



CHILD WELFARE & SAFEGUARDING POLICY

REPORTING PROCEDURES

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5. Reporting procedures

The FAI, clubs, leagues and members shall treat all concerns reported under the Policy in a serious manner.

The Children first: National guidance for the Protection and welfare of children 2017 was used as a guidance for this section. Please see appendix 1 for a direct link to this national guidance

5.1 All FAI Staff and Volunteers, Participants, Clubs, League, members & parents (included Mandated persons- see section 3) should follow the procedures outlined in this section when they have a reasonable grounds of concern that a child has been, is being or is at risk of being abused, harmed or neglected. Mandated persons have further responsibilities as outlined in section 3.

5.2 Persons who may be involved:

The following people may be involved in reporting allegations, concerns or disclosure of abuse:

- a) Designated liaison persons- the person who fulfil this role is detailed in section 3 of the policy, their details will be provided on the relevant organisations Child Safeguarding Statement.
- b) Childrens officer- their details will be provided on the relevant organisations Child Safeguarding statement as the relevant person for the statement.
- c) Mandated persons- as outlined in section 3
- d) FAI Child Welfare & Safeguarding Manager (Designated Liaison Person for FAI staff and FAI volunteers) & FAI Child Welfare & Safeguarding department.
- e) External mandated persons- as outlined in section 3

5.3 All FAI Staff, FAI Volunteers, Mandated persons, Participants (defined in the glossary), Clubs, League, members & parents who have reasonable grounds for concerns that a Child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected are advised to immediately inform the relevant Designated Liaison Person (or deputy Designated liaison Person) of their Club, League and Member body. If this is not possible then the participant can report their concern directly to the Statutory Authorities (information within appendix 1). The FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Department can be contacted for advice on procedures in line with the policy. TUSLA can also be contacted for informal consultation. The priority in all cases is the safety and wellbeing of the Child and all necessary steps should be taken to protect the Child.

5.4 The Designated Liaison Person should record all concerns or allegations brought to their attention.

5.5 Once a Designated Liaison Person make a report to a Statutory Authorities in relation to a participant (as set out in the glossary), they should notify the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager, Child Welfare and Safeguarding department if the manager is not available.

5.6 If, as a Designated Liaison Person, you decided not to report a concern to Statutory Authorities, the following steps should be taken;

- » The reasons for not reporting should be recorded
- » Any actions taken as a result of the concern should be recorded
- » The employee or volunteer who raised the concern should be given a clear written explanation of the reasons why the concern is not being reported.
- » The employee or volunteer should be advised that if they remain concerned about the situation, they are

free to make a report to Statutory Authorities themselves at any time and should notify the Designated Liaison Persons if they have done so.

5.7 If there are concerns about a Child but the Designated Liaison Person is unsure if it should be reported to Tusla, it may be useful to contact Tusla to informally discuss the concern. This provides an opportunity to discuss the query in general and to decide whether a formal report of the concern to Tusla is appropriate at this stage.

5.8 The Designated Liaison Person should always consider any internal action which may be necessary whether they decide to report or not report the matter.

5.9 As highlighted Employees or others engaged by the FAI who are advised, suspect or are concerned that a Child may be at risk of abuse are obliged to immediately inform the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager (the Designated person for the FAI) or the other members of the Child Welfare & Safeguarding department if the Manager is not available, in line with the FAI Child Safeguarding Statement. The priority in all cases is the safety and wellbeing of the child. Should an employee choose to report a matter directly to TUSLA they should also report it to the Child Welfare & Safeguarding department to ensure other precautionary measures can be taken. When reporting the matter the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding manager will do so as a mandated report, however a mandated person can make a non-mandated report if the concern does not meet the threshold of harm.

5.10 In the event of an emergency where a Child is believed to be in immediate danger and Tusla cannot be contacted then the Gardaí should be contacted.

5.11 In cases where there is deemed to be a serious risk to Children the Designated Liaison Person may issue a precautionary Stand Down Order in line with the Policy. Please see section 8 for more details.

5.12 Reports can be made to Tusla via their online portal, the link is available in appendix 1, by telephone or in writing - including by email- to the local duty service in the area where the Child lives. Details can be found on the Tusla website which is also available in the appendix 1. It is important that the report reaches TUSLA as soon as possible.

5.13 To help Tusla staff assess the reasonable concern, they need all relevant information. Observations should be accurately recorded and should include dates, times, names, locations, context and any other information that may be relevant. **It is not the role of the Designated Liaison Person to investigate the circumstances of an allegation of abuse prior to informing the Statutory Authorities.** It should be ensured that all relevant information is recorded and provided to the Statutory Authorities.

