



RFC Concern/ Complaint Policy

Concern/ Complaint Policy



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Glossary

- **Affiliated Member** shall mean Rathcoole Football Club, affiliated directly to the FAI or to their respective governing body.
- **Children, Child or Young Person** shall mean a person under the age of 18 other than a person who is or has been married.
- **Clubs/League Children's Officer** shall mean the person who the Child welfare day to day functions are delegated to. Their remit shall be a key component of the Safeguarding Statement and they shall be the Relevant Person for the Child Safeguarding Statement.
- **Designated Liaison Person** shall mean the person who is responsible for ensuring that reporting procedures within the Club/League are followed so that child welfare and protection concerns are referred promptly to Statutory Authorities and will also liaise with outside agencies. Additionally, they will be a resource person to any employee or volunteer who has child protection concerns.
- **Executive Committee** shall mean the Committee responsible for the day to day running of the Club
- **Incident Form**- Shall mean the document which should be completed when making a report of poor practise.
- **National Body** shall mean Football Association of Ireland (FAI).
- **Reporting Form** shall mean the document which should be completed when making a report of Child abuse.
- **Stand Down Order** shall mean an order which is issued to any person who is the subject of a complaint or inquiry by a Statutory Authority in relation to any Child welfare or Vulnerable Person concern. A Stand Down Order is issued to an individual to immediately refrain from particular activities within the Club for a specified or indefinite period pending the outcome of an enquiry or investigation in accordance with FAI Rules.
- **Statutory Authorities** shall mean those state bodies which promote the welfare and protection of Children and Vulnerable Persons and have a legal responsibility for the investigation and/or validation of suspected abuse, and these include An Garda Síochána, the Health Service Executive and the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) and any other authority as may be appropriate from time to time.
- **The Policy** shall mean this RFC Concerns / Complaints Policy.
- **Vulnerable Person** means a person, other than a Child, who—
 1. is suffering from a disorder of the mind, whether as a result of mental illness or dementia,
 2. has an intellectual disability,
 3. is suffering from a physical impairment, whether as a result of injury, illness or age, or
 4. has a physical disability,which is of such a nature or degree—
 1. as to restrict the capacity of the person to guard himself or herself against harm by another person, or
 2. that results in the person requiring assistance with the activities of daily living including dressing, eating, walking, washing and bathing.

Please note- within the Policy where Child/Children is referred to there may be occasions when it may also be applicable to Vulnerable Persons.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This document is written to provide clear and unambiguous procedures for responding to cases of suspected poor practice and/or abuse. It aims to set out guidelines and procedures on how to take action if there are any concerns about a Child's or Vulnerable Person's safety and welfare, for those working in a voluntary or paid capacity with Children or Vulnerable Persons within the game.
- 1.2. There is a responsibility on all volunteers/ staff within the game of Association football in Ireland to protect Children, Young Persons and Vulnerable Persons and report suspected abuse so that the Statutory Authorities can investigate. However, it is important to distinguish between poor practice and abuse.

2. What is Poor Practice?

- 2.1. Incidents of poor practice occur when the needs of Children or Vulnerable Persons are compromised. Examples of poor practice are likely to be once off incidents and these might include but are not limited to:

2.2. Coach

1. Giving preferential treatment to individuals and unfairly rejecting others (e.g. singling out and only focusing on the talented Children and failing to involve the full squad).
2. Giving preference to winning games over Children's development, participation and satisfaction.
3. Encouraging Children to play while injured.
4. Using inappropriate language, gestures or comments to motivate Children or provoke a reaction.
5. Delivering a coaching session alone, without another responsible adult present.
6. Not paying due care and attention to the Children taking part in the training session or game.
7. Failing to recognise and applaud a Child's efforts to make improvements to their game.
8. Coaching alone when their own child is part of the team.
9. Entering the field of play as a coach/manager when their own child is involved in an on-field incident.

