



Responding to and reporting child protection or welfare concerns in the Republic of Ireland (ROI)

This document should be read alongside the RSC safeguarding policy and the RSC safeguarding procedures and processes

The RSC is committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of children while they are participating in activities run on behalf of the RSC. The RSC adheres to the requirements of the 2015 Act and the National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2017, issued by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and requires those who run activities on its behalf to do so.

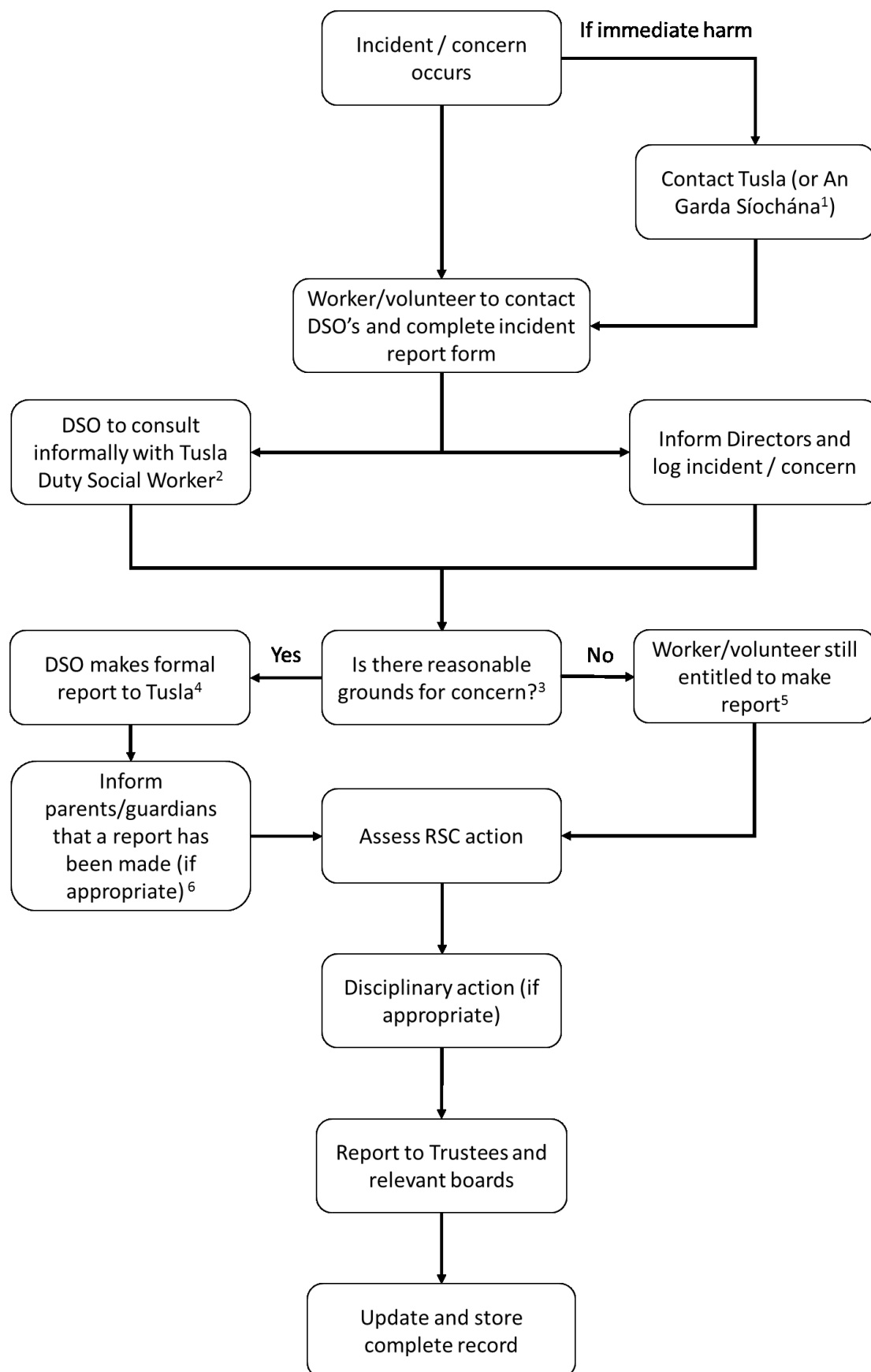
All members and volunteers in the ROI have a responsibility to safeguard children and young people and to report any concerns they may have for the protection or welfare of a child/young person. Tusla has statutory responsibility for the protection and welfare of children and An Garda Síochána has responsibility for the investigation of suspected criminal offences.

