

## **Child Safeguarding Statement**

### **Designated Liaison Person: Aoife McGrath – Centre Manager**

Claremont Stadium Group (CSG) is a large sporting, social and education centre. It is a community setting established to help all reach their potential and have a more balanced and healthier lifestyle. CSG is based at Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath.

CSG is committed to creating a safe, healthy, and inclusive environment for all, particularly, the children, young people and vulnerable adults who use our facilities. CSG are committed to ensuring their safety and welfare through upholding children's rights specifically and human rights generally.

Children will be unconditionally respected and consulted, in accordance with their age and ability to reason, in matters concerning their welfare.

The Management of Claremont Stadium has adopted and will implement fully and without modification the regulatory guidelines and procedures as set out by the governing bodies we work with as part of this Child Safeguarding Statement.

In accordance with the requirements of the Children First Act 2015, Children First: National Guidance for the protection and Welfare of Children 2017 and Tusla Guidance on the preparation of Child Safety Statement the Management of Claremont Stadium has agreed the Child Safeguarding statement set out in this document are now the policies and procedures which we adhere too.

The Management recognises that Child Protection and Welfare considerations permeate all aspects of life and therefore must be reflected and taken into consideration in all of Claremont Stadium's procedures, practices and activities.

Claremont Stadium will:

- Recognise that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations.
- Fully comply with its statutory obligations under the Child First Act 2015 and other relevant statutory legislation relating to protections and welfare matters.
- Adopt safe practices to minimise the possibility of harm and accidents happening to children / service users and employees from the necessity to take unnecessary risks that may leave the organisation open to accusations of abuse or neglect;
- Develop a practise of openness and transparency with parents and encourage responsibility for the care of their children.
- Fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters as well as understanding the limitations associated with this.

- Implement a Code of Behaviour for all employees.
- Enact a Safe Recruitment Policy.
- Appoint a Designated Person who deals with child protection issues.
- Ensure procedures for reporting concerns to Tusla are in place
- Implement procedures for dealing with allegations against employees or volunteers.
- Adopt a Confidentiality Policy.
- Ensure a Complaints Policy is in place.
- Apply an Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Enact an Accidents and Incidents Reporting Policy.

## **Risk Assessment**

We have carried out an assessment of any potential risk for harm to a child while availing of our services including the area of online safety when accessing the internet whilst on the premises.

Below is a list of the areas of risks identified and the list of procedures for managing these risks:

	<b>Risk Identified</b>	<b>Procedure in Place</b>
<b>1.</b>	New member of staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Garda Vetting</li> <li>- Induction Policy which includes procedures to inform new staff about the Child Safeguarding Statement and accompanying safeguarding policies and procedures</li> <li>- All Team members will complete Tusla training (Children First) e-learning module &amp; any other training requirements.</li> <li>- Team members have access to regular Supervision and training</li> <li>- Complaints Policy</li> <li>- Policy for Managing Accidents and Incidents</li> </ul>
<b>2.</b>	Inaccurate Information leading to risks, potential to miss reportable incidents and accidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Induction Policy which includes procedures to inform new staff about the Child Safeguarding Statement and accompanying safeguarding policies and procedures</li> <li>- All Team members will complete Tusla training (Children First) e-learning module &amp; any other training requirements.</li> <li>- Team members have access to regular supervision and training</li> <li>- Policy for Managing Accidents and Incidents</li> </ul>
<b>3.</b>	Children movement within our premises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Claremont Stadium always requires parental / guardian / adult supervision of all children</li> </ul>

