

# Child Safeguarding Statement

This statement has been prepared to comply with the requirements of the Children First Act 2015 and is derived from EPIC's Child and Youth Protection Policy 2024.

## About

EPIC is a national organisation that works with and for children and young people who are currently living in care or who have experience of living in care. This includes those in residential care, foster care, relative care, hostel, high support and special care. EPIC also works with young people preparing to leave care and in aftercare, and with adults with care experience.

EPIC is an independent national organisation supporting children and young people in care; to enable them to have their views and concerns heard, to empower them to speak for themselves, to resolve the issues and problems they raise, to help them get the services and resources they need and bring about positive change in their lives and in the lives of other young people in care.

EPIC has 4 offices across Ireland, in Cork, Dublin, Mayo and Limerick.

## Services Provided

EPIC's work is focused in 3 areas. A National Advocacy Service, Youth Engagement, Research & Policy.

The key objectives of EPIC's services are:

- ✓ To give a voice to children and young people with care experience
- ✓ To promote the rights of children and young people with care experience
- ✓ To provide children and young people with information, support and advice
- ✓ To promote the participation of children and young people with care experience

EPIC works to ensure the fulfilment of Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of The Child (UNCRC) providing that children have a right to express their views and have them taken into account in all matters affecting them. EPIC is also guided by articles 2 and 3 of UNCRC, providing for the enjoyment of rights without discrimination and for the best interests of the child to be of paramount consideration.

In addition, EPIC respects and actively promotes relevant National Policy and Legislation that emphasizes the rights of young people in care to be heard, listened to and involved, in particular, the Child Care Act 1991, Children First Guidelines and the National Standards for Residential and Foster Care.

**EPIC's National Advocacy Service** is a 1:1 advocacy service for children and young people in care and those with care experience up to the age of 26. Through this Advocacy Service, EPIC resolves issues children and young people raise in relation to their care.

EPIC Advocates meet children and young people to discuss the issues they wish to raise in several settings:

- Online
- Onsite (in one of our offices by appointment)
- In their home
- Supported Emergency Arrangements (SEA's)
- Special care units
- Oberstown Children Detention Centre
- Residential services
- Public facilities (court, cafes, youth spaces)

**EPIC's Youth Engagement Programme (YEP):** EPIC is committed to empowering children and young people to have their views heard and considered, as their insights into the care system, if listened to and acted upon, have the power to influence change locally and nationally.

EPIC is guided in this work by the Lundy Model. The Lundy model has 4 parts, space, voice, audience and influence. These parts are delivered through a programme of youth engagement and participation, EPIC creates safe, inclusive spaces for the active involvement of care-experienced children and young people. YEP also support care experience young people to feed into consultations on policy developments in the care system and provide space and time for them to liaise directly with decision makers.

This work is delivered:

- Online
- Onsite (in Cork, Dublin or Limerick office)
- Offsite (Appropriate venues e.g. Youth spaces and student facilities)
- Special Emergency Arrangements (SEA's)
- Special care units
- Oberstown Children Detention Centre

- Outdoors
- Some activities require overnight stays
- Residential Care services

**EPIC's Research and Policy:** EPIC's policy proposals cannot be created without evidence to support them. They are made by listening to children, young people, key professionals, and others about their experiences. EPIC strongly believe in voice-led participative research to inform wider society on key issues related to care experiences. Capturing this is a key part of EPIC's research function. This work is facilitated through the Youth Engagement Programme.

## Child Protection Risk Management

EPIC recognizes that there are potential risks to children and young people within our organisation and its activities and events. In recognising these risks EPIC proactively assesses and manages them to reduce the risk of harm to children and young people in our organisation.

This is achieved by examining each aspect of the young person's participation in EPIC's activities and its potential impact on those children and young people. Activities / programmes that involve direct work with children and young people are considered a higher risk, and therefore require more stringent protection procedures. However, as children and young people are part of every community in which we work, we are always mindful of any and all potential risks.

Risk management is an on-going part of every activity, and EPIC conducts a child and youth protection risk assessment on every new and emerging activity / programme which includes children and young people.

Members, staff and others should continually be aware of risks and actively minimise opportunities and situations where children and young people could be exposed to risk of harm.

A child and young person abuse incident/accident-reporting sheet is in place.

