



Child Protection Policy

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Introduction

Dublin City University has adopted this Child Protection Policy in accordance with the requirements of:

- a) the Children First Act 2015;
- b) Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017; &
- c) Tusla guidance on the preparation of Child Safeguarding Statements.

Purpose

This Child Protection Policy protects children and promotes best practice by providing children with appropriate safety and protection whilst involved in University activities or visiting the University.

The primary aim of this Policy is to provide a mechanism for dealing with any suspected incidents of child abuse. This Policy facilitates Members to make informed decisions in respect of child protection issues.

Scope

This Policy applies to :

- a) all University staff, students and those working on a voluntary or unpaid basis on behalf of the University, including campus companies and research centres; &
- b) all other external parties (e.g. agents, contractors, service providers, summer residency programmes / activities, licensees and visitors) operating on behalf of DCU.

Please note that the groups listed above are collectively known as **Members** throughout this document and associated documents. (See definition on page 10).

This Child Protection Policy document should be read in conjunction with the Child Protection Procedures document and the Child Safeguarding Statement.

Policy Statement

1. The University recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeate all aspects of university life and therefore must be reflected (where applicable) in its policies, procedures, practices and activities. In adhering to the following key principles of best practice in child protection and welfare, all Members will:
 - recognise that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations;

- fully comply with statutory obligations under the Children First Act 2015 and other relevant legislation relating to the protection and welfare of children;
- fully cooperate with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters;
- adopt safe practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and protect workers from the necessity to take unnecessary risks that may leave them open to accusations of abuse or neglect;
- where appropriate, develop a practice of openness with parents/carers and encourage parental/carer involvement in the education of their children;
- &
- fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.

All Members will also adhere to the above principles in relation to any adult with a special vulnerability.

2. In relation to the reporting of child protection concerns to Tusla, all Members are required to adhere to the procedures set out in the *DCU Child Protection Procedures* document, including in the case of Mandated Persons reporting under the Children First Act 2015.

Reporting of child protection concerns to Tusla should use the Tusla Child Protection and Welfare Report Form ([See link](#)).

Please note: All child protection concerns must be channelled through the DCU Designated Liaison Person (DLP) who is the person responsible for making reports to TUSLA, An Garda Síochána and other external agencies. In the event that the concern relates to the DLP the concern must be reported to the DCU President.

Internal reporting of child protection concerns to the DLP should use Appendix 7 Internal Reporting Form set out in the Child Protection Procedures document ([See Link](#)).

3. This Child Protection Policy will be published on the [Child Protection webpages of the Office of the Chief Operations Officer](#).

Designated Liaison Person

The President of the University will appoint the Designated Liaison Person for the purposes of the Children First Act 2015. The Designated Liaison Person shall liaise closely with Mandated Persons as set out in Schedule 2 of the Children First Act 2015.

The Designated Liaison Person is the ex-officio post holder of Chief Operations Officer.

1. Designated Liaison Person and Deputy Designated Liaison Persons

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) responsible for dealing with all child protection matters in DCU is the Chief Operations Officer.

In the absence of the Designated Liaison Person the Deputy Designated Liaison Persons (DDL) responsible for dealing with child protection matters are the Deputy Chief Operations Officer with responsibility for Child Protection or the Deputy President.

Contact	Name	Contact details
Designated Liaison Person (DLP)	Dr Declan Raftery Chief Operations Officer	child.protection@dcu.ie 01-700 5118 01-700 8257
Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL)	Martin Ward, Deputy Chief Operations Officer	child.protection@dcu.ie 01- 700 7476
Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL)	Prof. Anne Sinnott Deputy President	child.protection@dcu.ie 01-700 5396

Responsibility of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

- act as a resource to any Member who has a child protection query or concern;
- act as a liaison with outside agencies such as the Child and Family Agency (“Tusla”) and An Garda Síochána;
- ensure that mandated and non-mandated reporting procedures are followed, so that cases of child abuse and neglect are referred promptly to Tusla and/or to An Garda Síochána;
- ensure compliance by Mandated Persons with joint reporting procedures;
- record all allegations of child abuse and neglect brought to his/her attention;
- record all actions taken in relation to allegations of child abuse and neglect;
- where a concern does not reach the threshold for mandated reporting, but there remains a reasonable concern about the welfare or protection of a child, report this to Tusla;
- seek informal advice from Tusla where there is any doubt as to whether a matter should be reported to Tusla and/or as to whether a mandated report should be made;
- record the reasons where a decision is made not to report an allegation;
- Where the DLP does not believe the concern satisfies the threshold of harm sufficient to submit a mandatory report, s/he should inform the Mandated Person in writing that if s/he remains concerned, the Mandated Person may submit a mandated report to Tusla. In these circumstances, the Mandated Person must furnish the DLP with a copy of the mandated report s/he provided to Tusla and inform the DLP of any advice, information and/or documentation s/he receives from Tusla in relation to the report.

