procedures in respect of child protection and welfare concerns
 - That a code of behaviour is in place for staff members/volunteers which sets out their responsibilities in interacting with children and young people
 - That a code of behaviour is in place which outlines the responsibilities of children and young people in their interactions with each other and adults
 - That Clare County Council recognises the importance of multi-agency working in keeping children safe and therefore has developed working relationships with the relevant statutory agencies e.g. An Garda Síochána and Tusla

Clare County Council's child-centred approach

In taking a child-centred approach Clare County Council expects staff members to:

- Treat all children and young people fairly and without prejudice or discrimination
- Listen to and respect children and young people
- Involve children when appropriate, particularly regarding their age and level of understanding
- Provide encouragement, support and praise (regardless of ability)
- Use appropriate language (verbal and physical)
- A positive atmosphere should be encouraged
- Offer constructive criticism if deemed appropriate
- Treat all children and young people as individuals
- Respect a child's personal space
- Use age appropriate teaching/learning and communication aids including support staff where necessary e.g. sign language practitioners
- Lead by example when engaging with children and young people
- Recognise children and young people may have other time commitments when scheduling activities
- Work towards creating an atmosphere of trust
- Respect, and be aware of differences of ability, culture, religion, race and sexual orientation of children and young people
- If required translation services will be provided for children to maximise their participation in services and to ensure any possible safeguarding issues can be communicated
- Staff members and volunteers will be offered access to equality/diversity training in relation to cultural issues
- Ensure that information in respect of children will be treated confidentially, and for the purposes which it was given, in situations where a child may be at risk of harm

Risk Assessment

Safeguarding children risk assessments have been completed by all Directorates/Services within Clare County Council to consider and evaluate the potential for abuse or harm to come to a child while availing of the services provided by the authority. In view of the complexity of the service provision an overarching corporate risk assessment and plan for managing any identified risks has been completed. Individual services and Directorates are in the process of reviewing their safeguarding children risk assessments and developing their plans within the context of the overarching corporate plan.

Below is a table of the identified potential risks to the safety of children and young people involved with Clare County Council services and the steps taken to manage the risks of abuse or harm.

"Harm is defined in the Children First Act 2015 as, 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 a child,

whether caused by a single act, omission or circumstance or a series of combination of acts, omissions or circumstances, or otherwise"

A child is anyone under 18 years of age, excluding a person who is or has been married.

Risk Assessment Framework Part 2

The table below sets out the identified risks to the safety of children and young people, involved with or in contact with, Clare County Council services and the steps taken to minimise the risk of harm.

These risks are relevant to Council services.

Responsibility is placed on the external providers of relevant services either working in partnership with or who are resourced by the Council and in contact with children, to manage the risk issues relevant to them and to take steps to minimise the risk of harm to children.

*Rank: L = Low, M =Medium, H = High

Potential risk/harm to children	*Rank: L,M,H	Current controls- procedure in place to manage risk	Future actions required- by corporate level .Post audit
1. A named person is not appointed to ensure implementation of the Act (Children First Act 2015)	L	A named persons group has been identified. The details of these persons are known to all Clare County Council (CCC) Staff members and volunteers, contractors and funded groups and agencies	Ensure the named persons group is aware of their responsibilities and that they provide 6 monthly reports to the Council's management team on implementation and compliance with the Act and the Children First national guidance.
2. A declaration of guiding principles in safeguarding is not in place	L	The guiding principles for safeguarding children are contained within the CCC Child Safeguarding Statement and within the CCC Policy and Procedures for the Protection and Safeguarding of Children January 2025	Ensure all staff members, volunteers and contracted individuals or bodies are aware of the guiding principles.
3. Key child safeguarding personnel are not in place, including designated liaison persons (DLP) and mandated persons	L	Designated liaison persons and Deputy liaison persons are in place. Mandated persons are also known and identified	Ensure the safeguarding structure is established and populated by appropriately trained and experienced personnel.
4. Contact details for DLPs and mandated persons are not known	L	Contact details for DLPs and mandated persons are within the CCC Policy and Procedures for the Protection and Safeguarding of Children document and on line on the CCC website under Safeguarding Children	Ensure the safeguarding children communications plan is implemented Action as above