As outlined in the Safeguarding Children Policy we are committed to the following principles:

### Mandatory Reportin

Each member of the EPIC staff team has a duty to notify the statutory authorities of suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations that a child is being or has been abused physically, emotionally, sexually, or through neglect.

### Caring for the welfare of all children and the adults who work with them

Measures to create and maintain environments that are safe for children, that prevent abuse and that create nurturing, caring conditions for children and the adults who work with them, will continue to be strengthened and reviewed. This will be done through training support, communications and quality assurance.

### Responding appropriately to child protection suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations

Anyone who brings any suspicion, concern, knowledge or allegation of current or past abuse of a child to EPIC will be responded to sensitively, respectfully, actively and in a timely manner, in line with statutory child protection procedures.

All suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations that reach the threshold for reporting to the statutory authorities will be reported to the appropriate statutory authorities. This will be done irrespective of the status of the person who is suspected of having been abusive to a child.

## Risk Identified and Procedure in Place to Manage Identified Risk

We have carried out an assessment of any potential for harm (as defined in the Children First Act, 2015) to a child while availing of our services. **Risk of harm as defined in the Act means, in relation to a child – (a) assault, ill-treatment or neglect of the child in a manner that seriously affects or is likely to seriously affect the child's health, development or welfare, or (b) sexual abuse of a child.**

Below is a list of the areas of risk identified and the list of procedures for managing these risks.

Risk of harm in relation to a child as defined in the Children First Act (2015)	Procedure in place to manage identified risk
1 Risk of harm of abuse by staff	Recruitment and selection procedure Garda Vetting procedure Allegations of abuse against staff Procedure Code of practice Reporting procedure Complaints procedure Code of behaviour for staff Training and Information for staff procedure
2 Risk of inappropriate use of social media or digital images by staff	Code of practice Use of social media or digital images procedure Reporting procedure Complaints procedure
3 Risk of harm from peer-to-peer abuse	Risk assessment Procedure Supervision of children procedure Reporting Procedure Anti bullying procedure Complaints procedure Youth Council contract and code of behaviour Training and information procedure for staff and volunteers
4 Risk of abuse on outings or trips away	Risk assessment Procedure Outings and trips away procedure Recruitment procedure Supervision of children procedure Reporting procedure Complaints procedure Code of behaviour for staff Youth Council contract and code of behaviour
5 Risk of abuse while providing 1:1 working	Code of Practice for staff-Including lone working Staff and volunteer supervision procedure Recruitment procedure Reflective Practice
6 Risk of staff not being aware of correct child safeguarding procedures resulting in children coming to harm including lack of supervision	Code of conduct for Staff Event Risk Assessment procedure Reporting Procedure Training and information provided to staff Induction & onboarding procedure Staff supervision Reflective Practice

## Policies and Procedures

Our 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 in our risk assessment, the following procedures support our intention to safeguard children while they are availing of our service:

- ✓ Policy & Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers of a child availing of our service
- ✓ Policy & Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of workers to work with children
- ✓ Policy & Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm
- ✓ Policy & Procedure for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla
- ✓ Procedure for maintaining a list of the persons in the relevant service who are mandated persons
- ✓ Procedure for appointing a relevant person

## Implementation and Review

EPIC is committed to safeguarding children through the implementation of Safeguarding Children – EPIC Child and Youth Protection Policy. This Child Safeguarding Statement and our practice supports our desire to keep children safe from harm while accessing our services.

We recognise that implementation is an on-going process. As part of our annual audit against the relevant indicators of the child safeguarding standards, we will review the effectiveness of our practice as outlined in this statement and will revise, as appropriate. This Child safeguarding Statement will be reviewed by the 30<sup>th</sup> April each year or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

The relevant person as set out under the Children First Act 2015 is Wayne Stanley CEO of EPIC contact details are provided below. For any queries relating to this statement please contact Wayne.

Email: [waynestanley@epiconline.ie](mailto:waynestanley@epiconline.ie)

Phone: 01 8727661

Address: 7 Red Cow Lane, Smithfield, Dublin 7, Co. Dublin, D07 KX52

Signed:



If you have any child protection or welfare concerns about a child engaging with EPIC, please contact:

Ms. Nicky Russell, Designated Liaison Person on – 086 838 5795 / [nickyrussell@epiconline.ie](mailto:nickyrussell@epiconline.ie).