- raise awareness of the University's commitment to child protection via information on the Child Protection Website and through promotion of Tusla Children First Training available via Loop.

In accordance with this Child Protection Policy, a Mandated Person shall, when making a mandated report, make it jointly with the DLP.

Completed Child Safeguarding Risk Assessments will be reviewed by the DLP/DDLP as part of the annual review of the DCU Child Protection Policy or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment refers.

2. Responsibilities of DCU and Members

DCU must ensure that:

- a) the DCU Child Protection Policy and the Child Protection Procedures and the Child Safeguarding Statement are formally adopted and fully implemented.
- b) Employees/members and students being placed in outside agencies and organisations are required to inform themselves of that agency's or organisation's Child Safeguarding Statement.
- c) best practice guidelines are adhered to in the recruitment of employees or volunteers, which includes vetting, taking up of references, HR practices in interviewing, induction training, probation and ongoing supervision and management.
- d) Provide information, instruction and training in respect of the identification of the occurrence of harm (as defined in the 2015 Act) and will implement the following:
 - a. Refer all Members to the website location of the DCU Child Protection Policy and the Child Safeguarding Statement (CSS) - [\(See Link\)](#).
 - b. Encourage Members to avail of relevant Tusla training available via [Essential eLearning on the DCU People website](#).
- e) In line with the [University Vetting Policy for Staff](#) and in compliance with the [National Vetting Bureau \(Children and Vulnerable Persons\) Act 2012 and 2016](#), all members are required to be Garda vetted who carry out work or activity, a necessary and regular part of which consists mainly of the member having access to, or contact with children or vulnerable persons.

In line with legislation, the Child Care Act 1991, defines a child as any person under 18 years, excluding a person who is or who has been married. In the event that a person under the age of 18 is employed or engaged in any work or activity, the member who is responsible for the supervision of the person shall be Garda vetted.

In relation to the selection or recruitment of employees and their suitability to work with children, DCU will adhere to [Garda Vetting / Police Clearance Policy for Staff](#).

- f) Under the instruction of the DLP, and where considered appropriate, DCU shall carry out a Risk Assessment for potential harm to a child or vulnerable adult while attending or participating in university activities. A written assessment setting out

the areas of risk identified, and procedures for managing the risks, will be compiled in accordance with the **Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment Template** set out in the DCU [Child Protection Procedures](#).

- g) Members are aware of their statutory reporting obligations (See Chapter 3 Child Protection Procedures).

Members must ensure that:

- a) they are aware of how to recognise signs of child abuse.
- b) they are aware of how to avail of appropriate training where necessary.
- c) follow the reporting procedures, set out in Chapter 3 and 4 of the Child Protection Procedures, where they have reasonable grounds for concern about the safety and welfare of any child involved in any service provided by DCU.
- d) they fully co-operate with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection matters.
- e) they comply with confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.
- f) they maintain a watching brief in terms of recognising signs of child abuse.

3. Child Protection Training

Effective child protection depends on the skills, knowledge and values of Members working with children and families, as well as cooperation between agencies (interagency) and within agencies (intra-agency). Relevant training and education are an important means of achieving this.

It is imperative that all Members are familiar with this Policy (and its related Procedures and Statement) to enable them to fulfil their legal responsibilities therein. This will be achieved by developing a culture of awareness and knowledge of the Policy, Procedures and Statement amongst all Members and, where necessary, ensuring that appropriate training is undertaken. It is recommended that all Members who may have contact with children and/or vulnerable adults take the Tusla Child Protection online training module at [this link](#).

DCU People will provide training statistics to the DLP as part of the Child Protection Annual Review.

Note: The link to the Tusla training is routed through the DCU People Essential eLearning platform. Participants may access the training through the 'Loop Self Enrolment' link and by selecting the 'Child Protection' option. Once the module is completed all participants must take and pass the 'Child Protection Knowledge Check' at the end of the module.

Policy Violation

DCU may take appropriate action against an individual(s) where:

- a Member has been found to be in breach of this Policy (including instances of where an individual covered up, obstructed, failed to report or to monitor an issue that they become aware of);
- or
- where the University reasonably believes that a deliberately false allegation has been made.

