

## **Child Protection**

### **1.1. Introduction**

The Environmental Education of An Taisce was set up in 1993 and runs a wide range of education and awareness raising projects, both national and international. In the delivery of these programmes, An Taisce staff work closely with adults/teachers, young people and children.

**An Taisce accepts that in matters concerning child protection, the welfare of the young person always takes priority.**

#### Policy Statement

An Taisce is committed to a child-centred approach to working with children and young people and undertakes to provide a safe environment and experience wherein the welfare of the child is paramount. In adherence with recommendations in *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2011* (Department of Children and Youth Affairs revised 2017), and *Our Duty to Care: The principles of good practice for the protection of children and young people* (Department of Health and Children 2002), An Taisce has implemented Child Protection procedures covering:

- Recruitment and staff selection.
- Management and supervision of staff.
- A code of behaviour for all staff.
- Reporting of suspected or disclosed abuse.
- Involvement of primary carers.
- Allegations of misconduct or abuse carried out by staff.
- Incidents and accidents.
- Complaints and comments.

Confidentiality

#### Definitions

##### General

For the purposes of this policy and procedures document:

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- 'the organisation' means An Taisce – the National Trust for Ireland
- 'employee' means anyone engaged in the delivery of An Taisce programmes in either a paid or voluntary capacity.
- 'child/children' includes any person(s) under the age of 18 (in line with the Child Care Act, 1991 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child).
- 'young person/people' Also refers to a child/children.
- 'HSE' means the Health Services Executive.

#### Definition of Child Abuse

Child abuse occurs when the behaviour of someone in a position of greater power than a child or young person abuses that power and causes harm to that child or young person.

Child abuse, as referred to in this document, is categorised into four groups:

1. Emotional abuse
2. Physical Abuse
3. Sexual Abuse
4. Neglect

#### *Emotional abuse:*

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe adverse effects on the child's emotional development. Emotional abuse may occur in the relationship between a caregiver and child.

#### *Physical abuse:*

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury, or injury resulting from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child; e.g. shaking a child, excessive force.

#### *Sexual abuse:*

Sexual abuse occurs where a child is used by another person for his or her gratification for sexual arousal or for that of others.

Indirect sexual abuse of children occurs where children have been photographed, videotaped or filmed for pornographic purposes or subjected to gross and obscene language or indecent images.

#### *Neglect:*

Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission. It is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs such as is likely to result in significant harm or impaired development.

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point.

Examples of abuse through neglect might include:

- a child suffering a series of minor injuries as a result of not being properly supervised or protected;
- a child failing to achieve normal growth through due to inadequate provision of nutrition;
- a child consistently missing school due to bullying, deprivation of intellectual stimulation and/or lack of support.

## **1.2. Policy Aims and Objectives**

### Scope

This policy extends to all An Taisce employees, including Unit directors, programme managers, paid employees and volunteers. All An Taisce employees must be sensitive to the vulnerability of children and must act in a responsible manner at all times.

This document is designed in particular for those employees who have contact with children in the normal course of their duties. As most An Taisce employees do not have expertise in the area of child protection, this document aims to provide guidance on appropriate behaviour around children, as well as direction on procedures to be followed if physical, sexual, emotional or neglect abuse is suspected.

All employees will be asked to read this policy and to indicate their understanding of:

- the procedures outlined herein and
- their responsibilities pertaining to child protection.

Independent contractors working with or on behalf of An Taisce will be made aware of this policy and the procedures in operation for child protection where appropriate and will be asked to confirm that they will implement and adhere to the policy and procedures.

The policy and procedures laid out in this document are supplementary to, and should be read in conjunction with, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government's Child Protection Guidelines; and are in keeping with the "*Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011*" published by the Department of Health and Children.

### Locations

This policy document aims to assist An Taisce employees in minimising the possibility of any sort of harm coming to children who participate in an Taisce programmes when they are:

- on An Taisce premises or at the site of an An Taisce property;
- in their own school grounds; or
- visiting a site that is not one of the above (e.g. a woodland, beach or bog which is the property of another agency or individual).
- online (e.g. virtual workshop, conference, webinar, social media)

Detailed procedures for specific locations are set out in Section 6 below.

### Authority and responsibility

#### Roles

The relevant An Taisce Programme Manager is responsible for ensuring that staff recruitment and training procedures in relation to child protection are carried out in accordance with this policy and procedures document.

The Human Resources Manager is currently the designated Liaison Person (by the Garda Vetting Unit) and is responsible for overseeing the Garda Vetting process for employees and volunteers who come into contact with children or vulnerable adults during the course of their normal duties for the organisation; and for the escalation of any resultant irregularity, in line with An Taisce's Garda Vetting Policy.

