



# UPDATING YOUR CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT

Considerations for the Youth Work  
Sector due to Covid-19

# CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENTS

Organisations classed as providers of relevant services under the Children First Act 2015 are required to have a Child Safeguarding Statement.

Before preparing your Child Safeguarding Statement, you must undertake an assessment of any potential for harm to a child availing of your service ("risk assessment").

The Child Safeguarding Statement is a written statement that specifies the service being provided and the principles and procedures to be observed in order to ensure, as far as practicable, that a child availing of the service is safe from 'harm'.

Your Child Safeguarding Statement must include a **written assessment** of the risks of 'harm' to a child that you have identified in your risk assessment, and specify the procedures that are in place to manage any risk identified.

As of March 11th 2018, all providers of relevant services which are in operation for greater than three months are legally required to have a Child Safeguarding Statement in place.



## CURRENT SITUATION FOR YOUTH WORK ORGANISATIONS

- Most organisations have had a Child Safeguarding Statement in place since March 2018, in line with the introduction of this requirement.
- The Child Safeguarding Statement must be reviewed minimum every 24 months, or sooner if there has been a material change in any of the issues to which it refers.
- Most organisations were therefore due to review their Child Safeguarding Statement around the 11th March 2020, in line with the 24 month review period.
- This coincided with Ireland's introduction of the Covid-19 control measures on March 12 2020.



**Regardless of whether you were able to complete your review due to Covid-19 control measures, the current situation has altered youth work practice and the way we engage with young people. This represents a significant change for many organisations, which should be reflected in your Child Safeguarding Statement.**



## WHAT IS THERE TO CONSIDER?

Is your organisation engaging with young people online due to the current Covid-19 situation? If you did not engage in online work previously as an organisation, then it would not have been addressed in your original risk assessment and Child Safeguarding Statement.

**When reviewing your Child Safeguarding Statement, there may be new risks of harm for youth work organisations to consider, and to then outline the policies and procedures which are in place to manage the risks which have been identified.**

An example of a new risk:

"The risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) of a child by a member of staff/volunteer through an online service"

### **Addendum to Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children - Online Safety**

In January 2019, the Children First National Guidance was amended to include a specific reference to the need to consider online safety in the context of completing the Child Safeguarding Statement. It makes clear that all organisations and services working with young people must include online risks and safeguards in their legally required Child Safeguarding Statements.

The following is an extract from the DCYA Addendum and needs to be considered when working with young people.

*Children should be supported and encouraged to develop safe and responsible online behaviours. If a relevant service is allowing children access to the internet where they could become exposed to harm, including harm of assault or sexual abuse (as set out in Section 2 of the Act), there is an obligation on the service provider to ensure that the risk is identified and that the policies and procedures that are in place to manage the risk are set out in the Child Safeguarding Statement.*

Department of Children and Youth Affairs, January 2019

This is a unique opportunity to review your Child Safeguarding Statement while incorporating any new risks identified in moving your services online due to Covid-19.







# SUPPORT

This resource was developed by the National Youth Council of Ireland to support youth organisations to consider their Child Safeguarding Statement requirements in the context of the impact of Covid-19. It is not official guidance, you should contact Tusla directly regarding your Child Safeguarding Statement and for official guidance. See [here](#) for Tusla's dedicated contact and further information page regarding Child Safeguarding Statements.

For more information on the National Youth Council of Ireland Child Protection Programme see [here](#).

If you are planning to review your Child Safeguarding Statement:

### **Risk Assessment**

The Children First: National Guidance provides information on completing the risk assessment part of your Child Safeguarding Statement. The NYCI Child Protection during Covid-19 Resource highlights the steps outlined in the National Guidance.

### **Child Safeguarding Statement**

The Tusla Guidance on Developing a Child Safeguarding Statement provides information for organisations required to develop a Child Safeguarding Statement, including an example template Child Safeguarding Statement.

If you need to subsequently update your policies and procedures:

Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice is Tusla's best practice guide to help anyone who provides a service to children and families to develop guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures to keep children and young people using their services safe from harm.

The NYCI Child Protection during Covid-19 Resource provides support for youth organisations to consider translating policies and procedures in the current Covid-19 circumstances.