An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



Child Safeguarding Statement

The mission of the Heritage Council (HC) is to ensure that our heritage is nurtured, managed and conserved to enrich the lives of people now and in the future. In order to secure a legacy of appreciation for the intrinsic value of heritage, it is essential to engage children and young people with the natural and cultural heritage that surrounds them.

SERVICE BEING PROVIDED

The HC offers services to and for children for the purposes of engagement and education through the provision of the Heritage In Schools (HIS) Scheme. This education programme provides a panel of 140-160 Heritage Specialists and facilitates visits to primary and post-primary schools nationwide. The aim of this scheme is to promote the outdoor classroom and encourage both teachers and pupils to engage with their local heritage in a hands-on, interactive and meaningful way. The HC also engages with young people through Heritage Officer projects, other education and grant aided projects, consultations and focus groups.

PRINCIPLES TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN FROM HARM

The HIS Scheme operates according to the key principle that the welfare of children is of paramount importance. It is our policy that any group or organisation that receives support from the HC and provides services to children must comply with the HC's child protection policy and procedures. The HC is committed to ensuring, so far as is possible, that children are protected from harm while in the company of HC staff, HIS Specialists or with those working on behalf of the HC. In order to foster a culture of safety that promotes the welfare and protection of children, the HC has put in place a standard reporting procedure for dealing with disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse. The safety and well-being of the child must always take priority.

The HC undertakes to fulfill its statutory obligations under the Children First Act 2015 and to adhere to the *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The HC has undertaken a Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment in respect of potential risks of harm to children arising from the provision of relevant services. Below is a list of the areas of risk identified and the list of procedures for managing these risks.

RISK IDENTIFIED	PROCEDURE IN PLACE TO MANAGE RISK IDENTIFIED
1 Unsanctioned recirculation of photographic, audio or video recordings featuring children, without parental consent	The HC's Child Protection Policy includes clear procedures for taking and circulating photographic, audio or video recordings featuring children. Staff are required to sign a Staff Declaration Form certifying that that have read and will abide by our Child Protection policies and procedures. The HIS booking page clearly states that no photo, video, or audio recording of sessions is permitted by participants without prior consent.
2 Inability of staff members or HIS Specialists to properly recognise 'harm'	HIS Specialists and relevant HC staff are required to complete the *Tusla Children First E-Learning Programme*, renew certificates every three years and be familiar with the HC Child Protection Policy and Child Safeguarding Statement.
3 Incident of inappropriate behaviour by a member of staff or HIS Specialist	HIS Specialists are Garda vetted every three years and adhere to the HC's code of practice when on Council premises, in a school or visiting a heritage site. HIS Specialists must attend child protection training and sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or framework agreement with the HC, clearly outlining their responsibilities around child protection. All specialists are issued with photo ID and the HC maintains oversight of the scheme through the online booking process, evaluation forms and mentoring of new panellists. Staff are required to sign a Staff Declaration Form certifying that they have read and will abide by our Child Protection policies and procedures.

4 Inadequate supervision of children	When making a booking, schools are required to confirm that 'the class teacher will be present at all times and that the Heritage Specialist will not be left alone at any time with the pupils.' Mandatory adult/child ratios outlined in the Child Protection Policy must be adhered to during HIS visits.
5 Inadequate security for online workshops	Strict online security protocols are in place for live online calls including a pre-visit call to discuss security settings, platform for delivery and the teacher's role in the virtual visit. Live online calls are delivered as single sessions to one group at a time. When submitting a booking the school confirms that parental consent has been obtained for participating children.
6 Incident of individuals who have not been Garda vetted by the HC accompanying HIS Specialists on school visits	HIS Specialists must attend child protection training and sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or framework agreement with the HC, clearly outlining their responsibilities around child protection. All specialists are issued with photo ID and the HC maintains oversight of visits through the online booking process and post visit evaluations from schools. Specialists may not be accompanied on school visits by an individual who has not been Garda vetted by the HC.
7 Incident of inappropriate behaviour by a grant beneficiary	Grant beneficiaries delivering services to children must comply with Children First requirements and, where required by legislation, maintain and implement a Child Safeguarding Statement.
8 Inappropriate digital communication or online interaction with children and young people	HC staff and HIS Specialists must not engage in direct private communication with children or young people through personal email, social media, messaging apps or personal devices. All online engagement must take place through approved channels and under the supervision of the school, parent/guardian or responsible adult, as appropriate. Where online workshops, consultations or focus groups are delivered, they must be conducted in accordance with the HC's Child Protection Policy, online safety guidance and established safeguarding procedures.

PROCEDURES

Our Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, the Children First: National Guidance, and Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice. In addition to the procedures listed in our risk assessment, the following procedures support our intention to safeguard children while they are availing of our services:

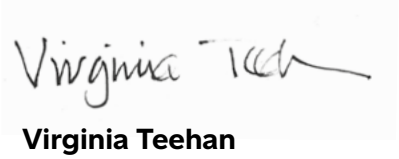
- Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against a staff member or HIS Specialist of a child availing of our service
- Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of HIS Specialists
- Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm
- Procedure for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla
- Procedure for maintaining a list of mandated persons
- Procedure for appointment of a relevant person

All procedures listed are available upon request.

IMPLEMENTATION

We recognise that implementation is an ongoing process. Our service is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while availing of our service. This Child Safeguarding Statement was formally approved by the Board of the HC on 17 September 2026 and will be reviewed every 24 months, 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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