5.14 Parents/carers of a Child who is a suspected victim of abuse should be advised that a report is being made unless doing so is likely to endanger the Child.

5.15 Reports received anonymously should be taken seriously and relevant enquiries made to establish if there is any substance to the complaint. The welfare of the Child is a priority in all cases.

5.16 Children who are being abused may hint that they are being harmed and sometimes make disclosures. Disclosures should always be believed and reported to the relevant Designated Liaison Person without delay. The person to whom the child is making the disclosure should follow the procedure outlined in the Safeguarding 1 basic awareness training.

5.17 Any request to keep information anonymous cannot be guaranteed.

5.18 Anonymous Concern

Whilst difficult to pursue, anonymous complaints should not be ignored. Anonymous complaints brought to the attention of the Designated Liaison Person should be looked into fully, based on the information that has been provided. The review should be completed without prejudice to any person and it should be explained to all parties that there is an obligation to review all matters reported. Where necessary, having carefully considered all of the facts, a report to the Statutory Authorities may be submitted.

5.19 Joint reporting

A mandated person can make a report jointly with another person, whether that person is also a mandated person or not. An example of this could be the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding manager and a club Designated Liaison person. A mandated person should be aware that the legal obligations under the Children First Act 2015 to report mandated concerns rest with the mandated person and not with the designated liaison person. Where mandated persons share the same concern or information, only one person is required to report, or they can report jointly. A clear decision on who will report the concern if not jointly and all parties should be kept informed. Reporting forms can be found in Appendix 8 or link to the Tusla online portal within appendix 1

5.20 Dealing with a retrospective allegation

Some adults may disclose abuse that took place during their childhood. You should report this information to Tusla, as the alleged abuser may pose a current risk to children. If you have a reasonable concern about past abuse, you should report it to Tusla using the retrospect reporting form. A link to forms for Retrospective abuse report can be found within appendix 1. All retrospective abuse concerns must also be reported in line with the above reporting procedure and the Designated Liaison Person informed without delay.

Internal precautionary measures such as Stand Down Orders will also be applicable.

5.21 Reporting Peer Abuse.

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.

5.22 Missing Children

If a Child is believed to be missing, efforts should be made to first establish the Child's whereabouts by contacting the parents/carers. If the Child's location cannot be established and/or the parents/carers are not available and reasonable efforts have been made to contact them the matter should be reported to the Gardaí urgently.

5.23 Protection from civil liability for persons reporting concerns of child abuse in good faith:

a) Section 16 (3) of the Children First Act, 2015: If a Mandated Person furnishes any information (including a report), document or thing to the Agency pursuant to a request made under subsection (1), the furnishing of that information, document or thing shall not give rise to any civil liability in contract, tort or otherwise and nor shall the information, document or thing be admissible as evidence against that person in any civil or criminal proceedings.

b) Section 3 Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998: Legislation makes provision for the protection from civil liability of persons who have communicated Child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to designated officers of Tusla or to any member of An Garda Síochána. This protection

applies to organisations as well as to individuals. This means that even if a communicated suspicion of Child abuse proves unfounded, a plaintiff who took an action would have to prove that the person who communicated the concern had not acted reasonably and in good faith in making the report.

5.24 How Reports shall be managed

- (a) Once a report is received it shall be reviewed by the relevant Designated Liaison Person. The Designated Liaison Person shall determine if a report needs to be made to the relevant Authorities following the above information. If not, please follow procedure outlined in 5.5 of the policy.
- (b) The Designated Liaison Person should issue a Stand Down order once a report to a statutory body has been made and notify the FAI in line with section 8 of the policy.
- (c) Record keeping is very important to ensure all steps taken have been recorded and the reasons why those steps have been taken.
- (d) All records should be kept in line with General Data Protection Regulations.
- (e) No enquiry is to proceed if a Statutory Investigation is under way as it may affect that investigation. Once any Statutory Investigation is completed the Designated Liaison Person shall follow the above step.
- (f) Any report made directly to the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager or Child Welfare and Safeguarding department shall be assessed and if assessed as not reaching the threshold of harm or a reasonable grounds for concern, then the FAI child Welfare and Safeguarding manager will carry out the steps outlined in 5.5 of the policy and also, if deemed more appropriate, it shall be remitted to the Designated Children's Officer of the Club, League and Member for consideration as per FAI Concern and complaint section 6.
- (g) If a mandated person has made a direct report to TUSLA, the mandated person should notify the Designated Liaison person of their organisation (FAI, Club, League, Member) to ensure the above steps are completed.

5.25 False/Malicious Allegations

False or malicious allegations are deemed to be a serious breach of the Policy and the FAI Regulations. This may result in disciplinary action being taken and may constitute an offence under relevant legislation.



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