



## CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT

**Date: December 2023**

**Review date: December 2025**

### CONTEXT

Prepared in line with ChildVision's statutory duty under S11 of the Children First Act 2015, this statement reflects ChildVision's commitment to providing a service to children and young people which is safe, welcoming, respectful and transparent in its dealings with them, their families and other relevant agencies.

### INTRODUCTION:

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 provides the basis for ChildVision's child protection and welfare day to day awareness, supplemented by the best practice principles identified in Our Duty to Care 2002 and in the Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook 2011. ChildVision recognises the importance of implementing the principles underpinning the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 and the Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006. In particular ChildVision commits to ensure that children are consulted, that all our practices are inclusive and non-discriminatory, that the dignity and unique potential of each child is recognised and that all our work is guided by the best interests of the child.

As required by the Children First Act 2015 this Statement lists all of the various services and activities offered to children and young people by ChildVision, the Act also providing for a written assessment and ranking of any potential risk of abuse which might occur to a child or young person while availing of a service in or from ChildVision.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to preparing and publishing this Statement and addressing risk, the Children First Act 2015 also requires that ChildVision is committed to:

- manage any identified risk
- investigate any staff member against whom an allegation is made of any act, omission or circumstance which results in a claim of abuse against a child or young person
- select and recruit staff who are suitable to work with children
- provide information and training to staff on child protection and safeguarding matters
- enable staff members to make a report to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, in accordance with the Act
- maintain a list of mandated persons<sup>2</sup> under the Act within ChildVision<sup>3</sup>

### SERVICES PROVIDED

ChildVision provides services to visually impaired children and young people in the following areas:

- Education, specifically in two early years settings, one on ChildVision's campus in Drumcondra and one in Cork, based at Model Farm Road (separate child safeguarding statements exist in respect of ChildVision's Early Years Services (EYS, Dublin and EYS, Cork))

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<sup>1</sup> This assessment is contained in a separate document. In accordance with best practice this process of identifying potential risks has involved consulting staff.

<sup>2</sup> a mandated person is a person who by virtue of their contact with children and/or families and their qualification, training and/or employment are in a key position to help protect children from abuse; a mandated person has a statutory obligation to report concerns which reach a particular threshold to Tusla and, thereafter, to cooperate, if so required, with Tusla in any assessment.

<sup>3</sup> This list is contained in a separate document.

In addition, the children availing of these services access nursing, therapeutic and specialist interventions, such as orientation and mobility training, provided by ChildVision staff

- Nursing services extend to, potentially, all children on ChildVision’s campus, including The Learning Tree, St. Joseph’s Primary School for Visually Impaired Children, visiting children using, for example, ChildVision’s Café, the Equestrian Centre. In addition, the nursing staff provide an out of hours service to ChildVision’s one children’s residential house
- Residential services based in one house in the local community and staffed by a team of social care workers (a separate child safeguarding statement exists in respect of this house)
- A family respite service available families and their visually impaired children, including children with multiple disabilities and a day respite service operating from our children’s residential house
- Therapeutic services, including psychology, located on-site but also offering some consultations in home and community based settings
- Equine assisted Occupational Therapy and Equine Assisted Therapy services, both on site and in home and community based settings and available to ChildVision’s own children as well as to visiting children and external service users
- Café, which is run by an external provider.
- Reading Services, including the production of school texts in braille and alternative formats and an on-site library service
- Family Resource work, including afterschool, weekend activities and one on one working in young people’s local areas for visually impaired children.

## RISK OVERVIEW

Based on an assessment of any potential risk for harm<sup>4</sup> to a child while availing of our services, the following is a list of the areas of risk identified and the procedures in place for managing these risks:

Risk identified	Policies and Procedures in place to manage risk identified
1 Abuse by a staff member; risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) to a child by a member of staff, including in circumstances where a staff member/volunteer may be working alone with a child.	Policy on Safe Practice and Working Alone; advance confirmation to colleagues, where possible, that lone working will occur; lone working scheduled and timetable available to relevant people; appropriate documentation. In addition, rigorous recruitment and vetting procedures and policies, training in Children First, awareness of signs and symptoms of abuse; promoting a culture of openness and respect for children and their dignity at all levels of the organisation; awareness of internal and external reporting requirements (these being also relevant to all the other risks identified herein). Policy on recruitment and training of staff, policy on Garda vetting, policy on induction and staff training, policy on supervision (staff), policy on unprofessional contact with students, policy on intimate care, policy on allegation of abuse against an employee, policy on protected disclosures and policy on reporting allegations of abuse. Any allegation of harm is reported to Tusla or An Garda Siochana or, if necessary, to both. The HSE will also be informed as per the HSE Service Level Agreement.
2 Intimate Care; risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) to a child associated with intimate care.	Intimate Care Policy; lone working to be avoided where practicable and where not, Policy on Safe Practice and Working Alone to be adhered to; appropriate documentation. Any allegation of harm is reported to Tusla or An Garda Siochana or, if necessary, to both. The HSE will also be informed as per the HSE Service Level Agreement.

