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North Tipperary Development Company

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Document Control

Date	Version	Author	Comment
August 2012	2012.0	M. Putti/D. Cahir	Initial draft
September 2014	2014.1	M. Putti/D. Cahir	Updated final
July 2015	2015.2	M. Putti	Updating on SICAP, Resettlement Project & Rural Transport. Additional DLP for Tus/Resettlement Project.
August 2018	2018.3	D. Cahir	Updating DLPS Policies attached
September 2020	2020.4	L. Doherty	Formatting update
March 2021	2021.5	M. Gordon	Updating DLP's, projects, extracting bullying & garda vetting policies to be standalone policy documents, Tusla reporting procedure & report forms updated
April 2021	2021.6	M. Gordon	Updating layout, content Garda vetting, retrospective abuse, safety statement, guidance for management of staff

NOTE: Please see NTDC.POL.0057 Community Childcare Child & Adult Protection Policy with Safeguarding Statements for Little Learners & First Steps projects.

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Who is North Tipperary Development Company:

North Tipperary Development Company (NTDC) is an Integrated Local Development Company that provides area-based responses to long term unemployment and promotes social inclusion and economic and rural development throughout North Tipperary. NTDC's Child Protection Policy has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017), and Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice. The Company is committed to working from the local development perspective of inclusion, partnership, participation, area-based planning/lobbying, equality and non-discrimination. NTDC seeks to add value to services and supports already being delivered in the County by statutory, community and voluntary agencies. The Company further seeks to collaborate with other groups to meet needs where gaps in service provision are identified. NTDC operates within the old North Tipperary Local Authority Area and is governed by a Board of Directors.

Programmes delivered by NTDC include:

- Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)
- Rural Development Programme (LEADER)
- Community Childcare Services
 - First Steps
 - Little Learners
- Roscrea Youth Service
 - Roscrea Youth Project UBU
 - RAY Garda Youth Diversion Programme (12-18 years & 8-11years)
 - Youth Counselling & Wellness Project
 - Family Support Service
- ASCEND - Domestic Abuse Service
- Traveller Projects
 - Primary Healthcare
 - Traveller Men
 - Family Support
- Jobs Club
- Community Employment Scheme (CE)
- Rural Social Scheme (RSS)
- Tús Programme
- Mental Health Programmes
- Energy Programmes

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Scope of Policy

This policy is for all staff, volunteers and service users of our organisation. It is imperative that all are made aware of its existence and our commitment to safe-guarding young people and children. Training will be provided to all staff and volunteers during our induction process. All service users will be made aware that it is in operation and will be provided with a copy if they so wish. For childcare specific projects (Little Learners & First Steps) please see the NTDC.POL.0057 Community Childcare Child & Adult Protection Policy with Safeguarding Statement.

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Section One: Policy Statement

We at NTDC recognise that the welfare of children is paramount and are committed to best practice in accordance with the Children First Act 2015, Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017), and Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice which promotes the general welfare, health, development and safety of children and protects them from harm of all kinds. We will endeavor to safeguard children by:

- Following carefully the procedures for recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers, in line with NTDC Recruitment and Health and Safety Policy.
- Adopting child protection guidelines through a code of behaviour for staff and volunteers.
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.
- Sharing information about child protection with parents, staff and volunteers. Parents will be informed that NTDC have a Child Protection Policy in operation on the application/permission forms and they will be invited to read the policy at their convenience.
- Children will be told by leaders of the Child Protection Policy and taken through the policy in language they understand. Any questions will then be answered.
- Having a detailed Reporting Procedure in place for staff and volunteers who have a concern about the welfare of young person.
- NTDC's Child Protection Policy adheres to National Policy Guidelines and Best Practice. The Group's Designated and Deputy Designated Liaison Persons attend regular training with key agencies that have a remit in the area of Child Protection. The Child Protection Policy will be reviewed annually by the Designated Liaison Persons.
- Informing parents, children and staff so that they know how to voice their concerns or complain if there is anything they are not happy about.
- All staff, volunteers, parents and children will be made familiar with NTDC's Child Protection Policy document. This will be done by induction and training for staff and volunteers. Parents will be advised by letter and through information on Parent Consent Forms of the policy and invited to read of same.
- NTDC take into account that children have a right to be heard, listened to and taken seriously. Taking into account their age and understanding, they should be

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consulted and involved in all matters and decisions that may affect their lives.
Where there are concerns about a child's welfare, there should be opportunities
provided for their views to be heard independently of their parents/carers.

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Section Two: Definitions, Signs, and Symptoms

What is child abuse?

Child abuse can be categorised as follows:

- Neglect
- Emotional Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse

A child (unmarried person under the age of 18 years) may be subjected to more than one form of abuse at any given time.

The National Guidelines have adopted the following definitions of child abuse:

Neglect

Neglect is normally defined in terms of an omission, where a child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, or medical care.

