

Children First: Guidance for the Protection and Welfare for Children 2011

Legislation

In the Forward Minister Fitzgerald states: “We intend to enact legislation so that all people who are working with children will have a statutory duty to comply with the Children First: National Guidance.” Note as of now Children First is not yet on a statutory basis, pending the publication and enactment of new legislation.

The need for all those working with children to be vetted, the role of the Garda Vetting Unit and the intention to put this on a statutory basis is also included. Note the Minister for Justice Alan Shatter TD published the National Vetting Bureau Bill 2011 on July 27th 2011.

All Child Protection Policies should be based on the following three documents

1. **Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children**

- The Children First Guidance launched on the 15th July, 2011 is National Guidance that promotes the protection of children from abuse and neglect. It states what organisations need to do to keep children safe, and what different bodies, and the general public should do if they are concerned about a child’s safety and welfare. The Guidance sets out specific protocols for HSE social workers, Gardaí and other front line staff in dealing with suspected abuse and neglect. Overall Children First 2011 is much clearer and more concise than the previous guidelines.

2. **Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook**

- The Handbook, which is based on the protocols as set out in Children First Guidance 2011 and the collective wisdom and best practice of experts and front line staff, will support the vital work of social workers and other relevant practitioners in dealing with child protection and welfare cases. The introduction and use of the Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook will standardise the nationwide implementation of Children First.

3. **Our Duty to Care**

- Our Duty to Care was published by the Department of Health and Children in October 2002. It is aimed at staff and volunteers of community and voluntary organisations of any size or type that provide services for children. It is a practical guide offering guidance on the promotion of child welfare and the development of safe practices in work with children. It also gives information on how to recognise signs of child abuse and the steps to take within organisations if abuse is suspected, witnessed or disclosed.

Copies of the document are available only to download

- <http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Publications/services/Children/childprotectionandwelfarepracticehandbook.html>
 - http://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/child_welfare_protection/ChildrenFirst.pdf
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