



Chernobyl Children International

Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Statement

Approved by Board of Director 23 May 2023.

Introduction

Chernobyl Children's Project International, herein known as Chernobyl Children International or CCI, restores hope, alleviates suffering and protects current and future generations in the Chernobyl regions, by passionately advocating the rights of all of those affected. In partnership with indigenous organisations, CCI develops programmes to reduce poverty and improve the livelihoods of current and future generations of Chernobyl's children.

Commitment to Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

Chernobyl Children International acknowledges the organisation's duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and is committed to ensuring safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, Government guidance and complies with best practice.

This Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Statement recognises that the welfare and interests of children and vulnerable adults are paramount in all circumstances.

The aim and purpose of this Policy is to ensure children, young people, families, staff and volunteers are kept safe and protected from harm through misconduct by staff, operations and programmes. To do this we are committed to:

- Ensuring the best interests and safety of children and vulnerable adults is the paramount consideration in all our actions.
- Providing the principles, procedures and clear guidance to implement good safeguarding practices to CCI Board members, staff and volunteers.
- Ensuring everyone is aware of their responsibilities and know what to do when concerns arise about children.

1. Guiding Principles

CCI is guided by the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most relevant statements for guidance on this policy include:

- Article 2: Children have the right to protection without any form of discrimination.
- Article 3: Adults should always do what is best for a child.
- Article 12: Children have the right to an opinion and for it to be listened to and taken seriously.
- Article 16: Children have a right to privacy.
- Article 19: Children have the right to be protected from being hurt or badly treated.

CCI is also guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) which seeks to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. It applies established human rights principles from the UN Declaration on Human Rights to the situation of people with disabilities. It covers civil and political rights to equal treatment and freedom from discrimination, and social and economic rights in areas like education, health care, employment and transport.

CCI is committed to adhering to the highest standards of behaviour when working with children and vulnerable adults in accordance with the Children First Act 2015, the Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 and the Tusla Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice for the Protection and Welfare of Children.

All have been used to inform this policy.

2. Key safeguarding principles:

- Everyone has a right to freedom from abuse and exploitation.
- The abuse of a child or a vulnerable adult is never acceptable.
- The best interests of the child and vulnerable adult are of paramount importance to CCI and form the basis of the design and operation of all programmes.
- CCI is committed to promoting the safety and wellbeing of all children and vulnerable adults in contact with the organisation, irrespective of what society, community or country they reside in.
- CCI recognises that the organisation has a moral and legal obligation to maintain the highest standards possible in child protection and put in place safeguards to ensure a safe environment for all children and vulnerable adults.
- All allegations of mistreatment will be handled with due diligence, irrespective of whom the allegation has been made against.
- Safety concerns will be dealt with in a robust and transparent process ensuring information is managed confidentially and only shared without consent where the duty to protect the child/vulnerable adult supersedes an individual's right to privacy.
- When CCI faces a suspicion of abuse, action will be taken. However, it will never be the role of any CCI staff member or volunteer to investigate or adjudicate on a suspicion or claim of abuse, only to report the suspicion of abuse.
- Anyone working on behalf of CCI will be subject to safeguarding checks and Garda vetting when eligible, will undergo safeguarding training appropriate to their role and responsibilities and will conduct themselves in line with our Code of Conduct.
- In line with best practice under the Children First: National Guidance, a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) have been

appointed. Staff and volunteers shall be provided with Children First training in accordance with their needs, responsibilities and interactions (if any) with children and vulnerable adults.

3. Scope

This Safeguarding Policy applies to **all** CCI staff both in Ireland and Belarus and to those working for and on behalf of CCI, including:

- Volunteers
- Staff and volunteers of CCI's partner organisations, if any.
- Any person actively involved in CCI's Programmes – details of these Programmes are set out in Appendix 1 attached.

4. Risk assessment

This Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Statement is informed by a risk assessment to assess any potential for harm to a child or vulnerable adult while availing of our services. Below is a list of the areas of risk identified and an outline of the procedures in place for managing these risks.

