



Irish Society of
Homeopaths

The Homeopaths Responsibility for the Protection and Welfare of Children

This policy applies to all Society Registered Homeopaths

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The Principles

The individual Homeopathic Practitioner, as a member of the Irish Society of Homeopaths are committed to promoting the health and welfare of all children and young people and protecting them from harm. We all want what is best for children and while it is not possible to eliminate all risk of harm, we need to collectively and individually remain attentive and focused to the needs of children in our professional and personal lives. We must commit to ensuring full compliance with the law and policies governing Children First in Ireland.

Presently, Homeopaths are private providers of a health delivery service. Of vital importance is the need for everyone to understand that we are all responsible. We are all required to act and we are all required to report to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency any concerns or knowledge that strongly suggests that a child has been or is likely to be harmed.

While at times it can be difficult to acknowledge or accept, evidence shows that every child and young person can be hurt, put at risk of harm or abuse, regardless of their age, gender, religion or ethnicity. Harm or abuse can occur in any place that one finds a child or a group of children, their home, school or community. Consequently, raising awareness in this critical area to protect the welfare of children is essential to protect them from harm or abuse.

There are two agencies in Ireland that have responsibilities set out in law regarding the care and protection of children. These are Tusla, the Child and Family Agency and An Garda Síochána (The Irish Police Force).

This document explains the individual Homeopathic Practitioners roles and responsibility in relation to child protection and welfare.

The full policy of The Irish Society of Homeopaths is available for download in the Member's Area of the Society website www.irishhomeopathy.ie

What is The Irish Society Child Protection and Welfare Policy Statement

The intention of the Irish Society of Homeopaths is that the welfare of children is of paramount importance and that each homeopath is equipped to prevent harm to children and where there are concerns, able to deal with this confidently. The Society and the individual Homeopaths has a duty to cooperate with the statutory authorities (Tusla, the Child and Family Agency and An Garda Síochána) in the sharing of information and records as appropriate.

The Society is mindful that all Children have a right to be heard and taken seriously. They must be treated with sensitivity, respect and dignity. The Society appoints a DLP who can support members in a situation where there is Child Welfare/Protection Concerns. It is important that every Homeopath working with children and families is aware of their own role and the role of other professionals. This requires training in this area.

Roles and Responsibility in respect to this policy

The Homeopath is a private practitioner in the Health delivery service. For the purpose of dealing with suspected cases of child abuse, the Homeopath functions by:

1. Identifying and recording Child Welfare and Protection concerns.
2. Providing Information to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency and/or the Garda Siochana about Child Protection and Welfare Concerns under the Children's First Act 2015.
3. Keep up to date with best practice guidelines in relation to child protection.

Key Messages within this policy include:

- We are all responsible for promoting the welfare of children and keeping them safe from harm.
- Children have a right to be heard and taken seriously. They must be consulted and involved in all matters and decisions that may affect their lives with due regard to their age and level of understanding.
- Parents/Guardians/carers have a right to respect and should be consulted and involved unless doing so creates additional risks.
- All homeopaths are encouraged to complete training in An Introduction to Child Protection and Welfare.
- To work together with other agencies in the interest of children.
- If in doubt consult the Child Protection Designated Liaison Person (DLP) for the Society, and/or relevant Designated Liaison Person with the HSE, and/or Tusla the Child and Family Agency and/or a member of the Garda Siochana.
- For the Designated Liaison Person phone the office at 01-8168830.

Key messages relating to our duty to protect children include:

- That the safety and welfare of children is everyone's responsibility and children will have safer lives when everyone is attentive to their well-being.
- That people who work with children understand their responsibilities for safe practice.
- That good child protection practice requires a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach.
- That we provide clarity and guidance for individuals and the organisation.
- That we maintain confidentiality and ensure that no personal information about a person should ever be divulged except for the protection or welfare of a child or following agreed procedures.

