



Comhairle Contae **LÚ**
Louth County Council

Housing Child Safeguarding Statement

Subsidiary Service Specific Child Safeguarding Statement

This statement sets out the principles and procedures to be observed to ensure as far as possible, that a child availing of Louth County Council Housing Services is safe from harm.

**To be read in conjunction with the Louth County Council
Corporate Child Safeguarding Statement**

Relevant Services Provided

Louth County Council considers that we are a relevant service, under the Act.

1. Name of service being provided: Louth County Council Housing Services

2. Nature of service:

The housing section of Louth County Council facilitates the provision of suitable, cost effective, quality accommodation and housing support for people who cannot afford to provide a home for themselves. There are various housing supports available including the following: allocation of standard social housing; housing assistance payment (HAP); homeless services; Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan; Tenant (incremental) Purchase Scheme; Adaptations to a Council House for a person with a disability; and Housing Transfers. The local authority provides specific supports, in addition to those outlined above, to Traveller applicants: Traveller Group Housing and Halting Site Accommodation; First-Time House Purchase Grants for Travellers; and Caravan Loans. The housing section also provides Disabled Persons Grants for private house owners and Housing Aid Grants for Older People who are private house owners.

Maintenance is a fundamental aspect of estate management principles and the housing section of Louth County Council provides: a housing technical department to maintain and manage its housing stock; tenant liaison officers to manage the tenant and landlord relationship and enhance tenant participation; and Anti-Social Behaviour Investigation Officers to investigate complaints of anti-social behaviour emanating from Council owned dwellings and estates and to address incidents of anti-social behaviour. Two Social Workers are also employed to work in the housing section of Louth County Council to provide a social work service to local authority tenants, transfer applicants and housing applicants who are considered vulnerable or experiencing challenges and difficulties impacting their housing needs.

3. Principles to safeguard children from harm:

Louth County Council is committed to a child-centred approach to our work with children in the delivery of all our services and activities.

Louth County Council is committed to;

- Promoting general welfare, health development and safety of children;
- Ensuring safe management procedures are in place for all staff and volunteers including: robust recruitment, selection, supervision and support procedures;

- Developing guidance and procedures for staff and volunteers who may have reasonable grounds for concern about the possible abuse or neglect of a child involved in the services or activities of the Local Authority;
- Ensuring Designated Child Protection Liaison Officers are appointed and accessible;
- Ensuring that the Local Authority has procedures in place to deal with an allegation of abuse made against an employee/volunteer;
- Raising awareness in the organisation about potential risks to children's safety/welfare;
- Developing procedures for responding to accidents and complaints;
- Developing and maintaining clear record keeping procedures;
- Ensuring a Code of Behaviour is in place to provide employees and volunteers with clear guidance on how to treat children and young people in the organisation;
- Developing a policy of interagency cooperation with Tusla and other agencies involved in the protection of a child.

Louth County Council's child-centred approach

Louth County Councils child-centred approach means to:

- Treat all children equally
- Listen to and respect children
- Involve children as appropriate
- Provide encouragement, support and praise (regardless of ability)
- Use appropriate language (verbal and physical)
- Have fun and encourage a positive atmosphere
- Offer constructive criticism when needed
- Treat all children as individuals
- Respect a child's personal space
- Use age-appropriate teaching aids
- Lead by example
- Be aware of child time limitations e.g. school/exams when scheduling activities
- Create an atmosphere of trust
- Be aware of the *Equal Status Act 2000-2015* which relates to discrimination based on grounds of :
 - Gender
 - Civil Status

- Family Status
- Age
- Race
- Religion
- Disability
- Sexual Orientation
- Membership of the Traveller community

In addition, the Acts prohibit discrimination in the provision of accommodation services against people who are in receipt of rent supplement, housing assistance or social welfare payments.

- Use all information in respect of children only for the purpose for which it is given, subject to child protection concern(s).
- Only to photograph or use photographs with the specific approval of parent/guardian(s)

4. Risk Assessment

We have carried out an assessment of any potential for harm to a child while availing of our services. This list of risks listed below should be read in conjunction with the corporate identified risks included in the Corporate Child Safeguarding Statement.

	Risk Identified	Procedure in place to manage risk identified
1.	Child may witness an incident involving individuals exhibiting challenging behaviour or who are substance affected	Adequate staffing in place in Council Offices and staff trained in managing difficult behaviour, sanctions policy in place. Estate Management team in place to investigate incidents of anti-social behaviour which is impacting on children and Council tenants in their communities.
2	Child may be subject to harm from other children while accessing our services	Staff ratio, clearly defined boundaries for all children using our services, clear communication with parents/guardians as to expectations of services and supports offered where there may be deficits in knowledge/skills. Support plans/placement plans to reflect needs of children involved.
3	Child may be subject to harm from staff member/volunteer/relief staff	Comprehensive recruitment and vetting process in place. Lone working policy outlines procedure for working alone with children. Site specific safety mechanisms in place. Code of Conduct for all staff.
4	Child may be witness to/at risk due to domestic violence whilst in our services.	Child safeguarding procedures to be followed.
5	Use of images of children	Photo consent is sought in advance from parents and/or schools for use of images in publications or on line.
6	Off site events	Circulation of child safeguarding statement and code of conduct to all staff involved and statement on view to public.

7	Children in our accommodation services may be subject to harm from visitors/contractors to the service or premises.	Adequate supervision procedures: Visitors/Contractors sign in. Staff and Accommodation Providers to be aware of child safeguarding procedures and responsibilities under Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare Of Children (2017). Accommodation Providers to implement their service specific Child Safeguarding Statement.
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5. Procedures

Our Child Safeguarding Statements have 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:

- Louth County Council Corporate Child Safeguarding Statement
- Louth County Council's Policy and Procedure for the Protection and Safeguarding of Children:
- Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm;
- Procedure for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla;
- Procedure for maintaining a list of the persons in the relevant service who are mandated persons and Deputy Liaison Officers

All procedures listed are available upon request.

6. Reporting a Concern

Anyone can report a concern about a child. If you have any concerns about a child, you should report it to Tusla. A report can be made in person, by telephone or in writing. Any member of the public who has a concern about a child can contact the Tusla local social work duty service in the area where the child lives for advice about reporting your concerns.

In the event of any emergency where you think a child is in immediate danger and you cannot get in contact with Tusla, you should contact [An Garda Síochána](#).

If a child is in danger outside office hours you can contact the Gardai.

If you require any further information on the Local Authority's Policies and Procedures, please contact within the Housing Section, the Deputy Child Protection Liaison Officer - Aoife Lawler, Senior Executive Officer Officer; or, Mandated Persons – Arja Cullen, Social Worker and Danielle McMahon, Social Worker; and Manager of the Homeless Services.

Other Deputy Child Protection Liaison Officers within Louth County Council include Yvonne O'Brien, County Librarian and John Lawrence, Senior Executive Officer, Quality of Life. Joe McGuinness, Director of Corporate Services, Louth County Council is the Child Protection Liaison Officer.

Further information on Child Protection – www.tusla.ie

7. Implementation

We recognise that implementation is an on-going process. Our service is committed to the implementation of this Specific Service Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while availing of our service. This Statement will be reviewed within 24 months or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

Signed: 
Paddy Donnelly,
Director of Services
Housing

Date: 28th August 2019