It is the responsibility of all An Taisce employees to ensure that they have read and understood this policy and procedures document. Where appropriate, any external organisations subcontracted to work on behalf of An Taisce must be made aware of these guidelines by their manager.

Institutionally-designated responsible adults/teachers must accompany children participating in An Taisce activities, e.g. teachers, parents or guardians; and retain primary responsibility for each child in their care and on whose behalf the appropriate registration forms were signed by them where relevant. Responsible adults/teachers have a duty to inform An Taisce employees of any medical or other condition relating to participating children, which they may need to know in the interests of the child and the group.

#### Best Practice

An Taisce will ensure that all employees:

- Are familiar with An Taisce Child Protection Policy and Procedures and Safeguarding Statement.

- Are aware of their obligations and have signed and returned the Acknowledgement Form to indicate their understanding of the Organisation's Policy.
- Have been adequately screened during the recruitment process and through the Garda Vetting service where appropriate.
- Participate in recognised Child Protection awareness training, where appropriate.
- Will apply the practice and procedures outlined in their training.
- Undertake First Aid training and hold valid First Aid certificates.
- Keep a First Aid kit on hand at all times when in An Taisce of programme participants.
- Put the safety and welfare of children first at all times.
- Provide, to the best of their ability, a safe and positive experience for children participating in An Taisce programmes.
- Keep a written record of any incident involving a child or children participating in any An Taisce programmes, and also a record of any action taken in response.

### **1.3. Recruitment**

#### General

In line with An Taisce's policy on Recruitment and Selection, all reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that staff recruited to An Taisce are suited to the tasks required of them. Thorough selection procedures will be applied regardless of the applicant's identity and/or the basis of employment (i.e. full/part time, contract or voluntary).

All candidates for positions involving working with children will undergo an interview process which will involve questioning related to their suitability to work with children. At least two references will be checked and will specifically be asked about the candidate's character and any history of working with children.

Candidates must complete and sign a self-declaration form which will ask them to declare any relevant information in relation to their suitability to work with children. They must also give their written consent to undergo Garda Vetting by An Taisce or another relevant organisation if required.

#### Garda Vetting

All newly hired employees will be vetted through the Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU) if it is determined that they will come into contact with children or vulnerable adults in the course of their normal duties. The vetting process will be completed before any such contact occurs and/or permanent employment is confirmed. Any issue arising from the vetting process will be managed in line with An Taisce's Garda Vetting guidelines.

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All employees must agree to comply with any requests for vetting whether conducted by the An Taisce administration or from relevant organisations registered with the Garda Vetting Unit.

It should be noted that previous vetting for any other organisation does not preclude relevant employees from the need to comply with this procedure.

Kayleigh Mulvey , HR Manager and Lukasz Krzywon are the designated Garda Vetting Liaisons for all matters related to vetting for An Taisce.

#### 1.4 Joint Agreements

##### A.

Joint agreement A, will set out the arrangement that An Taisce is vetting the employee on behalf of the relevant organisation they will be working with and that An Taisce will provide a copy of the vetting disclosure obtained for that employee. Joint agreements will be provided as standard by An Taisce but may be amended by the other relevant organisation if agreed by both parties.

Joint Agreement B, will set out the arrangement Schools and other relevant organisations may instead request that they carry out the vetting themselves. Employees must be willing to undergo vetting by relevant organisations upon request. The vetting disclosure in this case should then be shared between the school and An Taisce.

This agreement applies to vetting carried out under the old vetting procedures and also applies to e-vetting applications under Section 12 3 of the National Vetting Bureau (Children & Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 – 2016. The Act states that where 2 or more relevant organisations jointly agree in writing to the employment, contracting, permitting or placement of a person to undertake relevant work or activities, it shall be a defence in any proceedings brought against a person for an offence under subsection (2) to show that another relevant organisation who was party to the agreement received a vetting disclosure in respect of the employment, contract, permission or placement of the person concerned

A joint agreement declaration will be provided to the school by An Taisce. Joint agreements must include details related to confidentiality of the disclosure of the employee. A relevant person must be nominated and the disclosure should only be shared with the relevant person within the organisation. It must be stored securely and deleted or destroyed following the end of the joint agreement.

Where appropriate, employees will be vetted every two years.

#### Volunteers and Interns

Volunteers are expected to comply with the policies and procedures of the organisation and to adhere to its ethos.

It is a mandatory requirement that volunteers be Garda vetted by An Taisce if they meet with the same group of children more than three times in any 12 month period, regardless of whether they have previously been Garda vetted by any other organisation.

**Volunteers will receive adequate supervision throughout the course of their duties and their ongoing suitability to their roles will continue to be monitored. An Taisce may, at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate volunteer relationships with the organisation**

## **1.5. Management and Supervision**

### Management

An Taisce staff will adhere to clear lines of supervision and reportage. Staff working off-site will maintain regular contact with their Line/Programme Managers.

