



## CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT

**Chair:** Claire Missen

**Date:** 24<sup>th</sup> January 2024

**Signed:** *Claire Missen*

CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT

**Name of Service**

Pact is an accredited adoption agency under Section 4 (e, f & g) of the Adoption Act, 2010. We are a national service and employ a Principal Social Worker to oversee a panel of ad hoc social workers to undertake assessment work as allocated by Tusla as well as a small number of fostering Assessments to fill the Pact panel of short term, temporary, pre-adoptive foster carers. All social workers are regionally based and can visit applicants in their own localities. All social workers employed by Pact are Garda Vetted and all social workers are accredited by CORU, [www.coru.ie](http://www.coru.ie), the statutory body with responsibility for the registration of health and social care professionals and are experienced in the fields of adoption, fostering and child welfare.

**Nature of service and principles to safeguard children from harm**

Pact provides the following services:

- Undertaking assessments/home study reports to determine eligibility and suitability for both inter-country and domestic (including stepparent) adoption.
- Birth parent counselling service in stepparent assessments
- Offering child placements to Tusla for short-term, temporary pre-adoption foster care where birth mothers living in Ireland who are considering adoption as an option for their babies.
- Recruiting, training and assessing short term temporary foster carers.

The key principles that inform the agency's approach to best practice in child protection and welfare are:

- The welfare of children is of paramount importance.
- Early intervention and support should be available to promote the welfare of children and families, particularly where they are vulnerable or at risk of not receiving adequate care or protection. Family support should form the basis of early intervention and preventative interventions.
- A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents/carers and families. Where there is conflict, the child's welfare must come first.
- Children have a right to be heard, listened to and taken seriously. Taking account of their age and understanding, they should be consulted and involved in all matters and decisions that may affect their lives. Where there are concerns about a child's welfare, there should be opportunities provided for their views to be heard independently of their parents/carers.
- Parents/carers have a right to respect and should be consulted and involved in matters that concern their family.
- Factors such as the child's family circumstances, gender, age, stage of development, religion, culture and race should be considered when taking protective action. Intervention should not deal with the child in isolation; the child's circumstances must be understood within a family context.
- The criminal dimension of any action must not be ignored.
- Children should only be separated from parents/carers when alternative means of protecting them have been exhausted. Re-union should be considered in the context of planning for the child's future.
- The prevention, detection and treatment of child abuse or neglect requires a coordinated multidisciplinary approach, effective management, clarity of responsibility and training of personnel in organisations working with children.

### **Risk assessment**

Under the Children First Act 2015, organisations providing a relevant service, must undertake a risk assessment. This considers the potential for harm to come to children while they are in the organisation's care. It should be noted that risk in this context is the risk of abuse and not general health and safety risk.

Having carried out a risk assessment of any potential for harm to a child while availing of our services Pact has determined such procedures as listed below for managing these risks.

In undertaking this risk assessment, the board of management has endeavoured to identify as far as possible the risks of harm that are relevant to Pact and to ensure that adequate procedures are in place to manage all risks identified. While it is not possible to foresee and remove all risk of harm, Pact has in place the procedures listed in this risk assessment to manage and reduce risk to the greatest possible extent.

### Procedures

Pact's Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (2017), 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 service:

(See Child Protection Policy for all appendices noted here)

- Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child availing of our service; (Appendix 1 Pact Child Protection Policy)
- Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers to work with children; (Appendix 8)
- Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm; (Appendix 9)
- Procedure for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla; (Appendix 1. PACT Child Protection Policy)
- Procedure for maintaining a list of the persons (if any) in the relevant service who are mandated persons;
- Mandatory reporting; A mandated person is someone who is specified in Schedule 2 of the Children First Act 2015 and includes Designated Liaison Officers, employees and volunteers, foster carers, Gardaí, Creche Managers, teachers and youth workers. Mandated persons have a duty to report, without delay, any child protection issues to the relevant authorities e.g. TUSLA. (Appendix 4)
- Designated Liaison Person: DLO;  
The DLO is the principle person nominated by Pact as the liaison person for Pact in all dealings with the HSE/Tusla, An Garda Síochána and other parties in connection with allegations of and/or concerns about child abuse. The DLP will typically liaise with the Board of Pact and the relevant manager on the most appropriate course of action in the event of an allegation of child abuse. (Appendix 3, Pact Child Protection Policy.)

All procedures listed are available upon request.



**Implementation**

Pact recognises that implementation is an ongoing process. Pact 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.

The child safeguarding statement will be reviewed in January 2026 or as soon as practicable after any material change in any matter to which the Statement refers.

For Queries please contact (DLO)