



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

DECC Child Safeguarding Statement

2021

Prepared by the Department of the Environment
Climate and Communications
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Background

Under the Children First Act 2015, the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC), is required, within three months of the commencement of the relevant provisions of the Act and in relation to any relevant services to children provided by the Department, to:

- a) undertake an assessment of any potential risk for harm to a child while availing of the service;
- b) prepare, in accordance with section 11 (1)(b), a written statement referred to as a Child Safeguarding Statement specifying the service being provided and the principles and procedures to be observed to ensure as far as is practicable, that a child, while availing of the service, is safe from harm; and
- c) appoint a relevant person for the purpose of the Child Safeguarding Statement.

Following the commencement of the relevant provision (Section 11) of the Children First Act 2015 on 11 December 2017, the Department published its Child Safeguarding Statement (CSS) in March 2018.

In accordance with Section 11 (8) this review of the CSS takes account of material changes.

Introduction

DECC administers a very diverse, complex and technical brief across critical and strategic sectors of the Irish economy. DECC employs approximately 414 full time equivalent staff. The Department is fully committed to safeguarding the well-being of all the children and young people with whom we work. Every member of staff has a responsibility and duty of care to ensure that every young person and child engaging with the Department as part of the work of the Department is safe and protected from harm within the meaning of the Children First Act 2015.

The policies and procedures outlined in this Child Safeguarding Statement apply to all DECC staff (employees, students, trainees, volunteers, contractors and any person performing any role or function in, or on behalf of, DECC). This Child Safeguarding Statement is informed by the following risk assessment.

Risk Assessment

	Risk identified	Procedure in place to manage risk identified
1	Risk of harm to a child from a member of staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of current/new policies and codes for staff • Policies, protocols, procedures and guidelines regarding safe practice and service delivery
2	Risk of non-compliance with Children First Act and National Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children First Governance structure • Compliance assurance process
3	Risk of harm or concern not being recognised or reported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff information, supervision and training • Reporting procedure • Legal and administrative consequences for non-reporting • Further training and support available as necessary

Procedures

DECC policies and procedures are being developed to promote safe environments for children and young people; to mitigate the potential for risk to arise; and to manage it safely where it does. In addition to the procedures outlined in the risk assessment, the following policies and procedures support our intention to safeguard children availing of any DECC service:

- “An Introduction to Children First” eLearning training available for all staff;
- Procedures in place to investigate an allegation made against a staff member;
- DECC Child Safeguarding Statement and Departmental Sectoral Implementation Plan outlining the Department’s procedure with regards to Children First Act;
- Appointment of a designated liaison person (DLP) and ensuring that responsibility for on-going monitoring of the implementation of the Children First Act is appropriately assigned.

Implementation

The Corporate Governance/HR/Corporate Services Division is responsible for ensuring that the policies and procedures outlined in this Child Safeguarding Statement are in place and operating effectively. In addition, they must ensure that any service specific risks are identified, and that additional policies and procedures are developed, implemented and reviewed as necessary to manage these risks. This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed again in January 2023 or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

For further information or queries, contact Hugh Loughman/ Dean Cahill (DLP)/ Barbara Stanley (DLP) - DECC Children First contacts (Relevant Persons for the DECC Child Safeguarding Statement) on 01 6782451 / 01 678 2122 / 01 678 2121 - hugh.loughman@DECC.gov.ie / dean.cahill@DECC.gov.ie / barbara.stanley@DECC.gov.ie.

Appendix 1

DECC STATEMENT IN RELATION TO THE PLACEMENT OF TRANSITION YEAR STUDENTS UNDER 18 AND TEMPORARY CLERICAL OFFICERS UNDER 18

1. Background:

- a) DECC supports developing the potential of children and young people.
- b) In this context, the DECC aims to facilitate the placement of transition year students [TYs].
- c) A TY student is assigned to a Division and is the responsibility of the relevant Principal Officer of that Division for the duration of the placement.
- d) TY students are under 18 and fall within the definition of a child.
- e) DECC may also employ Temporary Clerical Officers [TCOs] who may be under the age of 18.
- f) DECC is committed to safeguarding all under 18 year olds working or training in the Department in line with Children First legislation and guidance, and best practice.

2. Obligations under the Children First Act 2015 in relation to TYs:

As the placement of transition year students in the DECC is considered to be a relevant service to children under the Act [specifically, paragraph 5(a) of Schedule 1 in relation to the provision of training opportunities to children], the following obligations attach:

- a) keep the child safe from harm while receiving the service [i.e. on the placement];
- b) assess the risks; and
- c) address those risks.

3. Risks attaching to TY students:

The risks identified in relation to TY students are as follows:

- a) that the student will be harmed by a member of staff of the DECC in the course of their placement [harm having the meaning assigned to it under the Children First Act 2015];
- b) that the nature of the work that the student is exposed to, may be inappropriate and potentially harmful; and
- c) that the student will disclose to DECC staff that they are being harmed [by persons either within or outside the DECC] and that this disclosure will not be appropriately reported to Tusla.

4. Risk that a TY student should be harmed

- a) The procedures in place to mitigate the risk at 3.a above are as follows:
 - b) On induction to the DECC, all TY students will:
 - (1) Be given a copy of the DECC Child Safeguarding Statement which will be explained to them in detail in relation to TY placements;
 - (2) Be given the **name and contact details of, and be introduced personally to, a staff member who will be a contact person for them,** accessible at all reasonable hours, to raise any issues/concerns around abuse, bullying, inappropriate behaviour, or any issue of concern to the TY.
 - (3) **The DECC staff member at (2) above will be a member of the Corporate Services Division.**
 - (4) The contact person will be obliged to make contact with the TY half way through their placement, and again on its conclusion.
- c) The procedures in place to mitigate the risk at 3.b above are as follows:
 - (1) In determining placements of TYs, care will be taken to avoid placing students in Divisions where exposure to the content of the work may be distressing or inappropriate for children.