



Howth Sutton Autism friendly Community, Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy

1 Introduction

Howth Sutton Autism Friendly Community, is committed to safeguarding the welfare of children and vulnerable adults involved in our activities. This policy outlines our approach to protecting these individuals, ensuring compliance with Irish legislation and best practice guidelines.

2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to protect children and vulnerable adults involved in HSAFC activities by providing a clear framework for safeguarding, promoting a culture of safety and respect, and ensuring compliance with relevant legislation and best practice.

3 Scope

This policy applies to all activities, programmes, events, projects and initiatives organised, delivered or supported by HSAFC, whether provided directly by HSAFC or in partnership with other organisations.

It applies to all committee members, volunteers, members, participants, parents, guardians, contractors, partner organisations and visitors who are involved in ,or attend HSAFC activities.

All individuals involved in HSAFC activities are expected to support and uphold the principles of this policy and to play their part in creating a safe, respectful and inclusive environment for children and vulnerable adults.

4 Legal Framework

This policy has been developed in accordance with the following legislation and guidelines:

Children First Act 2015

Child Care Act 1991

Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012

National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012-2016

Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse – National Policy & Procedures (HSE, 2014)

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017)

Safeguarding: National Framework (HSE, 2019)

National Policy Framework for Adult Safeguarding in the Health and Social Care Sector,
2025

5 Definitions

Child: Anyone under the age of 18, or in the event they are in full-time secondary, or equivalent education, up to the age of 19.

Vulnerable Adult: A person aged 18 years or over [apart from above] who is participating in HSAFC activities and who, because of disability, autism, health condition or other circumstances, may require additional support or reasonable accommodations to participate safely and fully in community activities.

Safeguarding: Measures to protect individuals from abuse, neglect, and harm.

6 Safeguarding Culture

HSAFC is committed to promoting a culture where safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All committee members, volunteers and participants are encouraged to raise concerns in good faith, knowing that concerns will be taken seriously, handled appropriately and without fear of disadvantage or retaliation.

Safeguarding Principles

Our safeguarding principles include:

The welfare of the child and vulnerable adult is paramount.

All individuals have an equal right to protection from harm.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

All concerns about the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult should be reported.

7 Recruitment and Selection

The Committee shall appoint a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and a Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP) to oversee safeguarding matters within HSAFC.

The DLP is responsible for receiving safeguarding concerns, maintaining safeguarding records, seeking advice where appropriate and making reports to Tusla, the HSE and/or An Garda Síochána where required.

In the absence of the DLP, these responsibilities shall be undertaken by the Deputy DLP.

The names and contact details of the DLP and Deputy DLP shall be communicated to all committee members, volunteers and relevant participants and reviewed annually by the Committee.

All committee members and volunteers with direct contact with children or vulnerable adults will undergo Garda Vetting.

References will be checked for these individuals

A comprehensive interview process will assess the suitability for working with children and vulnerable adults.

8 Code of Conduct

Staff and volunteers will adhere to HSAFC Code of Conduct

Any physical punishment or verbal chastisement is strictly prohibited

Staff and volunteers should treat all children and vulnerable adults with respect.

Personal relationships between staff/volunteers and children/vulnerable adults are strictly prohibited

Parent and Carer Responsibilities

HSAFC is a community organisation that provides inclusive and autism-friendly activities and events. Unless expressly agreed otherwise in advance, parents, guardians and carers remain responsible for the supervision, welfare and safety of children and vulnerable adults attending HSAFC activities.

HSAFC volunteers and committee members are not responsible for providing individual care, supervision or personal support unless this has been specifically arranged and communicated in advance.

9 Recognizing and Responding to Abuse

Any concerns about the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult should be reported immediately to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP).

The DLP is responsible for making reports to Tusla (for children) or the HSE (for vulnerable adults) as appropriate.

10 Reporting Procedures

If a staff member or volunteer receives a disclosure, they will immediately liaise with the DLP

If a staff member or volunteer suspects abuse, they must report their concerns to the DLP

The DLP will assess the concern and decide whether to make a formal report to Tusla or the HSE.

Should the DLP decide against reporting to Tusla/ HSE he will inform the staff member /volunteer of his decision and reason.