Harm can be defined as the ill treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child. Whether it is significant is determined by his/her health and development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child.

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 being deprived of adequate nutrition. A child who consistently misses school may be being deprived of intellectual stimulation. The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that his or her well-being and/or development are severely affected.

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NEGLECT	
Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
• Constant hunger	• Listlessness
• Exposed to danger; lack of supervision	• Lack of relationships
• Inadequate/ inappropriate clothing	• Low self-esteem
• Poor hygiene	• Compulsive stealing/ begging
• Untreated illness	
• Tiredness	

Emotional Abuse

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's needs for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. It is rarely manifested in terms of physical symptoms. Examples of emotional abuse include:

- (i) Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming;
- (ii) Conditional parenting, in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his or her behaviours or actions;
- (iii) Emotional unavailability by the child's parent/carer;
- (iv) Unresponsiveness, inconsistent or inappropriate expectations of a child;
- (v) Premature imposition of responsibility on a child;
- (vi) Unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of a child's capacity to understand something or to behave and control himself in a certain way;
- (vii) Under or over protection of a child;
- (viii) Failure to show interest in, or provide age appropriate opportunities for, a child's cognitive and emotional development;
- (ix) Use of unreasonable or over harsh disciplinary measures;
- (x) Exposure to domestic violence.

Children show signs of emotional abuse by their behaviour (for example, excessive clinginess to or avoidance of the parent/carer), their emotional state (low self-esteem, unhappiness), or their development (non-organic failure to thrive). The

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threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/carer.

EMOTIONAL	
Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudden speech disorders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rocking, thumb sucking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wetting and soiling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs of mutilation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronic runaway
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent vomiting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor peer relationships
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention seeking behaviour

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. Examples of physical abuse include:

- (i) Shaking;
- (ii) Use of excessive force in handling;
- (iii) Deliberate poisoning;
- (iv) Suffocation;
- (v) Munchausen's syndrome by proxy (where parents fabricate stories of illness about their child or cause physical signs of illness);
- (vi) Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child.

PHYSICAL	
Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scratches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-mutilating tendencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bite marks or welts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronic runaway
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruises in places difficult to mark e.g. behind ears, groin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggressive or withdrawn
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burns, especially cigarette burns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of returning home
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Untreated injuries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undue fear of adults
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fearful watchfulness

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Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others. For example:

- (i) Exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child;
- (ii) Intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification;
- (iii) Masturbation in the presence of a child or involvement of the child the act of masturbation;
- (iv) Sexual intercourse with the child, whether oral, vaginal or anal;
- (v) Sexual exploitation of a child;
- (vi) Consensual sexual activity between an adult and a child under 17 years. In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that, for the purpose of the criminal law, the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years. This means, for example, that sexual intercourse between a 16-year-old girl and her 17-year-old boyfriend is illegal, although it might not be regarded as constituting child sexual abuse.

SEXUAL	
Physical Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soreness, bleeding in genital or anal areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronic depression
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Itching in genital areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate language, sexual knowledge for age group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stained or bloody underwear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making sexual advances to adults or other children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stomach pains or headaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low self esteem
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain on urination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afraid of the dark
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty in walking or sitting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wariness of being approached by anyone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruises on inner thighs or buttocks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substance/drug abuse
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anorexic/bulimic 	

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Recognising Child Abuse:

The ability to recognise child abuse depends as much on a person's willingness to accept the possibility of its existence as it does on knowledge and information. It is important to note that child abuse is not always readily visible, and may not be as clearly observable as the 'text book' scenarios outlined in these guidelines suggest. The recognition of abuse normally runs along three stages:

- (i) Considering the possibility – if a child appears to have suffered an inexplicable and suspicious looking injury, seems distressed without obvious reason, displays unusual behavioural problems or appears fearful in the company of parents/carers.
- (ii) Observing signs of abuse – a cluster or pattern of signs is the most reliable indicator of abuse. Children may make direct or indirect disclosures, which should always be taken seriously. Less obvious disclosures may be gently explored with a child, without direct questioning (which may be more usefully carried out by the HSE or An Garda Síochána). Play situations such as drawing or story telling may reveal significant information. Indications of harm must always be considered in relation to the child's social and family context, and it is important to always be open to alternative explanations.
- (iii) Recording of information – it is important to establish the grounds for concern by obtaining as much detailed information as possible. Observations should be recorded and should include dates, times, names, locations, context and any other information which could be considered relevant or which might facilitate further assessment/investigation.

Who can make a report to North Tipperary Development Company?

Reports can be made by:

- Children/young people;
- Parents/guardians;
- Employees, volunteers of NTDC;
- Other advocates on behalf of children/young people.

