

Child and Adult Protection Policy

Crèche Cois Laoi's is committed to provide an environment where the safety and protection of children is paramount and where suspicion of abuse is handled appropriately and promptly

In devising our Child Protection Policy we have implemented procedures covering

1. Code of behaviour for staff
2. Responsibility to Report
3. Definitions of abuse
4. Dealing with disclosure of abuse
5. Reporting of suspected or disclosed abuse
6. Confidentiality
7. Allegations of misconduct or abuse by staff
8. Reporting of suspected abuse by a staff member
9. Recruitment and selecting staff
10. Recruitment of work experience students
11. Management of staff and work experience students
12. Parental involvement
13. Accident/Incident Procedure
14. Policy Review

1. Code of behaviour for staff

What staff must do

- Treat all children equally with dignity and respect
- Treat all children as individuals
- Make time to listen, talk to and get to know the children
- Provide support and encouragement and praise regardless of ability
- Encourage children to be safe, happy and have fun as much as possible
- Use appropriate language (verbal and physical)
- Be sensitive to the possibility of developing favouritism
- Encourage children when appropriate that their bodies are their own property
- Encourage children to express their feelings, fears and experiences openly
- Respect a child's need for personal space
- Staff must never physically punish or be in anyway abusive to a child

What staff must not do

- Use forceful physical contact
- Use inappropriate touch
- Be left alone with children; always be within sight or hearing distance of other staff members
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control
- Physically or verbally punish or be in anyway abusive to a child

- Do things of a personal nature for a child that they can do for themselves
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unrecorded or not acted upon
- Discuss topics of a sexual nature in the presence of children
- Discuss children or children's families outside the crèche environment
- Engage in horseplay or rough physical contact

2. Responsibility to Report

Generally, all adults owe a general duty of care to children with whom they work. Children First: National Guideline for the Protection and Welfare of Children (1999) advises that any person who suspects that a child is being abused, or is at risk of abuse, has a responsibility to report their concerns to the health board. This responsibility is particularly relevant to those who have regular contact with children in the course of their work.

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

- (a) a specific indication from a child that s/he was abused
- (b) a statement from a person who witnessed abuse
- (c) an illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse
- (d) a symptom which may not in itself be totally consistent with abuse, but which is supported by corroborative evidence of deliberate harm or negligence
- (e) consistent signs of neglect over a period of time

3. Definitions of Abuse

There are four main categories of abuse as outlined in The Children's First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children. The following is a synopsis of the information contained in that document

A. Neglect:

Neglect can be defined as occurring where a child suffers significant harm or impairment of development being deprived of adequate food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults and or medical care.

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point. For instance a child who suffers a series of minor injuries is not having his or her needs met for supervision and safety. A child whose ongoing failure to gain weight or whose height is significantly below average may be deprived of adequate nutrition.

B. Emotional:

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a caregiver and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child needs for affection approval consistency and security are not yet met. Examples of emotional abuse include

- (a) Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming
- (b) Emotional unavailability of the child's parent/carer
- (c) Unresponsiveness, inconsistent or inappropriate expectations of a child
- (d) Premature imposition of responsibility on a child
- (e) Unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of a child's capacity to understand
- (f) Under or overprotection of a child
- (g) Use of unreasonably harsh discipline
- (h) Exposure to domestic violence

C. Physical:

Physical Abuse is any form of non-accidental injury that causes harm to a child, including;

- (a) Shaking;
- (b) Use of excessive force in handling
- (c) Deliberate poisoning
- (d) Suffocation
- (e) Munchausen's syndrome by proxy (where parents cause physical signs of illness)
- (f) Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child

D. Sexual:

Sexual abuse involves the use of a child for gratification or sexual arousal by a person for themselves or others.

Designated Person and their Role

Crèche Cois Laoi's designated Child Protection Officer is the Crèche Manager, Angela Cronin who is the person to contact if staff, student trainees or parents have an issue or concern about any aspect of a child's safety and welfare. In the absence of Angela Cronin, the Crèche Assistant Manager, is the Deputy Child Protection Officer.