Risks Identified	Procedure in place to manage identified risk
Risk of abuse while staying with a host family in Ireland	<p>In Ireland, all potential host families are visited by a Group Leader and one other Committee member to ensure the suitability of the host household and family members.</p> <p>Two references for the key host family members are to be provided and checked by the Outreach Group Leader.</p> <p>Every adult member of the host family resident in the household will be Garda Vetted before the placement.</p> <p>Every host family is also notified to Tusla for approval before the placement.</p> <p>A Belarusian interpreter and carer (where a child/young person is from an institution) accompany the children and part of their duties is to engage regularly with the children/young adults to ensure their safety and wellbeing.</p> <p>Before permission is given by the Belarussian Government for an adult to travel with the children/vulnerable adults</p>

Risks Identified	Procedure in place to manage identified risk
	<p>they must complete a special course, which includes child safety, before travelling to Ireland. This course must be repeated every 3 years.</p> <p>There is regular engagement, often daily, with the Outreach Group members and the children/young adults to ensure their safety and wellbeing.</p> <p>Outreach Group Leader, committee members, host families & volunteers to complete Tusla Children First e-learning Programme & other relevant Children First training.</p> <p>When there is a concern or suspicion that a child is at risk action will be taken immediately. In a situation where suspected or reported abuse has occurred in a host family, the child will be removed from the household and into temporary safe accommodation until a permanent solution can be found. In cases of emergency, children or their guardians will be able to contact CCI 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, 365 days per year.</p>
<p>Risk of abuse from volunteers as part of an overseas programme such as the Vesnova Multidisciplinary Team and Dental Team.</p>	<p>CCI commits to the following specific procedures regarding Volunteers in Belarus;</p> <p>All potential volunteers will complete an application form, provide two references which are checked by the Medical Coordinator and complete the Garda vetting process.</p> <p>All potential volunteers will be interviewed by a member of CCI staff.</p> <p>All potential volunteers will attend a team meeting prior to departure.</p> <p>Volunteers travelling to Belarus sign Volunteer Charter and agreement.</p>

Risks Identified	Procedure in place to manage identified risk
	<p>Experienced Team Leader travels with each team.</p> <p>Team Leader & volunteers to complete Tusla Children First e-learning Programme & other relevant Children First training.</p> <p>All volunteer teams are accompanied by a member of CCI staff in Belarus for the duration of their trip.</p>
Risk of abuse by staff employed in Belarus on the Community & Hospice Care Programme	<p>Ensure a safe recruitment policy is in place.</p> <p>A Belarusian Coordinator has oversight of the medical etc. professionals employed.</p> <p>Services are generally provided in the homes of children/vulnerable adults with family members in situ.</p> <p>CCI carries out monitoring visits to families in the programme.</p>
Risk of abuse by staff employed in the Vesnova Institution in Belarus	<p>CCI staff come within the ambit of the Director and senior management of the Vesnova Institution.</p> <p>Regular monitoring visits to Vesnova are carried out by CCI staff in Minsk.</p> <p>Monthly visits by Irish Multidisciplinary Teams include a monitoring and reporting requirement.</p> <p>Oversight by CCI Medical Co-Ordinator.</p>
Cultural differences/difficulties in communication in the host culture	Provision of interpreters both in Ireland and Belarus
That an image or video of a child or vulnerable adult is used inappropriately.	CCI has a social media policy and procedures around taking of images of a child/vulnerable adult and use of same by staff or volunteers. All photos/videos have to be approved in advance by the CCI Communications Officer before they may be posted on social media. CCI ensures that all images are stored securely.

Risks Identified	Procedure in place to manage identified risk
	Consent of parents/guardians and subject is sought, wherever possible, before images or footage is captured.
Risk of abuse by staff or volunteers with CCI funded partners (eg. Novick Cardiac Alliance, Caritas Ukraine)	<p>All team members of Novick Cardiac Alliance are trained in their medical specialty, and are registered practitioners in their country of residence.</p> <p>Children are accompanied by parents or guardians, as much as possible.</p> <p>Team members have no unsupervised or unaccompanied access to children.</p>

