

Dublin Rape Crisis Centre Safeguarding Statement June 2019

The Dublin Rape Crisis Centre (DRCC) is fully committed to the safeguarding of children and young people, who come in contact with our service. Management, staff and volunteers in this organisation recognise that the welfare of children is paramount and our services endeavour to safeguard children and young people. DRCC aims to create a safe and healthy environment for the young people with whom we work and we are committed at all times to ensure the safety and protection of children:-

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 re 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. 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.
- DRCC's trained **Outreach Volunteers provide talks to secondary school students** in Transition year, fifth and 6th year, at the invitation of the schools.

Risk Assessment

We have carried out an assessment of any potential for harm to a child 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 would be lost. The procedures outlined at 1-4 are designed to manage this risk. Other issues with potential risks are listed from 4-8 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 on the Helpline, to a staff member or volunteer.</p> <p>A parent, concerned adult or professional may use the Helpline to seek advice in handling a situation where a child /teenager under 18 may be at risk of abuse, or has been abused.</p>	<p>Contacting the DRCC 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 Túsła or other counselling agencies that will assist them.</p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p>NB If identifying information is received, the Telephone counsellor reports the disclosure to the Designated Person (DP), who completes Túsła' Child Protection and Welfare report form and forwards it to Túsła.</p>
<p>2. Direct disclosures of sexual violence/abuse in Crisis Counselling, by young clients aged 16-18.</p>	<p>DRCC provides crisis counselling for young people 16- 18 who attends DRCC for crisis counselling 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 parents the requirement to notify Túsła of all cases of child abuse and will obtain their written consent.</p> <p><i>Therapists must discuss each case involving an underage client with the DP and complete the Túsła standard report form. The DP will notify Túsła of all cases of alleged child abuse. If the parent or child informs the therapist that there is already a Túsła Social worker involved in the case, the DP will make contact with him/her, as soon as possible to notify them of the report.</i></p>
<p>3. Disclosures of current abuse of children/risk of current abuse, by adults clients in the course of therapy in DRCC.</p>	<p>Some adults may disclose in therapy in DRCC 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><i>The therapist will remind the client of the DRCC's policy re Child protection. 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 DP and the risk to the child will have to be reported to Túsła. The DP will report the case immediately to the relevant Túsła 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 Túsła, by the DP, as a matter of urgency.</i></p>

4.	Retrospective disclosures of historic abuse, by adults, in the course of therapy.	<p>Some adults may disclose in therapy abuse that took place during their childhood or teens. In the case of 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 DP, together with the relevant staff member, that a child or children may currently be at risk from a known offender, the DP will notify Túsla, using the standard report Form.</p> <p><i>All potential clients are informed of this policy 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.</i></p>
5.	Contact of DRCC volunteers or staff with young people under 18 through accompaniment services and talks .	<p>DRCC Volunteers who provide accompaniment for underage clients/their family members at the SATU or at Garda Stations/Courts or who provide talks to young people receive intensive training in relation to maintaining the proper boundaries of their role, in each situation. <i>They will not meet with a young person on their own.</i></p> <p><i>Immediate 24-hour mobile phone backup support is provided by the Volunteer Service Team to the volunteers, if they have any concerns. Any disclosures of child abuse will be reported to the DP who will make a report to Túsla.</i></p>
6.	An allegation of abuse or misconduct in relation to a child availing of DRCC services is made against an employee or volunteer	<p>In the event of allegations being made against a DRCC staff member/volunteer, the protection of the child/young person is the first and paramount consideration.</p> <p><i>DRCC's Child Protection Policy Document clearly outlines the procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child availing of our service.</i></p> <p><i>The child protection issues, including the reporting of concerns or allegations, fall within the remit of the Designated Person.</i></p>

7.	Confidentiality, and data protection, in particular re 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 forms part of the contracts of both employees and volunteers of DRCC. Therapists will discuss the limits of confidentiality with clients from the outset.</p> <p>However, in relation to child protection and welfare, the DRCC undertakes that:- 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.</p> <p>Parents and children have a right to know if personal information is being shared, unless doing so could put the child at further risk.</p> <p>With regard to reporting under the Children First guidelines, staff and volunteers have 'privilege' in relation to such cases, as set out in legislation by 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 DP.</p> <p><i>Staff should only access records on a need to know basis in relation to their role. Records of Child Protection Referrals are stored in a central file, which can be accessed only by the DP. All client information is of a sensitive nature and information regarding Child Protection is of particular concern. The DP has responsibility for the safety of this information.</i></p>
8	Communication regarding issues of alleged child abuse between DRCC and other agencies, especially Túsla.	<p>DRCC's Child Protection policy outlines co-operation with TUSLA 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><i>DRCC is committed to sharing information in relation to child protection with TUSLA 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.</i></p>
	<p><i>For queries, or concerns re child protection, please contact: DRCC's Designate Person for Child Protection and Relevant Person under the Children First Act 2015.</i></p>	<p>Angela McCarthy, Head of Clinical Services</p> <p>Email: info@rcc.ie</p> <p>Phone: 01-6614911 during office hours.</p>

Conclusion

DRCC's **Child Safeguarding Statement 2019** has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, the *Children First: National Guidance*, and Túsla'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:

DRCC's Child Protection Policy includes:

- Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm.
- A clear reporting procedure to respond to concerns around children's welfare and safety.
- A code of behaviour for staff and volunteers.
- A safe recruitment and selection procedure, including vetting of all staff and volunteers.
- A procedure to respond to accidents.
- A procedure to respond to complaints.
- Having a Designated Person.
- Induction and ongoing training to staff in relation to DRCC's Child Protection Policy.
- Provision of supervision and support for staff and volunteers in contact with children.
- Sharing information about the child protection policy and good practices with families and children.
- Reviewing DRCC's child protection policy and practices on a regular basis. 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 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 **Dec 2020**, 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,