



Libraries

Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí
Offaly County Council

Child Safeguarding Statement

1. Name of service being provided:

Offaly Library Service

2. Nature of service:

Offaly Library Service, as a part of Offaly County Council, is a free civic resource welcoming all members of the community in accessing knowledge, ideas and information. It supports community life and individual self-development across a network of eight community libraries and a library headquarters. Offaly Library Service delivers on the national priority areas outlined in the public library strategy, **Our Public Libraries 2022, Inspiring, Connecting and Empowering Communities** by contributing to the social, economic and cultural wellbeing of Offaly communities. We are achieving this through increased user engagement and promotion of our services via innovative technological solutions. We facilitate improved accessibility through My Open Library services, and deliver diverse national and local programmes of community and cultural events across County Offaly.

Offaly Library Service is led and managed by the County Librarian, Eimear McGinn, with support from the library team, other staff employed by the Council and a range of freelance contractors.

The Service works towards the continuing development of library services in the county by providing:

- Reading Supports and Opportunities; Right to Read is a national programme to promote literacy and reading development for people of all ages and backgrounds. Offaly Libraries run reading festivals, bookclubs and literacy support events throughout the year.
- Health Information; Healthy Ireland at Your Library, is the national strategy to improve health and wellbeing, placing a focus on prevention, individual awareness and keeping people healthy for longer. Offaly Libraries house Healthy Ireland reading collections and host Healthy Ireland events.
- Services to Schools; Offaly Libraries provide a wide range of resources and activities including class visits which strongly support schools in developing children's literacy, numeracy, creativity and communication skills.
- Research Support; Offaly Libraries recognises our documentary heritage as the archival memory of the community and collects materials about the history of County Offaly, such as county and parish histories, maps, photographs, drawings, old records, and newspapers as part of our Local Studies collection. In conjunction with Offaly Archives, which is the jointly managed archives service of Offaly County Library and Offaly Historical and Archaeological Society (Offaly History),

we endeavour to identify, preserve and make these materials available for research purposes.

- Work Matters; is a national initiative supporting business start-ups, job seeking or career changes. Offaly Libraries provides supports that include access to business publications, e-learning courses and access to space for meetings, study and research. An annual programme of targeted workshops/lectures assisting with job-seeking and interview skills is also a key part of this programme.

This statement has been developed in accordance with the requirements of the **Children First Act 2015, Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017, the Policy and Procedures for the Protection and Safeguarding of Children for Offaly County Council, 2020** and **TUSLA's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice.**

Offaly Library Service Child Safeguarding Statement applies to those activities involving children and young people that are delivered by Offaly Library Service.

Offaly Library Service provides a full and varied service to children and young people in County Offaly free of charge. Comprehensive collections for children and young people are provided in all eight branches including but not limited to physical books, games, DVDs and eResources. Educational and literacy development needs are catered for on an individual, family and school basis. As well as hosting family visits, the library hosts class visits and library staff provide outreach to classes in schools.

Internet and WiFi access is available to children and young people subject to our Internet Access Policy.

Offaly Library Service strives to provide a safe, creative and welcoming space to all using the library by endeavouring to uphold the highest possible standards in child protection and taking all reasonable steps concerning the safety and welfare of children, young people and vulnerable people who use our services.

Current Programmes include:

Spring Into Storytime, Summer Stars, Children's Book Festival, Family Time at the Library - Offaly Library Service delivers these programmes annually with stories, events, workshops and more.

Workshops and Community Activities - Offaly Library Service provide a wide range of Arts & Crafts activities, STEAM workshops, Coding, Robotics and many other events throughout the year.

Cruinniú na nÓg – Offaly Libraries hosts many fun and creative activities and workshops as part of the national day of youthful creativity.

Other child-centred programmes - a wide variety of other programmes are run on an annual basis; such as Science Week, Engineers Week, Heritage Week, Seachtain na Gaeilge, etc.

Programmes/Workshops via the Internet - Workshops and events can take place over the internet. Offaly Library Service has developed a separate Internet Child Safeguarding Policy with regard to same.

