**Name of Policy: Child Safeguarding Statement**

**Version 5: December 2023**

**Board Approved: Yes**

**Due for Renewal: December 2024**

**Responsibility of: Childcare Policy Review Panel**

**CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT**

The aim and purpose of this statement is to safeguard children, young people, families and staff. Sophia’s Child Safeguarding Statement is a guidance document for Sophia staff in identifying and responding to allegations and suspicions of child abuse or neglect. The document is based on and adheres to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 and The Children First Act 2015.

This Safeguarding Statement and a list of mandate persons are displayed prominently in Sophia Offices.

**SCOPE**

Sophia adheres to the Children First Act 2015 and Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC’s definition of a child is anyone below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier or the young person has previously been married.

The Safeguarding Statement applies to;

* All staff employed directly or indirectly by Sophia.
* Volunteers, Students, Interns
* Board members.

The Child Safe Guarding Statement applies when working in Sophia premises and while representing Sophia at other venues.

1. **NATURE OF SERVICE AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN FROM HARM**

Sophia Childcare Service provides the following service to children aged 6months to 14 years:

* Early Years’ Service
* School Age Services
* Individual Play Sessions
* Family Sessions
* Summer Projects
* Parenting Programmes

The Management Structure of Sophia is as follows:

* Sophia’s Board of Management
* CEO – Tony O’ Riordan
* Head of Service – Niamh Cullen
* Assistant Service Manager – Susie O’Keeffe
* Area Managers- Leanne Clooney, Emma Mannion
* Childcare Resource Coordinator- Mary Gilton
* Childcare & Project Manager -
* Childcare & Project Worker -

**Nature of Nurturing Centre’s Services:**

At Sophia we deliver a high quality, child centered service for children and young people.

* We provide childcare services and support services to children aged 0-14 and operate ECCE & NCS Programmes~~.~~
* We take children on trips and outings. The nature of our outings are determined by the appropriate regulations under the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) Regulations 2018.
* We have a designated, secure outdoor area where we provide learning activities for children.
* We have outdoor activities for children and young people.
* We provide additional support under the AIM model to smaller groups to allow all children to meaningfully participate in this ELC service

1. **COMMITMENT TO SFAEGUARDING CHILDREN FROM HARM**

* Sophia’s priority is to ensure the welfare and safety of every child and young person who attends our service is paramount.
* Sophia is committed to respecting the right to dignity and bodily integrity of every child and to protecting those rights in line with the core principals of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child ( UNCRC) as articulated in Articles 2.3. & 6.
* Sophia is committed to upholding the rights of every child and young person who lives in Sophia’s accommodation and attends our childcare service, including the rights to be kept safe and protected from harm, to be listened to and to be heard.
* Sophia Childcare Service is committed to safeguarding the children in our care and to providing a safe environment in which they can play, learn and develop.
* Sophia is committed to child centered practice in all our work with children and Sophia staff have a responsibility to protect children. ~~And~~ Therefore have a duty of reporting child abuse as set out in the Children First Act 2015 and Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017.
* Sophia Policy and Procedures to safeguard children and young people reflect national policy and legislation and are underpinned by 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.
* Sophia upholds and is guided by the principles of the UNCRC and in this regard, is committed to ensuring that all children with whom staff members have contact are treated equally and that all children have a right to voice their opinion in matters affecting them (Articles 2.12 & 13).
* Sophia ensures that all staff receives the appropriate training in Child Protection & Welfare. Sophia’s recruitment policy adheres to best practice and Sophia ensures that all staff are vetted by the Garda Central Vetting Unit ( GCVU).
* Interns, students & Volunteers working with children and young people will be vetted by GCVU.
* Anyone contracted on a consultancy basis to work on projects that involve contact with children will be vetted by GCVU.
* Workers/volunteers/students must conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of our organisation.
* Sophia will review our child safeguarding statement and accompanying child safeguarding policies and procedures annually, or sooner if necessary, due to service issues or changes in legislation or national policy.

**Designated Liaison Person for Child Protection:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **DLP:**  Manager:,  Phone Number:  Email Address: | **Deputy DLP other DLP’s**  Childcare /Project Worker:  Phone Number:  Email Address: |

**3. RISK ASSESSMENT**

We have carried out an assessment of any potential for harm ( as defined in the Children First Act 2015) to a child while availing of our services. Below is a list of the areas of risk identified and the list of procedures for managing these risks.