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Guidance on dealing with Disclosures:

A child may disclose abuse to a worker as a trusted adult at any time, it is important that they are prepared for this. Training during induction period should include the following guidelines should this arise:

- Be calm and natural as possible.
- Do not panic, you have been approached because you are trusted.
- Be aware that disclosures can be very difficult for the child.
- Remember, the child maybe initially testing your reactions and may only fully open up over a period of time.
- Listen to what the child has to say. Give them the time and opportunity to tell as much as they are able and wish to.
- Do not pressure the child, allow them to disclose at their own pace and in their own language.
- Conceal any signs of disgust, anger or disbelief.
- Accept what the child has to say – false disclosures are very rare.
- It is important to differentiate between the person who carried out the abuse and the act of abuse itself. The child quite possibly may love or strongly like the alleged abuser while also disliking what was done to them. It is important therefore to avoid expressing any judgement on, or anger towards, the alleged perpetrator while talking with the child.
- It may be necessary to reassure the child that your feelings towards him/her have not been affected in a negative way as a result of what they have disclosed.

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Section Three: Designated Liaison Persons

Staff must be aware that they are required to report concerns to the Designated Liaison Person responsible for the Project in which they work.

The Designated Persons for the Specific Projects are as follows:

Designated Liaison Person for staff from the following projects:	Designated Liaison Person for staff from the following projects:	Designated Liaison Person for staff from the following projects:	Designated Liaison Person for staff from the following projects:	Designated Liaison Person for staff from the following project:
Rural Social Scheme (countywide) Rural Development Programme (countywide) Jobs Club (Nenagh & Roscrea/Thurles) C.E Programme (Nenagh & Roscrea) Administration staff (Nenagh) Tús (countywide) Administration staff (Roscrea)	Family Support Project (Roscrea) Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (North Tipperary) Roscrea Youth Service	Ascend	Little Learners Community Childcare First Steps Childcare	Traveller Family Support Primary Health Care Countywide
Michael Murray 087-6753380 David Kyne 087-1229438 Michael Carey 087-2585245 Tony Lanigan 087-9459744	Maedhbh Gordon 087-2166011 Robert Foley 087-6200633	Kathleen Maher 087-9501299	Brenda Small 087-6774609 Melissa Mooney 087-3602812	Michael Murray 087-6753380

Roles and Responsibility of the Designated Liaison Person/ Mandated Person

- It is the role of the Designated Liaison Person/ Mandated Person to report child protection concerns, allegations and disclosures to Tusla.
- To receive and consider all child protection concerns within the organisation.
- It is the Designated Liaison Persons role to inform parents that a report is being made to Tusla – unless doing so could endanger the child.

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- Ensure that the organisation's Child Protection Policy and Procedure are followed.
- To ensure appropriate information is available at the time of referral and that the referral is confirmed in writing, under confidential cover.
- To maintain confidential records.
- To liaise with Tusla and An Garda Síochána as appropriate.
- To maintain contact with the Information and Advice Officer of Tusla.
- To provide information and advice on child protection matters within the organisation.
- To ensure that the standard reporting procedure is followed
- That they are knowledgeable about child protection and have undertaken any training necessary.

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Section Four: Reporting Procedure

Reporting Procedure for Reporting Suspected/Disclosed Abuse

- A staff member/volunteer has a concern or suspicion:
 - (i) A person/ child may have made a disclosure;
 - (ii) You may have noticed a physical injury, a change in a child behaviour, or staff or volunteers behaviour;
 - (iii) Or you may have heard information from a third party;
 - (iv) You may have a concern about a colleagues behaviour in relation to a child/ren;
 - (v) An adult may inform you of abuse that has taken place retrospectively.
- Concerns should, if appropriate, be checked out with the child and or parent.
- Staff member/volunteer should document factual information on all concerns/disclosures as soon as possible. This should be written clearly on blank sheets of paper, which is available at receptions in each NTDC Centre, on the bottom shelf of the policy trays. All recorded information is to be passed onto the Designated Liaison Person for confidential storage.
- A concern about a potential risk to children posed by a specific person, even if the children are unidentifiable, should also be communicated to Tusla.
- Staff member/volunteer should inform/consult with Designated Liaison Person or deputy Designated Liaison Person assigned to the project in which they work.
- In the absence of the designated/deputy person the staff member/volunteer should contact the Duty Social Worker directly to discuss the concern.
- Designated Liaison Person will inform parent(s) if making a report, unless doing so would endanger child.
- A report is made by the Designated Liaison Person to Tusla where there are reasonable grounds for reporting.
- The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:
 - (i) specific indication from the child that (s)he was abused;
 - (ii) an account by a person who saw the child being abused;
 - (iii) evidence, such as an injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way;

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- (iv) An injury or behaviour which is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse. An example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse, dysfunctional behavior;
- (v) Consistent indication, over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect. (p. 38, Children First)
- (vi) Retrospective disclosure, as perpetrator may still be in the community and cause risk.