The Child Protection Officer ensures that reporting procedures are followed and she supports the staff member / student trainees reporting the concern and liaises with the Health Board or An Garda Síochána as appropriate about suspected or actual cases of child abuse.

4. Procedures when dealing with a disclosure

Staff members are trained on how to respond sensitively to a child disclosing child abuse and are advised to react in the following way:

- To remain calm and listen and give the child time to say what she or he wants
- To be aware that the disclosure is very difficult for the child

- To allow s/he to disclose at their own pace and in their own language
- To be careful when asking questions ensuring they are supportive, not leading and for the purpose of clarification only
- To assure the child you believe him. False disclosures are rare.
- To be sensitive to the fact the child may love or strongly like the alleged abuser
- To avoid expressing anger towards the alleged abuse, while talking to the child
- To reassure the child and not promise to keep it a secret
- To explain what needs to be done next

Staff members are advised to record in writing at the earliest opportunity the exact words utilised by the child. Staff will then be advised to pass on information as outlined in the child protection policy.

Anyone who reports abuse in good faith is protected by law under the 1998 Protection of Person's Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998.

5. Procedures for staff and work experience student reporting child protection concerns

All staff and work experience students in Crèche Cois Laoi will be given information and trained about the nature of child abuse, its effects, how to recognise symptoms and how to respond appropriately to disclosure of abuse. All staff will be given clear support procedures when dealing with suspicions of child abuse.

Staff members conduct regular progress reports and observations on the children in their care. When a staff member has a concern of abuse they are instructed to fill out a Child Protection Report form (**Appendix 1**) and bring it to the Child Protection Officer's attention. The Child Protection Officer will promptly assess the level of risk to the child and review the information and may contact promptly the HSE on an informal basis, to get advice relating to the concern, allegation or disclosure and to access whether or not a report is warranted. Details of the consultation will be recorded. A formal report to the health board may follow as advised and this will be submitted without delay.

If it is decided not to make a formal report to the HSE then a record of the concerns will be kept on file. The reasons for not reporting the allegation, concern or disclosure will be clearly recorded. The staff member or student trainee who made the initial report will be kept up to date on whether or not a formal report is made. It may be decided that on going observation is required and all incidences of suspect child abuse will be recorded and kept on file and reviewed frequently by the child protection officer, who may decide that the number of incidents merits reporting to the HSE.

If it is decided that it is necessary to make a formal report (**Appendix 2**) to the Health Board regarding a concern over abuse, then the crèche will inform the parents of the impending report unless doing so would put the child at future risk.

All relevant numbers are displayed in the Child Protection Policy (**Appendix 3**) and are located in the crèche office on the notice board if needed. Staff will

know the steps which need to be taken should they feel that there is a high suspicion of abuse. All staff partakes in regular in house child protection training to make sure that they are up to date with current legislation and procedures. Numbers are also displayed in the office for An Garda Síochána and the local Child Protection Social Work Services.

In an emergency or where an on Duty Social Worker cannot be contact a report will be made directly to An Garda Síochána.

6. Confidentiality

It is our policy at Crèche Cois Laoi to keep any information on children, parents, staff and work experience students strictly confidential. However in cases of child protection and welfare, Crèche Cois Laoi will forward information to a designated officer of the H.S.E. on a 'Need to Know' basis and only if absolutely necessary, in order to safe guard the child. Crèche Cois Laoi will inform relevant parents, children, staff or work experience students if personal information is being shared and or a report is being submitted to the HSE unless doing so unless doing so puts the safety of the child at further risk. All records are kept in a safe and confidential manner.

7. Allegations of misconduct or abuse by staff

If a staff member, work experience student, child or parent makes an allegation against a staff member or work experience student, Crèche Cois Laoi will ensure that everyone involved gets a prompt response. This will involve two separate procedures, the reporting procedure in respect of the child and the procedure for dealing with a staff member.

