



## **POLICY ON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN -**

*Reviewed by Governance Sub-Committee on 22/09/2022*

This policy has been written in line with the principles and definitions of the Children First document: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (Department of Children and Youth, 2011). The main focus of the document is to ensure that in the course of our work, we are promoting the safety and well-being of children at all times, in line with our core values of dignity, respect and protection from harm. CyberSafeIreland (T/A CyberSafeKids – CSK) will ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to minimise the risk of harm to children in our programmes and activities.

### **SCOPE OF THE POLICY**

This Policy applies to all staff, whatever their status, as part of their contractual obligations to CSK. It also applies to all volunteers who work with CSK or in CSK's name. The policy also applies to all those engaged, commissioned or contracted to work with or for CSK in any capacity.

**DESIGNATED CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER:** Head of Education and Innovation (*received Designated Child Liaison training from Barnardos in 2020*)

### **FOCUS OF POLICY**

#### **1. Staff conduct**

- CSK expects all staff, volunteers, partners and consultants to conduct themselves in a manner that preserves the dignity, respect and equality of every individual.
  - Staff will always create and maintain an environment that prevents all forms of abuse and exploitation.
  - Staff will not engage in any type of sexual relationships with any person under the age of 18
  - Staff will not use the organisation's computers or other equipment to view, download, create or distribute inappropriate material, including but not limited to pornography
  - CSK's expectation is that all contact with children and young people (whether by phone, email, webinar or direct contact) should be supervised, accompanied, or at least in sight of other adults. We recognise that situations may arise where this cannot be the case for urgent or for practical reasons (i.e. where a teacher has to leave the classroom for a few moments) but in this case, the door to the classroom should be left wide open until the teacher's return. In the case of webinars and a teacher, for example, encountering technical difficulties, which impede or interrupt access to the session, the session should be recorded.
  - CSK further commits to ensuring webinars are a safe experience for children by ensuring that cameras remain off for the duration and that contact can only be made with the facilitator through the chat function.



## 2. Garda Vetting

- CSK has since 2016 sought Garda Vetting for any staff or contracted trainers who have direct contact with children from the Garda National Vetting Bureau (GNVB). In 2020 however, CSK was advised by the GNVB that since CSK's service is in the form of giving once off short presentations (1-4 hours in length) in schools, that it does not fit within the statutory framework of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016, vetting was not required and that CSK could not be a registered organisation for this purpose. We were further advised that vetting only applies where there is "necessary and regular" access to or contact with children and CSK has therefore been advised by the GNVB that *"there is no legal requirement on CSK to have staff vetted to conduct presentations or talks at a school"*. The GNVB further noted that, *"Notwithstanding the above, an individual school may request vetting from CyberSafe Ireland, and in that circumstance, it is the determination of the GNVB that the vetting obligation rests with the school"*.

## 3. Safe Recruitment

- We will check potential staffs' employment history and at least two referees – including where relevant, referees that can testify to their suitability to work with children
- It is a condition of service that all staff, volunteers and consultants will work to the safeguarding policy and that breach of policy is viewed as a contractual breach of conditions under which they work with CSK.

## 4. Education/Training

- In order that CSK can meet its commitments to safeguard children, it is essential that everyone associated with the organisation is clear about these commitments, the expectations CSK has of them, and what this means in practice. Creating an 'aware culture' in which all staff, volunteers and other representatives, including the Board of Directors, contribute to the protection of children and prevention of abuse is essential.
- CSK will support its representatives' understanding of child protection all by asking them to complete, at a minimum, the Tusla/HSE e-training 'An Introduction to Children First': <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/children-first-e-learning-programme/>. We will also ask those Board Members who have not yet done so, to complete the 90-minute course.
- Any new trainers will undergo training, support and mentoring from the Head of Education and will be asked to undergo relevant child protection training where possible and appropriate.

## 5. Disclosure

- CSK has a clear duty under Tusla to report "without delay" any abuse or child protection concern about a child. Steps we will take include:
  - i. Inform the principal immediately of our concerns either on site or immediate follow-up by phone call (and in this instance it would be done by the DCPO).
  - ii. We report it directly to Tusla.
  - iii. At the point of allegation or concern our staff should make a contemporaneous written note of what is said or otherwise noted. This



constitutes the reasonable evidence required by Tulsa for the complaint to be passed on. Where appropriate we will need to ensure that the Garda are informed.

- In the event of CSK staff or trainer becoming aware of child welfare issues such as a child being impacted by bullying, the principal or teacher should be informed at the earliest opportunity. The staff member/trainer should also inform the DCPO.

#### **6. Confidentiality**

- CSK commits to maintaining a policy of confidentiality in its work, especially in relation to children.
- We will keep a note of the allegation/concern and what action was taken. This record will be kept confidential (and this will be on the ONLY place where the name of the child concerned will be used).
- We will never use real names of children in any public material, such as case studies or stories. The only exceptions are if a child has disclosed information of a sensitive nature that needs to be referred on to the appropriate authority (see point above on Disclosure)

#### **Notes:**

- Any breach of the child protection policy must be handled in accordance with the organisation disciplinary procedures and in accordance with any advice or guidance received from the HSE and/or An Garda Síochána.
- Allegations against staff/representatives:
  - all staff/representatives are required to pass on any concerns that they have about a colleague and for any person making a complaint to keep this confidential. Breach of confidentiality will constitute misconduct.
- This policy should be reviewed and where appropriate, updated, at least annually

I acknowledge that I have read and understand this document: