



Children First
National Office

Children First Resource Pack for Line Managers





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Introduction

The HSE Children First National Office is committed to contributing to the development of an organisational learning culture, through the development and delivery of child safeguarding training and resources.

This resource was identified in the HSE Children First Training and Resource Strategy as a need in order to help provide HSE Line Managers with the knowledge, information and resources available to support their role and responsibilities from a Children First perspective.

As a Line manager you may need to support staff members to manage a difficult child protection or welfare experience in the course of their work. Staff may feel uncomfortable approaching a parent about a child protection or welfare concern. Guidance and best practice tips are provided for these incidences. Additional supports appropriate to staff individual wellbeing needs and mental health requirements are also provided.

We hope that this innovative resource for Line Managers and staff with managerial responsibilities will help promote effective organisational and individual skills and behaviours for ensuring the protection and welfare of children and young people across the HSE and HSE funded services.



Line Managers - Roles and Responsibilities



The safety and welfare of children is everyone's responsibility regardless of role, grade or profession, whether you are working in a service for children or adults or in an administration role in the HSE.

All staff need to be alert to the possibility that children with whom they work or come into contact with may be harmed or may be at risk of being harmed.

As a line manager you are required to support senior management in the implementation of the HSE Child Protection and Welfare Policy and may be delegated other responsibilities in addition to those outlined below:

As a line manager it is your responsibility to ensure that:

- You and staff in your area of responsibility read, understand and incorporate into practice the HSE Child Protection and Welfare Policy. The HSE Child Protection and Welfare Policy sets out the roles, responsibilities and procedures for staff to ensure the effective management of child protection and welfare concerns in the HSE.
- You incorporate the HSE Child Protection and Welfare Policy into the induction process for all new staff. A visual algorithm of the HSE Child Protection and Welfare Reporting Procedure, which clearly outlines the key steps you must take if you have a child protection or welfare concern is included on page 7.
- Staff sign the signature sheet in Appendix 3 of the HSE Child Protection and Welfare Policy (or an equivalent version of it) to acknowledge that they are aware of the policy and understand their roles and responsibilities. Evidence of the signed staff signature sheet should be retained on file by you as the line manager.
- You monitor and advise on issues affecting the implementation of the HSE Child Protection and Welfare Policy in your area of responsibility.



Line Managers - Roles and Responsibilities (continued)

- You raise awareness of child protection and welfare issues through supervision, support, training, assistance, and advice.
- It is important that you and staff in your area of responsibility are familiar with and consult as necessary the Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017.
- As a line manager, you should ensure that all staff complete the **mandatory** HSE e-Learning programme “An Introduction to Children First”, and refresh this training every 3 years.
- You should obtain a current certificate of completion of the Children First HSE e-Learning programme from each staff member and retain it on the staff file.
- Check if staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities, particularly staff that are:
 1. Mandated Persons under schedule 2 of the Children First Act 2015; and
 2. Designated Officers under the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998.
- Mandated persons have legal obligations in relation to making mandated reports of concerns that reach the threshold of harm and assisting Tusla – Child and Family Agency in the assessment of mandated reports, if requested to do so.
- A staff member who reports a concern reasonably and in good faith is protected from civil litigation, and from penalisation by their employer under the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998.
- You should provide consultation and assistance to staff who have a child protection or welfare concern in determining what actions need to be considered in relation to the concern.
- Its important that staff are familiar with the Tusla reporting guidance and the relevant Tusla designated contact numbers on the Tusla website.



