

Listowel Family Resource Centre

Throughout the document the following terms are used:

Child Protection Concern – when there are reasonable grounds for believing that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being physically, sexually or emotionally abused or neglected. *Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook* (2011) Page 5.

Child Welfare Concern – a problem experienced directly by a child, or by the family of a child, that is seen to impact negatively on the child's health, development and welfare, and that warrants assessment and support, but may or may not require a child protection response. *Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook* (2011) Page 6.

Abuse - refers to the four recognised, categories of abuse, i.e. neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse;

Child - refers to a person under the age of 18 years, excluding a person who is or has been married. *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (2011) Paragraph 2.1.2.

Family Resource Centre - Refers to the activities planned, organised, supervised and run by the staff and Voluntary Board of Directors of the Family Resource Centre or those appointed by them to do so;

Volunteer – refers to people who volunteer to run and manage the Family Resource Centre (Directors) or to undertake activities as directed by the Voluntary Board of Directors;

Student – a person on work placement from an educational institution.

Staff member – a paid employee of the Family Resource Centre, including CE, Tus, RSS and Internship

Parent - refers to parent, guardian and caregiver

THIS POLICY APPLIES TO ALL STAFF MEMBERS, STUDENTS AND VOLUNTEERS, INCLUDING BOARD OF MANAGEMENT.

Designated Liaison Person:

Ms. Jackie Landers, Manager

Deputy Designated Liaison Person:

Ms. Jacqui Harteveld, Children's Centre Co-ordinator

Leadership Team:

Ms. Jackie Landers, Manager

Ms. Jacqui Harteveld, Children's Centre Co-ordinator

Ms. Claire Stack, Administrator

Ms. Bridie Mulvihill, Community development Co-ordinator

Mr. Denis Robinson, Parent Supports Co-ordinator

Ms. Patricia Lyons, After-Schools Team Leader & Deputy Children's Centre Co-ordinator

Ms. Sylvia Hughes, Facilities Co-ordinator

Contents

	Page No.
Child Protection and Welfare Statement	3
Involving Children and Sharing Information	3
Confidentiality Statement	4
Reporting Procedures	4
Guidelines for Recognising Child Neglect or Abuse	5
Reasonable grounds for Concern	5
Role of the Designated Liaison Person	6
Reporting a Concern	6
Third Party Referrals	7
Reporting a Concern that a Child is Missing	7
Reporting a Concern about a Colleague's Behaviour	8
Retrospective Disclosure	8
Protected Disclosure	8
Records and Sharing Information	8
Policy on the Recruitment and Selection of Staff and Volunteers	9
Application Form and Advertising	9
Garda Vetting	9
Declaration Form	9
Selection and Interview Process	9
ID and References	10
Probation	10
Staff / Volunteers from Other Organisations	10
Safe Management of Staff and Volunteers	11
Induction	11
Supervision and Support	11
Training	12
Code of Behaviour	12
Comments and Complaints Procedure	14
Procedure for Addressing Allegations of Abuse against Staff / Volunteers	15
Procedure for Addressing Allegations of Abuse against Staff / Volunteers outside of Listowel FRC that comes to the Attention of Listowel FRC	16
Accidents	17
Policy on Sharing Information with Primary Carers	17

Child Protection and Welfare Statement

Listowel Family Resource Centre is actively committed to a child-centred approach to working with children and young people and undertake to provide a safe and nurturing environment where the welfare of the child is paramount. By promoting their rights Listowel Family Resource Centre will support children to participate in matters that affect their lives. Listowel Family Resource Centre believes that children should be safe and protected in all aspects of their lives and that best practice in relation to child protection and welfare must be at the core of providing community based family supports and services.

Listowel Family Resource Centre adheres to the recommendations of *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (2011) Department of Children and Youth Affairs; the *Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook* (2011) HSE and *Our Duty to Care: Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People* (2002) HSE by implementing best practice procedures on:

- Involving Children and Sharing Information;
- Confidentiality;
- Reporting both child protection and child welfare concerns;
- Recruitment and Selection of staff and volunteers;
- Management and Supervision of staff and volunteers;
- Code of Behaviour for all staff and volunteers;
- Complaints and comments;
- Incidents and accidents;
- Allegations of misconduct or abuse by staff or volunteers;
- Involvement of primary carers.

Involving Children and Sharing Information

Listowel Family Resource Centre aims to protect and promote children's rights by centring its activities around their safety, enjoyment and comfort (**Appendix 1**) and ensuring that they are valued, encouraged and treated as individuals in the Centre. Children's rights and entitlements will be widely communicated within the Centre using posters and age appropriate information leaflets, including information on the Centre's child protection and welfare policy.

