

Child Safeguarding Statement

1. Name of service

The name of this service is the Office of the Police Ombudsman or Fiosrú- Oifig an Ombudsman Póilíneachta. For ease, it is commonly referred to as Fiosrú.

2. Child safeguarding statement

Fiosrú's Child Safeguarding Statement sets out the service we provide and the principles and procedures to be observed to ensure, as far as practicable, that a child availing of our service is safe from harm. We have included an assessment of risk of harm to a child while availing of our service and specify the procedures in place to manage any identified risks. The Child Safeguarding Statement applies to all our office locations (Dublin, Cork, Longford).

3. Nature of service provided

Fiosrú is charged with taking and investigating complaints relating to Garda conduct. The Childcare Act 1991 defines a child as a person under the age of 18 years other than a person who is or has been married. Children aged between 16 and 18 years can make complaints themselves. An authorised person, such as a parent or guardian, may make a complaint on their behalf. For children aged less than 16 years, the consent of their parent or guardian is required. For children in care, aged under 16, information will be sought from Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, in relation to consent, where appropriate.

Children may attend Fiosrú offices by appointment to give their complaint verbally to a member of staff.

Fiosrú has staff trained as specialist interviewers who are used to take statements or obtain video recorded accounts from child victims or witnesses. In some cases, Fiosrú may arrange for Garda specialist interviewers to take the statement on our behalf.

If a child complains that they have been assaulted by a Garda member, Fiosrú will photograph the injuries.

From time to time Fiosrú will facilitate transition year students.

4. Principles to safeguard children from harm

Below are principles and procedures which should be observed to ensure, as far as possible, that a child is safe from harm and availing of our service.

- All staff are Garda vetted
- All staff will have undertaken Tusla online child protection training as a minimum standard.
- Child protection or welfare concerns will be reported to Tusla in a timely manner.
- Any child having direct contact with Fiosrú e.g. for a meeting or having a statement taken will, where operationally possible, be met by two members of staff, one of whom should be the same gender as the child. If this is not possible, the reasons why and a decision as to how to proceed will be documented.
- If an unaccompanied child comes to Fiosrú offices to make a complaint, the child will be asked for the necessary information to decide whether Fiosrú can investigate their complaint, but will not be interviewed.
- Fiosrú will arrange for an appropriate adult to accompany any child that is giving a statement or being interviewed. An appropriate adult is someone whose only interest is supporting the child and ensuring their safety, welfare and protection. Fiosrú will adhere to the standard of rights, supports and protections that children who are the victims of crime can expect. Insofar as possible, Fiosrú will extend these rights, supports and protections to children whose complaints are disciplinary in nature.
- Fiosrú will take the best interests of the child into account in decisions concerning them.
- Children will be listened to and their views considered in decisions concerning them, according to their age and understanding.

- Fiosrú will manage children's expectations of the outcome of their complaint by communicating in a way that is suitable to their needs.
- Children who may be working with Fiosrú on transition year placements or projects will be accompanied at all times.

5. Risk Assessment

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

Risk	Response
Non-compliance with Child safeguarding policy and guidelines	Up-to-date training on policy and guidelines delivered to relevant staff
Risk to schoolchildren including transition year students availing of work experience in our offices	Child safeguarding policy will be followed
Delay in making referrals to Tusla	Cases where referrals may be required will be identified on a daily basis from internal reports and internal alerts. Urgent referrals are made on a case-by-case basis.
Receipt of complaints of alleged child abuse where a member of An Garda Síochána is the alleged perpetrator	Admissibility of complaints determined immediately followed by a referral to Tusla

6. Procedures

Fiosrú's Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with 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 on our risk assessment the following procedures support our intention to safeguard children while there availing of our service:

- Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers or 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 provision of access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm
- Procedure for the reporting of child protection and welfare concerns to Tusla
- Procedure for maintaining a list of mandated persons
- Procedure for maintaining a relevant person in accordance with the Child Care (Amendment) Act 2015.

7. Implementation and Review

Fiosrú recognises that implementation is an ongoing process. Our services 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 as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement referred.

Signature: 

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For queries please contact: