

Edmund Rice Development  
**Child and Vulnerable Adult  
Safeguarding Policy  
for ERD Personnel**

## **Preface**

Edmund Rice Development (ERD) is an international development agency that supports Edmund Rice (ER) development projects. ERD works in partnership with ER Governing Bodies and development projects to promote human rights and fullness of life for all, especially those made poor.

We support the governors and staff of the projects with whom we work to

- access funding,
- improve capacity and
- build collaboration to achieve greater impact.

At ERD we are committed to the protection of children and vulnerable adults from abuse, harm and exploitation. We have a duty to ensure that all children and vulnerable adults who come into contact with our organisation and our partners are safe and treated with care and respect.

This policy lays out our commitments to safeguarding and informs ERD personnel of their responsibilities towards the protection of children and vulnerable adults. It builds on our previous Child Safeguarding Policy (2018), taking into account developments in international best practice guidelines, with the important addition of protection for vulnerable adults.

Compliance with this Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy is a mandatory requirement for all ERD personnel, this includes anyone who carries out work for or represents ERD.

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**All safeguarding incidents, suspected or alleged, must be reported to the ERD CEO or SO within 24 hours of them first being reported. For information on incident reporting see Section 7.**

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## Glossary of terms

<b>Beneficiaries</b>	Children and adults who participate in ERD-funded development projects
<b>Child/Children</b>	A person/people under the age of 18 years
<b>Vulnerable Adult(s)</b>	<p>Adults who may be restricted in capacity to guard themselves against harm or exploitation or to report such harm or exploitation for any reason, where restriction of capacity arises as a result of physical or intellectual impairment, where such vulnerability may be influenced by context and individual circumstances and including but not limited to circumstances where the adult:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is suffering from a disorder of the mind, whether as a result of mental illness or dementia</li> <li>• has an intellectual disability</li> <li>• is suffering from a physical impairment, whether as a result of injury, illness or age</li> <li>• has a physical disability, which is of such a nature or degree as to restrict the capacity of the person to guard themselves against harm by another person, or that results in the person requiring assistance with the activities of daily living including dressing, eating, walking, washing and bathing.</li> </ul>
<b>Edmund Rice Development Project</b>	An Edmund Rice Development Project is an entity under the governance of an ER Governing Body, and can comprise several sub-projects.
<b>ERD personnel</b>	Employees, board members, contractors, subcontractors, apprentices and trainees, work experience students, volunteers, employers and any other person who performs work for/or represents ERD.
<b>Governing Body</b>	The body who has ultimate responsibility for a development project or group of development projects and who holds the contract with the donor.
<b>Head of Development Project</b>	The person responsible for the day-to-day management of an Edmund Rice Development Project
<b>Project Personnel</b>	Employees, board members, contractors, subcontractors, apprentices and trainees, work experience students, volunteers, employers and any other person who performs work for/or represents ERD-funded development projects.
<b>Safeguarding</b>	Safeguarding means taking all reasonable steps to prevent harm, to protect people, especially children and vulnerable adults from that harm; and to respond appropriately when harm does occur. In the development and humanitarian sector, this term often applies to the safety and welfare of people involved in the delivery or receipt of development assistance or humanitarian aid.

## Attached documents

1. Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Code of Conduct
2. Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Self-Declaration and Agreement
3. Interim Narrative Report Form (including Safeguarding)
4. Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Monitoring Form
5. Additional Recommendations for Reporting Safeguarding Incidents
6. Template for Public Display
7. Principles of Investigation

8. Safeguarding Incident Report Form
9. Dóchas Code of Conduct

## Related policies

1. ERD Employee Handbook and Code of Conduct
2. ERD External Safeguarding policy
3. ERD Funding Policy

## Section 1 Policy overview

Edmund Rice Development is committed to acting ethically and with integrity to safeguard children and vulnerable adults. We have put in place and enforce measures and controls that demonstrate that commitment. This safeguarding policy is based on the following guiding principles:

- All children and vulnerable adults have a right to be safe at all times;
- Any form of vulnerable adult/child abuse and exploitation is unacceptable and it will not be tolerated;
- All children and vulnerable adults are to be equally protected and assisted regardless of their gender, nationality, religious or political beliefs, family background, economic status, physical or mental health or criminal background;
- All decisions involving children and vulnerable adults are made to ensure that they receive the maximum benefit possible from the services provided, and that the positive impacts of any course of action outweigh any negative impacts;
- Children and vulnerable adults will be consulted in the development of the safeguarding policies and safe practices.

We have put in place and enforce measures and controls that demonstrate that commitment. These are:

1. **ERD Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy** is in place and updated every two years;
2. **ERD Safeguarding Officer** is appointed and resourced to carry out their role;
3. **Safeguarding training** is given to all new staff on appointment and to all existing staff annually;
4. **Safeguarding risk assessment** procedures are in place;
5. **Safeguarding monitoring** is carried out on an ongoing basis;
6. **Safeguarding incident reporting** procedures are in place.