In addition, Offaly Library Service ensures our staff have received Child Safeguarding training and are aware of and comply with Child Safeguarding policies and procedures. We ensure that appropriate recruitment procedure and Garda Clearance are in place.

As a condition of collaboration, Offaly Library Service asks facilitators, artists and organisations working with children to submit their own Child Safeguarding Statement and policies or agree to comply with the Offaly Library Service Child Safeguarding Statement.

3. Principles to safeguard children from harm:

Offaly County Council is committed to a child-centred approach to our work with children in the delivery of all our services and activities. The local authority has an overall corporate duty and responsibility to safeguard children accessing Local Authority Services and Activities.

Offaly 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.

Local Authority's child-centred approach

Offaly County Council's Local Authority's 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 2000-2010* which relates to discrimination based on nine grounds:
 - Gender
 - Civil Status
 - Family Status
 - Age
 - Race
 - Religion
 - Disability
 - Sexual Orientation
 - Membership of the Traveller community
- Use all information in respect of children only for the purpose for which it is given, subject to child protection concern(s).

4. Risk Assessment:

We have carried out an assessment of any potential for harm to a child while availing of our service. It is a mandatory requirement that an assessment of risk is carried out in accordance with Children First National Guidance 2017 see Act, 2015 and as outlined in Tusla’s Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Children_First_National_Guidance_2017.pdf

A list of areas of risk identified and procedures for managing these risks have been identified as:

Risk identified	The libraries have the following procedures in place to address the risks of harm identified in this assessment
<p>Risk of harm of one to one contact.</p>	<p>Parents/Guardians are advised to accompany children on library visits.</p> <p>Parents/Guardians are informed at booking of events that they must stay with children at certain events.</p> <p>Some workshops for those over the age of 8 years do not require parents or guardians to stay. An emergency contact number is required for each child at such events.</p> <p>Accompanying teacher to be present for school visits.</p> <p>Library staff to ensure that their behaviour is appropriate to the age and maturity of the child or young person concerned.</p> <p>When in public areas, lone workers should ensure that they remain in areas where they can be seen and heard by library users.</p> <p>Staff/contractors should never accompany a child outside the library.</p> <p>Staff/contractors should never initiate contact with a child outside the library whether by phone or via social media.</p> <p>Staff/contractors are never to accompany children to toilets.</p> <p>Staff/contractors are to be vigilant and aware of children using toilets unaccompanied.</p>

Risk of harm in areas out of view of the staff desk.	Public areas are covered by CCTV cameras.
Risk of harm of overcrowding at events.	<p>Event is planned and specific risk assessment for the event is carried out.</p> <p>The majority of events must be pre-booked to control the numbers attending.</p> <p>Parents/guardians stay with their children and teachers stay with their classes.</p>
Risk of harm of not being recognised by staff/contractors.	<p>Mandatory reading and signing of the Service's Child Safeguarding Statement and policies.</p> <p>Provision of and access to Child Safeguarding information including Tusla's online Child Protection Training – Children First E-Learning module. Staff are encouraged to avail of training and Offaly County Council maintains a record of all staff training.</p> <p>A requirement of a Health & Safety Statement which includes policy and procedures to minimize any foreseeable risk.</p>
Risk of harm not being reported properly and promptly by staff/contractors.	All personnel are provided with procedures for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns promptly to Designated Liaison Person/Tusla/Gardai through the Offaly County Council's Policy and Procedures for the Protection and Safeguarding of Children, June 2020. Including information on the role and responsibilities of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Deputy Designated Liaison Person.
Risk of a young person being harmed by staff/contractors.	<p>Provision for the safe recruitment and selection of workers and contractors including the procedure for Garda Vetting.</p> <p>Refer to Offaly County Council Dignity at Work Policy.</p>
Risk of harm due to the bullying of a young person.	<p>Refer to Offaly County Council Dignity at Work Policy.</p> <p>The amount of times of staff/contractors being on their own with a child is minimised.</p>
Risk of harm through online activity through public access computers.	A written policy is in place that governs the use of public access terminals and Wi-Fi. This policy is viewable on our public access terminals and must be accepted by members of the public before using public access computers/Wi-Fi.