Children will be unconditionally respected and will be heard, listened to and taken seriously in the Centre. They will be encouraged to express their opinions, ask questions and depending on their age and level of understanding they will be consulted in planning activities and drawing up codes of behaviour and an anti-bullying policy. Where possible and depending on resources, age appropriate workshops will be facilitated to maximise their participation.

Listowel Family Resource Centre will engage a variety of communication tools when working with children that have communication difficulties. Staff and volunteers will be encouraged to avail of appropriate training and to access whatever additional resources and supports that are available. The Centre will work closely in partnership with parents / carers and other agencies / support services that are working with the individual child.

Confidentiality

Listowel Family Resource Centre is committed to ensuring peoples' rights to confidentiality. However, in relation to child protection and welfare the Centre undertakes that:

- The Designated Liaison Person and the deputy Designated Liaison Person will immediately be made aware of any information concerning the welfare of a child;
- No undertakings regarding secrecy can be given by Listowel Family Resource Centre where there is a child protection concern. Staff and / or volunteers that are working with a child and his / her family will always make this clear to all parties;
- The Centre will co-operate fully with the TUSLA Social Work Services on the sharing of its records where a child welfare or protection issue arises. Sharing information in this way is not a breach of confidentiality and total confidentiality can never be guaranteed where the best interests of the child are at risk;
- Listowel Family Resource Centre will take full account of all legal requirements when handling information regarding child protection concerns and will access legal advice as required;
- There are clear procedures in place in relation to keeping records of child protection and welfare concerns or reports. Records will be kept securely until the individual child has reached 21 years of age. Access to these records will be managed by the Designated Liaison Person and the Chairperson;
- Information in relation to child protection and welfare will only be shared on a 'need to know' basis within the Centre and will always be in the best interest of the child;
- Parents / primary carers and children have a right to know if personal information is being shared and / or a report is being forwarded to the Tusla(CFA). They will be told unless doing so would put the child at further risk and/or put a staff member at risk.

Refer to Confidentiality Policy

Reporting Procedures

If any child that Listowel Family Resource Centre comes in contact with is identified as being at risk of harm the Centre must act. 'It is the responsibility of all agencies working with children and for the public to recognise child protection concerns and share those with the agencies responsible for assessing or investigating them, not to determine whether the child protection concerns are evidenced or not'. *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011)* Paragraph 3.7.3.

The Criminal Justice Act, 2006 introduced the criminal charge of 'reckless endangerment of children'. It states that 'a person having authority or control over a child or abuser, who intentionally or recklessly endangers a child by (a) causing or permitting any child to be placed or left in a situation which creates a substantial risk to the child or being a victim of serious harm or sexual abuse or (b) failing to take reasonable steps to protect a child from such a risk while knowing that the child is in such a situation, is guilty of an offence'.

GUIDELINES FOR RECOGNISING CHILD NEGLECT OR ABUSE

Protecting children and young people is everyone's responsibility and staff and volunteers in Listowel Family Resource Centre must be alert to the possibility that children with whom they are in contact with may be experiencing abuse and / or neglect. A definition of the four types of abuse with a list of indicators is contained in **Appendix 2**. Commonly there are three stages in the identification of child neglect or abuse:

- Considering the possibility;
- Looking out for signs of neglect or abuse;
- Recording of information.

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011) Paragraph 2.7.1.

REASONABLE GROUNDS FOR CONCERN

In Listowel Family Resource Centre staff and volunteers must follow the reporting procedures outlined below if they have a concern about the protection or welfare of a child or young person that they are working with. Each of the following constitutes reasonable grounds for concern:

- An injury or behaviour that is consistent both with abuse and an innocent; explanation, but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse;
- Consistent indication over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect;
- Admission or indication by someone of an alleged abuse;
- A specific indication from a child that he or she was abused;
- An account by a person who saw the child being abused;
- Evidence (e.g. injury or behaviour) that is consistent with abuse and unlikely to have been caused in any other way.

GUIDANCE FOR STAFF ON WHAT TO RECORD

- Date and time of disclosure or concern
- Details of disclosure or concern
- What Action was taken?
- Was anyone spoken to? Who was informed?
- Staff present, if any
- Sign report & witness by Team Leader
- Signature of DLP or Deputy DLP

Records should be factual (e.g. use child's words etc) and not contain assumptions.

DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON

In accordance with Section 3.3 of *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011)*, the Centre has appointed a Designated Liaison Person to act as a liaison with outside agencies and also as a resource for any staff member or volunteer that needs support in relation to child protection concerns. A deputy has also been appointed to cover this role when the Designated Liaison Person is unavailable or if s/he is directly involved in a particular concern or incident. Both the Designated Liaison Person and the deputy are familiar with *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011)*; the *Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook (2011)*; *Our Duty to Care: Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People (2002)* and *Threshold of Need Guidance for Practitioners in Tusla Social Work Services (2014)*.