- In the case of urgent concerns, or that there is imminent risk to a child, a report can be made by telephone and followed up with the completed report form.
- In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk, and a duty social worker is unavailable as it is after hours, An Garda Síochána should be contacted. **Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending Tusla contact.**
- If at any stage any person has any misgivings about the safety of welfare of a child and are unsure if a formal report should be made, they may consult by telephone with the duty social worker and seek advice through informal consultation.
- All reports should be made without delay.
- Section 176 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006 introduced the criminal charge of **reckless endangerment of children**. It states:

‘A person, having authority or control over a child or abuser, who intentionally or recklessly endangers a child by –

- a. Causing or permitting any child to be placed or left in a situation which creates a substantial risk to the child of being a victim of serious harm or sexual abuse, or
- b. Failing to take reasonable steps to protect a child from such a risk while knowing that the child is in such a situation,

Is guilty of an offence’.

The penalty for a person found guilty of this offence is a fine (no upper limit) and /or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years.

- Designated Liaison Person/Mandated Person will submit written Report to Duty Intake Team on the Standard Form for Reporting.

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- In cases where a DLP/ Mandated person decides not to report concerns, a clear written statement of why the organisation is not taking action, should be furnished to the individual who raised the concern.
- Concerns that are not initially reported to the authorities will be recorded under the organisation's accident/incident procedure.
- Information received in respect of a suspicion of child abuse/welfare from a third party must be reported, regardless of any consideration in respect of confidentiality.
- Should you have concern that a child is missing; emergency services should be alerted immediately.
- All discussions and phone calls in respect of the reporting procedure are confidential and will be carried out in a private room. Any documents will be locked away securely by the Designated Liaison Person and will only be accessible by the Designated Liaison Person. Staff/volunteers will be reminded of their obligations under the Confidentiality Statement contained in Section Ten of this document.
- NTDC record retention policy will be adhered to with regards to child protection documentation.
- Retrospective disclosures made by adults are increasing. This type of disclosure should be treated like any other form of disclosure and reported as there may be current risk to children. Retrospective Disclosures by Adults, Parents and staff who are working with children and young adults or who attend child protection training may disclose abuse which took place during their childhood. A disclosure of abuse by an adult which took place during their childhood must be noted or recorded. In these cases, it is essential that consideration is given to the current risk to any child who may be in contact. If any risk is deemed to exist to any child who may be in contact with the alleged abuser, a report of the allegation should be made to the Child and Family Agency Tusla without delay. Investigation of disclosures by adult victims of past abuse frequently uncovers current incidents of abuse and is therefore an effective means of stopping the cycle of abuse. An increasing number of adults are disclosing abuse that took place during their childhoods. Such disclosures often come to light when adults attend counselling. It is essential to establish whether there is any current risk to any child who may be in contact with the alleged abuser revealed in such disclosures. If any risk is deemed to exist to a child who may be in contact with an alleged abuser, the Designated Liaison Person should report the allegation to the Child and Family

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Agency Tusla without delay. The National Counselling Service is in place to listen to, value and understand those who have been abused in childhood. The service is a professional, confidential counselling and psychotherapy service and is available free of charge in all regions of the country (see http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/Mental_Health_Services/National_Counselling_Service/). The service can be accessed either through healthcare professionals or by way of self-referral.

- The **Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998** makes provision for the protection from civil liability of persons who have communicated child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith'. This protection applies to organisations as well as individuals. This means that even if a communicated suspicion of child abuse proves unfounded, a plaintiff who took an action would have to prove that the person who communicated the concern had not acted reasonably and in good faith in making the report. A person who makes a report on good faith and in the child's best interest may also be protected under common law by the defense of qualified privilege. Persons reporting suspicion of child abuse are also protected from penalization by their employer, in this case NTDC.

Important Telephone Numbers and Addresses

<u>Written Reports:</u> Principal Social Worker, Tusla, Children and Family Service, Civic Offices, Nenagh. Co Tipperary	<u>Telephone Reports:</u> Duty Social Work, Civic Offices, Nenagh. Co Tipperary 067- 46660
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Duty Social Work System

Department	Days	Tel No:	Time:
Intake and Duty Nenagh	Monday to Friday	067 46660	9.00 am – 5.30 pm
Child Protection Nenagh	Monday to Friday	067 41934	9.00 am – 5.30 pm

If a Social Worker is unavailable, report concerns to **An Garda Síochána**. The following stations are **open 24 hours:**

Nenagh
067 31333

Thurles
0504 25100

Roscrea
0505 21700

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Tusla Portal

The Tusla Portal allows users to securely submit Child Protection and Welfare Report Forms (CPWRFs) and Retrospective Abuse Report Forms (RARFs) to Tusla online.