The definitions of Child Abuse and Welfare Concerns:

Neglect can be defined in terms of omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, and/or medical care,

Emotional Abuse is normally found in the relationship between a parent/carer and a child rather than a specific event, or a once off act. It occurs when a child's developmental need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs and symptoms. Examples may include:

- The imposition of negative attributes on children.
- Conditional parenting in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his/her behaviours or actions.
- Emotional unavailability of the child's parent/guardian.
- Premature imposition of responsibility on the child.
- Unrealistic and inappropriate expectations of the child's capacity to understand something or to behave or control himself in a certain way.
- Under or over protection of the child.
- Use of unreasonable or over harsh disciplinary measures.
- Exposure to domestic violence.
- Exposure to inappropriate or abusive material through new technology

Physical Abuse is the physical abuse of children that results in physical harm from the interaction, or lack of interaction, which is reasonable without the control of the parent or person in position of responsibility, power or trust. Examples can involve:

- Severe physical punishment.
- Beating, slapping, hitting or kicking.
- Pushing, shaking or throwing.
- Pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling.
- Terrorising with threats.
- Suffocation.
- Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child.

Sexual Abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his/her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others. Examples include:

- Exposure to sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of the child.
- Intentional touching or molesting of a child's body.
- Masturbation in the presence of a child.
- Sexual intercourse with a child.
- Sexual exploitation of a child.
- Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person.

Child Welfare Concerns

Some concerns do not fit within a categorisation of abuse and relate to the ongoing welfare of a child. It is a problem experienced directly by the child and the family that impacts negatively on the child's welfare and development but may or may not require a child protection response.

Disclosure of Historical Abuse

Disclosures of historical abuse can present particular challenges for the Homeopath receiving the information; and for Tusla, the Child and Family Agency assessing the concern. A particular concern relates to the adult client's vulnerability [e.g. to self harm, suicide, psychological distress] or any potential risk of physical/ psychological harm to the client by others. These must all be considered in the context of making a report based on the information received regarding past abuse. However, concern for the welfare of the adult must be balanced against information that suggests current risk to any child who may be in contact with an alleged abuser revealed in such disclosures including unidentified children. The welfare of the child is paramount and while steps also need to be taken to secure the welfare of any vulnerable adult, reporting such concerns to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency should be made as soon as practicable. The threshold of response by Tusla, the Child and Family Agency is the same as in any other child protection and welfare report where there are reasonable grounds for concerns.

“The response to an allegation by an adult of abuse experienced as a child must be of as high a standard as that provided to current abuse concerns because there is sufficient possibility that a person who abused a child in the past is likely to have continued abusing children and may still be doing so; the prospect of criminal prosecution remains open to An Garda Síochána”. (Child and Family Agency: Policy and Procedures for Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse and Neglect, Section 2.5, page 8).

If a concern is identified that children may be at risk even if the children are unidentified, the health professional must follow the HSE Reporting Procedure and report the allegation to the Child and Family Agency in the area where the alleged perpetrator lives, if this information is known. Otherwise it should be reported to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency in the area where the children live. The adult who has disclosed past abuse should be informed in advance that a report is being made and the reporting procedures should be explained to them if not already known. If the health professional is unsure if children may be at risk they should consult with Tusla, the Child and Family Agency without delay.

The National Counselling Service has developed a form for the recording of historical abuse. If this form is used it must be appended to the Standard Report Form when making a report to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. The need to refer an adult for counselling, treatment or other support services should also be considered. The HSE National Counselling Service is available to offer counselling to any adult who has experienced abuse in childhood.

Dealing with Disclosure

If you receive an anonymous report you should;

- Outline that Tusla's capacity to respond is limited when the report is anonymous.
- Remind the person making the report that child protection is everyone's responsibility.
- Encourage and support the person to reconsider the issue.

If you receive a report directly from a person suspecting child abuse you should:

- Clarify with the person making the report that he/she is making a formal report.
- Inform that person that they are protected in law from civil liability if the report to you is reasonable and in good faith.
- Establish if reasonable grounds exist.