Designated Liaison Person:	<u>Ms. Jackie Landers, Manager</u>
Contact details:	<u>Listowel FRC; 068-23584/085-1434456</u>
Deputy Designated Liaison Person:	<u>Ms. Jacqui Hartevelde, Children's Centre Co-ordinator</u>
Contact details:	<u>Listowel FRC; 068-23584</u>

ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON

In Listowel Family Resource Centre, the Designated Liaison Person and the deputy Designated Liaison Person have participated in *Keeping Safe / Children First* training and *Designated Liaison Person* Training.

The role of the Designated Liaison Person is to:

- Be fully conversant with the Family Resource Centre's duties in relation to the protection and welfare of children;
- Provide information and advice on the Centre's child protection and welfare policy and procedures and ensure that all of the appropriate procedures are implemented;
- Ensure that new staff and volunteers are supported to implement the Centre's child protection and welfare policy and procedures through the induction process and the ongoing management, support and supervision of their work;
- Receive and consider child protection and welfare concerns and establish, in consultation with the individual who has raised the concern, if reasonable grounds for concern exist;
- Consult informally with the TUSLA Social Work Services' Duty Social Worker when unsure if the concern constitutes reasonable grounds for concern and whether a formal report should be made to the TUSLA Social Work Services;
- Make a formal referral to TUSLA Social Work Services as required using the Standard Report form (**Appendix 3**);
- Refer any 'out of hours' emergency situation to an Garda Síochána or if not on call - ensure that staff / volunteers are aware of their obligation to contact the Garda Síochána in an emergency ;
- Maintain confidential records;
- Inform the primary carers that a child protection concern is being reported to the TUSLA Social Work Services or to An Garda Síochána unless doing so is likely to endanger the child and/or a staff member.
- Relevant attendance at Child protection Strategy meetings, Child Protection Case Conferences, Family welfare conferences etc.
- Carry out and support all duties relating to appropriate plans for the welfare and protection of children and young people.

REPORTING A CONCERN

The definitions of abuse and guidelines for responding to a child that discloses are outlined in **Appendix 2 and 4** respectively. A child should never be left in a situation that exposes him / her to harm. If a child protection or welfare concern arises the steps below will be followed:

- The Designated Liaison Person (or the deputy Designated Liaison Person) will be informed immediately;

- The Designated Liaison Person may seek advice from the TUSLA Social Work Services Duty Social Worker to decide whether a formal referral is required. The situation may just require ongoing monitoring; contact details outline in **Appendix 3**
- If there are reasonable grounds for concern the Designated Liaison Person will make a formal report to the TUSLA Social Work Services without delay, using the Standard Report Form (**Appendix 3**). The form may be downloaded from www.hse.ie/go/childrenfirst or www.worriedaboutachild.ie;
- If the concern is urgent and there is imminent risk to a child, the Designated Liaison Person will make the report by telephone and then follow it up with the completed form;
- In an emergency outside of the TUSLA office hours, where the immediate safety of a child is threatened, An Garda Síochána will be contacted;
- If the Designated Liaison Person or deputy Designated Liaison Person is not available the person who has a concern, received a disclosure or witnessed an incident, should report to a member of Listowel Family Resource Centre's Leadership Team (Listed on Page 1 of this document). If there is no member available and there is imminent risk contact the TUSLA Social Work Services or An Garda Síochána directly;
- Where there is a concern about a potential risk to children posed by a specific person, even if the children are unidentifiable, the Centre will report the concerns to the TUSLA Social Work Services and/or An Garda Síochána.

In addition:

- The staff member / volunteer in Listowel Family Resource Centre that expressed the concern about a child's welfare will be kept informed;
- If the Designated Liaison Person decides not to pass on a concern to the TUSLA Social Work Services, a clear written statement of the reasons why the Centre is not taking such action will be given to the person who reported the concern initially. They will also be advised that if they remain concerned about the situation that they are free as an individual to consult with, or report to, TUSLA or An Garda Síochána. The provisions of the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 (**Appendix 5**) including protection from civil liability and penalisation by an employer, apply once they communicate 'reasonably and in good faith';
- If a report is to be submitted to the TUSLA Social Work Services or to An Garda Síochána, the Designated Liaison Person will inform the primary carers - unless doing so would put the child at further risk. *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (2011), Paragraph 3.2.9.

THIRD PARTY REFERRALS

If a member of staff or a volunteer with Listowel Family Resource Centre receives information regarding a suspicion of child abuse / welfare from a third party this must be reported to the Designated Liaison Person who will then consult appropriately with the TUSLA Social Work Services. The source of the information will be made aware that the information will be acted upon in the usual manner.