5. Procedures to keep children and vulnerable adults safe while participating with CCI

- Chernobyl Children International pledges itself to fulfil all legal obligations regarding child protection under current Government legislation and guidelines; this includes regularly reviewing Garda vetting and recruitment procedures.
- CCI has an appointed Designated Liaison Person (DLP) – Norrie McGregor and a Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) – Marie Cox.
- Every member of the organisation has a responsibility to work together to prevent harm to children and vulnerable adults, however ultimate responsibility for Safeguarding lies with the CCI Board of Directors.
- CCI's Board of Directors has appointed Helen Faughnan as the Board Member with special focus on Safeguarding.
- Ensuring board members, staff and relevant volunteers complete Tusla's e-learning module in relation to the Children First Act, 2015 and other Children First training, as required.
- Where there is a concern for the wellbeing of a child or vulnerable adult, CCI pledges to address the situation in an appropriate and urgent manner. Any suspicion of the sexual or physical abuse of a child in Ireland will be reported to Tusla: The Child and Family Agency or to An Garda Síochána where necessary.
- In Belarus, suspicions of abuse will be reported in an appropriate and urgent manner to CCI's Minsk Office who will report the information to the Inspector for Child Protection or to the Inspector of Militia for the Minors, as appropriate.
- Where there is a suspicion of child sexual abuse committed abroad by an Irish citizen or a person who is normally resident in Ireland, CCI will report that suspicion in an

appropriate and urgent manner to An Garda Síochána and to the Belarusian Inspector for Child Protection or to the Inspector of Militia for the Minors, as appropriate.

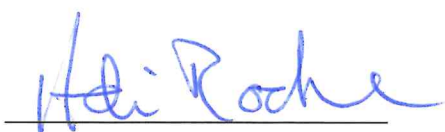
- CCI will support any staff member or volunteer who believes the wellbeing of a child is in danger. This will be done by assisting them in dealing with and reporting suspected mistreatment. CCI will also facilitate and, if necessary, aid staff members and programme participants to find professional help to deal with any issues of stress or discomfort that arise from encountering the mistreatment of a child. The Act Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to a person who, in good faith, reports an allegation or suspicion of abuse to the relevant authorities. An individual need only have a reasonable belief that abuse is occurring to justifiably make a complaint.
- CCI is committed to checking the suitability of all those within the organisation who have contact with children and vulnerable adults. This will be done through interview, application and completing Garda Vetting process and further reference checking. CCI will Garda Vet all volunteers, group leaders, host families and staff. All those over 18 will be Garda vetted and CCI will follow best practice in regard to vetting those under 18.
- CCI will ensure that all images and data are stored securely and are used in an appropriate manner.
- CCI will ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of this policy and the procedures through which they may raise concerns and express their concerns about the welfare of children/vulnerable adults.
- CCI will share this policy on its website and have translated copies available in Belarusian and Ukrainian for sharing with children and their guardians.
- CCI will request in writing that all CCI Funded Partners are aware of and agree to adhere to the principals and procedures outlined in this document.

6. Implementation and Review

CCI recognises that implementation is an ongoing process. Our service is committed to the implementation of this Child & Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children and vulnerable adults safe from harm while availing of our service.

This Child & Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed every two years with the next review to take place in 2025, or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

Signed:



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For queries, please contact Norrie McGregor. Designated Liaison Person under the Children First Act 2015 at nmcgregor@chernobyl-ireland.com

Appendix 1 - Programme Overview

De-institutionalisation Programmes

De-institutionalisation is the process of closing an institution or institutions through the development of a range of family and community based alternative services matching the needs of the children and young adults resident in institutions. Our work on deinstitutionalisation takes us one step closer to ensuring that the 300 institutions across Belarus will one day be redundant and that children will have a life free from incarceration and segregation from society. The deinstitutionalisation programme has two strands, that work in tandem with each other, for children and young adults at different life-stages.

Rights Restoration and Life Skills Home

CCI have pioneered both a Rights Restoration Programme and a Life-Skills Home which enables residents of Vesnova Children's Mental Asylum, who have the capacity to care for themselves, to live a life free from segregation and incarceration in institutions. CCI have built and fully equipped a Life Skills Home, as well as sponsoring a full-time teacher to work with the residents to develop skills and abilities to live independent of institutions.