To use the Tusla Portal, you will first need to create a user account. <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/web-portal/>

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Section Five: Procedure for allegations against a Staff Member/Volunteer

When allegations are made against an employee/volunteer, you must ensure that everyone involved gets a proper response. This involves making sure that there are two separate reporting procedures followed:

- 1) The reporting procedure in respect of the child – where there are reasonable grounds for concern.
- 2) The procedure for dealing with the worker/volunteer.

Any allegations will be dealt with sensitively and support provided for staff/volunteer including counselling if necessary. NTDC's primary goal is to protect the child while taking care to treat the employee/ volunteer fairly. The same person will not deal with both parties.

Procedure for Dealing with Worker/Volunteer

The Management of the Company will privately inform the worker/volunteer that:

- 1) An allegation has been made.
 - 2) The nature of the allegation.
- The worker/ volunteer will be given an opportunity to respond. This response will be noted and forwarded to the Health Service Executive when making the formal report.
 - Jim Finn, Chairperson of NTDC, will be informed as soon as possible.
 - NTDC will take whatever steps are necessary to protect the child. This entails reporting all allegations to the Tusla without delay. This includes liaising closely to Tusla and An Garda Síochána ensuring that actions taken by the Organisation do not undermine or frustrate any investigations. These steps will be proportionate to the level of risk and will not unreasonably penalise the employee. Steps could include:
 - (i) administrative leave for the worker/volunteer;
 - (ii) increased levels of supervision of the worker/volunteer pending investigation;
 - (iii) suspension from position.

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- Parents of the child will be informed of actions planned and taken by organisation.
- Following an allegation, the organisation will work in close liaison with, and will be advised by, Tusla and An Garda Síochána, as appropriate.
- The responsibility for dealing with both the reporting issues and the employment issues will not lie with the same person. The reporting issues will be dealt with by the Designated Liaison Person of the Project involved. The employment issues will be dealt with by the Chairperson of the Organisation.
- The future position of the worker/ volunteer in NTDC will be decided on a case-by-case basis and this decision rests with the Board of Management.
- **All stages of the process will be recorded.**

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Section Six: Recruitment and Selection Procedure for Staff & Volunteers

- All staff & volunteer vacancies in NTDC will be openly advertised as widely as possible and available to all interested applicants.
- Job descriptions will be available, and all applicants will be asked to complete an Application Form/provide an up to date Curriculum Vitae to NTDC. Applicants will also be given a background on NTDC and its activities.
- Short-listed applicants will be called for formal interview, which will be conducted by at least two people.
- The contact details for at least two referees must be supplied; these must not be family members. It is the Company's policy to verify the references in writing before the appointment is sanctioned. Verification will take place by way of contact with the referee through phone call or personal visit.
- Detailed photographic identification of successful candidates will be held on file e.g. Passport, Driving License.
- Garda vetting will be sought and declaration form signed. Staff & Volunteers being recruited to work with children, young people and vulnerable adults must have Garda vetting before commencement in the post. In the case of all other posts new hires will commence but continuance in post will be subject to successful Garda vetting. It would be expected that staff disclose any convictions or if they have been given the benefit of the Probation Act. Should Garda vetting prove to be unsatisfactory owing to offences such as those listed below, the staff member's employment & a volunteer's placement will be terminated immediately.
- NTDC considers the following non-exhaustive list to be reasonable grounds to refuse an individual access to programmes involving the care of or contact with children or vulnerable adults:
 - (i) The individual has been charged with, or have a conviction for, a sexual offence;
 - (ii) The individual has been charged with, or have a conviction for, an offence that relates to the ill treatment or neglect of children or vulnerable adults;
 - (iii) The individual has been charged with, or have a conviction for, the ownership, production, possession or distribution of child pornography;
 - (iv) The individual has been charged with serious drug offences.

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- The decision to appoint an individual as staff will be the responsibility of the Board of NTDC. A contract will be issued and signed by both parties within two months of employment. All employees will be subject to a probationary period of six months.
- During the induction process, staff & volunteers must read and agree to the child protection and welfare policy and sign to that effect.
- All staff & volunteers have completed the Tusla eLearning module – Introduction to Children First and relevant staff have attended Always Children First Child Protection Training.

Garda Vetting – *Please see Garda Vetting Policy NTDC.POL.0043*

The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012-2016 make it mandatory for people working with children or vulnerable adults to be vetted by the Garda Síochána National Vetting Bureau. NTDC has the following avenues for Garda Vetting:

- IRD Dunhallow – Tús Scheme & RSS participants.
- Tipperary Volunteer Centre – Volunteers with NTDC.
- Pobal – Employees of NTDC.
- Early Childhood Ireland – All Community Childcare staff.

The eVetting procedure is laid out in NTDC Garda Vetting Policy (NTDC.POL.). Existing employees working directly with children and young people will be re-vetted every three years.