2.3. Parent / Guardian

1. Placing too much pressure on their Child to perform to a high standard and win games.
2. Criticising their Child's performances instead of highlighting the positives of their game and where improvements were made.
3. Failing to ensure that their Child is appropriately dressed for the weather conditions.
4. Making derogatory comments about their Child, or another Child during a game or training session.
5. Failing to bring their Child to training on time, or collect them promptly at the end of the session.

2.4. Supporters

1. Using inappropriate language towards Children, coaches, referees or other supporters.
2. Making inappropriate comments about the performance of Children, coaches or referees.
3. Entering the field of play during a match or training session without being asked to do so.

2.5. The Club

1. Failing to provide adequate safeguarding arrangements for the Children in their care.
2. Failing to implement FAI Rules on the protection and welfare of Children, the FAI Child Welfare Policy and other supporting documents.
3. Placing undue pressure on a coach or team of Children to win games or competitions.
4. Allowing poor practice to go unreported (e.g. a coach who ridicules and criticises Children who make a mistake during a match)
5. Failing to create an environment that encourages player development and enjoyment over winning games and trophies.
 1. Failing to provide appropriate safeguarding education for their coaches and members.
 2. Not having procedures in place to ensure a parent/guardian does not coach their own child's team alone and that they do not enter the field of play as the coach or manager when their own child is involved in an on-field incident.

2.6. General

1. Shouting at or ridiculing Children when they make a mistake. Children should be given the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and develop.
2. Allowing Children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
3. Placing Children in potentially compromising and uncomfortable situations with adults.
4. Ignoring health and safety guidelines (e.g. allowing Children to set up goal posts unsupervised by adults).
5. Failing to adhere to the club's codes of practice.

2.7. Points to remember

1. Judgement about whether an incident is one of Child abuse or poor practice may not be possible at the point of referral, but only after the collation of relevant information.
2. The majority of poor practice concerns should be dealt with directly by the club in the first instance. Please refer to Section 3 for guidance on how to deal with an example of Poor Practice.

3. How to Deal with Alleged Poor Practice

- 3.1. Where alleged poor practice has been identified or reported, it must be dealt with in a fair and impartial manner. All information should be treated in the strictest of confidence, in accordance with procedures concerning confidentiality outlined in the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy.
- 3.2. When an example of alleged poor practice is reported, it should be dealt with on a case by case basis. The following steps provide guidance as to how a complaint of poor practice could be handled:
 1. Alleged poor practice is observed and/or reported. This information is then passed on to the Children's Officer.
 2. Initial assessment is carried out by the Children's Officer who should collate all information / reports and record what action has been initially taken, if any.
 3. Inform the person(s) against which the report of alleged poor practice has been made and offer them the opportunity to respond.
 4. The Children's Officer should then record what the next step will be and if any other parties need to be approached to collect information or reports from.
 5. If information needs to be collected from Children this should be done in the presence of their parents or guardians. Collecting information from Children should only occur where necessary.
 6. All information should be treated in the strictest of confidence, in accordance with procedures concerning confidentiality outlined in the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy.
 7. If the accused agrees that poor practice has taken place, they may be subject to an appropriate sanction. The matter should be referred by the Designated Liaison Person and / or Children's Officer to their Executive Committee for review. On assessment, the Executive Committee may refer the matter to an appropriate disciplinary body. This should be the body to which the matter was reported and if investigated in full no referral to a higher body is warranted.
 8. If the alleged poor practice is disputed, the Designated Liaison Person and / or Children's Officer must refer the matter to their Executive Committee for review. On assessment, the Executive Committee may refer the matter to an appropriate disciplinary body. This should be the body to which the matter was reported and if investigated in full no referral to a higher body is warranted
 9. Should a disciplinary hearing be required, the panel should be impartial consisting of at least 3 members. All parties should be provided with the opportunity to make further oral and / or written submissions.
 10. Should the alleged poor practice relate to an individual that is under 18 years of age, **no meetings should be held with that person without the presence or permission of a parent/ guardian.** If a parent or guardian cannot attend then a coach chosen by the parents can attend in their place.
 11. All parties should be informed of the decision of any such investigation or disciplinary hearing in **writing** as soon as possible on completion of same.

