

# Child Safeguarding Statement

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**Name of Service:** *Belong To LGBTQ+ Youth Ireland*

**Office Location:** *Belong To, Parliament House, 13 Parliament Street, Dublin 2 D02 P658*

**Group Location:** *Dublin Pride Hub, 44 Clarendon Street, Dublin 1, D02 YK66.*

## Nature of Service & Principles to Safeguard Children from Harm

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*Belong To is the national organisation supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTQ+) young people in Ireland. Since 2003, we have worked with LGBTQ+ young people between 14 and 23 years, to create a world where they are equal, safe, and valued in the diversity of their identities and experiences. As part of that work, we strive to ensure that children who access our service are safe from harm.*

Belong To provides a number of services to LGBTQ+ young people to have access to safe, high-quality youth work groups, services and supports. Our services to young people include the following groups and programmes:

- **Over 18s Group:** this weekly group is for LGBTQ+ young people 18-23
- **Under 18s Group:** this weekly group is for LGBTQ+ young people 14-17.
- **IndividualiTy:** this weekly group is for Trans and non-binary young people.
- **The Ladybirds:** this weekly peer support group is for lesbian, bi and trans gals and their non-binary pals.
- **New Young Person's Project:** this group takes place online every second week and is for newcomers wishing to engage in the projects.
- **Specialised and Seasonal Programmes:** we host a number of different short term projects and preventative programmes throughout the year with young people involved in the service.
- **Counselling Service with Pieta:** Pieta provides a free crisis counselling service for LGBTQ+ young people who are based in Ireland. The service is hosted in Belong To's office on two mornings each week.

This statement has been developed to safeguard children and young people in our service, as well as families, staff and volunteers who engage with Belong To. We also set out a commitment that all children will be equally protected from harm regardless of race, ability, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. The document is based on, and adheres to, the following from Tusla – the Child and Family Agency:

*Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*  
*Guidance 2017 and Children First Act 2015*

As an organisation, we:

- Recognise that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations;
- Comply fully with our statutory obligations under the Children First Act 2015 and other relevant legislation relating to the protection and welfare of children;
- Co-operate with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters;
- Adopt safe practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children, and protect workers from the necessity to take unnecessary risks that may leave themselves open to accusations of abuse or neglect;
- Respect in full confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.
- This Safeguarding Statement is displayed prominently on the Belong To website, our premises and at locations in which we run our groups.

The Safeguarding Statement applies:

- To all staff, interns, students on placement, volunteers, board members, and young people accessing our services.
- When working in any premises utilised by the organisation for its activities and for all when working on behalf of, or representing, Belong To.

## **Risk Assessment**

Belong To defines risk as per Section 11 (i)(a) of Children First Act 2015 defines risk as “*any potential harm to a child while availing of the service.*”

Section 2 of the act defines harm as follows:

“*harm means in relation to a child –*

*(a) assault, ill-treatment or neglect of the child in a manner that seriously affects the child’s health, development or welfare or*

*(b) sexual abuse of the child, whether caused by a single act, omission or circumstances or a series or combination of acts, omissions, or circumstances or otherwise.”*

Belong To maintains a risk register, which we regularly review. As part of developing this risk register, we carried out an assessment of any potential for harm to a child while availing of our services. Below is a list of the areas of risk identified and the list of procedures for managing these risks.

Risk		Policies and Procedures to Mitigate Risk
1	Belong To stakeholders lack of knowledge about internal Child Protection practices and procedures.	Child Protection Policy Recruitment Policy- both staff and volunteers
2	Working with External Service Providers/ partnership with other youth organisations	Garda Vetting policy Child Protection Training
3	Risk of harm of a child by a member of staff/volunteer	DLP Training
4	Risk of harm caused by lack of supervision	Belong To Code of Conduct
5	Risk of harm by a visitor to the service	Group Contracts/ Code of Conduct
6	Risk of harm by another child/ young person in the service;	Support and Supervision Policy
7	Risk of harm of a child on outings/ overnights/ groups or at a Belong To event by a member of staff/volunteer/stranger/peer	Consent Forms Registrations Forms GDPR Policy
8	Risk of harm through access to ICT / unauthorised photography (e.g., social media or web access, electronic contact, etc)	Risk Assessments Online Safeguarding Training
9	Risk of harm to young people through one-to-one support	Incident Reports .

## Procedures

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Our 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 commitment to safeguard children while they are availing of our service:

- Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child availing of our service;
- Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers to work with children;
- 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 personnel in the service who are mandated persons;
- Procedure for appointing a relevant person.

All procedures listed are available upon request.

## Implementation

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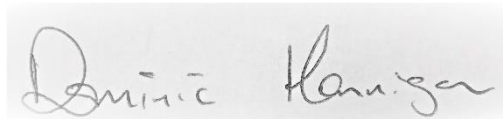
We recognise that implementation is an on-going process. Our service is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support it.

Our Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is our Youth Services Manager, Carmel Walsh, [carmel@belongto.org](mailto:carmel@belongto.org), 0871743019

Our Deputy DLPs are our CEO Moninne Griffith. [moninne@belongto.org](mailto:moninne@belongto.org) 0872290987 and Senior Youth Worker, Brenda Kelly, 0861086548.

For queries in relation to the Safeguarding Statement, please contact Carmel Walsh, our Relevant Person as required under the Children First Act, 2015, at the contact details above.

Signed:



Dominic Hannigan, Chairperson of the Board

Date: 06/10/2023