When a staff member has a concern of abuse they are instructed to fill out a Child Protection Report form and bring it to the attention of the Child Protection Officer. The Child Protection Officer will access and review the information promptly. The Child Protection Officer's first priority will be to ensure that no child is exposed to any unnecessary risk. Any measures taken will be appropriate to the level of risk and will not unreasonably penalise the employee, financially or otherwise, unless to protect children. The Child Protection Officer may contact with the HSE on an informal basis to get advice relating to the concern, allegation or disclosure and to access whether or not a report is warranted. Details of the consultation will be recorded. A formal report to the health board may follow as advised.

8. Reporting procedures of allegations of abuse by a staff member

In respect of the child, Angela Cronin (Crèche Manager), the child protection officer will deal with all issues in relation to the child.

In respect of the employee, Georgina Cronin (General Manager), Áras na Mac Léinn will deal with all issues in relation to the employee.

In respect of a complaint against management employees, a complaint or a child protection report should be sent to Michael Farrell, Chair of the Crèche Management Board.

Management, staff and work experience students may be subject to erroneous or malicious allegations. Therefore any allegation of abuse will be dealt with sensitively and support will be provided for staff and students. However the primary goal is to protect the child while taking care to treat an employee fairly.

Where an allegation of child abuse has been deemed legitimate the following steps will be taken

- (a) The staff/work experience student will be informed of an allegation has been made against him/her and the nature of the allegation
- (b) The staff and work experience students will be afforded an opportunity to respond
- (c) This response will be noted and forwarded to the HSE if a formal report is required.
- (d) Depending on the seriousness of the allegation and the level of risk, an employee may be suspended with pay pending the outcome of an investigation or the level of supervision may be increased.
- (e) The parents of the child will be informed of the actions planned and taken.
- (f) Action will be guided by the nature of the complaint the employee's contract including disciplinary measures up to and including dismissal as well as the rules of natural justice.
- (g) The General Manager of Áras na Mac Léinn and Chair Person of the Crèche Management Board will be informed.
- (h) The follow up on an allegation of abuse against an employee may be made in consultation with the health board and An Garda Síochána.
- (i) Health Boards will investigate and complete and assessment quickly bearing in mind the serious implications for an innocent employee. Crèche Cois Laoi will be notified of the outcome of the investigation.
- (j) The Health Board will pass on reports and records to Crèche Cois Laoi and to the employee where appropriate.
- (k) This will assist Áras na Mac Léinn/Crèche Cois Laoi in reaching a decision on the action to be taken regarding the longer term concerning the staff member/student trainee.
- (l) All employees will have a right to appeal any decision. The appeals procedure for Áras na Mac Léinn is detailed in the staff handbook.

Additionally Crèche Cois Laoi will ensure staff, work experience students, parents and children are aware of the appropriate authorities to whom they should report outside the organisation if they are inhibited for any reason in reporting the incident internally or where they are dissatisfied with the internal response.

9. Recruitment procedures for staff

When a position becomes available in Crèche Cois Laoi it is advertised in a national newspaper. The position advertised contains a description of the role and the qualifications and experience that the applicant should possess. Suitable applicants will be interviewed by a panel of at least two representatives from the crèche. Interviewers will explore the information

stated on the application form and assess the applicant's suitability to the role of post.

Suitable applicants are offered a position subject to appropriate Garda vetting, receipt of two positive written or verbal references and two forms of photo identification. The initial references may be taken over the phone but must be followed up by written references. References have to be written by non family members and should be as up to date and relevant as possible. If an applicant receives poor references or if they have previous convictions against children they will not be appointed by Crèche Cois Laoi.

When a person is recruited to a position within the Crèche they receive a contract agreed by management which outlines their job description and a staff handbook detailing Áras na Mac Léinn's, policies and procedures. The employee confirms she/he understands all policies and procedures in writing. The probation period is usually six months but may be extended if necessary. After probation an assessment is carried out on the new staff member's performance and a decision is made by management to employ the employee full time or to extend their probation. Full time members work performance is reviewed annually by conducting appraisals to assess performance, strengths, weakness etc.

When a new staff member commences employment, they are given a detailed induction that includes reading and learning about the crèche polices and procedures, including the child protection policy which they are required to read and sign they understand the policy. They also receive a tour of the facilities. Each room has a group leader who supervises the room and also helps to settle new staff in. The layout of each room allows for constant supervision. We avoid children being left alone in a one to one situation without being visible or informing others.