Note: If a party feels that the alleged Poor Practice has not been investigated in full, they should refer the matter to the appropriate Affiliated Member as outlined in the FAI Concern / Complaint Procedure (please see Appendix 1), for example, Club to League, League to National Body/Provincial Association, National Body/Provincial Association to FAI.

4. Possible Sanctions Involving Poor Practice

4.1. If there is cause to believe that poor practice has occurred, a sanction proportionate to the offence should be applied. Some examples of possible sanctions are likely to be, but are not limited to:

4.2. Coach

1. Issued with a verbal and / or written warning and warned as to their future conduct.
2. Required to re-attend an FAI approved Safeguarding course.
3. Required to step aside from duties for a specified period of time, or permanent removal.
4. Asked to work alongside a more experienced coach to ensure best practice is followed at all times.
5. Monitored by a nominated person as directed by the appropriate Committee.

4.3. Parent / Guardian and Supporters

1. Issued with a verbal and / or written warning and warned as to their future conduct.
2. Asked not to attend training sessions and / or games for a period of time, or permanent removal.
3. Required to attend an FAI approved Safeguarding 1 course.
4. Suspended from club and have club membership removed.

Note: Any suspension / removal of a parent / guardian should not impact the involvement of the Child. Drop off and collection of their Child should be facilitated to allow the Child attend training and matches.

4.4. The Club

1. Issued with a verbal and / or written warning and warned as to their future conduct.
2. Required to attend an FAI approved Safeguarding 2 or 3 course as appropriate to the role.
3. If a complaint of poor practice concerns a member of the Executive Committee, they may be asked to step down from their role for a specified period of time, or permanent removal.
4. Required to comply with recommendations concerning safeguarding practices from a higher body.

5. Child Abuse

5.1. Concerns identified as Child abuse will fall within the following categories:

1. Physical Abuse
2. Neglect
3. Sexual Abuse
4. Emotional Abuse
5. Bullying

Note: Further information on each form of abuse can found in the RFC Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy.

5.2. Grounds for Reasonable Concern

There are a number of indicators of abuse / suspected abuse, which include but are not limited to:

1. A direct disclosure / indication from a Child that they are / have been abused.
2. An account or report by a person who saw the Child being abused.
3. Consistent indication, over a period of time that a Child is suffering from abuse as defined in the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy.
4. Evidence, such as an injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way.
5. A sudden change of temperament and / or personality in the Child.
6. Corroborative indicators supporting a concern e.g. pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indicators of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour.
- 7.

If you have any concerns you should discuss these with the Designated Liaison Person in your organisation. At any time, you can consult informally with Tusla (Child & Family Agency) if you have a concern.

Note: For more information on recognising child abuse, please refer to the RFC Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy.

5.3. How to Respond to a Disclosure from a Child

Should a Child make a disclosure, the following points should be considered:

1. At all times, take the Child seriously.
2. Questions should be kept to a minimum. Your role is to listen, not to interview.
3. Praise the Child and assure them they have done the right thing.
4. Stay calm and do not react emotionally.
5. Do not make any judgemental statements about the alleged abuse or abuser.
6. Do not promise to keep the information a secret, but reassure the Child that any sharing of information will be to protect them.
7. Record exactly what has been said as soon as possible in line with recording procedures (Please see Appendix 2).
8. Explain to the Child what will happen next.
9. All information should be treated in the strictest of confidence, in accordance with procedures concerning confidentiality outlined in the RFC Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy.