All Staff will:

- Be made aware of the organisation's code of conduct, policy and procedures in relation to Child Protection, and the identity and role of the Designated Child Protection Representatives.
- Read and sign the Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding Statement Acknowledgement Form.
- Undertake Child Protection training where appropriate.
- Receive an adequate level of supervision and review of their work practices.

### Training

An Taisce will provide all employees who come into contact with children during the normal course of their duties with appropriate training to equip them with the skills and knowledge to effectively intervene where necessary in the protection of a child/children. Such training will be provided on an ongoing basis.

Training provided will adhere to the principles set out in the Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2017), and the Children First Act.

Employees will be trained in the recognition of signs of abuse and what immediate action to take. In addition, the training programme will ensure that employees:

- are equipped with appropriate skills, knowledge and values to deliver an effective service to children;
- are aware of relevant legislation, national guidelines, and local child protection procedures and protocols;

- are able to translate learning into a better service for children and families in collaboration with other service providers;
- maintain relationships with other agencies.

#### **1.4. Code of conduct**

##### General

- All children must be treated with equal respect; favouritism is not acceptable.
- Employees should be sensitive to the implications of becoming too involved with, or spending a lot of time with any one child.
- Under no circumstances should an An Taisce employee or volunteer be the only adult/teacher present when working with children. If an emergency situation arises where it is necessary to be alone with a child or group of children, another responsible adult/teacher should be informed immediately, by telephone if necessary.
- If an employee provides transport for a programme participant there should be two or more participants in the car. Any transport should only be provided with the full knowledge and consent of the young person's parents or guardians.
- The ratio of adult/teacher leaders to participants is important when undertaking certain activities. There should be at least one adult/teacher to every ten participants and a minimum of two adults/teachers per group including a responsible adult/teacher designated by the school or group from which the children originate. This number may need to be varied in accordance with the ability of the participants.
- Employees must never physically punish or be verbally abusive to a young person.
- Personnel should not engage in or tolerate any behaviour – verbal, psychological or physical – that could be construed as bullying or abusive.
- Under no circumstances should an An Taisce employees give alcohol, tobacco or drugs to children or young people.
- Alcohol, tobacco or drugs must not be used by An Taisce employees who are supervising or working with children or young people.
- Only age-appropriate language, material on media products (such as camera phones, internet, video) and activities should be used when working with children and young people. Sexually explicit or pornographic material is never acceptable.
- Images such as photos or video recordings of children may not be taken without prior written consent of the school or guardian. Such written consent must be



retained by Programme Managers, and a copy may be retained where appropriate by An Taisce Programme Officers.

### Respect for Physical Integrity

The physical integrity of children and young people must be respected at all times. Attempts should also be made to develop an attitude among young people that respects the personal space, safety and privacy of their peers.

Personnel must not engage in inappropriate physical contact of any kind – including rough physical play, physical reprimand and horseplay (tickling, wrestling). This should not prevent appropriate contact in situations where it is necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of a child (for example, where a child is distressed).

If in the delivery of an An Taisce programme, an employee needs to demonstrate a physical action by touch, the employee should first explain by words what they are about to do and then ask the child if they can show them before demonstrating the action.

Children with Special Needs or Disabilities Children with special needs or disability may depend on adults/teachers more than other children for their care and safety, and so sensitivity and clear communication are particularly important.

Any care task of a personal nature which a child or young person can do for themselves should not be undertaken by an An Taisce employee. In an emergency situation where this type of help is required, parents should be fully informed as soon as is reasonably possible. In carrying out such personal care tasks, sensitivity must be shown to the child and the tasks should be undertaken with the utmost discretion.

### Vulnerable Children

Workers should be aware that vulnerable children may be more likely than other children to be bullied or subjected to other forms of abuse and may also be less clear about physical and emotional boundaries.

It is particularly important that vulnerable children should be carefully listened to, in recognition of the fact that they may have difficulty in expressing their concerns and in order that the importance of what they say is not underestimated.

## **1.5. Site Specific Procedures**

An Taisce property (e.g. Foster Place/ Tailors Hall)

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When working at an An Taisce property staff will ensure that:

- the official registration form or attendance book is completed and stored in the appropriate place, for the individual, group or groups attending the premises before they use the facilities of the premises;
- they respond appropriately to any information pertaining to the medical or other conditions of the participants that may be given to them by the accompanying responsible adult/teacher;
- they note the total number of participants that attend on the day of the visit;
- the total number of participants (not including supervising / responsible adults/teachers) visiting the venue at any one time does not exceed the maximum designated for that venue by the Safety Officer or relevant An Taisce management representative;
- they ensure that there are at least two responsible adults/teachers accompanying the participants, and that a supervisor to child ratio of not less than 1:10 is maintained;
- they have a complete First Aid kit close by at all times;
- the accompanying responsible adult/teacher is reminded, as appropriate, that:
  - they are the “responsible adult/teacher(s)” for each participant’s welfare and behaviour and the management of the group as a whole;
  - they must stay with their participants at all times;
  - they must accompany their child/students any time they need to leave the main group (e.g. to avail of toilet facilities, retrieve forgotten items from another location, to attend A&E departments, etc.);
  - they must adhere to the instructions of An Taisce staff in relation to site or activity specific safety instructions.