How to establish if reasonable grounds exist

You examine the information which has been reported to you and ask questions if necessary to give further clarity:

- A specific indication from a child that they were abused or are at risk of abuse.
- A statement/report (verbal or written) from a person who allegedly witnessed the abuse occurring.
- An injury, illness or behaviour consistent with the abuse.
- Corroborative evidence of deliberate harm or negligence.
- Consistent signs of neglect over a period of time.
- A suspicion not supported by any objective signs does not constitute a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern.

What you record when receiving Child Protection and Welfare Concerns

The ability of Tusla, the Child and Family Agency Social Work Department Services to assess child protection or welfare concerns will depend on the amount and quality of information conveyed to them by members reporting concerns.

As much as possible of the following details should be provided in the Standard Report Form:

- Name, address and age of the child about whom the report is made.
- The name of the child's school.
- The name and address of the reporter.
- The contact number and the occupation of the reporter.
- The relationship of the child to the reporter.
- A full account of what constitutes the grounds for concern in relation to the welfare and protection of the child or children e.g. details of the allegations, incident, dates, description of any injuries etc.
- The name and address of the parents/guardians/carers.
- The names of other children in the household.
- Ethnicity, first language, religion of the child and parents/guardians/carer.
- Any need for interpreter, signer or other communication aid.
- Any special needs of the child and other household members.

- Any significant recent or historical events in the child's or family life, including previous concerns.
- Background information relevant to the report e.g. positive aspects of parental care, previous concerns, pertinent parental issues (such as mental health, domestic violence, drug or alcohol abuse, threats and violence towards professionals).
- The name, address of the person causing concern in relation to the child.
- The child's/parent's/guardians/carer's own views, if known and relevant.
- The name and address of other known personal or agencies involved with the child or children e.g. G.P., social worker, public health nurse, midwife, Garda etc.
- Information regarding parental knowledge of, agreement to, the report.
- Any other relevant information.
- In the case of disclosure by adults of child abuse, all available detail on the alleged perpetrator should be included and the report forwarded to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency in the area where the alleged perpetrator resides.

Notes should be factual, accurate and legible. Each entry should be signed and dated with the time recorded accurately. Files should be stored securely. Documentation and letters should be stored securely and in a place, that upholds the confidential nature of the information.

There are three main types of report

(1) Suspected child abuse of which there are four categories:

- Physical Abuse.
- Emotional Abuse.
- Sexual Abuse.
- Neglect.

(2) A child welfare report that reports where the circumstances of a child indicate he/she is experiencing difficulty in one or more aspects of their lives due to issues which are present in the lives of their parents/guardians/carers or other family members.

(3) Anonymous reports, they can cause difficulties for Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. Homeopaths who receive an anonymous report should make the person aware that the capacity of Tusla, the Child and Family Agency to respond to a report is more limited when reports are made anonymously. However, where the Homeopath receives an anonymous report concerning a child protection and /or welfare concern the Irish Society of Homeopaths Reporting procedure should be followed and the information shared with Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. The Irish Society of Homeopaths DLP has statutory responsibility under the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 and therefore cannot report anonymously or request anonymity. All Homeopathic Practitioners have a duty of care to safeguard children and when making reports to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency in their professional capacity there should be no expectation of anonymity. DLP of external services, where reporting in their professional capacity, should comply with their organisation's Child Protection Policy and should not report anonymously. Anonymity should never be promised since it cannot be guaranteed (see Children First 2011, Sections 3.9-3.11 and 5.15).

Reports made by professionals cannot be anonymous and must be made in the knowledge that during the course of enquiries, it will be made clear to the parents/guardians/carers of a child who originated the report.

What you do if reasonable grounds for concern exist

Use the Standard Reporting Form (see attached or available from the Social Work Department). The form and any other information should be sent to a social worker in Tusla, the Children and Families Agency.

If you believe the concern is urgent and that there is imminent risk to a child make the report by telephone and then follow it up with the form.