All new staff will trained in child protection and will receive an adequate level of supervision and review of their work practices.

10. Recruitment procedures for work experience students

Work experience students are generally recruited from the School of Commerce, Early Education Studies, UCC, Speech and Language Studies, UCC and Colaiste Stiofain Naofa. Each work experience student completes an application form (**Appendix 4**), is interviewed by the crèche manager and two written references are supplied as well as a Garda clearance cert.

When work experience students commence training, they are given a detailed induction which includes reading and learning about the crèche polices and procedures and includes the child protection policy which they are required also to sign up to. They also receive a tour of the facilities. Each room has a group leader who supervises the room and helps new students to settle in. Work experience students are not included in the crèche staff to child ratios and are not left alone supervising children.

11. Management of Staff and Work experience students

At Crèche Cois Laoi both new and existing staff and student trainees are supervised and supported throughout their time in the crèche.

Staff at Crèche Cois Laoi are supervised and supported in the following ways:

Management visits all the rooms in the crèche on a daily basis, spending time in the rooms and joining in the activities of the day while also observing practices being carried out.

Weekly team meetings with the team leaders of each care group take place. At these meetings we operate a two way communication system where management welcomes feedback from team leaders on how things are going in their rooms and if there are any issues that need attention.

Management discusses best practice with team leaders and brainstorm ideas on how best to deal with issues as they arise.

Staff members know that any issues of a confidential matter concerning the protection of a child can be discussed with the manager at any time.

Regular staff room meetings from the different care groups are also held and discuss how each room is going and how to move forward and also the meeting allows staff to raise any concerns they may have.

Supervision of new and existing work experience students

The manager/ assistant manager meet with trainee students on their first morning. Students must read the guidelines for working in the rooms, the crèche policies and also the child protection policy. Students must sign a form to say that they have read and understand the policies. The team leader of the care group the students have been assigned to, support and guide the volunteer/ student through their work experience. The volunteers/student tutor from their college regularly makes contact with the crèche to see how they are getting on and if there are areas that need to work on.

12. Parental involvement/ sharing information

At Crèche Cois Laoi recognises that parents are the primary carers of their child and we make every effort to keep parents updated on how their child is developing in the crèche in the following ways:

- Parents are given daily updates on how their child is doing
- Parents are given a fortnightly newsletter which informs them of the activities that the children will be partaking in and also upcoming events in the crèche.
- Parents are very welcome to accompany their child on any walks that take place during the year
- Parents are also free to request a meeting with their child's key worker and manager to discuss their child's development in depth and to discuss any concerns they may have about their child.

The crèche also holds yearly parent /teacher meetings where parents are encouraged to come in to meet with their child's key worker and manager to discuss their development.

When new parents take up a place for their child in the crèche they are given a parental booklet with some of the crèche policies included as well as being shown a copy of the crèche's policy and procedures main folder. They sign a contract which includes an acknowledgment that they understand and will adhere to all crèche policies.

On the enrolment form parents fill out before their child commences, they must tick the permission box on the form if they would like their child to take part on walks that take place in the crèche.

If the crèche organises an outing other than the designated walks then parents must give their consent in writing before hand if they would like their child to partake in that outing.

13. Accident / Incident Procedure:

Crèche Cois Laoi aims at all times to prevent accidents from occurring, however where children are concerned it sometimes is impossible to prevent them.

If a child has an accident no matter how big or small, a detailed account of this is recorded in the accident/ incident book, which every care group has. The form is then signed by the parent in the evening and they are given a copy for themselves. These books are kept on file for 10 years.

All our emergency numbers are kept in the back office on the notice board and they are easily accessible to all staff.

All staff members at Crèche Cois Laoi are trained in first aid and a copy of their certificate is kept on file. These certificates are renewed every three years.

Each care group in the crèche has a well stocked first aid box. This is checked/refilled if necessary and signed off by the team leader on a monthly basis.

14. Policy Review

It is policy in Crèche Cois Laoi regularly to review all policies and procedures on a regular basis.