Line Managers - Roles and Responsibilities (continued)

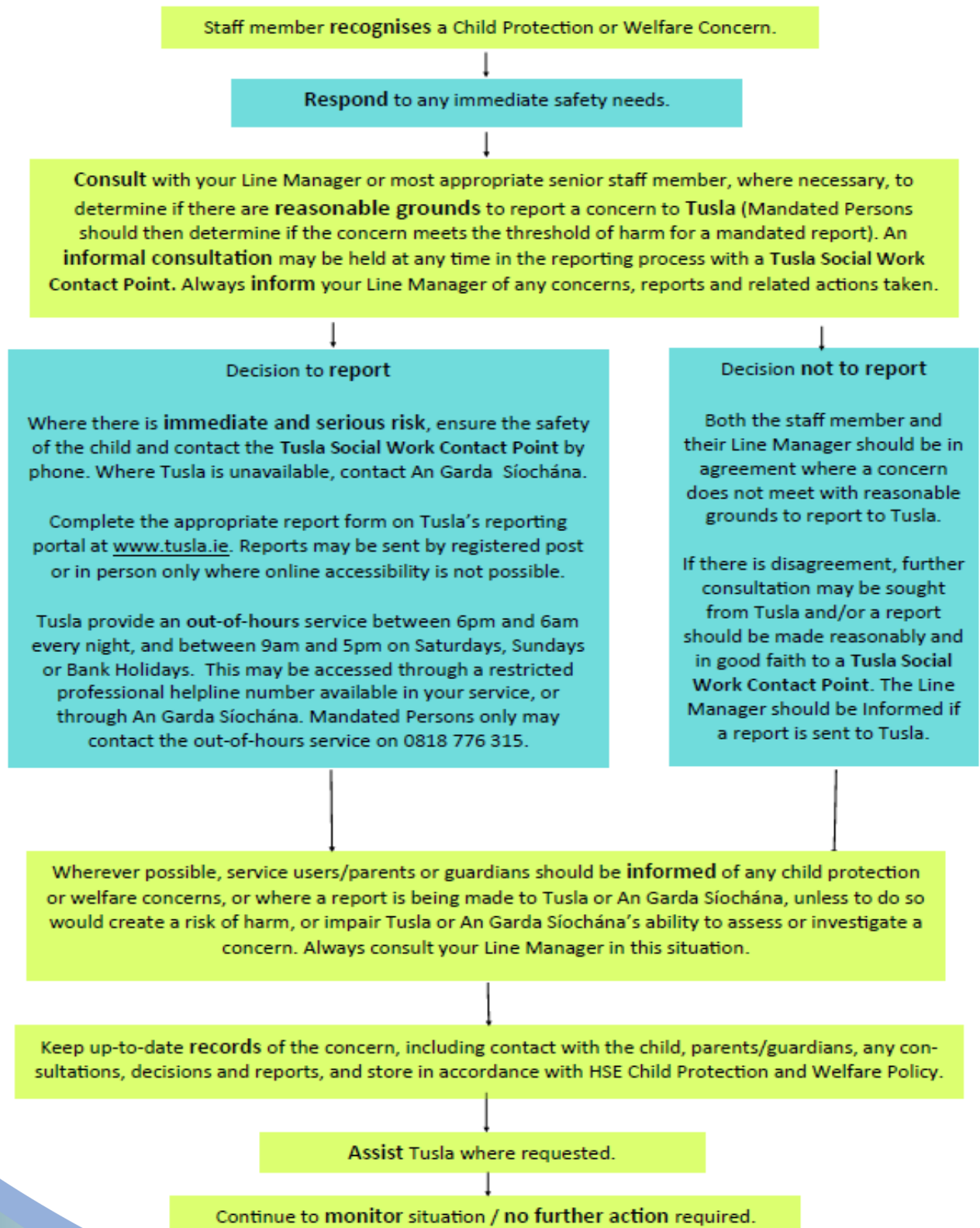
- All organisations providing 'relevant services', to children and families must have a Child Safeguarding Statement in place. This is a written statement, informed by a risk assessment, that specifies the service being provided and the principles and procedures to be observed in order to ensure, as far as practicable, that a child availing of the service is safe from harm. The Child Safeguarding Statement should be displayed in a prominent, public place and furnished to all staff.
- The HSE Children First National Office has developed a HSE Child Safeguarding Statements and Risk Assessment Workbook for relevant services undertaking child safeguarding risk assessments and developing Child Safeguarding Statements.
- If required, refer to the HSE Integrated Risk Management Policy to identify, evaluate and respond to any child related risks which arise and/or follow the HSE Safety Incident Management Policy in order to inform senior management of any incident where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, whilst availing of a service.
- Check if the HSE Children First Compliance Self-Audit Checklist has been completed to ensure compliance with the relevant organisational requirements under Children First.