REPORTING A CONCERN THAT A CHILD IS MISSING

If there is a concern that a child or young person has gone missing the Centre will immediately notify an Garda Síochána and the TUSLA Social Work Services. The Centre will provide as much information as possible to these agencies such as: age; gender; height; build; hair colour; date person was last

seen; where person was last seen; what person was wearing when last seen; any other relevant personal details or information and a recently taken photograph if available.

REPORTING A CONCERN ABOUT A COLLEAGUES BEHAVIOUR

- If a member of staff or a volunteer has a concern about a colleague's behaviour with regards to a child they should report their concern to their line manager who will liaise appropriately with the Designated Liaison Person;
- If the concern is about the behaviour of their line manager they should report the matter to the Manager (who is the Designated Liaison Person) of the Centre who will liaise appropriately with the Deputy Designated Liaison Person and if necessary with the Chairperson/Staffing Sub-Committee ;
- If the concern is about the behaviour of the Manager of the Centre they should report the matter to the Chairperson of the Voluntary Board of Directors who will liaise appropriately with the Deputy Designated Liaison Person.

RETROSPECTIVE DISCLOSURE

If an adult discloses that s/he was abused as a child and it is possible that the alleged abuser is still in contact with and / or responsible for children the matter should be reported to the Designated Liaison Person who will consult with the TUSLA Social Work Services.

PROTECTED DISCLOSURE

Protected disclosure provides legal safeguards for people who want to report serious concerns they have about standards of safety or quality in Irish health and social care services and was introduced into legislation via the Health Act, 2007. A disclosure to an authorised person is protected if that disclosure is made by (a) an employee of HSE/TUSLA, (b) other public health agencies, (c) service providers or bodies funded by the HSE/TUSLA, if it is made in good faith, on reasonable grounds and in accordance with the procedures outlined in the legislation. Listowel Family Resource centre will clarify the situation in relation to protected disclosures when it is negotiating funding levels and / or a Service Level Agreement with HSE/TUSLA. (See *Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook* (2011), Paragraph 4.6 for further details).

RECORDS AND SHARING INFORMATION

- All details in relation to a child protection or welfare concern including the date, time, persons involved in the concern, disclosure or incident and actions and outcomes will be recorded and held securely by the Designated Liaison Person/Deputy Designated Liaison Person in Listowel Family Resource Centre. As much factual information as possible will be obtained to establish the grounds for concern. With each individual case, whether or not a formal report was made to the TUSLA Social Work Services and the reasons for doing so, or not doing so, will also be noted;
- In cases where neglect is indicated over time there may be no requirement for a formal report to be made to TUSLA initially. However, a chronological record of the evidence or symptoms in the child that gave rise to the concern will be maintained. Thus daily records of incidents / observations may become significant if a pattern of neglect / abuse emerges and may become part of the record of a child welfare or child protection concern;
- Access to records and the extent to which information will be shared will be managed by the Designated Liaison Person and where relevant Chairperson;
- Listowel Family Resource Centre has a policy of co-operating fully with the TUSLA Social Work

- Services on sharing the Centre's records where a child welfare or protection issue arises;
- Information regarding concern or assessment of child abuse will be shared on a 'need to know' basis within the Centre and always in the best interests of the child.
 - All stages of dealing with child protection allegations will be recorded by Listowel FRC.
 - All relevant records gathered by Listowel FRC regarding child protection are kept until the child reaches the age of 21. All records are then shredded.
 - All information pertaining to child protection will already be submitted to the Tusla Child and Family Agency Child Protection department whose records are kept indefinitely. **Refer to Data Protection Policy.**

Recruitment and Selection of Staff and Volunteers

Refer to Recruitment Policy

Listowel Family Resource Centre is committed to ensuring best practice in the recruitment and management of staff and volunteers. 'Where staff or volunteers have access to children employers / heads of organisations should at all times implement safe recruitment practices, including Garda vetting of applicants and staff, rigorous checking of references, interview procedures and monitoring of good professional practice'.

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011), Paragraph 4.5.5

APPLICATION FORM AND ADVERTISING

An application form must be filled out for all positions in the Centre, whether the position is paid or on a voluntary basis. For volunteers the Application form is combined with a Declaration form (**Appendix 6**). Advertising for positions, paid and voluntary will be done as widely as possible and in a fair, open and transparent manner.

GARDA VETTING

Listowel Family Resource Centre will ensure that all members of the Voluntary Board of Directors, staff and anyone involved in the delivery of services, supports and programmes on behalf of the Centre have Garda Vetting. Staff or volunteers will not have unsupervised access to children until their vetting application has been satisfactorily processed. Vetting will be done through the Authorised Signatory for Family Resource Centres who is authorised to act as the liaison between Family Resource Centres and the Garda Central Vetting Unit. (Contact Maria Chrystal in Ballymote Family Resource Centre, Co. Sligo for further details). ***Refer to Garda Vetting Policy***

DECLARATION FORM

There may be a delay in the Garda vetting service and staff and volunteers are also required to sign a Declaration Form (**Appendix 6**) before they begin working with the Centre. This form details any criminal convictions, as well as any charges that are pending, against an individual.