6. Reporting

- 6.1. If a report of poor practice is made it should be recorded using the Incident Form in Appendix 2. This report should be submitted to the Children's Officer. A record should be kept of when the report was made, to whom and any response(s) received. For the avoidance of doubt, the person completing the Incident Form may in fact be the Children's Officer.
- 6.2. If the report of Child abuse is made it should be recorded using the Reporting Form in Appendix 3. This report should be submitted to the Designated Liaison Person. Reporting procedures are detailed within Section 5 of the Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy should be followed.
- 6.3. In cases which are deemed to be poor practice, they should be dealt with in accordance with Section 3 of the Policy.
- 6.4. In cases which are deemed child abuse they should be dealt with as follows:
 1. Anyone can report a concern about a child. If you have any concerns about a child you should report it to the Child and Family Agency (Tusla).
 2. A report can be made in person, by telephone or in writing to the Child and Family Agency (Tusla).
 3. The Reporting Form should also be completed and submitted immediately to the Designated Liaison Person, where appropriate.
 4. This report must also be forwarded to a Duty Social worker in the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) in the area where the child lives.
 5. To access the contact details of a Duty Social worker you will need to log onto www.tusla.ie, select 'Get in Touch', select 'Duty Social Work Teams'.
 6. If the Designated Liaison Person is unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist, he/she will informally contact the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) who will advise whether or not the matter requires a formal report.
 7. If a child is in danger outside of office hours for the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) the Gardaí will be contacted

Note: In the event that the Designated Liaison Person decides that they do not have reasonable grounds for reporting any concerns - individuals are free to consult with, or make a report (formal or informal) to the Statutory Authorities themselves. More detail on reporting cases of Child Abuse can be found in the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy 2018.

7. Stand Down Order

- 7.1. Any persons under investigation by a Statutory Authority will be issued with a Stand Down Order in accordance with the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy.

8. Anonymous Complaints

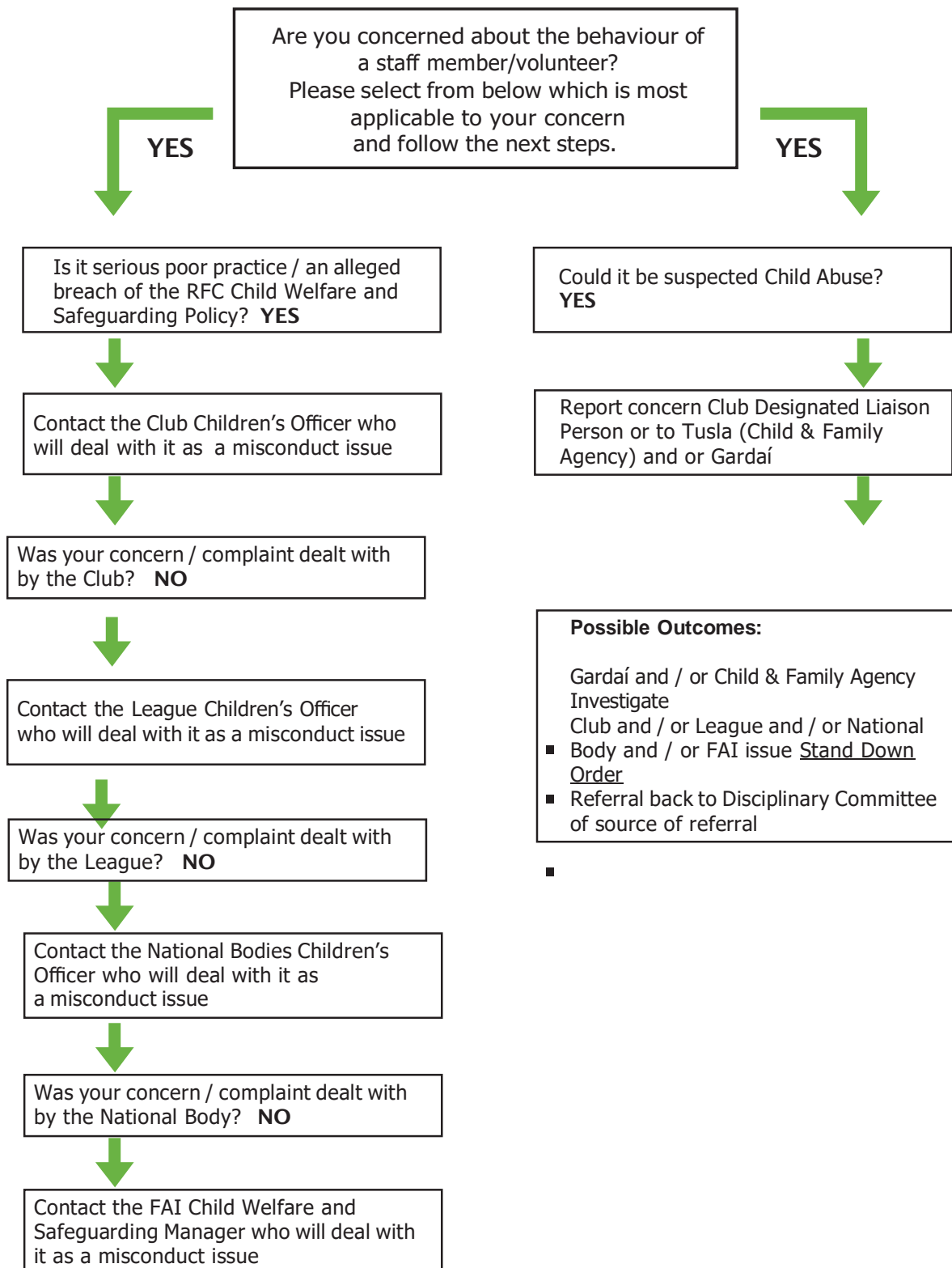
- 8.1. Whilst difficult to pursue, anonymous complaints will not be ignored. Anonymous complaints will be brought to the attention of the Designated Liaison Person and / or Children's Officer and investigated in full based on the information that has been provided. The investigation will be completed without prejudice to any person and it will be explained to all parties that there is an obligation to investigate all matters reported. Where necessary, having carefully considered all of the facts, a report to the Statutory Authorities may be submitted.