Record-Keeping & Sharing of Information:

- Ensure that confidential information relating to child protection or welfare concerns is shared only on a need-to-know basis in line with the guidance on HSE Child Protection and Welfare Information Sharing Procedures and Confidentiality contained within the HSE Child Protection and Welfare Policy.
- Support staff to maintain appropriate records of all child protection and welfare concerns that did not warrant a report to Tusla and / or An Garda Síochána. This information may be of benefit to you and a staff member if considering any patterns of concerns that may be identified over time.
- Have an appropriate and secure filing system in place to maintain all documentation related to child protection and welfare concerns reported to Tusla and / or An Garda Síochána.
- If records of child protection and welfare concerns are stored separately to a service user's 'master file', the 'master file' must indicate that another file exists and where it can be accessed.



HSE Child Protection and Welfare Reporting Procedure Algorithm



Managing Difficult Child Protection and Welfare Experiences



Line managers may need to support a staff member to manage a difficult child protection or welfare experience in the course of their work. This difficult experience may involve a staff member observing or receiving a disclosure of child abuse. It may arise following a difficult conversation with parents or guardians or when discussing the child protection or welfare concern to Tusla, An Garda Síochána or another service.

The following best practice tips may be useful:

- Allow adequate time for the conversation that may be required with the staff member following a difficult child protection or welfare experience.
- A private location is important in order to minimise interruption.
- Allow time for the staff member to express themselves.
- Avoid having this conversation over the phone, over email or by text message.
- Listen without judgement.
- Set a time to meet up again.
- Check if additional supports are required such as the Employee Assistance Programme, Occupational Health Department, Staff Counselling services or other professional support if appropriate.
- Promote staff member's wellbeing and agree additional training needs or other supports that could be offered.
- Enable the staff member to come up with their own suggestions to manage difficult experiences.
- Assist the staff member to identify ways of coping with difficult work situations and promote self care.
- Encourage staff to use coping strategies they consider most effective in their work

Responding to a Disclosure of Abuse



A child or adult may disclose abuse to you as a trusted adult at any time during your work with them. It is important that you are aware and prepared for this and respond sensitively and professionally.

The following approach is suggested as best practice:

- React calmly.
- Listen carefully, attentively and patiently.
- Take the child / adult seriously. False disclosures are very rare.
- Disclosures can be very difficult for the child / adult.
- Do not express any opinions about the person subject to an allegation of abuse. The child or adult may initially be testing your reactions and may only fully open up over a period of time.
- Reassure the child / adult that they have taken the right action in talking to you. Do not pressurise them.
- Do not promise to keep anything secret or give false assurances of absolute confidentiality. You may advise the child / adult you will only speak to the people who know how to respond to this situation.
- Parents / carers of a child should be informed, unless to do so would place the child or others at further risk, or impair an assessment / investigation.
- Ask questions for clarification only. Do not ask leading questions or press for information, interview or cross-examine the child / adult.
- Check back with the child / adult that what you have heard is correct and understood.
- Ensure that the child / adult understands the steps that will follow.
- Make a written record of the conversation as soon as possible, in as much detail as possible. Use the child / adult's exact wording where a disclosure of abuse is made.

Talking to Parents / Guardians About a Concern



Staff may feel uncomfortable approaching a parent about a child protection or welfare concern. Staff may have to discuss a concern about the welfare or protection of a child and / or young person or an issue which relates to their developmental needs.

You can support the staff member by following the best practice tips:

- Make sure parents / guardians have prior awareness of your guiding principles, procedures and duties to safeguard children.
- Be straightforward and clearly explain the nature of the concern or issue, e.g. by using facts and records of observations made.
- Think about the time and place to have the conversation. Find a time when parents / guardians are not in a hurry.
- Find a place that is quiet and allows for privacy.
- Consider who is the best person / who are the best people to have the conversation with the parents / guardians.
- Use a calm and gentle tone and consider the language used.
- Start with positive comments and observations about the child / young person.