SELECTION AND INTERVIEW PROCESS

Staff will be selected by a panel of at least two or more representatives through an interview process. Volunteers with the Family Resource Centre will also be required to go through an informal interview process with the Centre Manager and/or an appropriate member of the Leadership Team. Any person that is deemed to constitute a risk to children or young people will not be engaged / employed. Some of the exclusions include:

- Any child abuse related convictions;
- Refusal to sign the application and / or declaration form;

- Insufficient documentary evidence of identity;
- Concealing information on one's suitability for working with children.

ID AND REFERENCES

Two forms of identification, including one form of photo I.D. with a signature (e.g. passport or driving licence) must be provided by staff and volunteers. Contact details for two referees, who are not family members, must be provided. References will be sought in writing or by telephone and will be followed up by telephone or personal visit as appropriate (*Volunteer Reference Form - Appendix 7*).

PROBATION

Staff and volunteers will complete a probationary / trial period of at least three months or as outlined by Board of Directors and/or Manager. During this time, their interaction with children and young people and their willingness to abide by, and actively implement, this child protection and welfare policy and procedures will be assessed.

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

Staff and volunteers are expected to abide by the Code of Behaviour that is an integral part of this child protection and welfare policy.

STAFF / VOLUNTEERS FROM OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Listowel Family Resource Centre will clarify the nature of its relationship with the other organisation immediately – particularly in relation to management of staff and volunteers and agreement of the required policies and procedures to ensure a safe environment where the welfare of the child is paramount.

- (a) If the external organisation is renting a space / room from the Centre the organisation will be expected to be fully responsible for managing their own activities and to have the appropriate policies and procedures in place. They will also be required to show evidence of appropriate insurance cover;
- (b) Where students, Community Employment Scheme participants, TUS participants or people on work placements are engaged by the Centre the Designated Liaison Person will provide a copy of this document to their employer / supervisor as these participants are expected to operate under Listowel FRC Child Protection & Welfare Policy. Codes of Behaviour will be discussed to identify any variances in work practices and to agree a shared approach as part of the placement agreement. Complaints procedures / how to address allegations of inappropriate behaviour will also be part of this discussion and both organisations will have agreed procedures in place regarding information sharing, should such issues arise;
- (c) Where Listowel Family Resource Centre is co-managing an activity / programme in the Centre an agreement will be put in place with the other organisation(s). This agreement will stipulate the agreed policies and procedures that are required to ensure the safe management of the activity / programme and will identify the Designated Liaison Person to lead any child protection or welfare concern that may arise. Information sharing / record keeping protocols will also be agreed in relation to each and every procedure outlined in the agreement.

Safe Management of Staff and Volunteers**INDUCTION**

- New staff and volunteers in Listowel Family Resource Centre must undertake an induction process which includes:
 - (a) An introduction to the management / staff / volunteers in the Centre;
 - (b) A guided tour of the premises and its facilities;
 - (c) The background to the Centre e.g. history / guiding principles / management structure / aims and objectives / work plan etc.
 - (d) Relevant promotional material about the Centre e.g. copy of most recent annual report / SPEAK report / recent newsletter etc;
 - (e) An introduction to / information about other agencies working in the area;
 - (f) Information on the policies and procedures of the Centre particularly this child protection and welfare policy.
- All staff members and volunteers (as appropriate) will be provided with clear job descriptions that outline their particular roles and responsibilities;
- All volunteers and staff that work with Listowel Family Resource Centre are required to sign and abide by this child protection and welfare policy.
- As stated above - if the volunteers or staff members are external to the Centre then it will be agreed beforehand with their respective employer or supervisor what policies and procedures they will be governed by as well as the level of responsibility both organisations have in implementing the placement agreement. Appropriate induction will be an integral part of each placement agreement;
- Where Listowel Family Resource Centre is managing an activity / programme in the Centre in partnership with another organisation (or organisations) an agreement will be drawn up and agreed with the relevant organisation(s). The agreement will include procedures for the safe management of staff and volunteers for the particular co-managed activity / programme.

SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS IN THE CENTRE

- The Manager of Listowel Family Resource Centre provides and/or delegates support and supervision for staff on a regular basis;
- All staff members have access to the Staff Liaison Person and/or Staffing sub-committee of the Voluntary Board of Directors.
- Full Staff team meetings are held a minimum of 4 times per year;
- Leadership meetings are held a minimum of bi-monthly;
- Team meetings are held on a regular basis;
- Staff appraisal meetings take place annually/bi-annually and are overseen by the Staff Liaison sub-committee of the Voluntary Board of Directors. Child protection and the promotion of child welfare will be addressed during the appraisal meeting;
- Volunteers are supported and supervised by the appropriate member of the Leadership Team;
- Volunteers will be facilitated to meet at least annually, or more often as required, to review their performance and discuss any emerging issues;
- Volunteers may request a meeting with the Line Manager to discuss their work at any stage. They may also request a meeting with the Manager and/or Staff Liaison Person and/or Staffing sub-committee of the Voluntary Board of Directors;

- Appropriate support and supervision structures for staff / volunteers from an external organisation will form part of the placement agreement or contract described above.

The Terms of Reference for all working groups / sub-committees of the Voluntary Board of Directors will abide by the Policies and Procedures of Listowel FRC including this child protection and welfare policy. A member of the Voluntary Board of Directors and a member of staff will sit on each sub-committee / working group.

TRAINING

Staff and volunteers that have access to children and / or young must participate in *Keeping Safe / Children First* training as soon as possible.

“Training aims to promote effective interventions in the care and protection of children. Effective child protection depends on the skills, knowledge and values of personnel working with children and families, as well as cooperation between agencies (interagency) and within agencies (intra-agency). Relevant training and education is an essential prerequisite for achieving this. All agencies involved with children have a responsibility to ensure that such training is available on an on-going basis”.

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011), Paragraph 10.1.2

Code of Behaviour for Staff and Volunteers working with Children

Listowel Family Resource Centre promotes a child centred-approach to creating a safe environment for children and young people. Staff and volunteers are provided with clear good practice guidelines on what is acceptable behaviour when working with children and young people.

EQUALITY STATEMENT

Listowel Family Resource Centre is committed to providing equal opportunities for all children and young people regardless of their gender, age, culture/race, disability, religious beliefs, civil status, family status, sexual orientation or membership of the Traveller community.

Listowel Family Resource Centre respects the rights of all individuals to develop to their full potential and to celebrate their diversity and culture. In this Organisation we are committed to a policy of equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination on the grounds of sexuality, race, colour, ethnic or national origins, culture, age, class, disability, gender, educational or economic background, political belief or family circumstance. (*Strategy Plan of Listowel FRC*)

WORKERS AND VOLUNTEERS WILL

- Behave in a respectful manner towards children;
- Listen to and value children’s opinions and beliefs;
- Include children in appropriate decision making;
- Create a safe, inclusive, accessible environment;
- Recognise and nurture the individual potential of all children;
- Use encouragement and praise to positively develop confidence and self worth;
- Facilitate the young people to draw up an Anti-bullying Code of behaviour that will be followed while they are in the Centre or involved in any activities with Listowel Family Resource Centre.

WORKERS AND VOLUNTEERS WILL NOT

- Bully children;
- Spend excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others. Meetings with individual children or young people will take place as openly as possible;
- Shout at or show aggression towards children,
- Subject children to any form of verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse;
- Exclude children from groups or activities because of difference;
- Show favouritism towards individuals;
- Have inappropriate physical contact with children;
- Tell jokes of a racist, sexual or derogatory nature;
- Refuse to act on a child welfare concern about someone in their care;
- Engage in slugging or joking that belittles children.

Refer to Behaviour Management Policy

ORGANISING ACTIVITIES / EVENTS

- Appropriate transport arrangements will be made for all activities;
- Activities will be age appropriate;
- Registration forms, parental consent forms etc will be provided as required;
- Incident / accident report forms and safety procedures will be used to ensure the safety and protection of children and young people;
- Clear lines of communication between organisers and parents/guardians regarding attendance, location, drop-off and pick-up, duration of activities will be agreed.

Refer to Outings Policy

TOUCHING & INTIMATE CARE

- Touching will be in response to the need of the child and not the need of the adult;
- Touching should always be with the child's permission – resistance from the child will be respected;
- Breasts, buttocks and groin should always be avoided;
- Touching should be open and not secretive;
- Any touching should be governed by the developmental stage of the child
- Tasks of a personal nature will only be undertaken with the utmost of discretion in an emergency situation; for very young children or disabled children and always with the full understanding and consent of the parents.

COMMUNICATION

- All communication, including electronic email and text, between staff, volunteers and children will be appropriate and will only be done with parental consent;
- Communications will not contain inappropriate images or text that might be construed as pornographic, racist, derogatory or contain innuendo or material that in any way might be inappropriate or offensive;
- Young people will not be contacted by the organisation through social networking sites;
- Photographs, video or other images of children or young people will not be taken without the consent of the parents / carers and the young people themselves and only appropriate images will be used to promote the activities of the Centre. **Refer to Images Policy.**

Care plans are in place for any child with disabilities/special needs that are referred to the Centre. Listowel FRC, in conjunction and partnership with the parents, also implement a Support Plan for the child.