The quality of the information you provide will influence the ability of the social work department to respond. If you intend to contact the Social Work Department, you should firstly inform the parents/guardians/carers of the child concerned, unless there is good reason not to do so.

Should a member of the public make contact with you indicating they are concerned about a child who may be at risk you should advise them to make contact directly with a social worker in Tusla, the Child and Family Agency.

Each weekday there is a social worker on duty with the specific task of receiving such reports. For information on how to contact Tusla in your area please see here: <http://www.tusla.ie/get-in-touch/local-area-offices>

It is important to be aware of the following:

DON'T assume they will be able to easily contact the social worker on duty.

DON'T assume they will have the confidence to express their concern again as it will not necessarily have been easy for them to raise it with you.

DON'T guarantee them absolute anonymity but you can advise them that normally names of members of the public are not revealed without this being discussed further with the social worker. There may be other events such as court proceedings or Garda investigations where this is not possible.

DO help them to contact the duty social worker by ringing the nearest Health Centre and finding out who is on duty that day and how they can be contacted.

DO advise the member of the public to report to the Gardaí if they believe the concern is urgent and it is outside normal working hours or they can't access help elsewhere.

Remember if in doubt, check it out. If you are concerned about the safety of a child and are unsure what to do talk to a Tusla social worker or in an emergency where you believe the risk is real and immediate and you cannot contact anyone call the Gardaí.

Reporting Procedure for reporting child protection and welfare concerns (figure 1)



Note 1: Out of hours in emergency cases or in emergency situations where the Duty Social Worker is unavailable the Homeopath will make contact with An Garda Síochána. A copy of the Standard Report Form should be forward to the DLP.

Note 2: Parents are informed that a referral is being made unless doing so is likely to increase the risk to the child.

What happens after a Homeopath makes a report to the Tusla, Child and Family Agency Social Workers

The social worker will further screen the report you have made. An intake record will be completed after which the case will either be closed or proceed to an initial assessment. After the initial assessment the case will be classified as:

- Closed no further action.
- Suspected child abuse requiring a child protection response. The Gardaí are notified by the social work team in such instances.
- Welfare, requiring a family support approach.

Feedback to Referrers

Reports received by Tusla, the Child and Family Agency should be acknowledged and the referrer informed of the next likely steps as appropriate to their role. If an acknowledgement is not received and it appears that no action has been taken, the referrer can contact Tusla the Child and Family Agency by phone or letter or submit a new report through the electronic report system that will append the previous reports and copy all reports to the DLP.

It is the policy of the Irish Society of Homeopaths that individual Homeopathic Practitioners will work cooperatively with partner agencies and provide necessary assistance when appropriate and proportionate. This may involve:

- Provision of information
- Preparing a report
- Attending a Strategy Meeting or Child Protection Conference
- Attendance at court

The Homeopaths role after making a report to the Tusla, Child and Family Agency Social Workers

This depends on a number of factors. After you submit the Standard Reporting Form to the social work department you may, depending on your professional competence, setting and dealings with the child/family be requested to:

- Co-work the assessment of the case.
- Attend subsequent Tusla convened meetings to discuss the concern and the response to same.
- Be called to provide evidence if Court proceedings follow.

The social work team will assume overall responsibility for the management of the case, based on the report you have submitted.

Training for child protection and welfare

It is the policy of the Irish Society of Homeopaths that all Homeopaths should undertake the free online training in respect of Children First on the Tusla website here:

<http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/children-first-e-learning-programme>

References

<http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/children-first-guidance-and-legislation/>

http://www.dcy.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=%2Fdocuments%2FChildren_First%2FChildrenFirstLegislation.htm

Please refer to these websites for useful information

The HSE Children First Website:

http://www.dcy.gov.ie/docs/HSE_Statement:_Children_First_National_Guidance_2011/1593.htm

Tusla Website:

http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Child_Protection_and_Welfare_Report_Form_FINAL.pdf

<http://tusla.ie>