#### In their own school grounds

When working on site at a school, staff will ensure that:

- they respond appropriately to information regarding the medical or other conditions of the participants that may be given to them by their accompanying responsible adult/teacher;

- wherever requested, An Taisce Employee must complete the official school's registration form or Visitor's Log;
- The accompanying responsible adult/teacher is reminded, as appropriate, that:
  - they are the "responsible adult/teacher(s)" for each participants welfare and behaviour and the management of the group as a whole;
  - they must stay with their participants at all times;
  - they must accompany their child / students at any time they need to leave the main group, (e.g. to avail of toilet facilities, retrieve forgotten items from another location, to attend A&E departments, etc.).

At a location that is not one of the above

When working at a location that is neither an An Taisce property nor a school, staff will ensure that:

- the official registration form or register is completed and stored in the appropriate file, for the individual, group or groups visiting the site before the activity commences;
- the supervisor to child ratio is strictly adhered to. An Taisce Unit staff may, at local managers' discretion, be included in the calculation of sufficient supervisory personnel, provided at least two responsible adults/teachers accompany the participants. In addition, An Taisce staff will ensure that there are at least two responsible adults/teachers accompanying the participants, even when the group is less than 20;
- a limit of 30 participants in a group per An Taisce staff member is not exceeded;
- one responsible adult/teacher remains at the rear of the group and that all participants must stay in front of this person at all times;
- they respond appropriately to the information regarding medical or other conditions of the participants which may be given to them by the accompanying responsible adult/teacher;
- they have a complete First Aid kit close by at all times;
- they have some form of communication by which the emergency services can be contacted as soon as possible should the need arise;
- the accompanying responsible adult/teacher is reminded, as appropriate, that:
  - they are the "responsible adult/teacher(s)" for each participants welfare and behaviour and the management of the group as a whole:
  - they must stay with their participants at all times;
  - they must accompany their child / students at anytime they need to leave the main group (e.g. to avail of toilet facilities, retrieve forgotten items from another location, or attend A and E departments, etc.);

- they must adhere to the instructions of the Education staff member(s) in relation to site or activity specific safety instructions.

### Online

When working online staff will ensure that they:

- follow the same guidelines as they would when working offline with children in that institution (e.g. school, community group, etc.);
- follow the separate, best practice document developed for working with children virtually, stored in the Child Protection Folder on Sharepoint;

## **1.6. Reporting**

### General

Where an employee has a concern relating to the abuse, neglect, or the potential risk posed to a child participating in an An Taisce programme, or a concern relating to the nature of a particular relationship involving themselves, another employee or a young person, they should discuss their concern with An Taisce's Designated Child Protection Representative.

Where reasonable grounds for concern are found to exist in relation to a programme participant, the Designated Child Protection Representative will inform TUSLA of this concern. To assist the reporting of child protection concerns, the contact details of the Designated Child Protection Representative, TUSLA and the Gardai will be made available to employees along with a copy of this Policy.

If an An Taisce employee has cause to suspect abuse they must try to ensure in so far as is possible that no situation arises that could cause any further risk to the individual. If there is an immediate risk to a young person, the employee should contact An Garda Síochána.

### Responding to a disclosure of abuse

A child will carefully select a person to confide in. That chosen person will be someone they trust and have confidence in. It is important that a child who discloses abuse feels supported and facilitated in what may be a frightening and traumatic process for them. A child may feel perplexed, afraid, angry, despondent, and guilty. It is important that any negative feelings they may have are not made worse by the kind of response they receive.

Any disclosure of child abuse made to an employee must be treated with respect, sensitivity, urgency and care. In responding to such a disclosure the following steps should be taken:

1. Take what the child says seriously.

2. React calmly as over-reaction may intimidate the child and increase any feelings of guilt they may have.
3. Reassure the child that they were correct to tell somebody what happened.
4. Listen carefully and attentively.
5. Never ask leading questions. Use open-ended questions to clarify what is being said and try to avoid having them repeat what they have told you.
6. Do not promise to keep secrets.
7. Advise that you will offer support but that you must also pass on the information.
8. Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser to the child.
9. Explain and make sure that the child understands what will happen next.