<sup>4</sup> Harm, as defined in the Children First Act 2015 means ‘in relation to a child

- (a) assault, ill-treatment or neglect of a child in a manner that seriously affects or is likely to seriously affect the child’s health, development or welfare, or
- (b) sexual abuse of the child, whether caused by a single act, omission or circumstance or a serious or combination of acts, omissions, or otherwise’

3	Behaviour that challenges; risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) to a child resulting from behaviour that challenges, either to self or another child.	Behaviours that challenge policy; appropriate training for staff. Preventative strategies; rigorous documentation of all incidents of any restrictive practices used in order to establish any patterns and to inform better response strategies.
4	Public access / access by non-staff/visitors to children's areas and activities; risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) to a child, by a visitor.	General Public restricted to public areas only; sign-in requirement for all visitors <sup>5</sup> , visitors to wear visitor badges and visitors to be collected from reception area by staff member; visitors to non-public areas to be accompanied at all times; a culture of staff vigilance and staff willingness to challenge non-staff members if their presence and/or behaviour causes concern. Restricted areas to be clearly marked and respected and children always to be within staff view.
5	Peer to peer abuse; risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) to a child by a peer.	Policy on bullying and harassment; vigilance of well trained and alert staff. Policy on reporting allegations of abuse. Any allegation of harm may be reported to Tusla or An Garda Siochana or, if necessary, to both, assuming threshold levels of reportable harm is reached. The HSE may also be informed as per the HSE Service Level Agreement.
6	Abuse by a family member/ stranger; risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) in circumstances where a child suffers harm while at home or while in the company of others outside the Centre (where this harm is subsequently revealed to ChildVision staff).	Policy on Child Protection; training in Children First; awareness of signs and symptoms; awareness of internal and external reporting requirements. . Any allegation of harm is reported to Tusla or An Garda Siochana or, if necessary, to both. The HSE will also be informed as per the HSE Service Level Agreement.
7	ICT, social media and electronic communications; risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) to a child associated with but not limited to access to ICT, including social media and electronic communications, inclusive of harm arising from the use or misuse of digital images/unauthorised photography and accidental access to inappropriate online material.	Person centred practices focusing on respect and dignity and a policy requirement that images can only be used with informed consent and only then for specific and agreed purposes; promoting a culture of safe internet access including in-house modules on safely accessing the web; culture of vigilance and close supervision to ensure that young people are kept as safe as possible in the digital domain. Any allegation of harm is reported to Tusla or An Garda Siochana or, if necessary, to both. The HSE will also be informed as per the HSE Service Level Agreement.
8	Cyber bullying; risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) arising from cyber bullying, understood as an aggressive, intentional act using electronic forms of contact.	Adherence to policy on bullying; adherence to a policy whereby children can only access the internet and ICT devices for educational purposes and only then under supervision. Any allegation of harm is reported to Tusla or An Garda Siochana or, if necessary, to both. The HSE will also be informed as per the HSE Service Level Agreement.
9	Outings and failures of supervision; risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act	Adherence to policies in relation to outings, including advance risk assessments of possible outing venues, adherence to policy on foreign trips, culture of vigilance and close supervision. Any

<sup>5</sup> Visitors refers to all those entrants who are not direct employees of ChildVision, including (non-exhaustive list) parents/guardians, persons present by invitation or with permission such as a contractor, delivery person, interviewee, statutory inspector or board member.

2015) to a child while participating in an outing resulting from poor or inadequate supervision.	allegation of harm may be reported to Tusla or An Garda Siochana or, if necessary, to both, assuming threshold levels of reportable harm is reached. The HSE may also be informed as per the HSE Service Level Agreement.
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### Reporting procedures and support arrangements

ChildVision has in place a procedure for appointing a senior manager to act as a point of reference for ChildVision staff/volunteers, young people and all other persons (including parents and family members) in relation to child safeguarding and protection concerns. This senior manager has responsibility -

- for ensuring all child protection concerns are appropriately documented and reported to Tulsa and/or An Garda Siochana (if the necessary reporting threshold is reached) and to liaise with these agencies as required thereafter
- to act as a relevant person within the meaning of the Children First Act 2015 and as a resource to ChildVision’s senior management team in relation to child protection and welfare matters
- to liaise, as necessary, with HR to ensure that ChildVision staff are properly vetted and trained in Children First 2017 and that this training is regularly updated
- to compile and maintain a list of mandated persons within the meaning of the Children First Act 2015
- to oversee the implementation of policy and procedures in relation to any member of staff or volunteer against whom an allegation of abuse has been made or against whom a claim of an act, omission or circumstance which has or might have harmed a child has been made
- to co-ordinate all activities associated with good child safeguarding practices, including the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement
- to lead a culture of awareness and vigilance about children’s rights and to help promote organisational best practice in terms of realising these rights to ensure that staff appreciate the particular vulnerabilities associated with vision impairment which may arise in respect of child protection and welfare.

<p><b>This senior manager/designated liaison person is</b></p> <p><b>James Forbes</b>  <b>Director of Social Care</b></p> <p>ChildVision, National Education Centre for Blind Children  Gracepark Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9  01 - 8373635</p>	<p><b>Provider’s Name</b></p> <p><b>Barry Sheridan</b>  <b>Chief Executive Officer</b></p> <p>ChildVision, National Education Centre for Blind Children  Gracepark Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9  01 - 8373635</p>
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### Implementation

ChildVision understands that protecting children and young people is an ongoing process. Our commitment to doing everything we can to protect children and young people from abuse is exemplified in this Child Safeguarding Statement and in our intention to provide staff with access to high quality child protection training as well as supervision and support, to regularly review our child protection policies and procedures, including staff recruitment and selection practices, and to ensure that our overarching organisational culture remains one that listens to children and young people, values them and treats them with respect, care and dignity.

This Statement will be reviewed at intervals of not less than 24 months. As well as being displayed here, it has been furnished to all staff and volunteers and it is available on ChildVision’s web-site and on request to parents/guardians and other interested parties, including Tusla personnel.

For queries concerning this Child Safeguarding Statement, please contact: James Forbes

(Relevant Person under the Children First Act 2015)