Potential risk/harm to children identified	*R an Current controls- procedure in place to manage	Future actions required-by corporate level. Post Audit
5. DLP roles are not clearly understood by all Staff members	L All staff members and volunteers have received briefing information in respect of the role and	Ensure the safeguarding children training plan is implemented.
6. Mandated persons roles are not clearly understood by all Staff members	L All staff members and volunteers have received briefing information in respect of the role and function of the mandated persons	As above in 5
7. A procedure for maintaining a list of mandated persons is not in place	L A procedure for maintaining a list of mandated persons is in place and is held by the DLP	The relevant person oversees this process
8. Risk of harm of a child if procedures are not in place for reporting child protection or welfare concerns – allegations, suspicions, concerns or knowledge in respect of child abuse are not reported appropriately	L A revised version of the CCC Safeguarding Children Policy Procedure document is in place which is Children First The revised document is CCC Policy and Procedures for the Protection and Safeguarding January 2025	Ensure that the management team receives regular 6 monthly reports in respect of the status of compliance with Children First. Reference 1. Above
9. Risk of harm of a child if staff are not aware of the need to report if reasonable grounds for concern are deemed to exist in respect of a child	L All staff members have access the CCC Policy and Procedures the Protection and Children January 2025. In addition they have completed Children First module on the Website or received an equivalent in house briefing	The safeguarding children training plan has been implemented
10. Risk of harm of a child if procedures are not in place for information sharing and recording of all child protection or welfare concerns, including those which initially do not meet reasonable grounds for concern	L Children First compliant procedures are in place for recording all child protection or welfare concerns in respect children and young people. This process is managed by the persons group	Ensure regular 6 monthly reports are received from the Named Persons Group. DLP to provide to NPG relevant case numbers only
11. Risk of harm of a child if a policy is not in place for responding to information requests on behalf of children/ young people referenced in protection and welfare reports	M A policy will be in place for responding to information requests on behalf of children/young people referenced in protection and welfare reports	Ensure this policy is established

Potential risk/harm to children identified	* R Current controls- procedure in place to manage risk	Future actions required-by corporate level. Post audit
12. Risk of harm to a child if a policy on confidentiality is not in place	L A policy in respect of confidentiality is in place	Ensure the relevance of this policy to safeguarding children is reviewed at a minimum every 2 years
13. Risk of harm to a child if guidance to respond to children who disclose abuse is not included in child safeguarding procedures	L Guidance is in place within CCC January 2025 document on responding to children who disclose abuse	Ensure all staff members and contracted Individuals or bodies are aware this guidance . To be actioned by line managers
14. Risk of harm to a child if procedures for responding to adult disclosures of childhood abuse where it is identified there may be a current risk to a child are not in place	L Procedures are in place in CCC Policy and Procedures for the Protection and Safeguarding of Children January 2025 document for responding to adult disclosures of childhood abuse where there may be a current risk to a child	Ensure all staff members, volunteers and contracted individuals or bodies are aware of the Guidance. As in 13 above
15. Risk of harm to a child if procedures are not in place for responding to child abuse allegations against staff and volunteers	L These procedures are in place and referenced within the CCC Policy and Procedures for the Protection and Safeguarding of Children January 2025 document	Ensure all staff members , volunteers and contracted bodies are aware of the Procedures. As in 13 above
16. Risk of harm to a child if no procedure for responding to a concern made against a child or person who is in contact with the organisation	L These procedures are in place and referenced within the CCC Policy and Procedures for the Protection and Safeguarding of Children January 2025 document	Ensure all staff members , volunteers and contracted individuals or bodies are aware of the Procedures. As in 13 above
17. Risk of harm to a child if a “Whistle Blowing” policy is not in place to report concerns externally if staff are inhibited, for any reasons, in reporting a concern internally	L A Protected Disclosures of Information Policy is in place	Ensure that the relevance of this policy in respect of safeguarding children should be reviewed at a minimum of every 2 years .

Potential risk/harm to children identified	*R an	Current controls- procedure in place to manage	Future actions required- by corporate level. Post audit
18. Risk of harm to a child if a safe recruitment and selection procedure is not in place with regard to a person's suitability to work with children /young people	L	Safe recruitment procedures are in place	HR to provide regular 6 monthly updates on the status of their compliance with Children First and safe recruitment procedures Garda vetting of relevant staff to be every 3 years .
19. The organisation does not have a training strategy for child safeguarding training based on a training needs analysis	M	An interim training plan for Child Safeguarding training is in place CCC. A training needs analysis in respect of safeguarding children outstanding	Ensure that a safeguarding Training Needs Analysis is complete
20. Child safeguarding training provided is not consistent with Children First national guidance 2017 and the Children First Act 2015	L	The Child Safeguarding training made available to staff members volunteers is consistent with First national guidance 2017 and Children First Act 2015	Ensure that all elements of the safeguarding children training plan are fully Implemented. HR to advise
21 Risk of harm to a child if members have not received Children First training relevant to their role in the organisation	L	Ensure staff members and volunteers will have received Child Safeguarding Training or briefings relevant to role in the organisation. This process will be tracked by relevant person and the HR	Ensure that the relevant person and HR provide regular updates As above in 20
22. A record of attendees of child safeguarding training is not held by the organisation	L	A record of attendees of Child Safeguarding training is held jointly by the named persons group and the HR service	As above in 20. Information to be accessible to line managers
23. Risk of harm to a child if policies and procedures are not in place to support safe management of activities involving children	L	CCC Policy and Procedures for Protection and Safeguarding of Children document January 2025 references procedures to the safe management of involving children. Health and Safety risk assessments are also completed reference Libraries	Ensure this is implemented internally and with external individuals and /or groups associated with Council services or facilities Recommended annual review
24. Risk of harm to a child if an accident/incident procedure is not in place for children/young people	L	Reference CCC Policy and Procedures for the Protection and Safeguarding of Children January 2025	As above in 23