#### Reporting a disclosure of abuse

1. **Do not confront the alleged abuser.**
2. Write down immediately after the conversation what was said by the child, including the names of all those involved, what was reported to have happened, where, when, if there were any witnesses and any other significant factors. Note any visible marks on the individual making the report or any signs you observed. Sign and date all reports and indicate the time the notes were made.
3. Ensure that access to the information is restricted to those who need to know it.
4. Pass any allegations to the Designated Child Protection Representative immediately.
5. Allegations should not be investigated by An Taisce employees or volunteers.

#### Reporting Suspected Abuse

A suspicion that is not supported by any objective indication of abuse or neglect would not constitute a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern. However, these suspicions should be recorded or noted internally by the Designated Child Protection Representative only, as future suspicions may lead to the decision to make a report. Earlier suspicions may provide important information to TUSLA.

The employee should record all known facts including the young person's name and address, the nature of the concern or allegation and, where possible, information about a parent or guardian. A copy of this record should be given to the Designated Child Protection Representative.

The Designated Child Protection Representative will consult with the young person's parents or guardian in relation to the concern and the possibility of a report being made to the Health Service Executive, unless it is not in the best interests of the young person to do so.

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

- Specific indication from a programme participant that they were abused.
- An account by a person who saw the young person being abused.
- Evidence, such as an injury or behaviour that is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way.
- An injury or behaviour that is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are indicators supporting the concern that it may be an incidence of abuse. An example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation and other indications of abuse or dysfunctional behaviour.
- Consistent indication over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect. (Children First, 1999, p. 38.)

#### Reporting an Accident/Incident

All accidents and other incidents (e.g. near misses) should be fully recorded, signed, and dated by the staff member on duty using an incident report sheet, as soon as is reasonably possible after their occurrence. The incident report sheet should then be presented to the employee's line manager for review. The line manager should also sign and date the report form. A copy of the report should then be submitted to the Programme Manager, who will, if necessary, arrange for an accident investigation as soon as possible thereafter.

The Administration Department will retain copies of all information and reportage relating to any incident or accident. It is therefore mandatory that copies of all such records are sent to the Dublin Office by the relevant An Taisce personnel as soon as possible after any incident or accident.

#### Missing Persons

If the missing person cannot be located within a reasonable length of time, the appropriate emergency services must be contacted by the designated responsible adult/teacher as soon as possible. The staff member on duty should report the incident to their Programme Manager soon as possible.

A missing person situation is an "Incident" and should be reported as such, even if the person is swiftly found, and is unharmed.

#### Reporting allegations against An Taisce employees

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If an allegation is made against an employee, the first priority of An Taisce is to ensure that no child or young person is exposed to unnecessary risk. An Taisce will implement the following procedure, in consultation with TUSLA and An Garda Síochána.

The Designated Child Protection Representative will be notified, or in the event that allegations are made against one of the Designated Child Protection Representatives, the other Designated Child Protection Representative will be contacted.

The reporting procedures outlined above will be followed. Both the primary carers and the head of the school or institution should be informed of actions planned and taken. The child/young person should be dealt with in an age-appropriate manner.

The relevant staff member will be informed as soon as possible of the nature of the allegations and will be given the opportunity to respond to the allegations.

The Unit Director will be informed as soon as possible.

An Taisce Disciplinary Policy and Procedures will be implemented, pending investigation of the allegations.

In order to protect children while allegations are being investigated, the relevant staff member will work under supervision or, if necessary, be suspended pending investigation or outcome.

Whilst the priority will be to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk, it will be recognised that the employee has the right to natural justice and fair procedure including the right to representation, the right to hear a case against them, the right to respond to claims made and the right to due consideration of their case.

### Complaints

In the event of complaints or comments relating to the handling of a report:

- The Designated Child Protection Representative will take responsibility for directing complaints/comments to the appropriate person or authority.
- Complaints or comments will be responded to within two weeks.
- Verbal complaints will be logged and responded to in writing.

## **1.7. Designated Child Protection Representative**

### General

An Taisce will nominate a member of staff as the Designated Child Protection Representative for the Green-Schools Travel Programme; and a second member of staff will be nominated as the Designated Child Protection Representative for all other An Taisce's programmes. The staff members appointed to these roles will have the personal qualities, interest and life experience fitting to the tasks involved. They will also have completed a child protection-training course.

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The Designated Child Protection Representative does not deal with reported child abuse him/herself, but refers it to the Authorities.

Employees or subcontractors of An Taisce will give the Designated Child Protection Representative any assistance needed in carrying out their tasks.