Guidelines for management of staff:

NTDC staff provides monthly work reports to Line Managers. Formal Support & Supervision meetings take place monthly or more frequently if the workload requires it. Informal Support & supervision is available to staff members as requested or as required. Full Team Meetings take place a minimum of twice per year. Individual teams meet monthly or more frequently as work demands require.

In accordance with the NTDC Employee handbook all staff undergoes an induction process including the Child Protection Policy and will confirm in writing that the induction process has taken place.

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NTDC Child Protection Policy will be rolled out to existing staff through an in-house training programme. On-going training will be provided following annual review or statutory/ guideline changes.

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Section Seven: North Tipperary Development Company Code of Behavior

- All Staff and Volunteers will be committed to treat all children equally regardless of gender, race, culture or ability.
- Staff and volunteers should always listen, encourage and praise children and vulnerable adults as appropriate.
- Children and vulnerable adults should be involved in decision making as appropriate.
- Staff and volunteers should not spend excessive amounts of time alone with children or vulnerable adults, away from others. Meetings with individual children or young people or vulnerable adults should take place as openly as possible. In the case of one to one work, it will be planned and agreed with written consent with both child and parent/guardian. If privacy is needed, the door should be left open and other staff or volunteers informed of the meeting.
- Staff and volunteers are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with children/young people or vulnerable adults. However, there may be occasions when physical contact is unavoidable. The following should be noted in relation to physical contact and touching in this context:
 - (i) It should be in response to the need of the child and not the need of the adult.
 - (ii) It should be with the child's permission – resistance from the child should be respected.
 - (iii) Avoid breasts, buttocks and groin
 - (iv) It should be open and not secretive
 - (v) It should be governed by the age and developmental stage of the child.
 - (vi) Where appropriate individual tailored intimate care procedures for children requiring assistance for tasks of a personal nature will be developed in consultation with parents and child.
- It is not good practice to take children or vulnerable adults alone in a car on journeys, however short. Where this is unavoidable, it should be with the full knowledge and consent of the parents or caregivers and the project coordinator. The child should be seated in the backseat of the car and phone contact should be maintained with other youth worker or parent for the

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duration of the journey using hands free device. In the case of older children, two other children should be present.

- Staff and volunteers should not meet with children or vulnerable adults outside organised activities, unless it is with the knowledge and consent of parents and the person in charge of the organisation.
- Written consent will be sought from children and parent/guardian in relation to the using of photographs. They will only be taken on Organisational devices and will be stored on organisational owned equipment e.g. cameras/ computers. Children and young people will only be photographed in suitable clothing and inappropriate use will be reported.
- Use of technology and social media will be restricted to matters related to engagement with NTDC services. Please refer to NTDC's Internet and Social Media Policy.
- Leaders, who are involved in intimate relationships with other leaders, should ensure that their personal relationships do not affect their leadership role within the organisation.
- Staff and volunteers should never:
 1. Engage in sexually provocative or rough physical games, including horseplay – apart from structured sports activities.
 2. Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
 3. Make sexually suggestive comments about, or to, a child even in fun.
 4. Let allegations made by a child or vulnerable adult go without being addressed and recorded in accordance with NTDC's Child Protection Policy.
 5. Do tasks of a personal nature for children or vulnerable adults that they can do themselves. Individual, tailored intimate care procedures will be developed for children requiring assistance with tasks of a personal nature.

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Section Eight: Safe Management Procedures, Training and Support

In addition to the Recruitment Procedures, the following management systems are in place to minimise the possibility of children coming to harm within the organisation.

Membership of Children within Projects/Services:

An application/consent form will be completed by parent/guardian outlining any medical details, special needs, contact telephone numbers, emergency telephone numbers and the name of a Designated Liaison Person for collecting the child from the project (if required).

- All parents/guardians will be informed regularly of child's participation, this is done both formally through meetings, daily record books and letters and informally when dropping and collecting.
- Consent forms will be signed by parent/guardian who has guardianship rights to give consent.
- Attendance Records will be kept.
- An incident book will be kept for accidents or ongoing concerns regarding youth.
- Permission will be sought from parents/guardians for photographs and videos taken of children within the projects. Photos and videos must only be taken with the company equipment. If photos are publicly displayed, the child's name must not be displayed.
- Parents /Guardians will be encouraged to participate in activities within the organisation on an informal level should they show interest or through planned family days. Should they like to become a regular volunteer, they will complete the volunteer application process.
- All services will provide a variety of communication tools when required to ensure an inclusive service.
- Any complaints or grievances will be dealt with in adherence with NTDC's Complaints Policy (NTDC.POL.0011).