4.	Risk of child being harmed by another adult/child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Claremont Stadium always requires parental / guardian / adult supervision of all children</li> <li>- All visitors are required to report to reception on arrival and when leaving the building.</li> <li>- We have monitored CCTV with supportive policies and procedures to ensure safety measures are always maintained.</li> <li>- Whilst using the facilities in Claremont Stadium the following policies are in place and adhered to, to support children/young adult safeguarding:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Health, Safety &amp; Wellbeing</li> <li>2. Child Safeguarding Statement</li> <li>3. CCTV Usage Policy</li> <li>4. Anti-Bullying</li> <li>5. Supervision Policy</li> <li>6. Confidential Policy</li> <li>7. Record Keeping Policy</li> <li>8. Complaints Policy</li> <li>9. Accident and Incident Policy</li> </ol> </li> <li>- In the event of an incident occurring, management will revert to relevant policies.</li> </ul>
5.	<p>Child at risk of neglect</p> <p>Risk of neglect not being recognised by Team Member</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All our team are trained on what to do if a child/ young adult presents with vulnerabilities and / or specific need. (Children First Act, 2015)</li> <li>- We have numerous policies and procedures in place to work with situations that present such as:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Health, Safety &amp; Wellbeing Policy</li> <li>2. Anti-Bullying Policy</li> <li>3. Supervision policy</li> <li>4. A Designated Liaison Person has been appointed</li> <li>5. Child Protection and Welfare Reporting Procedures</li> <li>6. Confidentiality Policy</li> <li>7. General Data Protection Regulation requirements Policy</li> <li>8. Procedure for Managing Child Protection Records</li> <li>9. Recruitment Policy</li> <li>10. Garda Vetting for all employees</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
6.	Alleged bullying of a child or young adult by another child	All our team are trained on what to do if a child/ young adult presents with allegation of bullying of a child/ Young person.

7.	Alleged bullying of a child or young adult by a member of staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Claremont Stadium requires parental/guardian/adult supervision of all children at all times</li> <li>- We have monitored CCTV with supportive policies and procedures to ensure safety measures are always maintained.</li> <li>- We have numerous policies and procedures in place to work with situations that present such as:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Health, Safety &amp; Wellbeing Policy</li> <li>2. Anti-Bullying Policy</li> <li>3. Supervision policy</li> <li>4. A Designated Liaison Person has been appointed</li> <li>5. Child Protection and Welfare Reporting Procedures</li> <li>6. Confidentiality Policy</li> <li>7. Procedure for Managing Child Protection Records</li> <li>8. Recruitment Policy</li> </ol> </li> <li>- Garda Vetting for all employees</li> </ul>
8.	Child at risk of emotional or physical abuse	<p>We have numerous policies and procedures to work with situations that present such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Code of Behaviour</li> <li>2. Supervision policy</li> <li>3. A Relevant Person has been appointed</li> <li>4. A Designated Liaison Person has been appointed</li> <li>5. Child Protection and Welfare Reporting Procedures</li> <li>6. Confidentiality Policy</li> <li>7. Complaints Policy</li> <li>8. Policy for Managing Accidents and Incidents</li> </ol>

<p><b>9.</b></p>	<p>Unauthorised photography &amp; recording activities.</p> <p>Alternatively, photography, filming or recording in prohibited areas.</p>	<p>We have numerous policies and procedures to work with situations that present such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Code of Behaviour</li> <li>2. Anti-Bullying Policy</li> <li>3. Anti-Cyber Bullying Policy</li> <li>4. Supervision policy</li> <li>5. A Relevant Person has been appointed</li> <li>6. A Designated Liaison Person has been appointed</li> <li>7. Child Protection and Welfare Reporting Procedures</li> <li>8. Confidentiality Policy</li> <li>9. Complaints Policy</li> <li>10. Policy for Managing Accidents and Incidents</li> <li>11. Photography &amp; Use of Images policy</li> </ol>
<p><b>10.</b></p>	<p>Unauthorised access to designated children's play &amp; practice areas &amp; to changing rooms, showers, toilets etc.</p> <p>Unauthorised exit from children's areas.</p>	<p>We have numerous policies and procedures to work with situations that present such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Code of Behaviour</li> <li>2. Anti-Bullying Policy</li> <li>3. Anti-Cyber Bullying Policy</li> <li>4. Supervision policy</li> <li>5. A Relevant Person has been appointed</li> <li>6. A Designated Liaison Person has been appointed</li> <li>7. Child Protection and Welfare Reporting Procedures</li> <li>8. Confidentiality Policy</li> <li>9. Complaints Policy</li> <li>10. Policy for Managing Accidents and Incidents</li> <li>11. Photography &amp; Use of Images policy</li> </ol>

11.	Lone worker finding a lone parent in medical distress whilst caring for their child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- As Claremont Stadium requires parental / guardian supervision of all children at all times, the following procedure should be applied:</li> <li>- Call emergency services immediately, informing them that both Gardai and ambulance service are required and that there are children present who may be left unsupervised.</li> <li>- Leave the front door open for the emergency services to gain entry as you will not be able to answer the door if you have commenced CPR.</li> <li>- Once Gardai have arrived give Gardai details relating to Next of Kin, if possible or known.</li> </ul>
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Claremont Stadium will also adhere to the above principles in relation to any person with a special vulnerability.