APPROPRIATE CONTACT WITH FAMILIES, CHILDREN & SERVICE USERS OUTSIDE OF LISTOWEL FRC

It is the general policy of the company that staff are not involved in accepting or asking for favours from clients or that of other persons or bodies with whom we have dealings of any sort. In the very exceptional circumstance where a request is made to a member of staff it is imperative that approval is sought from Management prior to entering into any arrangement. This is to ensure that the Company is not liable in anyway and for the safety of the staff member. This policy is not designed to exclude neighbourliness and community network supports but you should inform your line manager of the relationship.

Where you are involved in neighbourliness and community network supports outside working hours, in particular for those families, parents and children who attend the Company, you must ensure at all times that confidentiality is maintained. It should also be made clear to the parent/service user that your neighbourliness and community network support is your own personal venture and in no way bears any relationship with the Company, HOWEVER, the welfare and safety of the child is paramount and any concerns should be reported appropriately.

Comments and Complaints

Listowel Family Resource Centre promotes best practice and welcomes feedback at all times. We would encourage people to address their comments / concerns to us as soon as possible - as this will facilitate us to address the matter most effectively.

- Informal comments or complaints should initially be addressed to the person(s) in question;
- Alternatively the Manager and/or a member of the Leadership Team of Listowel Family Resource Centre can be contacted. S/he will be responsible for directing the complaints / comments to the appropriate person;
- All comments or complaints will be treated properly, fairly and impartially;
- If the complaint relates to the safety and welfare of a child, it will be dealt with in accordance with this child protection and welfare policy and procedures;
- Where a complainant feels that their comment / complaint has not been addressed satisfactorily through the informal process outlined above, the comment / complaint should be put on a formal basis using the template provided in **Appendix 8**. Where possible formal complaints / comments should be made in writing;
- Complaints / comments will be acknowledged immediately and responded to in detail within 20 working days of receipt of the written comment or complaint;
- If there are outstanding issues for either party - these can be addressed with the chairperson who will be guided by the policies and procedures of the organisation.

Refer to Comments & Complaints Policy

Procedure for Addressing Allegations of Abuse against Staff / Volunteers internally

If an allegation of abusive behaviour is made against a staff member or volunteer two separate procedures will be followed and managed independently by different people in the Centre:

- (1) The Designated Liaison Person will deal with the child welfare or protection issue;
- (2) A member of the Voluntary Board of Directors (employer), ideally a member of the Staff Liaison sub-committee and / or the Chairperson, will deal with the allegation against the staff member / volunteer.

Where an allegation of abuse is made against the Designated Liaison Person, the deputy Designated Liaison Person or the chairperson, then others in the organisation will be charged with dealing with the allegations.

Child Protection / Welfare Issue	Allegation against a staff member / volunteer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When an allegation against a member of staff or volunteer is received - it will be dealt with promptly and strictly in accordance with these procedures; • The safety of the child is paramount and all necessary measures will be taken to ensure that the child is safe. Listowel Family Resource Centre will ensure that no other children or young people are put at risk during this period. This may include any of the following: suspension of duties pending the outcome of an investigation; re-assignment of duties so that the accused will not have contact with children or young people; working under increased supervision during the period of the investigation; • Listowel Family Resource Centre will inform the primary carers as appropriate; • The decision to make a formal report will be based on reasonable grounds for concern and in consultation with the TUSLA Duty Social Worker. It will also be done in accordance with the role of the Designated Liaison Person and the Centre's reporting procedures; • Both the child and the primary carers will be informed of any actions planned and taken; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If an allegation has been made against a staff member or volunteer a member of Staff Liaison and / or the chairperson will privately inform them of (1) the fact that an allegation has been made against them and (2) the nature of the allegation; • The employee or volunteer will be afforded an opportunity to respond and their response will be noted in any subsequent report to the TUSLA Social Work Services and/or an Garda Síochána; • Once the person has been informed of the allegation made against them, the Designated Liaison Person will consult with the TUSLA Social Work Services and complete the standard reporting form (Appendix 3) as required; • The Centre will ensure that the principles of 'natural justice' apply throughout the process; • An investigation will take place into the allegation(s) as soon as possible and in accordance with the Centre's disciplinary procedures; • Staff Liaison and / or the Chairperson will inform the person against whom the allegation has been made of the outcome of the investigation; • The Centre will work in consultation with the TUSLA Social Work Services and an

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child will be dealt with in an age appropriate manner. 	<p>Garda Síochána on what action(s) should be taken in regard to the staff member / volunteer;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The person against whom the allegation has been made will need support and the Centre will advise on how to access relevant support services.
--	--

Listowel Family Resource Centre recognises that the reactions of other members of staff / volunteers to the allegations may include anger, disbelief and shock. Staff and volunteers will be supported in a manner that protects the child, facilitates a fair investigation into the allegation(s) and outlines the behaviour expected of staff and volunteers whilst the matter is under investigation.

