

Child Safety Policy



An tSeirbhís Chúirteanna
Courts Service



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Nomination of Relevant Persons:

The CEO will nominate a Relevant Person and a deputy Relevant Person. These positions will be filled by:

- Relevant Person - Principal Officer assigned to the Circuit & District Court Operations Office
- Deputy Relevant Person – Assistant Principal Officer assigned to the Supreme Court Operations Office

Role of Relevant Persons:

- Ensure all incidents where welfare concerns of a child are raised are investigated
- Report child safety issues to TULSA and when necessary An Garda Síochána (AGS)
- Chair Child Safety Committee
- Ensure Child Safeguarding Statement is reviewed periodically in line with the Children First Act, 2015

Child Safety Committee:

The Courts Service formed this committee in 2018, comprising of members selected from various parts of the organisation:

Role	Office
Relevant Person	Circuit & District Operations
Deputy Relevant Person	Superior Courts Operations
Designated Liaison Officer	North Midlands Regional Office
Designated Liaison Officer	Southern Regional Office
Designated Liaison Officer	Western Regional Office
Designated Liaison Officer	Eastern Regional Office
Representative of Regional Managers	North Midlands Regional Office
Representative from Health & Safety	Health & Safety Office

Representative from Learning & Development	Learning & Development Office
Representative of Communication & Media Unit	Communications & Media Unit

Role of Child Safety Committee:

The committee will meet four times a year to review the following:

- Amendments/changes to Child Safeguarding legislation or regulations
- Review child safeguarding incidents that arose between meetings and identify actions/lessons learnt arising from such incidents
- Changes to legislations and/or the role of offices of the Courts Service that may lead to an increased/decreased risk of child safety incidents occurring or require the Child Safeguarding Statement to be amended
- Update the Child Safeguarding Policy to take account of changes to nominated Relevant Persons and Designated Liaison Officers
- Review and incorporate agreed recommendations of Internal Audits reviews of the Child Safeguarding procedures
- Regularly review and update the Risk Register as required
- Promote awareness of Child Safety procedures to all staff including the Child Safeguarding Statement
- Maintain a register of all issues or concerns reported to DLOs or the Relevant Persons. This register should contain the following information:
 - Date of issue raised
 - Person who raised an issue
 - Details of issue
 - Action taken by the Relevant Person including details of any engagement with TÚLSA or AGS
 - Recommendations (if any) following investigation of issue(s)
- Prepare an annual report for Senior Management Team (SMT) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) on the previous year's activity of the committee setting out:
 - The number of child safeguarding issues raised
 - The actions and outcomes arising from such issues
 - Updates to the Child Safeguarding Statement
 - Updates to Courts Service's Child Safeguarding policy

- Any other business the Committee feel should be brought to the attention of the SMT/DOJ.

Nomination of Designated Liaison Officers (DLO):

Designated Liaison Officers will be appointed for Dublin and for each of the four regions of the Courts Service. Appointments of the DLOs will be made by:

Nominator	Region	Counties
Head of the CMU	Dublin	Dublin
Regional Manager	Eastern	Carlow, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Waterford, Wexford & Wicklow
Regional Manager	North Midlands	Cavan, Longford, Louth, Meath, Monaghan, Offaly & Westmeath
Regional Manager	Southern	Cork, Kerry, Limerick & Tipperary
Regional Manager	Western	Clare, Donegal, Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon & Sligo

Role of a Designated Liaison Officer (DLO):

DLOs will be appointed in each of the regional offices and also in Dublin.

The function they carry out is to:

- Bring to the attention of the Relevant Person(s) any child safe guarding issues brought to their attention by staff within their areas
- Administer the operation of the Transition Year (TY) Student programme

- Ensure work experience student has completed new entrant Health & Safety programme before commencing their TY experience with the Courts Service.
- Requests from candidate TY students shall be forwarded to regional DLOs
- They shall ensure that:
 - all necessary information is forwarded to the TY student
 - confirmation that school will cover any insurance costs
 - parent or guardian's consent to attendance on the programme
 - details of known medical condition(s) or any allergies
 - permission to arrange emergency hospital/medical treatment for TY student if it is necessary.
 - signed undertaking form is returned
 - details of what is expected of the TY student
- DLOs will maintain records of correspondence received in relation to each application by TY student for a period of 12 months following the conclusion of the work experience
- Court offices will raise all child safe guarding issues that occur with their DLOs
- DLOs will forward all issues to [1] Relevant Persons for decision on the appropriate action to take and [2] to Child Safety Committee to allow consideration of any changes that may be required to the Child Safe Guarding Statement

Risk Assessment:

The Child Safety Committee have assessed areas where potential harm could be caused to a child during their participation in an activity under the control of the Courts Service. We have identified the measures we will put in place to mitigate the risks identified. Details of the Risk Assessment are contained in Appendix A.