## **Procedures:**

Our Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under 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. In addition to the procedures listed in our risk assessment, the following measures support our intention to safeguard children whilst they are availing of our services:

### **Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse against workers of our service:**

In relation to employees who are the subject of any investigation (however described) in respect of any act, omission or circumstance in preposition of a child, must adhere to the relevant policies and procedures set out in of the Child Protection Procedures which is defined by the Children First Act, 2015. Our Child Protection and Welfare Policy will be implemented and managed by the senior management alongside our disciplinary procedures for Employee's rules and guidelines.

### **Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of employees and their suitability to work with children:**

Claremont Stadium adheres to the statutory vetting requirements of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016 and to the wider duty of care guidance set out in relevant Garda vetting and recruitment circulars published by all associated government bodies.

Claremont Stadium:

- Has provided each employee with a copy of the Claremont Stadium's Child Safeguarding Statement
- Ensures all new employees are provided with a copy of the Claremont Stadium Child Safeguarding

Statement

- Encourages employees to avail of relevant training
- Encourages Board of Management members to avail of relevant training
- The Board of Management maintains records of all employees and Board member training

**Procedure for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla.**

All Claremont Stadium personnel are required to adhere to the procedures set out in our Child Protection Procedures and include mandatory reporting under the Children First Act 2015.

**Procedure for appointing a relevant person.**

The Board of Management of Claremont Stadium has appointed the above named DLP (Aoife McGrath – Centre Manager) as the “relevant person” (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) to be the first point of contact in respect of the Child Safeguarding Statement. The DLP can be contacted by phone on 0864608977 or by email at [aoife@claremontstadium.ie](mailto:aoife@claremontstadium.ie)

**Procedure for maintaining a list of mandated persons.**

Schedule 2 of the Children First Act 2015 does not necessitate for the appointment of a Mandated Person within the context of Claremont Stadium and the activities conducted. However, all staff and volunteers will revert to the Designated Liaison Person (Aoife McGrath – Centre Manager) for guidance on all child protection or welfare concerns. Details of this will also be included in all induction material provided to new staff members. The DLP can be contacted by phone on 0864608977 or by email at [aoife@claremontstadium.ie](mailto:aoife@claremontstadium.ie)

**Note:** The above is not intended as an exhaustive list.

This statement has been provided to all members of CSG personnel, associated governing bodies and outline references made on procedures and policies where applicable will be defined clearly.

The various procedures referred to in this Statement will be made available by Management upon request.

This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed annually (October 2022) or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this statement refers.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Board of Management

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Centre Manager

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Child Safeguarding Statement Checklist**

As part of our best practise format we review our child safeguarding monthly in line with our health and safety standards.

The following checklist is used as a guideline to review our compliance regarding safeguarding policies and procedures.

- The Child Safeguarding Statement is displayed in the reception areas for all to view.
- All staff have been Garda Vetted.
- All staff have read and are familiar with the Child Safeguarding Statement and accompanying safeguarding policies.
- All staff have completed the Tusla e-learning module: Introduction to Children First
- Staff know and understand their obligations under the Children First Act, 2015.
- All employees are aware of who to speak to should they have a concern about the well-being of a child.
- Information on the Safeguarding Policy is part of the induction process for new employees.
- A Designated Liaison Person for child protection has been appointed.
- Information naming the Designated Liaison Person is displayed in reception.
- The Designated Liaison Person has attended up to date Child Protection Training.
- Contact details for the local Tusla Duty Social Work Team and An Garda Síochána are displayed.