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Workers/Volunteers/Leaders in Projects:

- Will be recruited following selection procedure.
- Will receive full induction training on their first day of employment.
- Staff will participate in annual updating and training in relation to NTDC's Child Protection Policy.
- Will sign up to child policies and procedures and code of behaviour.
- Will receive Children First training.
- Will serve a six-month probationary period.
- Roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined.
- A sufficient number of male and female workers will supervise activities.
- Will support each other by being available to discuss concerns and provide ongoing in-service training.
- Supervision will be provided by line management/coordinators of NTDC.
- Where possible the supervisor/coordinator will hold weekly team meetings to address any stress or concerns from the workers. Steps will be taken to alleviate the stress causing factors, particularly in the case of a worker dealing with child protection concerns.
- Management Team Meetings will be held monthly.
- Any allegation or complaints will be dealt with promptly.

When other agencies are involved in recruitment, NTDC will seek a declaration from these agencies to state that appropriate recruitment procedures have been followed.

Health and Safety:

- All child/youth projects are carried out under the NTDC.POL.0005 Safety Statement.
- All buildings being used will be inspected prior to the event.
- There is sufficient heating and ventilation.
- Toilets, shower areas and washing facilities are up to standard.
- Fire precautions and first aid facilities are in place.

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- Equipment is checked regularly, and proper insurance cover is in place.
- There will be an adequate number of staff/volunteers to ensure the group will be supervised at all times. A minimum of two staff members/volunteers must be present with the group of youths at any given time.
- Youth are not normally left unattended, unless parents are notified.
- Staff and Volunteers must be furnished with work practices in the area in which they are working, these set the parameters for the way in which we do business.

Overnight Stay and Extended National and International Exchanges:

If the activities involve staying away from home overnight, NTDC will ensure:

- Safe methods of transport for youth.
- Insurance, to cover all aspects of the trip.
- Written parental consent to include medical information.
- Provision of details to parents of the location, itinerary and duration of stay in advance of each trip. Contact number should they need to make contact.
- Contact details of Parent/guardians in case of an emergency.
- Any information about the youth that may be relevant to staying away overnight, like allergies, medical problems, or special needs.
- Appropriate and well-supervised sleeping arrangements. Male/female leaders.
- Respect for the privacy of children and young people in dormitories, changing rooms, showers and toilets.
- An information briefing will be held for parents and guardians of participants. Information will be given on policies and procedures to be applied during the trip.
- A meeting will take place with both young people and leaders outlining roles and responsibilities and behavioural expectations of all involved. Parents/Guardians will be involved.
- An advance preparation visit will take place prior to trip; this will be an opportunity to assess the quality of the accommodation and facilities. This

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will also be an opportunity to discuss and exchange child protection and welfare policies. A written record of this assessment will be made.

- Accident and emergency procedures will be agreed.

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Section Nine: Youth with Disabilities

Disability is defined in the National Disability Authority Act, 1999 as:

“Disability in relation to a person means a substantial restriction in the capacity of a person to participate in economic, social or cultural life on account of an enduring physical, sensory, learning, mental health or emotional impairment”.

There are a number of additional responsibilities and issues which need to be addressed in the provision of services to young people with additional needs.

Types of Disability:

- Physical disability
- Mental ill health
- Autism
- Intellectual or learning disability
- Sensory Impairment e.g. hearing or visual impairment

Inclusion

We aim to ensure that all children, including children with a disability, will be able to meaningfully participate in our settings (apart from exceptional situations where specialised provision is required for unavoidable reasons). In line with this vision, our policy is about supporting the access and inclusion of children with a disability and/or additional needs.

Communication difficulties & arrangements:

In cases where a young person has difficulty or alternative ways of communicating with adults the worker will be trained in these methods. If there is a requirement for an advocate to be used then NTDC will, on a case by case basis, generate a procedure in conjunction with the advocate to ensure the youth has an adequate means of communication.

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Section Ten: Confidentiality Statement

NTDC recognises the need for confidentiality and will ensure that all application forms, medical information, contracts of employment, all records relating to child protection and welfare, including any concerns that have been recorded and incident books are stored in a secure place. All confidential material will be kept in locked storage cabinets. It is the responsibility of the Designated Liaison Person/Mandated Person to ensure that all documentation and information in relation to the protection and welfare of children is managed and stored confidentially (see record keeping). Access will only be given to management staff on a need to know basis. All staff members will adhere to the following guidelines and will be trained accordingly:

- All information relating to the welfare or protection of a child should be shared on “a need to know” basis in the interests of the child.
- No undertakings regarding secrecy will be given; this will be made clear to the family and all parties involved.
- Information gathered for one purpose will not be used for another without consulting the person who provided the information.
- Parents/carers/older/younger children will be informed or consulted at each stage of the Reporting Procedure. However, parents/carers will not be informed if there is a risk of endangering the child.
- **Giving information to others for the protection of the child is not a breach of confidentiality.**
- A confidentiality statement outlining the above will be signed by all staff and volunteers during induction.
- Sharing information in this regard is not a breach of data protection.
- NTDC will cooperate with Tusla Child and Family Services in the sharing of records where a child welfare or protection issue arises and on the basis of referrals made to Social Work by NTDC.
- NTDC is committed to attending formal child protection and welfare meetings as organised by Tusla Child and Family Services.

