

The Focolare Movement

Child Safeguarding Statement



The Focolare Movement recognises and upholds the dignity and rights of all children and is committed to ensuring their safety and well being, and works in partnership with parents/guardians to do this.

Focolare provides spiritual formation to children and families in Ireland

The National Headquarters of the Focolare Movement is based in Curryhills, Prosperous, Co Kildare and most of its activities are based in this venue. As members of the Focolare Movement live throughout Ireland activities can also take place in other venues also, especially in Dublin and Belfast.

Sometimes events are held outside of Ireland and children are accompanied by youth leaders to these events.

All age groups are involved in the activities of the Focolare Movement; children from the age of 4yrs to 18 yrs belong to groups in the Focolare led by youth leaders. The children and their families come from a cross-section of society and a small number of these children have special educational needs, thus presenting certain challenges for all.

Neighbouring Primary Schools are hosted once a year by the Focolare Movement at its centre in Co Kildare for Confirmation Retreats.

Occasionally the centre in Co Kildare is used by visiting groups who may have children participating in their events.

All Voluntary Leaders of children's groups have a responsibility to safeguard children through promoting their welfare, health and spiritual development in a safe and caring environment that supports their best interests and prevents abuse.

Child Safeguarding Statement

In accordance with the requirements of the *Children First Act 2015*, and *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017*, the Co-ordinating Council of the Focolare in Ireland has agreed the Child Safeguarding Statement set out in this document.

1. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is Margaret McLoughlin. The Deputy Designated Liaison Person is Declan O'Brien.

2. The Co-ordinating Council of the Focolare Movement recognises that child protection and welfare considerations permeates all aspects of community life and is reflected in all of its policies, procedures, practices and activities. The Focolare Movement adheres to the following principles of best practice in child protection and welfare:

The Focolare Movement:

- recognises that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations;
- fully complies with its statutory obligations under the *Children First Act 2015* and other relevant legislation relating to the protection and welfare of children;

- fully co-operates with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters
- adopts safe practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and protect leaders from the necessity to take unnecessary risks that may leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or neglect;
- develops a practice of openness with parents and encourages parental involvement in the activities of Focolare.
- fully respects confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.

3. The following procedures/measures are in place:

- In relation to the selection or recruitment of voluntary leaders and their suitability to work with children, the Focolare adheres to the statutory vetting requirements of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016 and to the wider duty of care guidance set out in relevant Garda vetting and recruitment circulars. All Leaders who work directly with children are vetted in advance of starting their work in Focolare.
- All volunteer leaders complete application forms, are interviewed and references are checked. Ongoing support and supervision is provided.
- In relation to the provision of information and, where necessary, instruction and training, to leaders in respect of the identification of the occurrence of harm (as defined in the 2015 Act) the Focolare Movement:
 - provides each leader with a copy of the Child Safeguarding Statement.
 - ensures all new leaders are provided with a copy of the Child Safeguarding Statement.
 - ensures every leader completes Children First training.
 - manages allegations of abuse or misconduct against volunteer leaders within the disciplinary procedures.
 - encourages Co-ordinating council of Ireland to avail of relevant training.
 - records of all leaders and training undertaken are filed by designated officers.
- In relation to reporting of child protection concerns to Tusla, all leaders of Focolare are required to adhere to the procedures set out in the Children First document.
- In relation to the reporting of allegations against leaders, the designated liaison officers will deal with the issue, promptly and in a sensitive manner. The rights of everyone will be respected and the guidelines as outlined in the *Children's First Act 2015* will be followed.
- The Focolare and co-ordinating council has appointed the above named DLP as the "relevant person" (as defined in the *Children First Act 2015*) to be the first point of contact in respect of the child safeguarding statement.
- In accordance with the *Children First Act 2015*, the Co-ordinating Council has carried out an assessment of any potential for harm to a child while attending any event organised by the Focolare Movement. A written assessment setting out the areas of risk identified and the Movement's procedures for managing those risks is attached as an appendix to this statement.

4. The Focolare Movement recognises that implementation is an ongoing process. It is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support its intention to keep children safe from harm while participating in any of its events. This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed annually or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this statement refers.

This Child Safeguarding Statement was adopted by the Co-ordinating Council on 9th March 2018.

Signed: *Catherine Burke*

Signed: *David Hickey*

Signed on behalf of the co-ordinating council

Date: 09/03/2018

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