We are committed to ensuring effective action is taken when issues occur, referring all concerns, allegations and incidents to the relevant statutory authorities.

This Safeguarding Policy provides instruction and guidance on the expected behaviours of ERD personnel when interacting and engaging with children and vulnerable adults, and ensures the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, by preventing and responding to cases of abuse by ERD personnel. This safeguarding policy strives to:

- Provide guidance on how to work respectfully and effectively with children, whilst promoting a child-friendly culture;
- Educate project personnel about abuse against children and vulnerable adults;
- Create an open and aware environment where concerns for the safety and wellbeing of a child can be raised and managed in a fair and just manner which protects the rights of all;
- Provide guidance on how to respond to concerns and allegations of child abuse;
- Adhere to local and international child safeguarding criminal laws, which prohibit abuse and exploitation of children. These include applicable local laws as well as international laws and Conventions that prohibit all forms of abuse and exploitation of children and vulnerable adults, including child sex tourism, sex trafficking, child labour and child pornography.

## Section 2 Defining Abuse of Children and Vulnerable Adults

Children and vulnerable adults may be abused physically, sexually, emotionally and through neglect, see table below. Some children and vulnerable adults may be at higher risk of abuse and exploitation. This includes those living in extreme poverty, people with disabilities, people from minority groups, people living in residential care or emergency/conflict situations, or those on the move. Abuse of children and vulnerable adults can occur in various settings: within the home, the community and in organisations that provide services and support.

<b>Child Abuse</b>	Abuse includes physical, sexual and emotional violations, neglect, bullying, child labour and family violence.
<b>Child Labour</b>	Refers to employment of children that deprives them of their childhood, their opportunity for education and their potential. It involves work that is harmful physically, mentally and/or emotionally. It usually involves long hours.
<b>Emotional Abuse</b>	Occurs when an individual is repeatedly rejected or frightened by threats. This may involve name calling, being put down or continual coldness from another person to the extent that it affects the child's physical and emotional growth.
<b>Exploitation</b>	Commercial or other exploitation of a child refers to the use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. Exploitation can often arise when there is an imbalance of power. This activity is to the detriment of the child's physical and mental health, education, or moral and social-emotional development. It includes, but is not limited to, child labour, trafficking and sexual exploitation.
<b>Neglect</b>	Persistent failure or the deliberate denial to provide a child with clean water, food, shelter, sanitation, supervision or care to the extent that their health and development are placed at risk.
<b>Physical Abuse</b>	Occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child. This may take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving or grabbing. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures.
<b>Sexual Abuse</b>	Occurs when a child is used by another child, adolescent or adult for their own sexual stimulation or gratification - regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. These can be contact or noncontact acts, including sexualized language, voyeurism, fondling genitals or breasts, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object and exposing a child to, or involving a child in pornography.

## Section 3 Legislation, Policy and Best Practice Context

This policy has been developed in accordance with national and international legislation, policy and best practice guidance. As a Company registered in the Republic of Ireland, ERD has a specific obligation to be in compliance with all relevant Irish legislation.

This includes:

### International

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted by the UN in 1989 and ratified by Ireland in 1992
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was adopted by the UN in 2006 and ratified by Ireland in 2018
- Keeping Children Safe - International Child Safeguarding Standards

- ERFA Child Protection Policy (2020)

#### **Republic of Ireland**

- Our Duty to Care: The Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People, Tusla (2002)
- Criminal Justice Act (2006)
- Criminal Justice Act – Withholding of Information on Offences Against Children and Vulnerable Adults (2012)
- Children and Vulnerable Adults Act, National Vetting Bureau (2012)
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults at Risk of Abuse: National Policy and Procedures, Health Service Executive (2014)
- Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures - The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014 -2020
- Children First Act (2015)
- Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act (2015)
- Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church Ireland (2016)
- Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017)
- Mísean Cara Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy (2020)
- Safeguarding Guidance for Charitable Organisations working with Children, Charities Regulator (2020)
- Safeguarding Guidance for Charitable Organisations working with Vulnerable Adults, Charities Regulator (2020)

## **Section 4 Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities**

All ERD personnel have responsibility for safeguarding in their organisation. In addition to general safeguarding responsibilities of all personnel, a Safeguarding Officer is appointed.

The Safeguarding Officer has specific additional responsibilities, outlined below in 4.2.

### **4.1 Responsibilities of all ERD personnel**

The responsibilities of all personnel are as follows:

- Sign the relevant Safeguarding Code of Conduct and Self-declaration form;
- Adhere to the Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy;
- Continuously make themselves aware of potential risks to children and vulnerable adults;
- Complete Child and Vulnerable Adult safeguarding training as instructed by their Safeguarding Officer;
- Report any witnessed, suspected or alleged incidents of abuse of a child or vulnerable adult to the Safeguarding Officer.

