



Growing Up in Ireland

Child Safeguarding Statement

March 2022

Background

The Children First Act 2015 requires organisations that are providers of ‘relevant services’¹ to prepare a Child Safeguarding Statement. This is a written statement that specifies the relevant work being carried out and the measures taken to ensure, as far as practicable, that a child engaging with the organisation is safe from harm. It includes a risk assessment detailing the procedures in place to manage potential risks to a child’s safety.

Guiding Principles

Growing Up in Ireland’s Declaration of Guiding Principles

Growing Up in Ireland is a longitudinal study of children which is funded by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. It is overseen and managed by the Department in association with the Central Statistics Office. It is being carried out for government by a group of independent researchers led by the Economic and Social Research Institute.

The study was launched in 2006 and since then has followed the lives of two groups of children, 8,000 children born in 1998 (Cohort ’98) and 10,000 infants born in 2008 (Cohort ’08).

The main objective of the study is to describe the lives of children in Ireland and to establish what is typical and normal, as well as what is atypical and problematic, in terms of their well-being and development.

The Growing Up in Ireland team (both Head Office and Field Interview staff) are fully committed to safeguarding the well-being of all children and young people involved in the project. We have a responsibility to ensure that children and young people engaging with the project are protected from harm, treated with respect, listened to, and have their own views taken into consideration in all decisions affecting them. A child will not be treated differently because of their gender, social or ethnic background, family status, sexual orientation, religion, or disability. All processes, procedures, questionnaires, and tests are subject to external review by oversight committees and an independent Research Ethics Committee.

The health, safety and protection of children are of paramount importance in all decisions taken by the team.

The study’s guiding principles are underpinned by national legislation and best practice guidance. Our principles and safeguarding procedures will be reviewed once a year by the Designated Liaison Person.

Description of Relevant Activities

The study involves interviewing the children, young people, and parents in their own homes. These interviews are administered by field interviewers who visit participants’ homes. During Covid-19 restrictions, when home visits are not possible, interviewers administer questionnaires over the phone and participants complete surveys online. Field interviewers are employed by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI).

On occasion, as part of the consultative process in the development of the project, focus groups with children and young people are carried out. Focus groups are typically held in the ESRI Head Office or in children’s schools.

Assessment of Risk and Procedures in Place

A risk assessment was carried out to identify any potential for harm to a child arising from their involvement in the study.

¹ As per Schedule 1 of the Children First Act 2015

Below is a summary of the areas of risk identified and procedures for managing these risks.

Risk identified	Procedure in place to manage identified risk
1. Risk of a staff member becoming aware of a child welfare or protection concern	A reporting procedure is in place and is communicated to both Head Office and field staff.
2. Risk of an inadequate response to a child welfare or protection concern	A Designated Liaison Person, and deputy Designated Liaison Person, are in place. Both are accessible to staff and are aware of their responsibilities to report concerns. All GUI personnel undertake Tusla's Children First eLearning training module and undertake additional training relevant to their role.
3. Risk of non-compliance with Children First legislation	A <i>Child Safeguarding – Guiding Principles and Procedures</i> document is in place. It is communicated to staff and reviewed once a year.
4. Risk of harm of a child by a staff member	A rigorous staff selection, recruitment and training process is in place. All staff are Garda Vetted before beginning work. Identity verification is carried out as part of this process. Candidates applying to work directly with children are assessed regarding their suitability to work with children. This includes character reference checks.
5. Risk of a staff member not receiving appropriate training in child protection	All staff, both Head Office and field staff, undertake Tusla's Children First eLearning training module. Additional training and guidance materials are provided to staff relevant to their duties.
6. Risk of an allegation of misconduct against a staff member	A procedure is in place to manage an allegation of misconduct against a staff member.

Relevant Person

The Relevant Person for the purposes of this Child Safeguarding Statement is Aoife Murphy, Fieldwork Manager and Designated Liaison Person, Growing Up in Ireland, Economic and Social Research Institute. As per Schedule 2 of the Children First Act 2015, the study does not have a mandated person.

If you would like any further information about the study's commitment to safeguarding children or our child protection policies and procedures please contact Aoife Murphy at the following address: growingup@esri.ie.

Monitor and Review

The study's policies and procedures have been developed in line with the requirements set out in the Children First Act 2015 and Children First: National Guidance 2017. Implementation is an ongoing process and regular reviews are carried out. All procedures listed are available on request.

This is the third iteration of Growing Up in Ireland's Child Safeguarding Statement. It will be reviewed once a year or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

Signed:



Professor Emer Smyth, Research Professor, ESRI and Principal Investigator, Growing Up in Ireland