## **Appendix 1:**

### **Promoting Good Practise in Claremont Stadium**

Safe practice is essential in our working environment and we have put in place the following procedures to govern our work with children and young people:

- All employees are aware of the good practice guidelines and are familiar with the overall Child Protection Policy and Child Safeguarding Statement of the Claremont Stadium.
- All staff members are trained in the appropriate measures and procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation, concern, or disclosure of child abuse.
- Claremont Stadium has an anti-bullying policy.
- Claremont Stadium has a Complaints Procedure.
- There should be no unnecessary physical contact between adult/ child or young person(s). Although there are times when for example, physical contact should only be in response to the needs of the child/young person(s) such as to prevent an incident or accident.
- A procedure is in place for recording any incidents or accidents.
- All employees of Claremont Stadium will show respect and understanding for the rights, safety and welfare of all children and young persons.
- Inappropriate behaviour/language by the children/ young person will not go unchallenged through the appropriate channels.
- Claremont Stadium respects and promotes the principles of equality and diversity and works with children in a culturally sensitive way within the context of the Irish Constitution.

Claremont Stadium has put in place the following standard reporting procedure for dealing with disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse.

The guiding principles in regard to reporting child abuse are summarised as follows:

- The safety and well-being of the child or young person must take priority
- Reports should be made without delay to the HSE
- While the basis for concern must be established as comprehensively as possible, children or parents should not be interviewed in detail about disclosures, concerns or allegations of abuse.

The reporting procedure for dealing with disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse is outlined in the following steps:

- The employee or volunteer who has received a disclosure of child abuse or who has concerns of abuse should bring it to the attention of the DLP immediately.
- The DLP will assess and review the information that has been provided. The DLP will contact Tusla for informal advice relating to the allegation, concern or disclosure.
- After consultation with Tusla, the DLP will then take one of the following options:

- Report the allegation, concern, or disclosure to Tusla using the correct format
- Not make a formal report to Tusla but keep a record of the concerns on file. The reasons for not reporting the allegation, concern or disclosure will be clearly recorded.
- In an emergency a report should be made directly to An Garda Síochána.

In making a report on suspected or actual child abuse, the individual must ensure that the priority is always for the safety and welfare of the young person and that no child or young person is ever left in an un-safe situation.

Parents/guardians of the child will be informed of the allegation, concern or disclosure unless doing so is likely to endanger the child.

### **Information required when making a report**

The more information which is gathered and put together on the Standard Reporting Form from Tusla, the easier it will be to assess an allegation, concern or disclosure of abuse. Reports which are made anonymously to employees will be followed up but this may take longer and will make it more difficult for the professionals involved to assess the situation. If a person is unsure about the case, it may be useful to talk over the issue with the DLP.

### **Confidentiality**

In matters of child abuse, an employee should never promise to keep secrets about any of the information divulged. It should be explained to the young person or the person disclosing such information, that this information cannot be kept secret but only those who need to know, will be told.

It is essential in reporting any case of alleged/suspected abuse that the principle of confidentiality applies. The information should only be shared on a 'need to know' basis and the number of people that need to be informed should be kept to a minimum.

### **The Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998**

This Act provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to Tusla or An Garda Síochána.

### ***Allegation relating to a staff member***

Where an allegation of abuse is made against an employee of the Claremont Stadium, there are two procedures the Claremont Stadium will put in place:

- The reporting procedure in respect of the allegation.
- The policies procedure for dealing with the employee.

If an allegation of abuse is made against an employee, the Centre Manager must be immediately informed. If the Centre Manager is unavailable, the next most senior staff member available should

be contacted.

In the case of the allegation being against an employee of the Claremont Stadium the same person will not deal with both the young person and the alleged abuser. Employment/contractual issues will be dealt with separately. The DLP will follow the normal reporting procedure in Claremont Stadium.

The safety of the child is the first priority of Claremont Stadium, and all necessary measures will be taken to ensure that the child is safe. The measures taken will be proportionate to the level of risk.

- Claremont Stadium will ensure that no other children/young people are at risk during this period and will inform other relevant agencies.
- The measures which can be taken to ensure the safety of children and young people can include the following: suspension of duties of the person accused, re-assignment of duties where the accused will not have contact with children/young people, working under increased supervision during the period of the investigation or other measures as deemed appropriate.
- If a formal report is being made the employer will notify the employee that an allegation has been made and what the nature of the allegation is. The employee has a right to respond to this and this response should be documented and retained.
- CSG will ensure that the principle of 'natural justice' will apply whereby a person is considered innocent until proven otherwise.
- CSG will work in co-operation with An Garda Síochána, Tusla and the HSE and any decisions on action to be taken in regard to the employee will be taken in consultation with these agencies.
- The person against whom the allegation is made will need support during this period.

