National Council for Special Education
Child Safeguarding Statement
July 2024

Who we are

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is an independent statutory body set up to improve the delivery of education services to persons with special educational needs with particular emphasis on children. The NCSE supports an inclusive education system that enables students and adults with special educational needs to achieve their potential.

Nature of our services

We provide a number of services directly to children and also indirectly through the services provided to schools as follows:

- Special needs assistant (SNA) posts are allocated to schools to support the additional care needs of students. This may involve observing children in the classroom and school environment and talking to them about their needs as part of the assessment.
- A range of supports and interventions for the management of behaviour for learning and wellbeing are provided at school level.
- Occupational therapy and speech and language therapy support and interventions are provided at school level.
- A range of supports and interventions are provided directly to children who are deaf/hard of hearing and children who are blind/visually impaired in schools, in children's homes and in pre-schools from time of diagnosis.
- Information and support is provided to schools in relation to the manner in which schools are intended to utilise and deploy their special education teaching resources.
- Professional development opportunities are provided to teachers and schools to build their capacity to support students with special educational needs.

Our Principles to Safeguard Children from Harm

The NCSE is guided by a number of the key principles of child protection and welfare as set out in the Children First National Guidance. NCSE staff support children, families and schools in a variety of ways and we are guided by the following principles:

- The safety and welfare of children is everyone's responsibility.
- The best interests of the child should be paramount.
- The overall aim in all dealings with children and their families is to intervene proportionately to support families to keep children safe from harm.
- Early intervention is key to getting better outcomes. Where it is necessary for the State to intervene to keep children safe, the minimum intervention necessary should be used.
- Children have a right to be heard, listened to and taken seriously. Taking account of their age and understanding, they should be consulted and involved in all matters and decisions that may affect their lives.
- Parents/guardians have a right to respect, and should be consulted and involved in matters that concern their family.
- A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents/guardians and families. Where there is conflict, the child's welfare must come first.
- Child protection is a multiagency, multidisciplinary activity. Agencies and professionals must work together in the interests of children.

Risk Assessment and Procedures

Our Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015 and the *Children First: National Guidance*, and Tusla's *Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice*. To inform this Statement, 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**
Staff member does not recognise signs/evidence and severity of abuse as defined in the Children First Act 2015	A programme of training is provided to staff on child protection and welfare, recognising and identifying the potential occurrence of harm and abuse and reporting as required. An induction pack for new members of staff to includes the policies and procedures regarding child protection and welfare.
Staff members do not report as soon as practicable their knowledge, belief or reasonable suspicion on the basis of information received, acquired or that they become aware of in the course of their employment that a child has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed.	Guidelines for recognising and identifying the potential occurrence of harm and abuse. Procedures for the timely reporting by staff of child protection and welfare concerns to Tusla and an Garda Síochána as required. Three named Designated Liaison Persons are available to provide information and guidance on child protection and welfare matters.
Allegation of abuse or misconduct against a NCSE staff member of a child or young person availing of NCSE services.	Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of staff who work with children and garda vetted as appropriate as part of the recruitment process. Management procedures in place for the treatment of complaints and/or allegations of abuse or misconduct against staff members along with the Civil Service Disciplinary Code and procedures. Staff members are required to adhere to the Code of Standards and Behaviour for Civil Servants, the Codes of Professional Conduct for SENOs and the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers (Teaching Council).
The Designated Liaison Persons fail to carry out their reporting and other duties.	Additional training as required for DLPs.

In addition to the procedures listed above in our risk assessment, the following procedures/structures support our intention to safeguard children while they are availing of our service:

- Procedures for recording centrally reported concerns provided to Tusla and an Garda Síochána. The recording and storage of such records are maintained in a confidential and secure manner in line with data protection requirements.
- NCSE staff members' abide with school Child Safeguarding Statements and child protection guidelines and procedures.
- The maintenance of a record of mandated persons amongst staff in the organisation.
- The appointment of Designated Liaison Persons and a Relevant Person.

All procedures listed are available upon request.

Implementation
We recognise that implementation is an ongoing process. Our service 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 in July 2026 or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

Signed:



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For queries, please contact : Jennifer Doran, Head of Finance, Governance & Research, NCSE, 1- 2 Mill St, Trim, Co. Meath Phone: (01) 6033200, the Relevant Person under the Children First Act 2015.