The RSC has Designated Safeguarding Officers in the UK. They have been appointed as the relevant persons under the 2015 Act and are the first point of contact for the RSC Child Safeguarding Statement. Their role is to receive child protection and welfare concerns from members and volunteers in the ROI and report concerns, which meet the threshold of 'reasonable grounds for concern' to Tusla. The guiding principle when a child protection or welfare report has to be made to Tusla is that the safety and wellbeing of the child takes priority over all other considerations.

The RSC's Designated Safeguarding Officers (and relevant persons) for the time being are:

Rio Hutchings and Magda Van Leeuwen
Thomas Graham House, Science Park, Milton Road, Cambridge CB4 0WF
Telephone: +44 (0) 1223 420066
Email: safeguarding@rsc.org

Process for reporting



Further detail

1. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a situation that exposes him or her to harm or risk of harm pending intervention by Tusla. If you think the child is in immediate danger and you cannot [contact Tusla](#), you should contact [An Garda Síochána](#). In an emergency call 999/112.
2. *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* states that “Tusla should always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected”. The DSOs should seek advice and guidance through an informal consultation with the Tusla Social Work office in the child/young person’s area if unsure whether a report should be made. Contact details for Child and Family Agency Social Workers (by county) can be found on the [Tusla website](#).
3. The reasonable grounds for a child protection or welfare concern are:
 - Evidence that is consistent with abuse and unlikely to have been caused in any other way. This evidence, for example, could be in the form of an injury or behaviour.
 - Any concern about possible sexual abuse.
 - Consistent signs that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.
 - A child saying or indicating by other means that he or she has been abused.
 - Admission or indication by an adult or a child of an alleged abuse they committed.
 - An account from a person who saw the child being abused
4. Tusla has two forms for reporting child protection and welfare concerns – the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form (CPWRF) and the Retrospective Abuse Report Form (RARF). The Child Protection and Welfare Report Form (CPWRF) is to be completed and submitted to Tusla for concerns about children under the age of 18. A [web portal](#) has been developed to allow for the secure submission of CPWRFs to Tusla. The RARF is to be completed and submitted to Tusla for cases of adults disclosing childhood abuse (not currently available through web portal). Hardcopies of both forms (along with guidance notes) can be found on the [Tusla website](#). Once completed they should be sent to the [Duty Social Work team](#) in the area where the child resides
5. If the Designated Safeguarding Officers decide not to make a report, the worker/volunteer with the reasonable concern is still entitled to make a report to Tusla under *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*, should they wish to do so. The individual worker has protections under the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998, should they report independently. *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* states that if a concern is not reported to Tusla, the following steps should be taken:
 - The reasons for not reporting are to be recorded;
 - If any actions are taken as a result of the concern, these should be recorded;
 - The worker or volunteer who raised the concern should be given a clear written explanation of the reasons why the concern is not being reported to Tusla;
 - The worker or volunteer should be advised that if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free to make a report to Tusla or An Garda Síochána.

The worker or volunteer who raised the concern should also be reassured that if they do choose to further pursue the matter, they are covered by the Protections for Persons

Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998. Consideration must also be given to responsibilities under the Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012, which are in addition to any reporting requirements under the Children First Act 2015 or *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*.

6. It is usually good practice to tell the family that you are making a report to Tusla. This means that the family is fully informed about the services they are being referred to and understand what information professionals are passing on and why. However, there are some exceptions to informing the family, such as:
 - Informing the parents/guardians is likely to endanger the child or young person;
 - Informing the parents/guardians may place you as the reporter at risk of harm from the family;
 - The family's knowledge of the report could impair Tusla's ability to carry out an assessment.

References:

1. Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice
2. Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children
3. Tusla: A Guide for the Reporting of Child Protection and Welfare Concerns