#### Role

The responsibilities of the Designated Child Protection Representative will be:

- To create and maintain links with the Health Service Executive and other relevant agencies and resource groups.
- To ensure that ready access to contact details for An Taisce's Child Protection Representative is made available to any relevant parties.
- To keep up to date on current developments regarding provision, practice, legal obligations, and policy and to advise on best practice.
- To promote awareness of An Taisce's Child Protection Policy and Procedures to employees, subcontractors, participants, and any other relevant parties.
- To organise and/or facilitate staff training on child protection.
- To facilitate anyone bringing an allegation or suspicion of child abuse to the attention of the Authorities, should they wish to have such support.
- To report suspicions and allegations of child abuse to TUSLA where there is reasonable grounds for concern.
- To maintain proper records on all cases referred to them in a secure and confidential manner.
- To advise on individual cases as appropriate.

#### Contact

All disclosures/allegations or suspicions about child abuse, no matter how insignificant, must be referred immediately and directly to:

- The Designated Child Protection Representative (Green-Schools Travel Programme) Lukasz Krzywon on phone: 087 247 1840

or

- The Designated Child Protection Representative (all other An Taisce's Education Unit Programmes) Clare Patten on phone: 086 199 5659

### **1.8. Confidentiality**

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An Taisce is committed to safeguarding individual rights to confidentiality however, total confidentiality cannot always be guaranteed where the best interests of a child or young person are at risk. It is the view of An Taisce that giving such information to others for the protection of a child or young person is not a breach of confidentiality.

In relation to child protection issues An Taisce undertakes that:

- Information will only be forwarded on a “need to know” basis in order to safeguard the child/young person.
- Primary carers, children and young people have a right to know if personal information is being shared and/or a report is being made to the Health Service Executive, unless doing so could put the child/young person at further risk.
- Images or audio/video clips of a child/young person taken during An Taisce programmes will not be used for any reason without the prior explicit consent of the parent/carer (however, An Taisce cannot guarantee that cameras/videos will not be used at public performances). If consent is obtained, images or audio/video material will only be used in the specified context
- Where image or information of a young person is to be used for promotion purposes in our own publicity materials, on our websites or social media in connection with An Taisce programmes, any identifying information will be kept to a minimum. Furthermore, no Education Unit images or information may be used without the **prior** consent of the relevant Programme Manager.
- Procedures will be put in place for the recording and storage of information in line with An Taisce’s confidentiality and data protection policy.

### **1.9. Breach of Policy**

Breach of any part of this policy will be considered extremely serious and may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. In addition, any breach of this policy may be reported to An Garda Síochána where appropriate.

### **1.10. Review of Policy**

An Taisce will review this policy from time to time and all new updates will be communicated to you.

### **1.11. Current Version and Change Control**

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<b>Version No.</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Author/Owner</b>	<b>Main Changes</b>
	25/07/2022	KM	Garda vetting contact and inclusion of Joint Agreements

### 1.12. Appendix I Child Safeguarding Statement

The Environmental An Taisce of An Taisce was set up in 1993 and runs a wide range of education and awareness raising projects, both national and international. In the delivery of these programs, An Taisce staff work closely with adults, young people and children.

In accordance with section 11 of the Children First Act 2015 the following is the Safeguarding Statement of An Taisce.

#### 1. Safeguarding statement and principles

An Taisce is committed to a child-centred approach to working with children and young people and undertakes to provide a safe environment and experience wherein the welfare of the child is paramount. In adherence with the recommendations of *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2017* (Department of Children and Youth Affairs), An Taisce has implemented Child Protection Procedures covering:

- Recruitment and staff selection.
- Management and supervision of staff.
- A code of behaviour for all staff.
- Reporting of suspected or disclosed abuse.
- Involvement of primary carers.
- Allegations of misconduct or abuse carried out by staff.
- Incidents and accidents.
- Complaints and comments.
- Confidentiality.

#### 2. Risk Assessment

##### **Important Note:**

**It should be noted that "risk" in the context of this Risk Assessment is the risk of "harm", as defined in the Children First Act 2015; and not general and safety risk.**

**The Children First Act defined "harm" in relation to a child as:**

- (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 the child whether caused by a single act, omission, or**
  - (c) Circumstance or a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances, or otherwise.**
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An Taisce has identified the following risk of harm in respect of its activities:

- 2.1. Children could be exposed through their involvement in An Taisce's activities to people who may harm them.
- 2.2. Staff or other adults working with children in An Taisce's activities could engage in unsafe work practices.
- 2.3. Staff or other adults working with children in An Taisce's activities could operate in unsafe environments.
- 2.4. Staff or other adults could behave inappropriately towards children taking part in An Taisce's activities.
- 2.5. Staff or other adults working with children in An Taisce's activities may lack clarity as to who is responsible for what in relation to child safeguarding and protection.
- 2.6. Children involved in An Taisce's activities may not understand what is expected of them in terms of their contact with and behaviour toward each other.
- 2.7. Staff or other adults working with children in An Taisce's activities may have reason to be concerned that a child may have been, is being or is at risk of abuse which may go undetected and unreported.
- 2.8. An Taisce's staff may be unaware of their responsibilities, or of the organisational support in place, in relation to the reportage of their concerns that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused.
- 2.9. Mandated persons may not be aware of their responsibilities under the Children First Act 2015.
- 2.10. Safeguarding practice may not be implemented in An Taisce 's activities.