The staff member /volunteer has the right to report concerns directly to Tusla/ HSE themselves

In emergencies, where immediate risk is present, it is the Policy of HSAFC to contact the Gardaí and then inform the DLP.

11 Safeguarding Records

All safeguarding concerns, disclosures, allegations and incidents shall be recorded in writing as soon as reasonably practicable after the concern arises.

Records should be factual, dated and signed by the person making the report and stored securely with access restricted to those with a legitimate safeguarding responsibility.

Safeguarding records shall be retained and managed in accordance with HSAFC's Data Protection and Privacy Policy and any applicable legal requirements.

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12 Confidentiality

Information regarding possible abuse should be shared only on a need-to-know basis.

The confidentiality of all parties involved shall be respected and kept, except where disclosures are necessary to protect an individual.

13 Allegations Against Staff, Volunteers, Committee Members or Office Holders

HSAFC is committed to ensuring that all concerns relating to the safety and welfare of children and vulnerable adults are taken seriously, including concerns involving staff, volunteers, committee members or office holders.

Any allegation, concern or complaint relating to the conduct of a staff member, volunteer, committee member or office holder towards a child or vulnerable adult must be reported immediately to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP).

Where the allegation concerns the DLP, the matter shall be reported directly to the Chairperson or only in the absence of the Chairperson, the Deputy DLP.

The safety and welfare of the child or vulnerable adult will be the primary consideration in all cases. HSAFC will cooperate fully with Tusla, the HSE, An Garda Síochána and any other relevant statutory authority in the investigation of safeguarding concerns.

Pending assessment or investigation, HSAFC may take appropriate interim measures, including the temporary withdrawal of duties or suspension from activities, where necessary to protect children, vulnerable adults, volunteers or the organisation.

All allegations and concerns will be treated confidentially, handled fairly and recorded in accordance with HSAFC's Safeguarding and Data Protection policies.

HSAFC recognises that raising a safeguarding concern can be difficult, particularly within a close-knit community. Any volunteer, staff member, committee member or participant who

reports a safeguarding concern in good faith will be supported and will not be disadvantaged for doing so, even where the concern is not subsequently substantiated.

14 Online Safety, Photography and Communications

HSAFC recognises the importance of maintaining safe and appropriate communications with children, vulnerable adults and families.

Staff, volunteers and committee members shall not engage in private or inappropriate online communication with children or vulnerable adults through personal social media accounts, messaging platforms or other digital channels.

Communications relating to HSAFC activities should be appropriate, transparent and, where possible, include parents, guardians or another responsible adult.

Photographs, videos or recordings of children or vulnerable adults shall only be taken, stored or used where appropriate consent has been obtained and in accordance with HSAFC's Data Protection and Privacy Policy.

All digital communications and media content must uphold the dignity, privacy and safety of participants.

15 Training

An assessment of the training requirements for the organisation will be performed.

All HSAFC volunteers will receive training on safeguarding policies and procedures.

Regular updates and refresher training will be provided.

16 Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or following significant incidents or legislative changes.

Feedback from staff, volunteers, and service users will be sought to improve the policy.

17 References

- Children First Act 2015. Available at: [Irish Statute Book](<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/36/enacted/en/html>)
- Child Care Act 1991. Available at: [Irish Statute Book](<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1991/act/17/enacted/en/html>)
- Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012. Available at: [Irish Statute Book](<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2012/act/24/enacted/en/html>)
- National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012-2016. Available at: [Irish Statute Book](<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2012/act/47/enacted/en/html>)
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse – National Policy & Procedures (HSE, 2014). Available at: [HSE](<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/corporate/personsatriskofabuse.pdf>)
- Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017). Available at: [Tusla](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Children_First_National_Guidance_2017.pdf)
- Adult Safeguarding: National Framework (HSE, 2019). Available at: [HSE](<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/corporate/adult-safeguarding-national-framework.pdf>)

HSAFC Designated Liaison Person {DLP}:



Gustavo Bernstein, Relevant Person under the Children First Act 2015.
Tel: 087 121 0434

HSAFC Deputy Designated Liaison Person {DDLDP}



Bredeen Keane,
Tel: 087 427 4778

HSAFC Chairperson



Gillian Molyneaux
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