APPENDIX 1

Concern and Complaint Procedure

Concern / Complaint Procedure



Accident/ Incident Report Form

CLUB NAME	RATHCOOLE FOOTBALL CLUB
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Accident/Incident Report Form (Please use block capitals or type this form)

Name of person completing this form	
Title/Role	
Address	
Tel. Number	
Mobile Number	

Accident Details	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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Date and Time	
Venue	

Name of person completing this form	
Name of person completing this form	
Name of person completing this form	

Witness 1 Contact Details	
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Witness 2 Contact Details	
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Signature	
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Date	
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APPENDIX 3 Reporting Form

Use block letters when filling out this form. Fields marked with an * are mandatory.

1. Tusla Area (this is where the child resides)*	
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2. Date of Report*	
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3. Details of Child

First Name*		Surname*	
Male* <input type="checkbox"/>	Female* <input type="checkbox"/>	Date of Birth*	
Address*		Estimated Age*	
		School Name*	
		School Address*	
Eircode			

4. Details of Concerns*

Please complete the following section with as much detail about the specific child protection or welfare concern or allegation as possible. Include dates, times, incident details and names of anyone who observed any incident. Please include the parents and child's view, if known. Please attach additional sheets, if necessary

Please see 'Tusla Children First – A Guide for the Reporting of Child Protection and Welfare Concerns' for additional assistance on the steps to consider in making a report to Tusla

5. Type of Concern

Child Welfare Concern	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neglect	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sexual Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emotional Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	Physical Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Details of Reporter

First Name		Surname	
Address If reporting in a professional capacity, please use your professional address		Organisation	
		Position Held	
		Mobile No.	
		Telephone No.	
Eircode		Email Address	

Is this a Mandated Report made under Sec 14, Children First Act 2015?* Yes No

Mandated Person's Type

7. Details of Other Persons Where a Joint Report is Being Made

First Name		Surname	
Address If reporting in a professional capacity, please use your professional address		Organisation	
		Position Held	
		Mobile No.	
		Telephone No.	
Eircode		Email Address	