### **3. Procedures**

An Taisce has implemented the following measures to address the risks of harm identified in this assessment:

- 3.1. The Board of An Taisce has agreed to implement the procedures set out in this Child Safeguarding Statement.
- 3.2. The Board of An Taisce recognises that child protection and welfare considerations must be reflected in all of its policies, procedures, practices and activities. At all times the An Taisce Board will adhere to the following principles of best practice in child protection and welfare.

An Taisce will:

- recognise that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations;
  - fully comply with its statutory obligations under the Children First Act 2015 and other relevant legislation relating to the protection and welfare of children;
  - fully co-operate with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters;
  - adopt safe practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children; and will protect workers from the necessity to take unnecessary risks that may leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or neglect;
  - set down procedures for reporting suspected abuse and for complaints or accusations against staff;
  - ensure that parents, teachers and other adults working with the An Taisce fully understand their responsibilities in relation to the children in their care during their involvement in An Taisce's activities; and
  - fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.
- 3.3. In accordance with the Children First Act 2015, the An Taisce Board has authorised and approved an assessment of any potential for harm to a child while participating in An Taisce's activities. A written list of the An Taisce's activities is attached as an Appendix to this statement.
- 3.4. The An Taisce Board has authorised the preparation of a Child Safeguarding Statement and Child Protection Policy that outlines the responsibilities of employees and of other adults working with An Taisce's employees; and the procedures to be followed in terms of the identification and reportage of suspected abuse.
- 3.5. The An Taisce Board has implemented procedures for staff selection and recruitment to ensure that all eligible employees and volunteers who may be required to work with children in the course of any An Taisce activities are adequately screened for their suitability to work with children prior to the commencement of any such activity in their employment.
- 3.6. An Taisce adheres to the statutory vetting requirements of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016 with regard to any employees or volunteers engaged in activities involving children.

- 3.7. The An Taisce Board has instigated staff management and supervision procedures; and all employees and volunteers are made aware of their reporting lines and supervision arrangements.
- 3.8. An Taisce has designed a code of behaviour for employees and volunteers working in activities involving children.
- 3.9. An Taisce's employees and volunteers may interact with children only in the presence of the children's primary carers, who may be parents, teachers or guardians; and adhere to strict adult/child ratios.
- 3.10. In relation to the provision of information, instruction and training of employees and volunteers with respect to the identification of the occurrence of harm (as defined in the 2015 Act) An Taisce,
  - Ensures all new relevant employees and volunteers are provided with a copy of the An Taisce's Child Protection Policy and Child Safeguarding Statement
  - Ensures that all relevant employees and volunteers complete *Introduction to Children First* training by Tusla
  - Maintains records of all training in Child Protection procedures
- 3.11. An Taisce's employees are prepared and equipped to deal with any foreseeable incidents or accidents that may occur during an activity involving children.
- 3.12. An Taisce has outlined procedures to address the specific requirements of undertaking activities at different sites and locations.
- 3.13. In their An Taisce's roles, employees and Volunteers are not mandated persons under the Children First Act 2015.
- 3.14. In relation to reportage of child protection concerns to Tusla, all staff are required to adhere to the procedures set out in the An Taisce's Child Protection Policy
- 3.15. The Designated Child Protection Representative for the Green-Schools Travel programme and any sub-programmes thereof is: *Lukasz Krzywon*
- 3.16. The Designated Child Protection Representative for all other An Taisce's programmes is: *Clare Patten*
- 3.17. The Director of the Environmental An Taisce of An Taisce has appointed the above persons as "relevant persons" (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) to be the first point of contact in respect of the child safeguarding statement.
- 3.18. The An Taisce Board has defined procedures and roles for dealing with complaints and comments made against employees.

- 3.19. In relation to any employee who may be under investigation for an act of abuse, An Taisce will adhere to the relevant procedures set out in its Child Protection Policy, and in its Disciplinary Policy and Procedures, where appropriate.
- 3.20. An Taisce's employees are required to uphold confidentiality requirements in relation to the reporting and/or investigation of suspected abuse.

**4. Approval, implementation, review, and updates**


In undertaking the abovementioned risk assessment, the An Taisce Board has endeavoured to identify as far as possible the risks of harm that are relevant to An Taisce's activities; and to ensure that adequate procedures are in place to manage all risks identified. While it is not possible to foresee and remove all risk of harm, An Taisce has implemented the procedures listed in the risk assessment to manage and reduce risk to the greatest possible extent.