Any actions taken by the University with respect to a Member will be initiated in accordance with the appropriate DCU regulations and disciplinary procedures, which may include, but are not restricted to, the following:

- i. the initiation of steps for implementation of disciplinary procedures under [DCU Statute No. 5 of 2010: Suspension and Dismissal of Employees](#) leading to demotion or dismissal (relevant to University employees only);
- or
- ii. the initiation of steps for implementation of disciplinary procedures under the DCU [Student Code of Conduct and Discipline](#).

Contact

A dedicated email account has been established to facilitate communication on child protection matters at child.protection@dcu.ie.

For further details on any aspect of this Child Protection Policy please contact the Designated Liaison Person or the Deputy Designated Liaison Persons.

Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed on a regular basis and as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this Policy refers.

Related Documentation

1. [Child Safeguarding Statement](#)
2. [Child Protection Procedures](#)
3. [Garda Vetting / Police Clearance Policy for Staff](#)
4. [Garda Vetting / Police Clearance Policy for Students](#)
5. [Employee Code of Conduct](#)
6. [Employee Grievance Policy & Procedure](#)
7. [Student Code of Conduct and Discipline](#)


Definitions

Term	Definition
Child	The Child Care Act, 1991 defines a child as any person under the age of 18 years, excluding a person who is or who has been married.
Vulnerable Adult	A vulnerable adult is a person aged 18 years or over who may require assistance to care for themselves or protect themselves from harm or from being exploited.
Age of Consent	<p>In Ireland the age of sexual consent is 17 years. It is a criminal offence to engage or attempt to engage in a sexual act with a child under 17 years of age.</p> <p>Please note: It is a serious offence for a person who is, or has previously been, in a position of authority over a child, to engage in a sexual act with a child or young person who is under the age of 18 (regardless of the fact that the legal age of consent is 17). Such a young person can never legally consent to engaging in a sexual act with a person who is, or who has previously been, in a position of authority over them.</p> <p>A full list of persons considered to be in a position of authority is set out in the law, which includes, for example, family Members, carers, teachers and sports coaches.</p>
Child Abuse	The words ‘child abuse’ as used in the Procedures should be taken to include all four categories (neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse) as outlined below and in Appendix 1 of the Child Protection Procedures document and in chapter 2 of Children First (2017).
Neglect	Neglect is when a child is not provided with adequate food or shelter, effective medical, therapeutic or remedial treatment, and/or care, nurturance or supervision to a severe and/or persistent extent where the health or development of the child is significantly impaired or placed at risk.
Emotional Abuse	Emotional abuse is the systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment of a child as part of the overall relationship between a caregiver and a child whereby the child’s basic need for attention, affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Once-off and occasional difficulties between a parent/carer and child are not considered emotional abuse.
Physical Abuse	Physical abuse is when someone deliberately hurts a child physically or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may

Term	Definition
	occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents, however, it does not include accidental injury.
Sexual Abuse	Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for their gratification or arousal, or for that of others.
Bullying	Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression – whether it is verbal, psychological or physical – that is conducted by an individual or group against others.
Designated Liaison Person (DLP)	‘Designated Liaison Person’ means a person nominated by DCU to act as the liaison person to deal with the Child and Family Agency, TUSLA and/or An Garda Síochána and other parties in connection with allegation/s of, and/or concerns about, child abuse.
Mandated Person	‘Mandated Person’ means a person who is specified in Schedule 2 of the Children First Act 2015. Mandated persons are people who have contact with children and/or families and who, because of their qualifications, training and/or employment role, are in a key position to help protect children from harm. Organisations that provide a relevant service to children are also considered mandated persons. The Children First Act 2015 places a legal obligation on mandated persons to report child protection concerns.
Employee	In the context of this Policy the word ‘employee’ includes all full-time, part-time and voluntary employees of the University.
Parent / Carer	The phrase ‘parent/carer’ is used in this Policy, and its Procedures, as it is used in Children First (2017) to refer to the child’s parent or carer as appropriate.
Members	<p>The phrase Members as used in this Child Protection Policy, and in the Child Protection Procedures Policy and in the Child Safeguarding Statement is a term used to encompass all those persons who are involved in the operations of DCU. It also includes all university staff, students and those working on a voluntary or unpaid basis on behalf of the university, including campus companies and research centres. All other external parties (e.g. agents, contractors, service providers, summer residency programmes/activities, licensees and visitors) operating on behalf of DCU are included in this term.</p> <p>Governing Authority and its associated sub-committees are also included in this term members.</p>

Term	Definition
Student	Includes all full-time and part-time registered students of the University.
Associated Organisations/External Parties	All University contractors, associated organisations, visitors and/or any other parties who are granted access to the University's resources and/or facilities but who are not under the direct management of DCU.

Version Control

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Approved by	Executive	Deputy COO	
Effective Date	December 14 th 2021	November 28 th 2024	

End.