



Dublin Rape Crisis Centre's Safeguarding Statement July 2021

The Dublin Rape Crisis Centre (DRCC) is fully committed to the safeguarding of children, young people and adults who come in contact with our services. All permanent, temporary, and contracted staff, Board members, volunteers and interns working for or on behalf of the DRCC recognise that the welfare of children, young people and adults is paramount. DRCC endeavours to safeguard all individuals who are engaged with our services. As an organisation our aim is to create a safe and healthy environment for all our clients, and we are committed at all times to ensure the safety and protection of children and vulnerable adults.

Services provided by DRCC to adults

- DRCC operates the National 24-Hour Helpline where callers are offered a listening and support service. There is currently no unique safeguarding legislation for helplines in Ireland so our procedures are guided by the (HSE) Safeguarding Vulnerable persons at Risk of Abuse National policy and National Standards for Adult Safeguarding 2019 published by HIQA and MHC. Just like face to face support services, Helplines must have adequate Safeguarding policies in place. While contact is indirect we understand that there is still potential for harm to occur.
- DRCC provides a face to face counselling service to adults (18+) who have suffered recent or past sexual violence or abuse. All appointments are made through contacting the National 24- Hour Helpline.
- DRCC provides Accompaniment at the Sexual Assault Treatment Unit (SATU) in the Rotunda Hospital, Dublin. Each SATU attendee and their family member(s) will have the option of a fully trained, Garda vetted volunteer present during their time in the unit to provide emotional and practical support.
- DRCC provides a Garda and Court Accompaniment and support services which is provided by our trained volunteers. The service aims to provide appropriate support to people who are witnesses in any criminal trial related to sexual violence
- DRCC's trained Outreach Volunteers provide talks to secondary school students in Transition year, fifth and sixth year, at the invitation of the schools.
- DRCC provides a Client Advocacy Service to vulnerable adults through our internal client support officer. Appointments are arranged by referral from the client's DRCC therapist only.



Services provided by DRCC to children/young people, are as follows:

- Although DRCC is primarily a service for adults from 18 years and upwards, many young people under 18 access the **National 24-Hour Helpline** and we offer them a listening and support service. Adults also use the helpline, for support and this may include concerned parents or professionals seeking advice with regard to children at risk.
- DRCC provides a **limited crisis counselling service for young people aged 16 and 17** who have experienced a recent rape or sexual assault, by a non- family member within the past 12 months. Parental or guardian consent is required and the parent/guardian must accompany the young person to the first appointment.
- DRCC provides **accompaniment at the Sexual Assault Treatment Unit (SATU)** in the Rotunda Hospital, Dublin to young people aged 14-18 years of age. Each child and family members will have a fully trained, Garda vetted volunteer present during their time at the Unit to provide emotional and practical support.
- DRCC provides a **garda and court accompaniment** and support services, provided by trained volunteers. The service aims to provide appropriate support to young people who are witnesses in any criminal trial related to sexual violence
- DRCC's trained **outreach volunteers provide talks to secondary school students**, at the invitation of the school.

Risk Assessment

DRCC have carried out an assessment of any potential for harm to a child or vulnerable adult while availing of our services, and other risks we may become aware of, directly or indirectly through adults or child disclosures. Below is a list of the areas of risk identified and the list of procedures for managing these risks.

The potential risk in relation to any of the types of disclosures listed in points 1-4 would be that the disclosures might not be handled correctly and the opportunity to protect or help the child/children at risk/vulnerable adult would be lost. The procedures outlined at 1-4 are designed to manage this risk.

Other issues with potential risks are listed from 5-11 below, together with the DRCC procedures designed to manage these issues correctly.