Section 2 of the Children First Act 2015 defines “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 circumstance or a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances, or otherwise”.

“ill treatment” in relation to a child is defined as:

“to abandon or cruelly treat the child, or to cause or procure or allow the child to be abandoned or cruelly treated”

“neglect” in relation to child is defined as:

“to deprive the child of adequate food, warmth, clothing, hygiene, supervision, safety or medical care”

General Procedures for Management of Any Risk:

- A relevant person has been nominated and appointed by the Senior Management Team for the purposes of the Children First Act 2015
- All staff are subject to standard Garda vetting procedures
- Trained Designated Liaison Officers will be provided
- Formal training will be mandatory for Videolink Assistants
- The Courts Service has established a Child Safety Committee to review child safety matters and provide guidance as necessary
- We have formalised our transition year programme and all relevant procedures for offices directly supporting the programme
- We will provide clear information about the programme in advance to students and their parents/guardians
- A staff member will be assigned as a contact person for the student during the programme
- Prior to attendance on the programme, the consent of a parent/guardian of the student will be obtained
- Parents/guardians will be required to provide any relevant information relating to the health of the student prior to participation on the programme
- The Child Safeguarding Statement will be provided to students and their parents/guardians
- Children First training will be provided to relevant staff in offices that directly support the transition year programme
- Guidelines will be put in place for offices that directly support the transition year programme
- All work experience students will complete the new entrant Health & Safety programme and sign a declaration to understand their acknowledgement of the programme’s contents.
- Personal data of students will be retained and utilised in accordance with data protection regulations

Responsibility of Staff of the Courts Service:

- Staff who have direct engagement with children without the presence of a parent/guardian must undertake appropriate child safeguarding training.
- Details of training courses can be found on L&D Connect
- If a staff member becomes aware of or concerned about a child safeguarding issue, they should either bring this to the attention of:
 - A Relevant Person(s) or
 - The Delegated Liaison Officer (DLO) for their area

To allow for an assessment to be carried out in line with TUSLÁ guidelines.

- If a member of staff becomes concerned about the behaviour of other staff, they should immediately bring this matter to the attention of their manager and the Relevant Person.
- The Relevant Person or DLO will make contact with the staff member to take full details of the staff member's concerns and take the appropriate action thereafter.

Appendix A – Child Safeguarding Risk Register

Risk	Existing Controls	Impact	Likelihood	Rating	Level
Student affected by information heard, or behaviour observed, at a public court hearing or in a public court office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidelines are in place for offices that directly support the transition year programme Care is taken by Office Management to minimise exposure of TY students to troubling information 	3	1	3	Low
Student makes a disclosure to a staff member and that disclosure is not referred to TÚSLA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children First training will be provided to relevant staff in offices that directly support the transition year programme Trained Designated Liaison Persons will be assigned Escalation pathway is clearly defined and made known to all staff of the Courts Service 	3	1	3	Low

Student suffers an injury or other medical issue arises whilst participating in the programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents/guardians will be required to provide any relevant information relating to the health of the student prior to participation on the programme Existing Courts Service health and safety documents will apply 	3	1	3	Low
Student harmed by a staff member while participating in our programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff are subject to standard Garda vetting procedures All staff are required to adhere to relevant Courts Service and Civil Service guidance, codes and policies with regard to behaviour in the workplace. Non-compliance and failure to uphold the expected standards of behaviour may result in disciplinary action up to, and including, dismissal. 	5	1	1	Low
Child supervision services provided by video link assistants to child witness giving evidence by way of video link	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff are subject to enhanced Garda vetting Bespoke training course developed, with mandatory attendance required for videolink assistants 	5	1	5	Low
School Tours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School tours organised in conjunction with School management and supervised by teachers Courts Service staff only engage with Children in presence of teachers 	3	1	3	Low

Mock Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mock trials organised in conjunction with local schools & community groups and supervised by teachers/parents/guardians • Courts Service staff only engage with Children in presence of teachers/parents /guardians 	3	1	3	Low
Social Events held in Courts Service building attended by Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children only attend social events when accompanied by parent/guardian 	3	1	3	Low
Comhrá programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comhrá events organised in conjunction with local schools, are supervised by teachers • Judiciary and Courts Service staff only engage with Children in presence of teachers. 	2	1	2	Low