

VSI Child Safeguarding Statement

Nature of service and principles to safeguard children from harm:

Voluntary Service International (VSI) is committed to promoting the welfare of children and protecting them from harm in order for them to grow, develop and achieve their full potential. VSI has developed a Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and a Code of Good Practice which applies to all staff and volunteers working with or around children and young people. Good practice contributes towards the creation of a healthy and safe environment for children and young people. The VSI policy and code are available from VSI.

VSI provides the following services to children/young people:

- VSI hosts projects in Ireland with our partners from community, voluntary, non-profit organizations and services. VSI recruits adult volunteers for these projects. The projects include providing summer and activity camps for children in an accommodation centre for asylum seekers and supporting young people and teenagers with disabilities on residential projects. All these projects take place at the premises of our partner organizations. All our volunteers are 18 years and over.

- We deliver workshops and provide information to young people, some of whom are under the age of 18. These take place at locations other than VSI for example the premises of youth organizations, at schools/colleges or in libraries.

- We meet with young people at our offices, including teenagers some of whom are under the age of 18.

Risk Assessment:

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.

Risks identified:

1. Recruitment of staff and volunteers

Procedure in place to manage identified risk:

Our Child Protection Policy and Procedures describe the measures we have in place for the safe recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers.

VSI ensures that our staff, volunteers and interns are vetted by the National Garda Vetting Bureau; offers of employment/position are dependent on this.

2. Failure to report allegation of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child involved with VSI

Procedure in place to manage identified risk:

VSI responds to allegations abuse or misconduct against staff/volunteers of a child involved with VSI in accordance with the Children First Act 2015 and Tusla Guidelines.

Staff/volunteers working with VSI complete Tusla's E Learning Module.

3. Failure to report child protection concerns from staff/volunteers.

Procedure in place to manage identified risk:

Staff and volunteers are trained and have agreed to VSI's Child Protection Policy which requires them to report any concerns they have, using the incident report form. Any reports are dealt with by the DLP. In these instances the Children First Guidelines will be applied.

Staff/volunteers working with VSI complete Tusla's E Learning Module.

4. Harm caused by staff/volunteers to children/young people.

Procedure in place to manage identified risk:

We have developed a Code of Conduct for volunteers working directly with children (at our activity camps) and our partner organisations with whom our volunteers work have codes of conduct in place. All volunteers are provided with comprehensive training and induction and on completion of this, they agree to and sign the code of conduct.

Staff/volunteers working with VSI complete Tusla's E Learning Module.

5. Information on children and photos/videos of children

Procedure in place to manage identified risk:

We do not hold identifiable information on the children with whom we work on the activity camps.

Information that we have on the young people/teenagers with whom we work is password protected and access is restricted to use of the intended purpose.

VSI staff/volunteers are not permitted to take photographs or make videos of children on the activity camps themselves.

Any photographs/videos of children are held securely and are password protected. We respect and protect children's privacy, dignity and rights in our marketing, communication and programme work.

We acquire permission before using any images. VSI is a signatory to the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages, through this we promote values of human dignity, respect and truthfulness.

Procedures:

Our Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (2017), 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:

- Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child availing of our service:
 - VSI follows the Children First Act 2015 and Tusla Guidelines.
 - Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers to work with children:
 - Workers and volunteers are subject to Garda Vetting before commencing employment/volunteering with VSI.
 - Two references from previous employers/teachers etc. are required for all staff/volunteers during the recruitment process.
 - Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm:
 - Training and induction is carried out at the beginning of volunteer projects.

- Staff/volunteers working with VSI complete Tusla's E Learning Module.
 - Procedure for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla:
- Mandated concerns are reported to Tusla as soon as possible in accordance with the Children First Act.

The DLP and mandated person:

- Procedure for maintaining a list of the persons (if any) in the relevant service who are mandated persons:
- The mandated persons are listed in our Safeguarding documents and all staff are made aware of them.
 - Procedure for appointing a relevant person:
 - The DLP holds the position of relevant person.

All procedures listed are available upon request.

Implementation:

We recognise that implementation is an on-going 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.

For queries, please contact Helen Walmsley, CEO Voluntary Service International, helen@vsi.ie, Relevant Person under the Children First Act 2015.