Risks Identified	Procedures in Place to Manage Risk
<p>1. An adult or child may disclose abuse / risk of abuse to a child to a staff member or volunteer on the Helpline.</p> <p>A parent, concerned adult or professional may use the Helpline to seek advice in handling a situation where a child /young person under 18 may be at risk of abuse, or has been abused.</p>	<p>Contacting the National 24-Hour Helpline (henceforth Helpline) offers an opportunity for parents and concerned adults to allow them to explore, usually anonymously, their concerns regarding any child/young person. Children/young people themselves may use the Helpline anonymously to speak about their experience of abuse and to seek some guidance as to how to access help. Concerned parents or professionals seeking referrals for services will receive information and appropriate referral to Túsla or other counselling agencies that will assist them.</p> <p>The Telephone Counsellor follows the guidelines in the DRCC Child Protection Policy (henceforth CPP) for handling a disclosure of child abuse. Telephone Counsellors assist children/young people to explore their situation and identify adults to whom they may disclose their abuse. Adults are supported in taking any necessary steps towards reporting reasonable concerns to the statutory services.</p> <p>If identifying information is received, the Telephone Counsellor reports the disclosure to the Designated Liaison Person (henceforth DLP), who completes the Túsla' Child Protection & Welfare Report Form and forwards it onto Túsla.</p>
<p>2. Direct disclosures of sexual violence/abuse in crisis counselling, by young clients aged 16-18 years of age.</p>	<p>DRCC provides crisis counselling for young people 16- 18 years of age who attend DRCC for recent rape or sexual assault by a non-family member. Prior to the start of counselling, the therapist will explain to the child and their parents the requirement to notify Túsla of all cases of child abuse and will obtain their written consent. Therapists must discuss each case involving an underage client with the DLP and complete the Túsla standard report form. The DLP will notify Túsla of all cases of alleged child abuse.</p> <p>If the parent or child informs the therapist that there is already a Túsla Social Worker involved in the case, the DLP will make contact with him/her, as soon as possible to notify them of the report.</p>
<p>3. Disclosures of current abuse of children and/or risk of current abuse, by adult clients in the course of therapy in DRCC.</p>	<p>Some adults may disclose in therapy that one or more of their own children, or a child or children known to them, is currently being abused or has recently suffered abuse, or is currently at risk of abuse.</p> <p>The therapist will remind the client of the DRCC's CPP. The situation will be explored and, the therapist will inform the client that s/he will have to discuss the current risk to the child/children with the DLP and the risk to the child will have to be reported to</p>

		<p>Túsla. The DLP will report the case immediately to the relevant Túsla Social Work Department, or to the Gardaí, in a case of an emergency where a social worker is not available. The Standard Report form will be completed and will then be forwarded to Túsla, by the DLP, as a matter of urgency.</p>
4.	<p>Retrospective disclosures of historic abuse, by adults, in the course of therapy in DRCC.</p>	<p>Some adults may disclose in therapy abuse that took place during their childhood or teens. In the case of a retrospective disclosure from a client that they were abused as a child or teenager: for all cases in which it is the professional judgement of the DLP, together with the relevant staff member, that a child or children may currently be at risk from a known offender, the DLP will notify Túsla, using the Standard Report Form.</p> <p>All potential clients are informed of the DRCC's CPP from the outset. Some sessions will be given to exploring the client's fears about reporting to Túsla, to help them to come to terms with the need for reporting. However, under the Children First Guidance, the DRCC will report such cases/concerns, even when the client does not consent.</p>
5.	<p>Contact of DRCC volunteers or staff with children /young people under 18 through accompaniment services and school talks.</p>	<p>DRCC Volunteers who provide accompaniment for underage clients/their family members at the SATU or at Garda Stations / Courts, receive intensive training in relation to maintaining the proper boundaries of their role, in each situation. They will not meet with a young person on their own. Immediate 24-hour mobile phone backup support is provided by the Volunteer Service Team to the volunteers, if they have any concerns.</p> <p>For those volunteers engaged in school talks, any disclosures must be dealt with in accordance with the procedures set out in the DRCC's CPP - Section 8.1.4 which is also reflected in the DRCC Outreach Speaker Policy.</p> <p>Prior to the commencement of the school talk, the outreach speaker must outline to the young people that if a disclosure occurs in the absence of a school staff member, the DRCC outreach speaker is obliged to notify their contact within the school or other setting immediately, if they have any child protection concerns.</p>
6.	<p>An allegation of abuse or misconduct in relation to a child availing of DRCC services is made against an employee or volunteer</p>	<p>In the event of allegations being made against a DRCC staff member or volunteer, the protection of the child/young person is the first and paramount consideration.</p> <p>DRCC's CPP clearly outlines the procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against staff / volunteers of a child availing of our service. The child protection issues, including the reporting of concerns or allegations, fall within the remit of the DLP.</p>

