

Child Welfare and Safeguarding Statement & Policy v1

The Open College

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Figure 1: A close up of a sign Description automatically generated

Child Welfare and Safeguarding Statement & Policy

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1 Document Control

Document Version

1.0

Responsibility

Leadership Team

Review Cycle

Yearly

Next Review

This policy is due for review upon publication of updated QQI QA guidelines in 2025/2026

1.1 Record of Revisions

Version	Date	Description	Approved by
1.0	May 2025	Initial Version	AB

Child Welfare and Safeguarding Statement & Policy

Policy Statement and Purpose:

The Open College is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment for all its learners, who are predominantly adults (over 18 years of age). While direct engagement with individuals under 18 (“children” as defined by the Children First Act 2015) is minimal, The Open College acknowledges its general responsibilities concerning child welfare.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Affirm The Open College’s commitment to promoting the welfare of children.
- Provide guidance to staff on their responsibilities should a child welfare or protection concern come to their attention in the course of their duties.
- Ensure awareness of and compliance with the spirit of relevant Irish legislation, primarily the **Children First Act 2015** and **Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017)**, as it may apply.

Scope:

This policy applies to all staff (full-time, part-time, contract), tutors, and other individuals acting on behalf of The Open College. It pertains to any child welfare or protection concerns that may arise or be disclosed in relation to any child, whether encountered

directly (in rare instances) or indirectly through interactions with adult learners or other contexts related to the College's operations.

Guiding Principles:

- The welfare of any child is of importance.
- Staff have a responsibility to act appropriately if a child welfare or protection concern is disclosed or observed.
- The Open College will liaise with statutory child protection services (Tusla – Child and Family Agency) if a reportable concern arises.

Designated Liaison Person (DLP):

The Open College has appointed a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) as a point of contact for staff who may have a child welfare or protection concern.

- **Designated Liaison Person (DLP):** Louise O'Gorman – Assistant Operations Executive.

Responding to and Reporting Concerns:

While The Open College does not provide services directly to children, staff may occasionally receive information or observe situations that give rise to a child welfare or protection concern (e.g., a disclosure from an adult learner about a child, concerns arising from adult learners' work placement experiences in settings with children).

In such instances:

- Staff should listen carefully and supportively.
- They **must report the concern to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) without delay.**
- Staff should not attempt to investigate the concern themselves.
- The DLP, having received appropriate training, will consider the information and, if there are reasonable grounds for concern that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of abuse, will make a report to Tusla – Child and Family Agency, or An Garda Síochána, as appropriate.

Confidentiality will be maintained as far as possible, consistent with the legal obligation to protect children.

Staff Awareness and Training:

The Open College will ensure that the Designated Liaison Person receives appropriate training in child protection procedures. All staff will be made aware of this policy and the identity of the DLP. General awareness information regarding Children First principles will be made available to staff.

Garda Vetting

Where applicable, The Open College will ensure that tutors, staff, and individuals working in roles involving potential contact with children or vulnerable persons undergo Garda Vetting in accordance with the requirements of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016. This includes roles linked to work placements, practical training, or any context where a child protection concern may arise.

Policy Review:

This Child Welfare and Safeguarding Statement & Policy will be reviewed every two years, or as required by changes in legislation or national guidance. The review will be overseen by the Leadership Team.