

MARINO AFC

Safeguarding Children Statement.

Marino AFC is committed to safeguarding the well-being of children, young people and vulnerable adults and to ensuring its employees and others working on its behalf (e.g. directors, contractors, students, volunteers) are aware of their personal and professional responsibilities to promote children's and vulnerable adult's safety and welfare in accordance with relevant legislation and guidance documents. This policy is designed to assist Marino AFC members in meeting standards of good practice in relation to safeguarding where relevant. All members are required to familiarise themselves with the policy and procedures. It is important that members are aware of good safeguarding practice and of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children. In addition the Officers and Committee of Marino AFC also need to be fully conversant with their obligations under this policy.

Safeguarding Children Relevant Legislation

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international treaty that recognises the human rights of children, defined as persons up to the age of 18 years. It was adopted by the UN in 1989 and ratified by Ireland in 1992. It pledges to protect and promote children's rights to survive and thrive, to learn and grow, to make their voices heard and to reach their full potential.

Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Young People

Children First was originally published in 1999 to give effect to the provisions of the Childcare Act 1991. The Children First: National Guidance is intended to assist people in identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect and deal effectively with concerns. It emphasizes that the needs of children and families must be at the centre of child protection and welfare services, and that the welfare of children is of paramount importance. It highlights the roles and responsibilities of Tusla, The Child and Family Agency and An Garda Síochána, which are the two agencies with statutory responsibility for child protection. It also offers guidance to agencies and community and voluntary organisations (e.g. religious/faith sector, sporting organisations, etc.) that have contact with or provide services to children.

Definitions of Abuse

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time.

Neglect

Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, and/or medical care. Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point for example a child who is deprived of adequate nutrition, who consistently misses club events or who lack necessary supervision and safety.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a parent/carer and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's developmental need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms. Emotional abuse can be manifested in terms of the child's behavioural, cognitive, affective or physical functioning. Examples of these include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, and oppositional behaviour. The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/carer.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse of a child is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction, or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others. Children or young people can also be exploited sexually. Sexual exploitation involves situations where a child or young person receive 'something' (food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) in return for sexual activity. Children and young people engaged in prostitution are forms of sexual exploitation are also victims of abuse. The age of consent in Ireland is 17 years. *It should be noted that the definition of child sexual abuse presented in this section is not a legal definition and is not intended to be a description of the criminal offence of sexual assault.*

On line child sexual exploitation can occur when children or young people are exploited by others who have power over them by virtue of age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or other resources. Children or young people may be engaged in contact with persons impersonating children or using false identities to make contact or form relationships with them. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common. Involvement in exploitative relationships are characterised by the child or young person's limited availability of choice as a result of their social/economic or emotional vulnerability. The use of images, exposure to or involvement in pornography, sometimes without the child's knowledge or understanding can also occur through on line contact, for example, by being persuaded to post or view images on line.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic Abuse is defined as the use of physical or emotional force or the threat of same. In relation to children, exposure to domestic abuse is defined as emotional abuse. Children exposed to domestic abuse are also at higher risk of emotional and physical abuse. Recognising child neglect or abuse Child neglect or abuse can often be difficult to identify and may present in many forms.

No one indicator should be seen as conclusive in itself of abuse. It may indicate conditions other than child abuse. All signs and symptoms must be examined in the context of the child's situation and family circumstances.

Guidelines for recognition

The ability to recognise child abuse can depend as much on a person's willingness to accept the possibility of its existence as it does on their knowledge and information. There are commonly three stages in the identification of child neglect or abuse:

- (i) considering the possibility;
- (ii) looking out for signs of neglect or abuse;
- (iii) recording of information.

There are a number of ways in which a concern in relation to a child's safety or welfare may come to light:

A child may disclose something that has upset or harmed them, someone else might report something that a child has told them, or that they believe that a child has been or is being harmed. A child might show signs of physical injury for which there appears to be no explanation.

A child's use of language or behaviour may suggest he or she is being abused, the behaviour or attitude of an adult towards a child in their care might cause concern, a child might demonstrate worrying behaviour towards other children.

Responsibility to report child abuse or neglect

Everyone must be alert to the possibility that children with whom they are in contact may be suffering from abuse or neglect. This responsibility is particularly relevant for professionals such as teachers, child care workers, health professionals. It is also an important responsibility for people involved in sports clubs, community activities, youth clubs, religious/faith sector and other organisations catering for children. TUSLA, The Child and Family Agency should always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being or is at risk of being abused or neglected.

In Marino AFC this is done through the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) who is responsible for receiving and passing on concerns. Child protection concerns should be supported by evidence that indicates the possibility of abuse or neglect. A concern about a potential risk to children posed by a specific person, even if the children are unidentifiable, should also be communicated to the TUSLA, The Child and Family Agency.

The guiding principles in regard to reporting child abuse or neglect may be summarised as follows:

- (i) the safety and well-being of the child must take priority;
- (ii) reports should be made without delay to the TUSLA, The Child and Family Agency Designated Liaison Persons (DLP) for reporting neglect or abuse.