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Record Keeping:

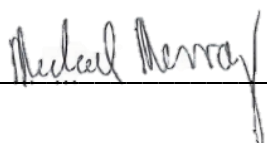
Please refer to NTDC.POL.0018 Data Protection Policy

- The service will conform to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003 plus any future amendments.
- Under the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, accurate and up to date records in relation to children, staff and service provision must be kept.
- Parents/guardians may have access to the files and records of their own children on request but may not have access to information about any other child.
- Only employees involved with a particular child should have access to confidential files and will be used to inform staff on how best to meet the needs of the child.
- Records are stored in compliance with the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.
- Where there are child protection or welfare concerns, observations/ records will be kept on an ongoing basis and information shared with Tusla as appropriate.
- These will be stored securely.
- Procedures are in place for archiving records.
- All records are managed in line with our Data Protection Policy.
- We aim to ensure that all records are factual and written impartially.
- The service will only share information with other professionals or agencies, with consent from parents/guardians or without their consent in terms of legal responsibility in relation to a Child Protection issue.
- Records or reports should not be altered or adjusted, if there are new developments then a new record of this information should be completed.

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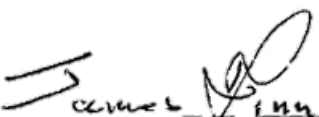
Section Eleven: Implementation

All NTDC's policies/procedures are available upon request. We recognize that implementation is an ongoing process. NTDC is committed to the implementation of this Child Protection Policy and the procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while availing of our services. The Child Protection Policy will be reviewed April 2022, or as soon as is practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

Signed: 

Date: 16/04/2021

Michael Murray, CEO

Signed: 

Date: 16/04/2021

Jim Finn, Chairperson

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Appendix One: Acknowledgement of North Tipperary Development Company Child Protection Policies and Procedures

I wish to acknowledge receipt of policy information relating to NTDC's Child Protection Policy.

I confirm that I have read understood and accept its contents and will abide by all the rules and procedures contained in it & also the ancillary NTDC policies: Garda Vetting Policy, Child and Youth Anti-Bullying Policy, Digital Youthwork Policy.

Please sign below and return immediately to your direct Supervisor/ Coordinator/Line Manager. This signed declaration will be kept on your personnel file.

DATE	Employee/Volunteer Signature

"THE WELFARE OF CHILDREN IS PARAMOUNT"

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Appendix Two: Tusla Standard Report Form

Tusla Child Protection and Welfare Report Forms (CPWRFs)

https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Child_Protection_and_Welfare_Report_Form_FINAL.pdf

The Child Protection and Welfare Report Form is to be completed and submitted to Tusla for concerns about children under the age of 18.

Tusla Retrospective Abuse Report Forms (RARFs)

https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Retrospective_Abuse_Report_Form_FINAL.pdf

Please note these forms can be completed online using the Tusla Portal, please consider using this Portal rather than the paper forms below for increased efficiency and ease, you will also be able to print and track your report if submitted online.

The Tusla Portal

The Tusla Portal allows users to securely submit Child Protection and Welfare Report Forms (CPWRFs) and Retrospective Abuse Report Forms (RARFs) to Tusla online. To use the Tusla Portal, you will first need to create a user account.

<https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/web-portal/>

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Appendix Three: List of relevant policies & legislative documents

North Tipperary Development Company Policies

NTDC.POL.0011 Complaints Policy
 NTDC.POL.0016 Volunteer Policy
 NTDC.POL.0017 Employee Handbook
 NTDC.POL.0018 Data Protection Policy
 NTDC.POL.0043 Garda Vetting Policy
 NTDC.POL.0048 Safeguarding Statement
 NTDC.POL.0049 Child & Youth Anti-Bullying Policy
 NTDC.POL.0056 Digital Youthwork Policy
 NTDC.POL.0057 Community Childcare Child & Adult Protection Policy with Safeguarding Statement.

Legislative Documents

Child and Family Agency Act 2013
 Child Care Act 1991
 Children Act 2001
 Children First Act 2015
 Criminal justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012
 Criminal Justice Act 2006, Section 176: Reckless Endangerment of Children
 Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003
 Domestic Violence Act 1996
 Education (Welfare) Act 2000
 Education Act 1998
 Freedom of Information Act 2014
 National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016
 Non-Fatal Offences against the Person Act 1997
 Protected Disclosures Act 2014
 Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998
 The General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679