Talking to Parents / Guardians About a Concern (continued)

- Ensure that the parents / guardians know that you care about the welfare of their child and recognise their strengths.
- Refer to how the situation may be affecting the child / young person.
- Use positive comments and observations about the parents / guardians. Most parents / guardians are trying to do their best for their children and will appreciate your acknowledgement of how challenging parenting can be at times.
- Give the parents / guardians an opportunity to talk; ask them for an explanation and acknowledge their feelings.
- Take the approach that you are working together to address any issues in the best interests of the child / young person.
- Don't blame, don't get defensive, and don't take things personally.
- Ensure that you are supportive but also address the issue.
- Refer to your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures for support.
- ♦ Offer possible solutions, where appropriate.
- Advise parents / guardian that you plan to follow up and keep them informed and involved, where appropriate.
- Where it is not possible to contact the parents / guardians to discuss a concern you may need to discuss the concern with your Line Manager or Tusla social worker.
- Remember if a report needs to be made to Tusla, do not delay.

(Tusla, Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice, p. 31)

It is best practice that parents / guardians are informed if a report is to be made to Tusla, unless doing so might further endanger the child, impair Tusla's ability to carry out a risk assessment or put the reporter at risk of harm.



Additional Resources for Supporting Staff

1. **HSE Children First Website** is a Children First Resource.

Children First

Children First promotes the protection and welfare of children and outlines how to help to protect them from harm or abuse. It details what you must do if you have a concern that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected. Children First applies to everyone, including staff working in adult services, HSE funded services and HSE contracted services.

The safety and welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. **The HSE Child Protection and Welfare Policy states that all staff irrespective of role, grade or position must promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm.**

HSE staff should promote the welfare of all children, and where you have a concern in relation to the safety, welfare or protection of a child, you **must** report this to the appropriate statutory agency. The statutory agencies for child protection are Tusla - Child and Family Agency and An Garda Síochána.

This website is maintained by the [HSE Children First National Office](#) as a Children First resource. Resources on this website are intended as a guide and do not take the place of legal or other advice.

Please use the navigation menu to access the content that you are looking for.

Children First

- > **Children First**
- > What is Children First
- > HSE Children First National Office
- > HSE Child Protection and Welfare Policy
- > Child Safeguarding Statement
- > Compliance Self-Audit Checklist
- > HSE Staff
- > HSE Funded Agencies
- > HSE Contracted Services / GPs

2. **HSeLand eLearning Programme:**

‘Supporting Your Staff’s Mental Health: A Programme for HSE Managers’ provides guidance on how to have a conversation with a staff member about their mental health.



Supporting Your Staff's Mental Health: A Programme for HSE Managers

This programme provides HSE managers with practical guidance on how to have a conversation with a staff member about their mental health. It gives managers the practical, concrete guidance and information they need to assist them in fulfilling their managerial role to staff.

The programme will help managers to prepare themselves to successfully have a mental health conversation with their staff. This will include clinical and admin scenarios on how to identify signs and symptoms that may indicate a staff member may be experiencing mental health issues.