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|  | **Risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015)** | **Procedure in Place to manage Identified risk.** |
| 1 | Risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015)  abuse to a child by a member of staff/ volunteer/student in the service | The following policies and procedures are in place with regard to a person’s suitability to work with children and young people and applies to all workers, volunteers and students:     * Recruitment Policy * Complaints Policy * Behaviour Management Policy * Staff Training Policy * Staff Induction Policy * Child Safeguarding Statement * Child Protection Responding to and Reporting a Child Protection or Welfare Concern * Staff Training Policy * Garda Vetting Policy * Code of Behaviour for Staff/Students/Volunteers Policy * Unexpected Absence Cover policy * Anti- Bullying Policy |
| 2 | Risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) of  abuse to a child by visitor/contractor to the service | The following policies and procedures are in place with regard visitors to the service:   * All visitors must enter through a lock door into the service * All visitors are required to sign the visitor book * All visitors are supervised at all times and aren’t permitted to be left alone with children * Visitors who can access children and staff information, such as Inspectors from Tusla, DESS, DCYA must provide photo ID and must sign into the service. A member of the management team will accompany inspectors. * External support services for children such as AIM Inclusion Officers, Speech & Language Therapist, Occupational Therapists must provide photo ID and sign into the service * Unexpected Absence Cover Policy * Risk Management Procedure/Policy * Visitor Signing in Procedure/Policy - check * Safety Statement Procedure/Policy * Anti- Bullying Policy |
| 3 | Risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) of a child on outing by a member of staff/ volunteer/stranger/peer | The following policies and procedures are in place with regards to children participating in outings:   * Recruitment Policy * Garda Vetting Policy * Behaviour Management Policy * Code of Behaviour for Staff/Students/Volunteers Policy * Outings Policy * Staff Training Policy * Child Protection Responding to and Reporting a Child Protection or Welfare Concern * Volunteer Policy * Complaints Policy * Missing and Lost Child Policy |
| 4 | Risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) of a child through the use of unauthorized photography | The following policies and procedures are in place with regards to the use of unauthorised photography’s   * Internet and Photographic and Recording Devices Policy * Media Policy * Record Keeping Policy |
| 5 | Risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) of a child through social media/internet use. | The following policies and procedures are in place with regards to social media and internet use:   * Internet and Photographic and Recording Devices Policy * Media Policy * Record Keeping Policy |
| 6 | Risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) of a child being bullied by another child | The following policies and procedures are in place with regards to bullying:   * Behaviour Management Policy * Anti-Bullying Policy * Code of Conduct Policy |

Sophia works directly with children in its Nurturing Centre offering activities and outings, where there is no Nurturing Centre Provision other projects provide activities and engage with children on an occasional basis eg Halloween, Christmas activities & Outings

Sophia also liaises with organisations that work directly with the children and families. Sophia will not knowingly engage with any person or organisation that poses a risk to children or that does not meet the child protection and safeguards outlined in the Children’s First Act 2015 and the Children First: National Guidance for The Protection and Welfare of Children 2017.

**4. PROCEDURES.**

Our Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, Children First: National Guidance for Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 and Tusla’s Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice.

The following policies and procedures are in place:

* A Designated Liaison Person & deputy have been appointed
* The Designated Person is responsible for updating and maintaining the Mandated Person list under the Children First Act 2015
* A Relevant Person has been appointed
* Child Protection Responding to and Reporting a Child protection or welfare Concern policy
* Recruitment Policy
* Complaints Policy
* Behaviour Management Policy
* Staff Training Policy
* Staff Induction Policy
* Child Protection Responding to and Reporting a Child Protection or Welfare Concern
* Staff Training Policy
* Garda Vetting Policy
* Code of Behaviour for Staff/Students/Volunteers Policy
* Unexpected Absence Cover policy
* Record Keeping Policy
* Outings Policy
* Volunteer Policy
* Complaints Policy
* Media Policy
* Unexpected Absence Cover policy
* Induction Policy
* Anti- Bullying Policy
* Missing and Lost Child Policy

This Child Safeguarding Statement will be displayed prominently.

All policies and procedures are available to staff, parents, young people, members of the public and Tusla, if requested.

**5. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW**

Sophia recognises that implementation is an ongoing process and therefore is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the accompanying child safeguarding policies and procedures that support our intention to keep children and young people safe from harm while availing of our services.

The Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed in December 2024 or as soon as practical after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

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**Signed:** **Date:** 05/12/2023

**CEO**

For queries, please contact the Childcare and/or Project Manager

Name:

Phone:

I acknowledge that I had read and understand the Policy Document.

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