

Child Safeguarding Statement

What is safeguarding? Safeguarding is the action that is taken to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. While protecting children from abuse is one part of safeguarding, children and young people also need safeguarding in order for them to grow, develop and achieve their full potential.

Name of service being provided: Fighting Words - head office is based at Behan Square, 12-16 Russell Street, Dublin 1 D01 WD53.

Locations in Dublin (Dublin city and Dún Laoghaire), Wicklow, Cork, Galway (Galway City and Clarinbridge), Mayo (Castlebar and Ballina), Kildare and the northwest (Donegal/Sligo/Leitrim).

Nature of service and principles to safeguard children from harm: We at Fighting Words are committed to safeguarding the well-being of children and vulnerable adults who are participating in creative writing programmes at our locations around Ireland.

Our aim is to create a safe, creative and enjoyable environment where children and vulnerable adults of all abilities can engage in storytelling and creative writing and where their protection and welfare is paramount.

Everyone working with children and vulnerable adults has a responsibility for their well-being and protection, including those working as staff members or volunteers at Fighting Words through the organisation's educational programmes and activities. We have a collective responsibility to ensure that the children and vulnerable adults we work with are encouraged and helped in their creative work and that this should take place in a safe and protected environment.

Risk assessment

We have carried out an assessment of any potential for harm to a child while availing of our services. Below is a list of the areas of risk identified and the list of procedures for managing these risks.

	Risk Identified	Procedure in place to manage risk identified
1	Inappropriate people with access to children	Comprehensive recruitment and screening process in each location in place: application, interview, reference check, Garda vetting and training
2	Inappropriate conduct around children	All volunteer tutors and story illustrators are trained in the Fighting Words Code of Behaviour
3	Lack of training	All volunteer tutors and story illustrators are provided with training in Fighting Words methods and provided with a Tutoring Handbook and Volunteer Policy
4	Lack of knowledge of reporting procedures	All staff members, volunteer tutors and story illustrators are trained in child protection procedures, including reporting child protection complaints and concerns
5	Use of images of children	Written permission sought in advance from parents and/or schools for use of children's images in publications and online
6	Offsite programmes	Fighting Words will participate in programmes at external locations with and/or with partner organisations with due regard to child safeguarding
7	Recording and Sharing Information	All records pertaining to child safeguarding complaints or concerns are held securely and shared only on a "need to know" basis
8	Ratios	For primary school workshops, the ratio should be not more than 4:1. For secondary school workshops, the ratio should be not more than 6:1.
9	One-to-One Working	Fighting Words programmes always involve more than one adult being present or at least in sight or hearing of others. A minimum of two adults should be present at all times.
10	Appropriate Physical Contact	Physical touch should only occur when it is appropriate to the age/development of the child and in response to particular needs of the child. There will be instances when physical contact is unavoidable and in fact necessary, e.g. preventing injury.
11	Safe Use of Internet/Social Media	There is no unsupervised access to wireless internet (wifi) connection and/or computer network by children. Mobile phones are not to be used during workshops unless absolutely necessary. The content of the Fighting Words website and social media accounts is appropriate for children.

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12	Transporting Children	Staff and volunteers will not external meetings or contact children or vulnerable adults outside the group or project or offer lifts to children or vulnerable adults.
13	Responding to Challenging Behaviour	Staff and volunteers should not under any circumstances attempt to deal with any problems or challenging behaviour alone. If an activity – the event itself or peer activities between children – is getting out of hand or becomes unsafe, the group leader or a member of staff must be notified immediately. Our Positive Behaviour Policy should be adhered to at all times by children and young people.
14	Communicating with parents/guardians (primary carers)	Fighting Words is committed to being open with all primary carers, i.e. parents and guardians. As a child-centred and person-centred organisation, Fighting Words is committed to putting the interest of the child and vulnerable adult first. We encourage primary carers to work in partnership with us under the guidelines set out by our organisation to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults.

Procedures

Our Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with the requirements under the Children First Act 2015, the *Children First: National Guidance* and Tusla's *Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice*. In addition to the procedures listed in our risk assessment, the following procedures support our intention to safeguard children while they are availing of our services:

- Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child availing of our service
- Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers to work with children
- Procedure for the provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm
- Procedure for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla
- Procedure for maintaining a list of the persons at Fighting Words who are mandated persons
- Procedure for appointing a relevant person

All procedures listed are available upon request.

Implementation

We recognise that implementation is an ongoing process. Fighting Words is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while availing of our service. This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed on **20 July 2018** or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

Local Tusla Contact Telephone Numbers

Dublin North City 01 846 7129	Dublin South East/Wicklow 045 907 896	Cork 021 492 3503	Sligo, Leitrim & West Cavan 071 982 2776
Donegal 074 974 3026	Galway & Roscommon 091 546 128	Mayo 094 904 2030	Dublin South West, Kildare & West Wicklow 045 907 896

In case of emergency, contact An Garda Síochána – 112/999

Signed:

Name and Contact Details:

Seán Love, Executive Director
 Telephone: 01 894 4576
 Email: info@fightingwords.ie

Please contact Sara Bennett, Relevant Person under the Children First Act 2015, with queries.