Potential risk/harm to children identified	*Rank: L,M,H	Current controls-procedure in place to manage risk	Future actions required-by corporate level. Post audit
25. Risk of harm to a child if there is not a code of behaviour in place for staff members and volunteers which specifies acceptable and unacceptable practice with regard to interacting/working with children/young people	L	Reference CCC Policy and for the Protection and of Children January 2025 . In addition some of the services with regular contact with children and young people ,on a regular and/ or planned basis, have developed additional guidance and/or safeguarding children risk assessment plans for staff in their service area	Ensure all directorates are aware of the requirement to comply with this code of behaviour. Communication plan to highlight
26. Risk of harm to a child if there is not a code of behaviour in place for children/young people, in contact with services, which states the roles and responsibilities in place to encourage positive behaviour	L	Reference CCC Policy and Procedures for the Protection and Safeguarding of Children January 2025	Strategy required
27. Risk of harm to a child if the responsibility to report concerns that they have about a colleague's practice with children/young people is not clearly stated in policy	L	Reference CCC Policy and for the Protection and of Children January 2025 . Also addressed in Children First training	Ensure that all staff members, volunteers, contracted individuals or bodies are aware of these Procedures.
28. A disciplinary procedure is not in place	L	Disciplinary and Grievance in place.	Action by HR
29. A lone workers policy is not in place	L	Reference CCC Policy and for the Protection and of Children January 2025	Action by HR
30. A procedure to provide a copy of the child safeguarding policy declaration to parents/guardians upon request is not in place	M	Procedure actioned	This information is available in soft and/ or hard copy across all Council services and facilities

Potential risk/harm to children identified	*R an	Current controls- procedure in place to manage	Future actions required- by corporate level. Post audit
31. Risk of harm to a child if children and young people have not been made aware of their right to be protected, consulted and treated with respect	M	Children and young people will be made aware of their right to be protected, consulted and treated with respect	This information is available in soft and hard copy or hard copy across all Council services and facilities
32. An anti-bullying policy in respect of children and young people has not been developed	L	An anti -bullying policy in respect of children and young people has been developed and is referenced within the CCC Policy and Procedures for the Protection and Safeguarding of Children January 2025	Ensure this policy will be reviewed as part of the regular safeguarding children review process
33. A communications policy in respect of Child Safeguarding has not been developed	L	A communications policy in respect of Child Safeguarding is in place	Ensure this is implemented and reviewed at least every 2 years
34. A policy for working in partnership with parents/guardians has not been developed	M	A policy for working in partnership with parents/guardians is being developed.	Ongoing
35. A complaints policy is not in place	L	A complaints policy is in place	Child centred information system in place
36. Council staff delivering programmes to children in third party settings are not Children First compliant	L	Staff ensure prior agreement in place for any concerns that may arise	Guidance in policy and procedures
37. Grants to external bodies for children's events do not require details re Children First compliance	L	Council to ensure compliance	Event Booking Form in place.

Procedures

The Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with the requirements of 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, the following procedures support our intention to safeguard children while they are availing of our services :

- CCC anti-bullying policy
- CCC Online Safety for Children policy
- CCC CCTV policy
- CCC safe recruitment procedures including national Garda vetting procedures
- CCC procedure for maintaining a list of mandated persons
- CCC procedure for appointing a relevant person and named persons for the Children First Act
- CCC Code of Behaviour for staff members and volunteers with regard to their interactions with children and young people
- CCC Code of Behaviour for children and young people for when they are in contact with or availing of Council services and activities
- CCC Protected Disclosures of Information policy

- CCC Safeguarding Children training strategy and action plan
- CCC Safeguarding Children Communication plan
- CCC lone worker policy
- CCC confidentiality policy

All procedures and policies listed above are available on request or are available on Clare County Council's website.

Implementation

This Child Safeguarding Statement is now available on Clare County Council's website.

Clare County Council is committed to the implementation of the Child Safeguarding Statement and of the procedures that will support our intention to keep children and young people safe from abuse or harm while availing of or in contact with our services and activities.

This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed no later than 2 years from the date of issue of this document or as soon as possible if there has been a material change in any matter to which this statement refers.



Signed

**Carmel Kirby
Interim Chief Executive**

Dated: 20/01/2025