	<p>Staff are aware of the policy and procedures for the safe use of the internet.</p> <p>Users must be mindful of accessing online material not suitable for children in areas of the library where children may be present.</p> <p>Parents/Guardians are solely responsible for their children's use of the internet, library staff cannot control what images or websites they access.</p>
<p>Risk of unacceptable behaviour while using libraries.</p>	<p>There is a Code of Behaviour for all users of Offaly County Libraries.</p> <p>CCTV is in place.</p> <p>Lone working security alarms in place in one person branches.</p> <p>Library staff are trained in dealing with incidents of violence and aggression.</p> <p>Parents/responsible person/teacher must take responsibility for the behaviour of their children whilst on library premises.</p> <p>Users must be mindful of accessing material not suitable for children in areas of the library where children may be present.</p>
<p>Risk of harm at opening times outside of normal hours (such as for special events, My Open Library hours).</p>	<p>Refer to Offaly Libraries My Open Library Service terms of use.</p> <p>All children under the age of 16 will be accompanied by a responsible adult while using My Open Library.</p> <p>Young people aged 16 and 17 can use My Open Library unaccompanied having been inducted and with written parental consent.</p> <p>A parent must be present at induction and register as a My Open Library user and will be contacted if any issues regarding the My Open Library arise.</p>
<p>Risk of harm due to inappropriate use of images of young people.</p>	<p>Consent for use of images is requested from children and their parents/guardians. There is a social media policy in place.</p> <p>Use of photographs is limited to specific use and for a specific purpose.</p>

<p>Risk of harm due to inappropriate use of young people's personal data.</p>	<p>Use of personal data is limited and relates to specific projects and the General Data Protection Regulations policy applies.</p> <p>Communications and Confidentiality policy based on any interaction with public data applies.</p>
<p>Risk of harm due to inappropriate relationships/communications between a child and another child or adult or staff/contractor.</p>	<p>Training is provided and staff/contractors are aware of the Offaly County Council's Policy and Procedures for the Protection and Safeguarding of Children, June 2020.</p>
<p>Risk of harm of children not being collected at closing time.</p>	<p>Children remain the responsibility of the parent/guardian. Communications to schools about events at libraries state that the school is responsible for all children brought to the library. Notices in libraries and online state that children should not be left unattended in the library.</p> <p>If the library has been closed, a staff member (two staff members in a full time library) should remain with the child and stay within an area covered by CCTV.</p> <p>Staff should contact the parent/guardian.</p> <p>Contact Gardai if all attempts to contact the parent/guardian fail.</p> <p>All incidents, complaints, near misses are recorded and followed up with the child protection liaison officer as per Offaly County Council's Policy and Procedures for the Protection and Safeguarding of Children, June 2020.</p>
<p>Risk of harm during work experience.</p>	<p>Refer to Offaly County Council's RISK ASSESSMENT / SAFE SYSTEMS OF WORK for Young People/Students at Work.</p> <p>To enable both employees and students to have a positive view of work experience, library staff should always ensure that students are not left to deal with the public unsupervised. Where students are provided with the opportunity to participate in work experience, the library shall seek to ensure that the student is not placed in a position of risk in the work environment and does not pose a risk to others.</p>

5. Procedures:

Our Child Safeguarding Statement has 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, as outlined in Offaly County Council Policy and Procedure for the Protection and Safeguarding of Children:

- Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child availing of our service;
- Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers to work with 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 persons (if any) in the relevant service who are mandated persons;
- Procedure for appointing a relevant person.

All procedures listed are available on 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 Tusla local social work duty service in the area where the child lives for advice about reporting your concern. 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 you require any further information on the Offaly County Council's Policy and Procedures for the Protection and Safeguarding of Children, June 2020, please contact the Offaly County Council Designated Child Protection Liaison Officer or Deputy Child Protection Liaison Officers named below, who may be contacted on (057) 9346800

Ann Dillon – adillon@offalycoco.ie
Eamonn Henry – ehenry@offalycoco.ie (Deputy)
Fiona McCabe – fmccabe@offalycoco.ie (Deputy)

For 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 Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while availing of our service.

This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed in August 2021 or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.