## **Complaints**

We work in partnership with all users by seeking their views and encouraging all to participate in any decision making in relation to our service. We welcome comments/suggestions on the delivery of our service.

### **Responding to a Complaint**

CSG undertake to ensure all complaints are taken seriously and dealt with fairly, impartially and confidentially. We will endeavour to quickly and informally resolve complaints through discussion, with governing bodies and members of our team as appropriate. Users will be made aware that there is a complaints procedure in operation as part of check in. If we find that we have made a mistake or that something could have been done better, we will change the way we do things to avoid making the same mistake in future. Complaints can be made by user groups and other advocates on behalf of children. If a complainant is not satisfied with any aspect of our service, they

are requested to resolve the issue informally through discussion with the manager.

### **Accident and Incident**

It is our policy to promote the health, well-being and safety of all the children through the implementation of policies and procedures and by developing and regularly reviewing accident prevention procedures and fire safety. Our procedures for responding to an Accident/Incident are to ensure that staff are aware of emergency numbers and that they are prominently displayed. We will ensure that all relevant personnel have up to date First Aid Training and that a complete First Aid Box is accessible. The safety and welfare of the child is always the first consideration if a child is injured or an accident occurs. After an accident, as soon as practicable, the Accident Report Form is completed and recorded in the Accident Book/Log. The manager is informed of serious accidents or incidents. Parents/Guardians are always informed of incidents or accidents involving their child and requested to sign the relevant form. The manager will review the accident and incident reports monthly.

## **Appendix 2:**

### **Types of Child Abuse and how they may be recognised**

Source: Children First National Guidance 2017, Chapter 2: Child Abuse – What is it? How do I recognise it? How do I report it? (Pages 7 – 11)

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time. Abuse and neglect can occur within the family, in the community or in an institutional setting. The abuser may be someone known to the child or a stranger and can be an adult or another child.

In a situation where abuse is alleged to have been carried out by another child, you should consider it a child welfare and protection issue for both children and you should follow child protection procedures for both the victim and the alleged abuser. The important factor in deciding whether the behaviour is abuse or neglect is the impact of that behaviour on the child rather than the intention of the parent/carer.

The definitions of neglect and abuse presented in this section are not legal definitions. They are intended to describe ways in which a child might experience abuse and how this abuse may be recognised.

**Neglect:** neglect is the most frequently reported category of abuse, both in Ireland and internationally.

On-going chronic neglect is recognised as being extremely harmful to the development and well-being of the child and may have serious long-term negative consequences. Neglect occurs when a child does not receive adequate care or supervision to the extent that the child is harmed physically or developmentally. It is generally defined in terms of an omission of care, where a child's health, development or welfare is impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, and hygiene, medical care, intellectual stimulation or supervision and safety.

Emotional neglect may also lead to the child having attachment difficulties. The extent of the damage to the child's health, development or welfare is influenced by a range of factors.

These factors include the extent, if any, of positive influence in the child's life as well as the age of the child and the frequency and consistency of neglect. Neglect is associated with poverty but not necessarily caused by it. It is strongly linked to parental substance misuse, domestic violence, and parental mental illness and disability. A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when neglect becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer. This may become apparent where you see the child over a period of time, or the effects of neglect may be obvious based on having seen the child once.

The following are features of child neglect:

- Children being left alone without adequate care and supervision
- Malnourishment, lacking food, unsuitable food or erratic feeding
- Non-organic failure to thrive, i.e. a child not gaining weight due not only to malnutrition but also emotional deprivation
- Failure to provide adequate care for the child's medical and developmental needs, including intellectual stimulation
- Inadequate living conditions – unhygienic conditions, environmental issues, including lack of adequate heating and furniture
- Lack of adequate clothing
- Inattention to basic hygiene
- Lack of protection and exposure to danger, including moral danger, or lack of supervision appropriate to the child's age
- Persistent failure to attend school
- Abandonment or desertion

**Emotional abuse:** Emotional abuse is the systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment of a child as part of the overall relationship between a caregiver and a child. Once-off and occasional difficulties between a parent/carer and child are not considered emotional abuse.