The An Taisce Board recognises that implementation of the procedures outlined in this Child Safeguarding Statement is an on-going process and are committed to ensuring that children are kept safe from harm while participating in An Taisce's programmes and activities.

The various policies and procedures referred to in this Statement can be accessed in relevant folder via the An Taisce's Sharepoint.

This statement has been provided to all staff and will be made available to relevant adults working with An Taisce's staff. It is readily available to parents and guardians on request. A copy of this Statement will be made available to Tusla and to any of the An Taisce's Programme Funders if requested. It will also be publicly displayed on [www.greenschoolsireland.org](http://www.greenschoolsireland.org) and at An Office Foster Place, Dublin.

This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed annually or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this statement refers.

Signed  \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
CEO

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



### 1.13. Appendix II List of Activities

The Environmental An Taisce of An Taisce was set up in 1993 and runs a wide range of education and awareness raising projects, both national and international. In the delivery of these programs, An Taisce's employees work closely with adults, young people and children and undertake the following activities:

- **Neat Streets** - introductory workshops, presentations and events within schools; events and activities in areas local to participating schools such as community clean-ups and action days; workshops, award ceremonies, conferences etc. that may take place at a centralized location.
- Interaction with students participating in the **GLOBE** programme take place in their schools or in the area local to them; Interaction with students at various international events; potentially at future national events.
- Participation in **YRE/LL** events and activities held in participating schools or areas local to them; interaction with participating students at national awards ceremonies and workshops held in centralized locations.
- Delivery of various energy workshops in schools and external events on behalf of the **SEAI**.
- Workshops and presentations with students held in participating **Green-Schools** schools.
- **Green-Schools** Teacher Training seminars and EPV-Approved Summer Courses held in regional venues.
- Water workshops, **Life Below Water** workshops for participating **Green-Schools** held at centralized locations.
- Award ceremonies, exhibitions, forums and etc. with students participating in **Green-Schools** held at centralized locations.
- **Chefs Connect Project**- Students working on the **Global Citizenship Food and Biodiversity** theme can take part in workshops and demonstrations with volunteer chefs in their schools.
- Workshops and presentations with students held in participating **Green-Schools Travel and Global Citizenship Travel** schools; cycle and scooter training in the school grounds or local area; walkability and cyclability audits and audits for **Safer Routes to School** initiative; group walking or cycling events in the local area; forums, award ceremonies and other events held in centralized locations.
- Workshops and presentations with students held in participating **#andshecycles Ambassador**; forums, award ceremonies and other events held in centralized locations.

- **GS Water Ambassador** Programme - students from different secondary schools attend training and go on site visits to water-treatment plants.
- **Climate Ambassador Programme** - Programme for secondary, third level & adult community members. Delivering group training events; guest talks; workshops & site visits indoors & outdoors; attendance at festivals (for 18+ only) and at events; annual award ceremony.
- **Climate Action Teacher Training** events held at centralized locations regionally as part of the Climate Action Programme.
- Various events held during **Climate Action Week** annually.
- **Green Campus** annual network meeting and Change Makers events held at a centralized location.
- **Clean Coasts** facilitated clean ups and other beach management events at various beach sites; roadshow presentations in coastal communities; award ceremonies, talks, symposium etc. held in centralized locations.
- Various events held nationwide during **Clean Coasts Week**, e.g. yoga, drumming, fitness events and marram grass planting in coastal locations and events such as film screenings in centralized locations.
- **Clean Coasts** and **Think Before you Flush** awareness-raising at events not primarily managed by An Taisce, include music festivals, home shows, community events etc., in locations nationwide.
- **Think before You Flush** student workshops held in schools located in TBYP communities.
- Workshops with students held within the classrooms and grounds of schools and local environs, participating in **LEAF**;
- Workshops with students participating in **An Choill Bheag** in school grounds; and with community groups participating in tree planting workshops.
- All above programmes also engaging online in form of virtual workshops, events, committee meetings, online webinars.

**1.14. Appendix III Staff Acknowledgement Form**



**Acknowledgement Form**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>An Taisce</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Child Safeguarding Statement</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Acknowledgement Form</b></p> <p>I, _____, have received and read the An Taisce Child Safeguarding Statement, which outlines the policies and procedures of the organisation, as well as my responsibilities as an employee.</p> <p>I have familiarised myself with the contents of the Safeguarding Statement and have discussed any queries I have with my Programme Manager.</p> <p>By my signature below, I acknowledge, understand, accept, and agree to comply with the information contained in this Safeguarding Statement by An Taisce.</p> <p>I understand this Safeguarding Statement is not intended to cover every situation which may arise during my employment but is a general guide to the policies and procedures of the organisation and my responsibilities as an employee.</p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>Employer Signature</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>Employee Name (Print in Block Capitals)</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>Date</b></p>
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