**Children First Considerations – Provision of On-line Lessons**

**Introduction**
Organisations and individuals are increasingly providing on-line lessons and tutoring to students. The following document is designed to assist organisations and individuals in considering their child safeguarding responsibilities and how they can reflect the principles of Children First when providing on line lessons. It is not an exhaustive list and each organisation will need to consider carefully their own online service provision.

The following areas can be considered from a child safeguarding perspective when providing on line lessons to students:

**Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures:**

* Are you a relevant service under the Children First Act 2015?
* If yes, consider your Child Safeguarding Statement (CSS), risk assessment and accompanying procedures. Do they reflect the provision of online lessons? A CSS is to be reviewed every 24 months or sooner if there is a material change to the relevant service. Does the CSS and risk assessment need to be updated? Relevant services should have a procedure for online safety which should be considered.
* If you are not a relevant service. Do you have Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures which reflect the provision of online safety?
* Reporting Procedure- a child may disclose child welfare or abuse concerns or you may see/hear something which requires to be reported to Tusla. Consider your reporting procedure and how it operates when providing online lessons and consider the role of the DLP.
* Mandated Persons need to continue to be aware of their mandated reporting requirements
* If you are not a mandated person you still have a responsibility to report to Tusla if you are concerned about the safety of the welfare of children.
* Do you have an acceptable internet/social media/communication with young person’s policy? It is essential that you ensure the personal data of teacher and students is not shared. The organisation will need to address in their policies the sharing and storing of images and ensure that all child protection and welfare/GDPR legislation is adhered to.

**Planning**

* Will it be one to one or a virtual classroom situation?
* Have you permission from your Organisation/ Management to deliver online lessons? Do not operate outside of your organisations guidance/instruction.
* Do all the students have access to a suitable devices or could some students be excluded?
* Is the device for the teacher and students an organisation issued device or personal device? Consider any risks associated with using personal devices.
* What is the system for delivery of the lesson and its level of internet security and safety including privacy settings? This must be agreed by your service and instruction offered on its use. Any privacy breaches of the communication system must have an agreed method of reporting within your organisation.
* Is it live video and audio for teacher and can students can students see and hear the other students? Consider if a lesson could be recorded and sent to the students so that it is not live. Consider that all sessions be one way sessions with screen sharing options disabled.
* Ensure the lessons are age and developmentally appropriate and that thought is given to the amount of screen time needed to participate.

**Parental engagement, consent and role**

* You would need comprehensive engagement with parents so they are fully aware of the process and can give full consent. If it is an email based programme it is advisable to go through the parents’ email.
* The questions below should be explored with parents so that everyone is clear on the process and expectations.
	+ Where will student be taking the lesson in their own home. E.g could it be their bedroom?
	+ Who will be supervising the children at home while the lesson is on?
	+ Agreement on children and staff behaviour and establishment of ground rules with parents and children and the organisation.
	+ Boundaries to be agreed regarding how the students and/or parents contact the teacher with questions that may arise after the session.
	+ If there are behaviour issues during the lesson how will these be addressed with parents?
	+ If parents want to speak with the teacher/organisation how will this be facilitated?
	+ Agree standardised record keeping of the lesson for the teacher.
	+ If the child is unwell they must not be expected to participate in the session.
	+ Parents and young persons (where appropriate) must be advised that these online lessons will be offered as part of the Organisations service and therefore all relevant child safeguarding policies and procedures will apply.
	+ If Parents or young persons are unhappy or have a concern regarding the online interactions with staff/volunteers/coaches they must be advised whom they can contact. This could be for example the DLP of the organisation?

**Tusla Resources**

* The [Tusla Web Portal](https://portal.tusla.ie/Account/Login?ReturnUrl=%2f) is safest and most secure method of reporting to Tusla. If you wish to consult or speak to a Tusla social worker a list of local departments is available on the Tusla website.
* In an emergency, out of hours or if you cannot contact Tusla contact An Garda Siochana without delay. Never leave a child in danger.
* Tusla has a range of [**general guidance and support documents**](https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/support-documents/) designed to assist organisations in their implementation of Children First. These are available on the Tusla website and your child safeguarding policies and procedures should reflect the guidance therein.
* Tusla has an online Children First training programme available on the Tusla website. <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/children-first-e-learning-programme/>

**Department of Education and Science**

* The Department of Education has issued a document called ‘*Guidance on Continuity of Schooling’* for Teachers. This is available on the Department Website. <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/guidance-on-continuity-of-schooling.pdf>
* The Professional Development Service for Teachers have created a short one-hour course aimed at helping teachers to teach and support online learning.  This is referenced in the above document and a link to same is provided on their website.