Abuse occurs when a child's basic need for attention, affection, approval, consistency and security are not met, due to incapacity or indifference from their parent or caregiver. Emotional abuse can

also occur when adults responsible for taking care of children are unaware of and unable (for a range of reasons) to meet their children's emotional and developmental needs. Emotional abuse is not easy to recognise because the effects are not easily seen. A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when the behaviour becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer.

Emotional abuse may be seen in some of the following ways:

- Rejection
- Lack of comfort and love
- Lack of attachment
- Lack of proper stimulation (e.g. fun and play)
- Lack of continuity of care (e.g. frequent moves, particularly unplanned)
- Continuous lack of praise and encouragement
- Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming of the child
- Bullying
- Conditional parenting in which care or affection of a child depends on his or her behaviours or actions
- Extreme overprotectiveness
- Inappropriate non-physical punishment (e.g. locking child in bedroom)
- On-going family conflicts and family violence
- Seriously inappropriate expectations of a child relative to his/her age any stage of development

There may be no physical signs of emotional abuse unless it occurs with another type of abuse. A child may show signs of emotional abuse through their actions or emotions in several ways. These include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, risk taking and aggressive behaviour. It should be noted that no one indicator is conclusive evidence of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is more likely to impact negatively on a child where it is persistent over time and where there is a lack of other protective factors.

**Physical abuse:** Physical abuse is when someone deliberately hurts a child physically or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents. A reasonable concern exists where the child's health and/or development is, may be, or has been damaged as a result of suspected physical abuse.

Physical abuse can include the following:

- Physical punishment
- Beating, slapping, hitting or kicking
- Pushing, shaking or throwing
- Pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling

- Use of excessive force in handling
- Deliberate poisoning
- Suffocation
- Fabricated/induced illness

**Reasonable Chastisement:** The Children First Act, 2015 includes a provision that abolishes the common law defence of reasonable chastisement in court proceedings. This defence could previously be invoked by a parent or other person in authority who physically disciplined a child. The change in the legislation now means that in prosecutions relating to assault or physical cruelty, a person who administers such punishment to a child cannot rely on the defence of reasonable chastisement in the legal proceedings.

The result of this is that the protections in law relating to assault now apply to a child in the same way as they do to an adult.

**Sexual abuse:** Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or arousal, or for that of others. It includes the child being involved in sexual acts (masturbation, fondling, oral or penetrative sex) or exposing the child to sexual activity directly or through pornography. Child sexual abuse may cover a wide spectrum of abusive activities. It rarely involves just a single incident and, in some instances, occurs over a number of years. Child sexual abuse most commonly happens within the family, including older siblings and extended family members. Cases of sexual abuse mainly come to light through disclosure by the child or his or her siblings/friends, from the suspicions of an adult, and/or by physical symptoms.

It should be remembered that sexual activity involving a young person may be sexual abuse even if the young person concerned does not themselves recognise it as abusive.

Examples of child sexual abuse include the following:

- Any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child
- An invitation to sexual touching or intentional touching or molesting of a child's body whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification
- Masturbation in the presence of a child or the involvement of a child in an act of masturbation
- Sexual intercourse with a child, whether oral, vaginal or anal
- Sexual exploitation of a child, which includes: - Inviting, inducing or coercing a child to engage in prostitution or the production of child pornography [for example, exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, videotape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of an image by computer or other means] - Inviting, coercing or inducing a child to participate in, or to observe, any sexual, indecent or obscene act - Showing sexually explicit material to

children, which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse.

- Exposing a child to inappropriate or abusive material through information and communication technology.
- Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person.

An Garda Síochána will deal with any criminal aspects of a sexual abuse case under the relevant criminal justice legislation. The prosecution of a sexual offence against a child will be considered within the wider objective of child welfare and protection.

The safety of the child is paramount and at no stage should a child's safety be compromised because of concern for the integrity of a criminal investigation. In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that in criminal law the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years for both boys and girls. Any sexual relationship where one or both parties are under the age of 17 is illegal. However, it may not necessarily be regarded as child sexual abuse. Details on exemptions for mandated reporting of certain cases of underage consensual sexual activity can be found in Chapter 3 of Children First: National Guidance 2017.