- (iii) A named Designated Liaison Person is responsible for dealing with child protection and welfare concerns in Marino AFC ensuring that the standard reporting procedure is followed. They can be contacted in relation to any child welfare concerns and will ensure child protection training is made available to members as needed.
- (iv) The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is responsible for ensuring that suspected cases of child neglect or abuse are referred promptly to the designated person in the TUSLA , The Child and Family Agency through the standard reporting procedure.
- (v) The contact details and job title of the Designated Liaison Person and Deputy are:
- (vi) 1. Paul Flynn Child Welfare Officer. (DLP)
2. Paul Foley Chairperson.

In the event of an emergency and the unavailability of the Child and Family Agency, reports should be made to An Garda Síochána. The Designated Liaison Person should ensure that they are knowledgeable about child protection and undertake any training considered necessary to keep them updated on new developments. The Designated Liaison Person may receive reports of suspected child abuse or concerns about a child's safety and welfare. It is their responsibility:

- To ensure that they are fully conversant with the organisation's duties to the protection and welfare of children.
- To ensure that they are fully familiar with Marino AFC Safeguarding Children policies and procedures, and that they know what they are and where to find the most up-to-date version.

Marino AFC will ensure that the Designated Liaison Person and Deputy Designated Liaison Person have access to appropriate training to undertake their roles and have regular support and supervision from a suitably qualified person.

Dealing with Disclosures

Remember, a child 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. Be as calm and natural as possible

- Remember that you have been approached because you are trusted and possibly liked. Do not panic.
- Be aware that disclosures can be very difficult for the child. Remember, the child may initially be testing your reactions and may only fully open up over a period of time. Listen to what the child has to say. Give them the time and opportunity to tell as much as they are able and wish to.

Do not pressurise the child. Allow them to disclose at their own pace using their own words. Conceal any signs of disgust, anger or disbelief.

- Do not give an undertaking of secrecy.
- Accept what the child has to say – false disclosures are very rare.

- Don't ask the child to repeat the story;
- Do make a detailed note of what the child disclosed to you, using the child's own words, as soon as possible afterwards, and date it. It is important to differentiate between the person who carried out the abuse and the act of abuse itself. The child quite possibly may love or strongly like the alleged abuser while also disliking what was done to them. It is important therefore to avoid expressing any judgement on, or anger towards, the alleged perpetrator while talking with the child. It may be necessary to reassure the child that your feelings towards him or her have not been affected in a negative way as a result of what they have disclosed.

Standard Reporting Procedure

Marino AFC has established the following procedures for reporting a concern in relation to the protection and welfare of children and young people. If a concern arises in the context of a service for children or young people that you are visiting or working in, in the first instance, report the matter to the service's Designated Liaison Person (DLP). The DLP has responsibility for reporting concerns to the statutory authorities and will have access to necessary information on children attending the service required to make a report (e.g. name, address, date of birth, parents contact details etc).

Provide the DLP with a clear and accurate account of the nature of your concern including reasonable grounds for reporting. This might include a factual account of something you observed; a record of a disclosure by a child or young person or information provided to you by a third party. In the event of third party disclosure, ideally that person would be encouraged to speak directly to the DLP also. The report should be made without delay. In the event that you are unable to contact the service DLP or the service were for whatever reason unwilling or unable to make a report, you should contact Marino AFC at the earliest opportunity and advise them of the nature of your concern.

In an emergency, any person can directly report a child abuse or neglect concern to the Child and Family Agency or to An Garda Síochána and should do so without delay. A report can be made in person, by telephone or in writing. Contact numbers for all the Child and Family Agency offices nationwide available on the TUSLA website www.tusla.ie/services/child-protection-welfare

Under no circumstances should a child be left in a situation that exposes him or her to harm or to risk of harm pending the Child and Family Agency intervention. In the event of an emergency where you think a child is in immediate danger and you cannot get in contact with the Child and Family Agency, you should contact the Gardaí. This may be done through any Garda station or by dialing 999 and giving your location.

It is good practice that parents are informed that a report is to be made to the Child and Family Agency unless doing so would put the child at further risk. Before deciding whether or not to make a formal report, the DLP may wish to discuss a concern with a health professional or directly with TUSLA. This informal consultation can be done confidentially without identifying the child, family or service involved. However if advised that the concern warrants a formal report, full details must be given, in order to enable an effective and timely investigation to take place.

Confidentiality

Where child protection and welfare concerns arise, information must be shared on a 'need to know' basis in the best interest of the child. No undertaking regarding secrecy can be given to either adults or children in relation to child protection concerns, disclosures or allegations. Sharing information in reporting child protection or welfare concerns is not a breach of confidentiality or data protection.

Marino AFC will cooperate fully with TUSLA and or An Garda Síochána on the sharing of information and records where a child welfare or protection issue arises. Relevant members will attend and share information, as required, at formal child protection and welfare meetings as organised by TUSLA . Parents and children have a right to know if personal information is being shared, unless doing so could put the child at further risk.