First Name		Surname	
Address If reporting in a professional capacity, please use your professional address		Organisation	
		Position Held	
		Mobile No.	
		Telephone No.	
Eircode		Email Address	

8. Parents Aware of Report

Are the child's parents/carers aware that this concern is being reported to Tusla?* Yes No

If the parent/carer does not know, please indicate reasons:	
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9. Relationships

Details of Mother	
First Name	Surname
Address	Mobile No.
	Telephone No.
	Email Address
Eircode	
Is the Mother a Legal Guardian?*	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

Details of Father	
First Name	Surname
Address	Mobile No.
	Telephone No.
	Email Address
Eircode	
Is the Father a Legal Guardian?*	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

10. Household Composition

First Name	Surname	Relationship	Date of Birth	Estimated Age	Additional Information e.g. school, occupation, other

11. Details of Person(s) Allegedly Causing Harm

First Name*	<input type="text"/>	Surname*	<input type="text"/>
Male* <input type="checkbox"/>	Female* <input type="checkbox"/>	Date of Birth	<input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>	Estimated Age	<input type="text"/>
		Mobile No.	<input type="text"/>
		Telephone No.	<input type="text"/>
		Email Address	<input type="text"/>
		Organisation	<input type="text"/>
Eircode	<input type="text"/>	Occupation	<input type="text"/>
		Position Held	<input type="text"/>

Relationship to Child	<input type="text"/>
Address at time of alleged incident	<input type="text"/>
If name unknown please indicate reason	<input type="text"/>

First Name*	<input type="text"/>	Surname*	<input type="text"/>
Male* <input type="checkbox"/>	Female* <input type="checkbox"/>	Date of Birth	<input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>	Estimated Age	<input type="text"/>
		Mobile No.	<input type="text"/>
		Telephone No.	<input type="text"/>
		Email Address	<input type="text"/>
		Organisation	<input type="text"/>
Eircode	<input type="text"/>	Occupation	<input type="text"/>
		Position Held	<input type="text"/>

Relationship to Child	<input type="text"/>
Address at time of alleged incident	<input type="text"/>
If name unknown please indicate reason	<input type="text"/>

12. Name and Address of Other Organisations, Personnel or Agencies Known to be Involved Currently or Previously with the Family

Profession	First Name	Surname	Address	Contact Number	Recent Contact e.g. 3/6/9 months ago
Social Worker					
Public Health Nurse					
GP					
Hospital					
School					
Gardaí					
Pre-school/ crèche					
Other					

13. Any Other Relevant Information, Including any Previous Contact with the Child or Family

Please ensure you have indicated if this is a mandated report in section 6.
Thank you for completing the report form.

In completing this report form you are providing details on yourself and on others. Details such as name, address and date of birth fall under the definition of ‘Personal Data’ in the Data Protection Acts, 1988 & 2003/2018. Tusla has a responsibility under these Acts in its capacity as a Data Controller to, amongst other things, obtain and process this data fairly; keep it safe and secure; and to keep it for a specified lawful purpose. That purpose is to fulfil our statutory responsibility under the Child Care Act 1991 to promote the protection and welfare of children. Tusla may, during the course of the assessment of this report disclose such Personal Data to other agencies including An Garda Síochána. Further details about Tusla’s responsibilities as a Data Controller and your rights as a Data Subject can be found on our website, www.tusla.ie. As you are providing Personal Data on others, you are a Data Processor. We ask that you only provide those details that are necessary for the report and that you keep this report and the Personal Data contained in it secure from unauthorised access, disclosure, destruction or accidental loss.

14. For Completion by Tusla Authorised Person on Receipt of Report

Report Received by

First Name		Surname		Date	
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Mandated Report Acknowledgement by

First Name		Surname		Date Sent	
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Authorised Person Signature*

Date*

Child Previously Known Yes No

Allocated Case No

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