



Children First Considerations- Provision of lessons/services online to children

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Aim

- To provide information on Children First in the context of providing lessons/services on-line
- Each individual/organisations must consider their own policies and procedures
- Seek support from national funding body e.g. HSE, NYCI, Sports Council etc.

Legislation/Policy Context

Legislation & Guidance

- Children First Act 2015
- National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012-2016
- Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012
- Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children
- Tusla – Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice

Key provisions Children First Act 2015

- Child Safeguarding Statement, Risk Assessment and Specified Procedures
- Mandated Persons

Children First Guidance 2017

The Children First Guidance 2017 was amended to include a specific reference to the need to consider online safety in the context of completing Child Safeguarding Statements.

DCYA - Amendment to Children First National Guidance 2017

Online lessons/services

Safeguarding Procedures

- Are you a relevant service under the Children First Act 2015
- If you are not a relevant service do you have Child Safeguarding Procedures?
- Do your procedures reflect internet/social media/communication with young person's policy?
- Consider GDPR – consent, sharing/storing images and personal data.

Reporting Procedure

- Organisations Reporting Procedure is key
 - a child may disclose child welfare or abuse; or you may see/hear something which requires to be reported to Tusla (AGS in emergency/Out of Hours)
 - Consider your organisations reporting procedure and how it operates when providing online lessons and consider the role of the DLP
 - Mandated Persons – how do you report?

Online Lessons

Planning online lessons/service

Give time to preparing and ensure you consider:-

- Seek organisations permission/support
- Agree device & platform you will use
- Ensure suitable location for delivery
- Consider privacy and having one way sessions
- Will session be out of hours- consider organisational support – manager on call if issues arise
- Ratios of staff to children

Child Factors

Consider the following:-

- Age of child
- Development of child and capacity to engage online
- No. of children – can children engage with each other online?
- Limitations of online – acknowledge difference of F2F
- Agree ground rules e.g. behaviour
- Plan how you will manage if child becomes upset/leaves room etc.
- What if child makes a disclosure & how you will respond
- How can child make a complaint

Parental factors

Consider the following:

- Engage with and seek full consent from parents
- Arrange through parents email if possible
- Be clear around purpose of online sessions
- Explain that it is offered by organisation and that safeguarding procedures apply inc. reporting concerns
- Explore expectations of parents
- Explore expectations of provider
- Discuss how you keep parents appropriately informed – agree in advance when & what feedback parents can expect.
- Agree location/times where child will take lessons/sessions

Parental Factors condnt.

- Discuss privacy and whether parents remain in room
- Agree with parents and child ground rules and boundaries for child and provider
- Explore with parents how issues will be dealt with e.g. behavioural issues
- Have clear arrangements in place if parent needs to contact you afterwards
- If parents have a concern who do they contact
- Record Keeping – how will records be maintained
- How will organisation deal with complaints
- Schedule regular reviews

Informing the family that a report is being made

- Working in partnership with parents is key
- It is good practice to tell the family that a report is being made and the reasons for the decision. This can be done by the DLP or jointly with mandated person
- Children First Act 2015 does not require you to inform the family:
 - if by doing so the child will be placed at further risk or
 - where the family's knowledge of the report could impair Tusla's ability to carry out a risk assessment.
 - if you reasonably believe that by doing so it may place you at risk of harm from the family.

Children First: National Guidance 2017

Tusla

Tusla Web Portal

- **The Web Portal should be used for sending both CPWRF's and RARF's to Tusla**
- **Benefits of using the Web Portal:**
 - Safe and secure for reporter and Tusla
 - Timely – gets to DCP quickly & can transfer to another DCP
 - Automatic acknowledgement (>24h contact DCP)
 - Increases data quality – some mandatory fields & prompts
 - Reduces likelihood of errors – e.g. errors on forms/ sent to wrong address
 - Detailed user guides within the Portal to assist reporters
 - Increased auditability within Tusla (e.g. when report was received/opened/actioned)
 - Support available portalsupport@tusla.ie

Tusla Portal

- To use the Tusla Portal, individuals will first need to create a user account <https://portal.tusla.ie/>
- To do this they need an email address and a mobile phone number to receive a verification pin.
- This login verification guarantees the security of all user access.
- The Dedicated Contact Point's (DCP's) review Portal submissions on Mon-Fri 9-5.
- Outside of this, in an emergency, contact An Garda Síochána and/or Mandated Persons' Tusla OOH line (0818)776-315

Reporting to Tusla

- Informal Consultation
- Tusla Out of Hours – Mandated Person phone number **Tel: 0818776315**
- Acknowledgement from DCP
- Feedback to Reporters
- Anonymous Reports
- Role of Gardaí
- Retrospective Abuse

Reports Received by Tusla 2019

- 56,561 referrals received in 2017 (+ 3% from 2018)
- 24,827 cases open to social work at end of 2019
- 2,186 referrals to National Out of Hours Service
- 24,828 children received a Family Support Service
- 2, 320 Meitheal processes requested (+ 34% 2018)

Additional Resources

- Be Safe Online: Ireland's Official Online Safety Hub [Government of Ireland]
- www.webwise.ie
- www.hotline.ie
- www.watchyourspace.ie
- https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Tusla_Child_Protection_Handbook2.pdf

Tusla Children First Elearning Programme

- English link - <http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/children-first-e-learning-programme>
- Irish link - <https://childrenfirstuniversal.hseland.ie/ga/>