

# Children in Hospital Ireland - Child Safeguarding Statement

**Name of Service Provided:** Children in Hospital Ireland Play and Information Service in Hospitals.

## Nature of Service

Children in Hospital Ireland is a voluntary organisation which provides information and support to children and their families before, during and after the hospitalisation of a child. It also provides information to professionals, policy-makers, and advocates for improved healthcare for children. A key part of the work of Children in Hospital Ireland is a play and recreation service for children and young people availing of hospital services, as either inpatients or outpatients. In addition, a *JustAsk* information and way-finding service is provided in Children's Health Ireland (CHI) at Crumlin. In order to deliver these services, Children in Hospital Ireland recruits and trains volunteers who, following completion of An Garda Síochána vetting process, are placed in hospitals. Volunteers, in general, commit to a shift of 2.5 hours once a week.

Children in Hospital Ireland is a registered charity whose work is supervised by a Board of Directors, the members of which act in a voluntary capacity. The management and oversight of Children in Hospital Ireland's volunteer service and the overall administration of the organisation are carried out by a small staff of paid employees.

## Principles for Safeguarding Children

Children in Hospital Ireland believes that all children have the right to grow, learn and develop in an environment which is not only free from harm but actively supports and protects them. Opportunities for play and recreation are an essential for the realisation of this right. CIH believes that such opportunities are especially important when children are receiving hospital care – a time that is, in itself, difficult and stressful for both children themselves and their parents.

Children in Hospital Ireland commits to ensuring that the children with whom it works are kept safe from harm while they are availing of its services. It is fully committed to and guided by the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and is compliant with the requirements of the Children First Act 2015 and of national guidelines in relation to the protection and welfare of children.

## Risk Assessment

Children in Hospital Ireland has carried out a risk assessment of its work to identify potential risks to the safety and welfare of children while availing of its services and it has identified and put in place strategies to manage these risks.

## Key Potential Risks Identified by Children in Hospital Ireland

| Potential Risk  | Strategies to Address Risk   |
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| Recruitment of an inappropriate person as a volunteer or staff member.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Recruitment policy in place in relation to volunteers and staff members.</li><li>Compliance with Garda Síochána vetting. Re-vetting every three years. Police checks for those who have lived in another country for six months or more.</li><li>Clear job descriptions and person specifications for roles.</li><li>References sought and obtained before recruitment finalised.</li><li>Interview and participatory training is part of recruitment process.</li></ul> |
| Lack of awareness of child safeguarding procedures among volunteers or staff members.                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Child protection incorporated into initial training.</li><li>Child protection training renewed every three years.</li><li>Volunteer Handbook with child safeguarding policy and reporting procedures given to all volunteers, and accessible online.</li><li>Team Leader training events include child protection.</li><li>Designated Liaison Person appointed for Children in Hospital Ireland.</li></ul>   |
| Incident or inappropriate behaviour brought to the attention of a staff member or volunteer but not reported. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Incident report forms accessible in hard copy and online for all volunteers.</li><li>A Code of Conduct included in Children in Hospital Ireland <i>Volunteer Handbook</i>.</li><li>Code of Conduct for staff members.</li><li>Volunteers and staff members are trained in reporting procedures.</li><li>Regular contact by Children in Hospital Ireland office with Team Leaders to encourage regular communication.</li></ul>   |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where performance issues are identified, re-training and support are provided for the person concerned and action up to and including dismissal may be taken</li> </ul>   |
| Children in Hospital Ireland not informed of a safeguarding incident in a hospital involving a member of staff or a volunteer with the organisation.                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear reporting procedure which requires a report to be sent to Children in Hospital Ireland and to the relevant staff member in the hospital.</li> <li>Children in Hospital Ireland in regular contact with the Director of Nursing and/or the hospital's Designated Liaison Person to share information.</li> <li>Information-sharing protocols included in the Service Level Agreement between Children in Hospital Ireland and individual hospitals.</li> </ul> |
| Volunteer shares personal information or engages with a child in hospital outside of their official role with Children in Hospital Ireland including through social media platforms. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Code of Conduct included in Children in Hospital Ireland <i>Volunteer Handbook</i>.</li> <li>Training for volunteers covers the issue of appropriate communication with children and their families and states that disciplinary proceedings will follow any breach of this requirement.</li> <li>Confidentiality agreement signed by all volunteers and staff members before starting with Children in Hospital Ireland.</li> </ul>                              |

### Procedures to Support Safeguarding

As part of its commitment to ensuring the safety of children with whom it works, Children in Hospital Ireland has developed a range of materials to support safeguarding and promote best practice in the recruitment, training and supervision of staff members and volunteers and in the overall governance of the organisation. The materials, including this Safeguarding Statement, have been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015; *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2017); *Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (Tusla, 2019). The written procedures of Children in Hospital Ireland include:

- Procedures for the safe selection and recruitment of volunteers, including Garda vetting (*Volunteer Policy*);
- Procedures for the provision of training for all new and existing volunteers, including training in relation to identifying and responding to a safeguarding concern (*Volunteer Policy*);
- A *Volunteer Handbook*, covering a range of issues regarding working safely with children (whether working in pairs or alone under the supervision of hospital staff) and including a Code of Conduct;
- Procedures for the safe recruitment of staff, including Garda Vetting, and for initial and ongoing training in relation to child protection;
- An *Employee Handbook*, including a Code of Conduct;
- Procedure for appointing a ‘relevant person’, as defined by the Children First Act 2015;
- A Child Protection Policy including:
  - Procedures to be followed by staff and volunteers where, during the course of their work with Children in Hospital Ireland, they have a concern about the safety or welfare of a child;
  - Procedures for the management of child protection concerns or allegations of abuse or misconduct in relation to employees or volunteers with Children in Hospital Ireland;
  - Procedures for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla – Child and Family Agency.
  - The establishment of a Board Safeguarding Committee.

All procedures are available on request.

### Implementation

Children in Hospital Ireland is committed to the full implementation of this Safeguarding Statement. The implementation of the Statement and of the associated policies and procedures will be monitored on a regular basis. The Statement will be reviewed every two years. The next review will place in July 2024, or as soon as possible after there has been a material change in any matter to which the Statement refers.

**Queries in regard to this Statement:** please contact Anna Gunning, CEO ('relevant person', as defined by the Children First Act 2015).

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