Chaussy Independent Living Programme

CCI have pioneered a ground-breaking, 18 apartment facility, where participants will have access to supports and accommodation, ensuring a successful transition from institutionalised life to community living.

'Homes of Hope' Programme

Through the purchasing of houses, CCI provides foster places for up to 10 previously institutionalised children. These children are placed into each foster home by the local State officials who have responsibility for ongoing monitoring. CCI has purchased 30 'Homes of Hope' which have provided over 300 children with a family home of their own. We have now begun the 'handing over' process, which gifts the homes to loving families as a token of gratitude for their commitment and dedication to children's welfare. The families who receive the deeds to their homes will continue to foster for many years to come under the supervision of the Belarusian Government

Independent Living Project

Two Independent Living Home for boys and girls built at Vesnova consisting of a terrace of six houses of mixed accommodation, home to 15 boys and girls; and a large, five-bedroomed house built by CCI for girls only. These teenagers have learned to live independently and undertake life-skills training and vocational workshops.

Community House

The 'next step' involves having older young adults move into a 'step down' house in the nearby town whereby we would slowly introduce them to independent living, supported by a carer, with the ultimate aim being that these young adults will be actively living and working in the community.

Training workshops

CCI refurbished and equipped an outhouse building and turned it into a training workshop. CCI employs a teacher to implement life-skills training and vocational workshops for young adults in the Independent Living Programme on the grounds of Vesnova. Classrooms in Vesnova are used to teach residents skills such as carpentry, pottery, basket-making, knitting and crochet.

Multi – Disciplinary Teams

Vesnova Children’s Mental Asylum Nursing Care Programme

Vesnova is currently home to 174 children with varying levels of disabilities and CCI’s Multi-Disciplinary teams provides enhanced care, in particular for those with severe disabilities. . As well as sending regular Multi- Disciplinary team’s CCI employs 22 staff on this programme.

Monthly Irish volunteer multi-disciplinary teams help to deliver care plans for each child. CCI have also enhanced the level of training and educational opportunities afforded each child.

Dental Programme

The Irish Volunteer Dental teamwork with the Nursing and Care staff to ensure high levels of oral care and hygiene for the children. This programme has recently expanded to become a mobile dental facility, to include 48 children on our Hospice Programme in Minsk and Gomel.

Cardiac Programme

CCI fund life-saving cardiac surgery missions each year in Ukraine, through US Charity, Novick Cardiac Alliance. CCI also provides state of the art equipment and technology for the Cardiac Programme.

Community Hospice and Palliative Care Programme

CCI supports families with children who suffer from life-limiting illnesses and disabilities to deliver therapeutic and personal services in the loving care of their family homes. Each family is assigned a palliative care team comprised of a doctor, nurse, social worker and psychologist. The team makes home visits to supervise the child’s care, provides medication and supplies at no cost and evaluates the social and emotional needs of all family members. Multi-disciplinary teams also provide physiotherapy and therapeutic massage to ensure that the children are in as little pain as possible.

As part of this development programme, CCI also upskills and trains local therapeutic professionals to design support plans for each family and complete a needs assessment for each child. Daily and weekly therapeutic and nursing visits, monitoring and social supports make it possible for these high-risk families to stay together as a unit.

Rest and Recuperation

CCI are committed to giving sick children and young adults the respite they need from the radioactive environment in which they are forced to live. Volunteer host families give children an opportunity to enjoy a recuperative stay in Ireland away from the heightened radioactive environment in which they live. Many children and young adults on this programme live in an institution or impoverished backgrounds.

Humanitarian Aid to Ukraine

In response to the war in Ukraine, CCI fund humanitarian aid deliveries to families living in the Chernobyl affected regions of Ukraine with the charity 'Caritas Ukraine'. This includes food, water, hygiene supplies, firewood, wood-burning stoves and lamps.

Summer Camps

CCI fund specially-designed Summer camps for children and young adults to give them respite from institutionalised life in Belarus, or the warzone in Ukraine. These camps address their specific needs and gives the participants a break from the negative impact and trauma they may have faced in their day-to-day. These camps are State regulated & very well supervised.