7.	Confidentiality, and data protection, in particular regarding Child Protection.	<p>The DRCC is committed to ensuring people's right to confidentiality. Adherence to strict confidentiality regarding information received relating to service-users and related issues form part of the contracts of both employees and volunteers of DRCC.</p> <p>Therapists will discuss the limits of confidentiality with clients from the outset. However, in relation to child protection and welfare, the DRCC undertakes that: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any information with child protection implications will be shared with relevant individuals/agencies on a need to know basis in the best interest of the child/young person. • Parents and children have a right to know if personal information is being shared, unless doing so could put the child at further risk. • With regard to reporting under the Children First guidelines, staff and volunteers have '<i>privilege</i>' in relation to such cases, as set out in legislation - The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998. However, such information must never be disclosed inappropriately, either inside the DRCC or in the public domain. Before disclosure to a third party, staff must discuss the matter fully with the DLP. <p>Staff should only access records on a '<i>need to know</i>' basis in relation to their role. Records of child protection referrals are stored in a central file, which can be accessed only by the DLP. All client information is of a sensitive nature and information regarding Child Protection is of particular concern. The DLP has responsibility for the safety of this information.</p>
8	Communication regarding issues of alleged child abuse between DRCC and other agencies, especially Túsla.	<p>DRCC's CPP outlines co-operation with Túsla, Child and Family Agency on the sharing of their records, where a child welfare or protection issue arises. DRCC seeks to work in partnership with any other agency/service when such a liaison will benefit the child and their family. This includes statutory and non-statutory services.</p> <p>DRCC is committed to sharing information in relation to child protection with Túsla, Child and Family Agency and therapists are available to liaise in the best interest of the child. DRCC will share what is necessary and proportionate in the circumstances of each individual case. This is in keeping with the principles of Data Protection which recognise that in certain circumstances information can be shared in the interest of child protection.</p>
9.	Disclosure of Rape/Sexual Assault by a vulnerable adult	<p>Where the identity of the perpetrator is known the Designated Officer is obliged to make a report to the Gardaí. Staff should pass</p>

		<p>their report to Angela McCarthy in line with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy procedures.</p> <p>Mandatory reporting requirements exist to keep clients safe and are not considered a breach of confidentiality or data protection. Obligations in this respect are made clear to the client from the outset.</p>
10.	Disclosure that an- adult or child is at risk of harming themselves	<p>In the provision of our services we recognise that it is our responsibility to take action before harm occurs. Having a central point of contact for disclosures ensures a consistent and practical approach across the organisation while ensuring accountability for decisions made.</p> <p>Where there is an obvious risk of the client or caller harming themselves, then the centre’s policy for suicidal clients and callers to the 24-Hour Helpline should be followed.</p>
11..	Disclosure that a vulnerable adult or child is at risk of harm by somebody else or due to other personal circumstances	<p>All disclosures by clients at risk should be reported to the designated officer Angela McCarthy, who will contact the relevant agency and ensure all reporting obligations are met.</p> <p>Details of procedures are set out in the centre’s Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adult policy.</p>
	For queries, or concerns regarding child protection or safeguarding vulnerable adults please contact:	<p>Angela McCarthy, Head of Clinical Services & DRCC’s Designated Liaison Person for Child Protection and Relevant Persons under the Children First Act 2015</p> <p>Email: angela.mccarthy@rcc.ie Phone: 01-6614911 Ext. 112 during office hours</p>

Conclusion

DRCC’s **Safeguarding Statement 2021** has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, the Children First: National Guidance, Túsla’s Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice, The National Standards for Adult Safeguarding published by Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) and the Mental Health Commission (MHC) in 2019.



In addition to the procedures listed in our risk assessment, the following procedures support our intention to safeguard children and vulnerable adults while they are availing of our service.

DRCC's Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults policy includes:

- Procedure for provision of and access to safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm.
- A clear reporting procedure to respond to concerns around individual's welfare and safety.
- A code of behaviour for staff and volunteers.
- A safe recruitment and selection procedure, including vetting for all staff and volunteers.
- A procedure to respond to accidents.
- A procedure to respond to complaints.
- Having a Designated Liaison Person.
- Induction and ongoing training to staff in relation to DRCC's Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adult's Policy.
- Provision of supervision and support for staff and volunteers in contact with children and vulnerable adults.
- Sharing information about the Child Protection Policy and good practices with families and children.
- Sharing information about the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy with adults using our services.
- Reviewing DRCC's Child Protection Policy, Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy and other internal processes regularly. All DRCC policies are available on request.

Implementation

We recognise that implementation is an on-going process. Our service is committed to the implementation of this Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children and vulnerable adults safe from harm, while availing of our services. This Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed in **June 2023**, or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

Signed:  (CEO)

Noeline Blackwell, Chef Executive Officer, Dublin Rape Crisis Centre



Title	DRCC Safeguarding Statement
Status	Approved (July 2021)
Background	Outward Facing Document
Policy Devised	May 2018
Next Revision date	June 2022