



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 CLG - head office is based at Behan Square, 12-16 Russell Street, Dublin 1 D01 WD53. Locations in Clare, Connemara, Cork, Donegal, Dublin, Galway, Kerry, Kildare, Laois, Longford, Louth, Mayo, Monaghan, Offaly, Tipperary, Waterford, Wexford and Wicklow.

Nature of service and guiding 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 at creative writing workshops and other programmes run both at our centres and at off-site locations. Our aim is to create a safe, creative and enjoyable environment where children of all abilities can engage in storytelling and creative writing programmes and where their protection and welfare is paramount.

1. Our priority is to ensure the welfare and safety of every child and young person who attends our service.
2. Our guiding principles and procedures to safeguard children and young people reflect national policy and legislation and we will review our guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures annually or with any change to national policy and legislation.
3. All children and young people have an equal right to attend a service that respects them as individuals and encourages them to reach their potential, regardless of their background.
4. We are committed to upholding the rights of every child and young person who attends our service, including the rights to be kept safe and protected from harm, taken seriously, listened to and heard.
5. Fighting Words fully subscribes to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Every child who attends our service should be treated with respect and dignity.
5. Our guiding principles apply to everyone in our organisation. The safety and welfare of children is everyone's responsibility.
6. Staff and volunteers must conduct themselves and work together in a way that reflects the principles of our organisation.

Risk assessment

We have carried out an assessment of any potential for harm to a child while availing of our services, including the area of online safety when accessing the internet. 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	Access to Children	All Fighting Words staff and volunteers are subject to a comprehensive screening process, which includes an application form, interview, reference check and Garda vetting.
2	Risk of Harm, including Risk of Bullying	Per the Children First Act 2015, "harm" means, in relation to a child— (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. All Fighting Words staff and volunteers are trained in child protection and aware of their obligations in reporting a child protection complaint or concern.
3	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.
4	Offsite Programmes	Fighting Words will participate in programmes at external locations with partner organisations with due regard to child safeguarding with appropriate policies in place.
5	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.
6	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.
7	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.
8	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 and in line with Children First legislation and public health guidelines. There will be instances when physical contact is unavoidable and in fact necessary, e.g. preventing injury.

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

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9	Safe Use of Internet/Social Media	There is no unsupervised access to wireless internet (wifi) connection and/or computer network by children at FW centres. 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.
10	Online Workshops	Staff and volunteers are trained in the appropriate use of technology for the delivery of online workshops and the standards of behaviour required. School staff and parents/guardians are also briefed in advance about safety measures in place for online workshop delivery.
11	Transporting Children	Staff and volunteers will not arrange external meetings or contact children or vulnerable adults outside the group or project or offer lifts to children or vulnerable adults in personal vehicles.
12	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.
13	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 on-going 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 **30 September 2023** or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

Local Tusla Office Contact Information

Contact details for all local Tusla Area Offices available here: <https://www.tusla.ie/get-in-touch/local-area-offices/>
Further information for reporting concerns available here: <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/report-a-concern/>

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

Signed:



Seán Love, Executive Director

Relevant Person under the Children First Act 2015

Contact Details:

Sara Bennett

087 274 6621 – sara@fightingwords.ie

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