The Centre also recognises the need to support the child and his / her primary carers and other family members throughout the process of assessment and investigation and will work with the TUSLA Social Work Services to provide this support.

**Procedure for Addressing Allegations of Abuse against
Staff / Volunteer outside of Listowel FRC that comes to the attention of LFRC**

In such a circumstance the role of investigator, as always, lies with Tusla Child & Family Agency and/or An Garda Síochána.

The safety of the child is paramount and all necessary measures will be taken to ensure that all children are safe. Listowel Family Resource Centre will ensure that no child or young people is put at risk during this period. This may include any of the following:

- suspension of duties pending the outcome of an investigation;
- re-assignment of duties so that the accused will not have contact with children or young people;
- working under increased supervision during the period of the investigation;

Advice will be sought from the Tusla Child and Family Agency regarding the best option to implement.

Listowel Family Resource Centre recognises that the reactions of other members of staff / volunteers to the allegations may include anger, disbelief and shock. Staff and volunteers will be supported in a manner that protects all children and outlines the behaviour expected of staff and volunteers whilst the matter is under investigation.

The Centre also recognises the possible need to support the staff member/volunteer and other family members throughout the process of assessment and investigation and will work with the TUSLA Social Work Services to provide this support if appropriate.

Accidents

Listowel Family Resource Centre has a Health and Safety Statement that includes a risk assessment of each area of operation. Procedures to follow in the event of an accident are clearly described in this.

PROCEDURES

- All accidents in Listowel Family Resource Centre must be reported to the Manager who will inform the Health and Safety officer;
- All accidents / incidents must be recorded using the Centre's Incident / Accident Report Form;
- If a child has an accident the primary carers are always informed of the nature of the accident and any treatment given and the ***Accident and Incident Policy for the Children's Centre*** if followed;
- An up to date register is maintained of the contact details of all children or young people involved with Listowel Family Resource Centre;
- The location of the First-aid boxes are known to all staff members / volunteers and they are re-stocked regularly;
- Children and young people are advised of any possible health and safety risks when participating in any activities / programmes in the Centre;
- Where trips are made 'off site', requirements in relation to having staff members / volunteers trained in first aid will be an integral part of the planning process;
- External organisations that Listowel Family Resource Centre works with are obliged to provide proof that they have adequate public liability insurance.

Refer to Accidents & Incident Policy in Children's Centre & Health & Safety Policy

Sharing Information with Primary Carers

SHARING INFORMATION WITH PRIMARY CARERS

Primary carers are encouraged to be involved as much as possible in the work of Listowel Family Resource Centre and the Centre is committed to keeping them informed of all aspects of the activity / programme that their child is involved in. A copy of the Centre's child protection and welfare policy and procedures is available to all primary carers. In the event of a child protection concern arising, the practice in Listowel Family Resource Centre is to inform primary carers immediately unless doing so is likely to endanger the child.

Listowel Family Resource Centre undertakes to:

- Advise primary carers of the Centre's child protection and welfare policy and procedures;
- Ensure that information is made available to primary carers on all of our activities and potential activities;
- Issue all relevant documentation including registration forms, attendance sheets, comment / complaint forms (Appendix 8), accident / incident report forms, parental consent forms as required. As part of this process the Centre will provide clarification as required on who has guardianship rights to give parental consent (www.treoir.ie);
- Fully comply with health and safety procedures;
- Operate child centred policies in accordance with best practice;
- Adhere to the Centre's recruitment, selection and management procedures for staff and

volunteers;

- Ensure that all activities are age appropriate;
- Actively encourage primary carers to ask questions and comment on the supports and services that are provided by the Centre in order to support their right to ensure that their children are safe at all times.
- Where possible support the involvement of parents, carers and / or responsible adults.

If Listowel Family Resource Centre has concerns about the welfare of any child or young person the Centre will:

- Respond to the needs of the child and ensure that the interests of the child are paramount;
- Inform the primary carers unless it is thought that this action would put the child and/or a staff member at further risk;
- Encourage the primary carers to work in partnership with the Centre and ensure that they have an opportunity to consult with the Designated Liaison Person;
- Liaise with the TUSLA Social Work Services and / or an Garda Síochána as appropriate;
- In the event of a complaint against a member of staff or a volunteer with Listowel Family Resource Centre the Centre will immediately take the appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the child and inform the primary carers as appropriate.

Review of this Policy:

A review of this policy will be undertaken every 2 years and amendments made in line with legislation and best practice as required. The review will be conducted by the Manager in conjunction with the Leadership Team and Board of Management.

This Policy was discussed and ratified at a Board of management meeting dated: _____

Signed: _____
Chairperson

Date: _____