



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 2022

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 the only independent organisation providing direct 1:1 advocacy support to 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.

Services Provided

EPIC's National Advocacy Service is a national 1:1 advocacy service for children and young people in care. Through this Advocacy Service, EPIC resolves issues children and young people raise in relation to their care or the care system. As part of the advocacy service, EPIC delivers a visiting advocacy service to high support units, special care units, children detention schools and other identified residential services to facilitate access to the advocacy service by particularly vulnerable children and young people in care.

EPIC provides visiting advocacy service across all of the children detention schools on the Oberstown campus. Data and cases from the advocacy service fuel the policy and research work of EPIC.

The key objectives of EPIC's advocacy service 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 fulfillment 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.

Child protection Risk Management

EPIC recognizes that there are a number of 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 has been developed and staff are aware of its existence.

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

- **Mandatory reporting.**

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

1. Child is harmed by an EPIC staff member, EPIC volunteer or other person, while availing of our services or services supported by EPIC.

General

(a) All EPIC staff and EPIC volunteers will complete the induction briefing on the Child Safeguarding Statement, which is informed by the Children First e-learning training and incorporates training on the recognition of harm;

(b) EPIC staff and EPIC volunteers will be vetted in accordance with EPIC's Garda Vetting Policy;

(c) EPIC has an appointed Designated Liaison Person. The Designated Liaison Person is responsible for ensuring that appropriate training and information is provided to staff regarding EPIC's Child Safeguarding Statement. The EPIC team is responsible for delivering an appropriate briefing on EPIC's Child Safeguarding Statement to EPIC volunteers, before participation. The EPIC team will work closely with the Designated Liaison Person to ensure that staff and volunteer induction materials are relevant and up to date and will be responsible for delivering the briefing to EPIC volunteers.

(c) A record of the induction briefing provided to EPIC staff members will be maintained by the Designated Liaison Person and a record of induction briefings provided to EPIC volunteers will be maintained by the EPIC team. These records will include written confirmation that EPIC staff members/ EPIC volunteers agree to adhere to EPIC's Child Safeguarding Statement, Child Protection Policy and Child

Student Work Experience Placements / Internships

(a) Students / interns will be given an induction briefing which will incorporate training on EPIC's Child Safeguarding Statement, Child Protection Policy and Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct and they will be requested to confirm their understanding of these policies by signing them. The signed

(b) EPIC has web filtering software in place and students working within EPIC will be reminded of the acceptable usage and social media policies;

(c) EPIC will assign work that is deemed appropriate for the student;

(d) Parties carrying out commissioned/subcontractor/funded activity at such an event will be required to meet with an EPIC team member to be briefed about EPIC's child safeguarding policies.

2. A child discloses to an EPIC staff member or EPIC volunteer that they are being harmed by persons either within or outside EPIC and this disclosure is not appropriately reported to the Designated Liaison Person or Tusla

(a) EPIC has developed a guide for EPIC staff and volunteers for reporting child welfare and protection concerns;

(b) If any disclosures of harm are made to an EPIC staff member or volunteer they should contact the Designated Liaison Person as a matter of urgency to seek advice on any necessary steps to take.

EPIC considers the likelihood of any of the risks set out above occurring to be low in light of the policies and procedures it has in place.

EPIC's Child and Youth Protection Policy

See (Appendix 1)

EPIC's Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct

EPIC staff and EPIC volunteers are expected to work within the policies and procedures of its programmes and adhere to its ethos. As representatives of EPIC, volunteers and staff members are expected to adhere to the Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct when engaging with children.

EPIC staff and Volunteers will:

- Follow all EPIC policies and procedures that apply to their role and commit to act at all times in an appropriate manner and in the best interests of the children and young people we serve
- Review and comply with EPIC's Child Protection Policy, Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct and EPIC's Child Safeguarding Statement
- Prepare for a volunteer role by reviewing briefing materials and the EPIC Child Safeguarding Statement, reviewing presentation materials and referencing websites' resources
- Dress appropriately to their role responsibilities at all times
- Report for their role in a timely manner and free from influence of alcohol and drugs

- Show respect and consideration at all times for fellow staff and members of the public
- Be a positive role model for children and young people at all times
- Keep personal opinions and actions separate from those made as representatives of EPIC
- Report any accidents, incidents or injuries involving children to the Designated Liaison Person
- Where there is immediate risk to a child, inform Tusla or An Garda Síochána.

The nature of EPIC's work means that staff will come in contact with children (under 18 years of age). It is important that staff and volunteers should not be in a situation where they are left alone with a child.

Staff and Volunteers will not

- Physically touch a young person (handshakes are acceptable);

Contact a young person directly in any way (via email, text, befriend on social media, phone or arrange to meet in person after the activity);

- Take photos/videos of a young person unless their parent has completed an EPIC approved consent form;
- Use vulgar or inappropriate language, or make remarks that could be considered offensive;
- Discriminate on the grounds of race (including skin colour, nationality or ethnic origin), religion, sex, age, civil status, family status, disability, sexual orientation or membership of the Traveller community;
- Take any action which could harm or threaten the health or safety of themselves, a child, a young person, other volunteers or members of the public

Procedures:

All procedures outlined in the risk assessment above are available in the EPIC Child and Youth Protection Policy

- Procedure for raising a complaint
- Procedure for the management of allegations of harm to a child availing of our services
- Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of EPIC staff members or volunteers to work with children
- Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm
- Procedure for reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to the Designated Liaison Person and Tusla

Implementation

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. 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.

For any queries relating to this statement please contact Ms. Fiona Murray, Designated Liaison Person on - 087 219 73 98 / fionamurray@epiconline.ie