Learning Type: Programme

Language Enroled: English

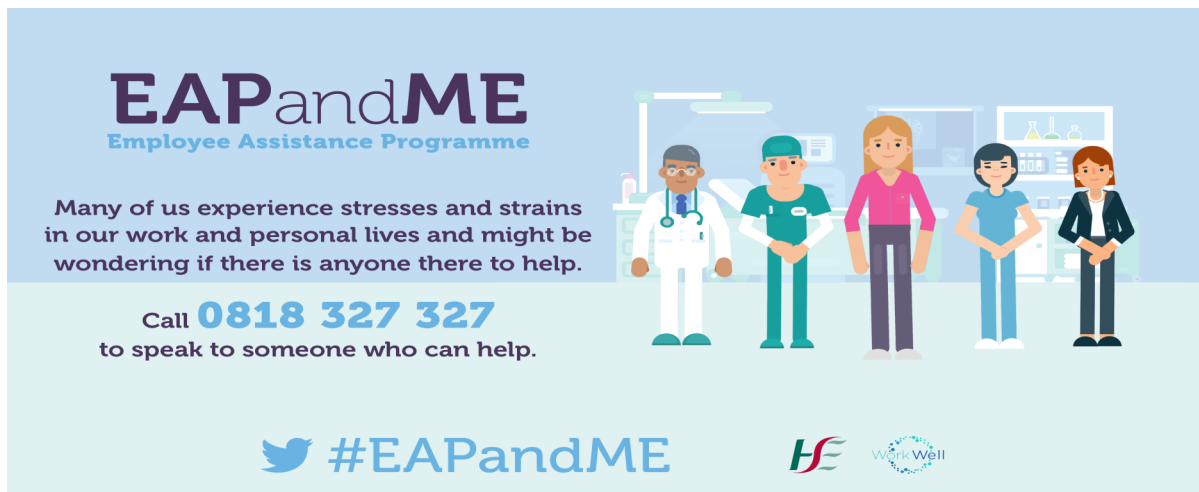
Who Should Take This:

- Primary: HSE employees with line management responsibilities and anybody in a supervisory or leadership position
- Secondary: All HSE employees

Additional Resources for Supporting Staff (continued)

3. HSE Employee Assistance Programme (EPA)

Provides Staff counselling, consultation to managers on staff wellbeing and psychological issues. EAP also offer a Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Response which is a form of psychological first aid following a traumatic incident and workshops on staff wellbeing issues.



<https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/benefits-and-services/employee-assistance-programme-staff-counselling/>

4. The Inspire Support Hub (<https://www.inspiresupporthub.org>) provides high quality, professional and innovative services and support appropriate to your individual mental health and wellbeing needs.

Watch Inspire Workplaces-Wellbeing at work video for more information.

The Inspire Support Hub provides instant access to a range of information, guidance, screening and intervention tools, tailored specifically to help care for your individual wellbeing needs.

When logging in at first, you will be prompted to enter your company PIN and to complete a sign up form in order to register.

To start using the hub, follow the steps below:

- Visit: [inspiresupporthub.org](https://www.inspiresupporthub.org) and on the homepage, click the purple 'Sign Up' icon, top right
- Where prompted, enter your company PIN
The PIN for HSE is: HSEHUB
- This will create a randomly generated username - it is important that you take a note of this as you will need it when logging in each time you visit the hub.*



Sign up to the inspire support hub

Enter Company pin

If you don't know this pin, please contact your employer.

Please make a note of this. This is the username you will need each time you log in.



HSE National Counselling Service

The HSE National Counselling Service is a professional, confidential counselling and psychotherapy service available free of charge in all regions of the country.

The HSE National Counselling Service welcomes calls from adults who have experienced abuse in childhood. Healthcare professionals can also refer clients using the following contact details:

HSE Area	Free Phone
HSE Dublin North East (Dublin North, Dublin North City)	1800 234 110 ReferNCS.DNCC@hse.ie
HSE Dublin North East (Louth , Meath, Cavan & Monaghan)	1800 234 117 Referncs.lmcm@hse.ie
HSE Dublin Mid-Leinster (South Dublin, South East Dublin & East Wicklow)	1800 234 111 Referncs.east@hse.ie
HSE Dublin Mid-Leinster (Dublin South, Kildare & West Wicklow)	1800 234 112 Refer.NCSDSKWW@hse.ie
HSE Dublin Mid-Leinster (Laois, Offaly, Longford & Westmeath)	1800 234 113 ReferNCS.midlands@hse.ie
HSE West (Galway, Mayo & Roscommon)	1800 234 114 Referncs.midwest@hse.ie
HSE West (Limerick, Clare & North Tipperary)	1800 234 115 Referncs.midwest@hse.ie
HSE West (Donegal, Leitrim & Sligo)	1800 234 119 ReferNCS.midwest@hse.ie
HSE South (Waterford, Wexford, Kilkenny, Carlow & South Tipperary)	1800 234 118 CAPA.SECH@hse.ie
HSE South (Cork & Kerry)	1800 234 116 ReferNCS.CKCH@hse.ie