### **4.2 Safeguarding Officer's Specific Responsibilities**

The specific responsibilities of the Safeguarding Officer are as follows:

- Continuously assess potential risks to children and vulnerable adults and put in place appropriate measures to manage these risks;
- Create and update the Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy;
- Monitor compliance with the Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy;
- Be available at all times, or have a nominated delegate, to respond to any safeguarding reports or issues;



- Provide regular safeguarding training for personnel and beneficiaries;
- Publicly display child-friendly safeguarding posters which include details on how to report witnessed, suspected or alleged incidents;
- Report any witnessed suspected or alleged incidents of abuse in accordance the Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy;
- Ensure ongoing monitoring requirements are met.

## **Section 5 ERD Safe Employment Procedures**

Safe recruitment, selection and screening practices are essential are central to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. ERD must have the following safe employment practices in place:

- Promoting a commitment to safeguarding on relevant communication materials and in all job advertisements;
- Providing job applicants with the Safeguarding Policy and ensuring they are aware of screening requirements;
- Providing comprehensive job descriptions that include safeguarding requirements for all positions;
- Assessing all staff positions for potential safeguarding risks.
- Requiring applicants applying for positions with direct interaction with children and vulnerable adults to have relevant qualifications and experience;
- Incorporating issues relevant to safeguarding in staff performance reviews.

### **5.1 Safe selection and screening**

The ERD Board implements the following selection and screening steps during the recruitment process, taking responsibility for safe recruitment, selection and screening, which comply with the points outlined below:

- Applicants must submit a detailed work history when applying for a position including comprehensive information about their background, employment, education and other activities;
- Interviews will be conducted for all positions. Where relevant, applicants will be asked to provide examples of their past experiences working with children or vulnerable adults;
- For positions that involve direct interaction with children or vulnerable adults, applicants will have to complete a rigorous interview. Applicants will be asked value-based questions to determine their attitudes towards children, professional boundaries, accountability, team work and capacity to respond to ethical dilemmas;
- Applicants are required to submit a minimum of two reference checks. The candidate's most recent employer/supervisor must be one of these referees. Direct contact must be made with each of the referees. Written references will not be accepted;
- Applicants will be subjected to a police clearance or relevant criminal history checks depending on the country of work;
- Applicants are required to provide proof of their identity, original documents are required;
- All Staff positions are subject to a probationary period;
- All Staff are required to read the Child and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy and sign the Safeguarding Code of Conduct (see appendix 1) and Self-declaration form (see appendix 2).

## **Section 6 Measuring Compliance**

### **6.1 Safeguarding Policy**

The Safeguarding policy and procedures are in place and are accessible to all ERD personnel.

## 6.2 Safeguarding Officer

The Board appoints a Safeguarding Officer as described in section 4.

## 6.3 Safeguarding Training

All new personnel receive training in the Safeguarding policy and procedures. Training for all personnel is provided annually.

## 6.4 Safeguarding Risk Assessment

There are a number of potential safeguarding risks. In recognising these risks, the ERD Board will conduct a safeguarding risk assessment on an ongoing basis.

ERD personnel are expected to be continually aware of potential risks to children and vulnerable adults and actively minimise situations where children can be harmed.

## 6.5 Safeguarding Monitoring

The ERD Board is responsible for ongoing monitoring of safeguarding compliance. Ongoing monitoring must include a system for retaining a record of safeguarding issues and how they were addressed, ensuring confidentiality and compliance with local legislation.

ERD carries out the following monitoring

1. **A Safeguarding Issues Logs** is kept and updated
2. **Monitoring visit:** ERD personnel conduct in-person monitoring
  - a. Record of all safeguarding concerns or incident which have occurred
  - b. Details the actions taken in response to safeguarding concern or incidents;
  - c. Details of the Safeguarding training conducted during the reporting period;

## Section 7 Incident Reporting Procedure within ERD

If any ERD personnel witnesses, suspects or are informed of an alleged incident of abuse carried out by another ERD personnel, or within the ERD office, they must report it immediately to the ERD Safeguarding Officer or ERD Chief Executive. The ERD Safeguarding Officer or Chief Executive will then complete the ERD Safeguarding Incident Reporting Form (see attachment 6).

The ERD Chief Executive must notify the ERD Board Safeguarding Officer. A Safeguarding Panel will be formed and will include the ERD CE, ERD Safeguarding Officer, ERD Board Chairperson and the ERD Board Safeguarding Representative. The Panel will assess the incident and agree next steps. The purpose of the panel is to ensure the safety of the alleged victim and determine if there was a breach to the ERD Child and Vulnerable Adult Policy. See the Incident Reporting Flowchart below for further detail. Throughout this process the safety of the alleged victim must be ensured.

### 7.1 The Safeguarding Panel

The Panel will carry out the following steps:

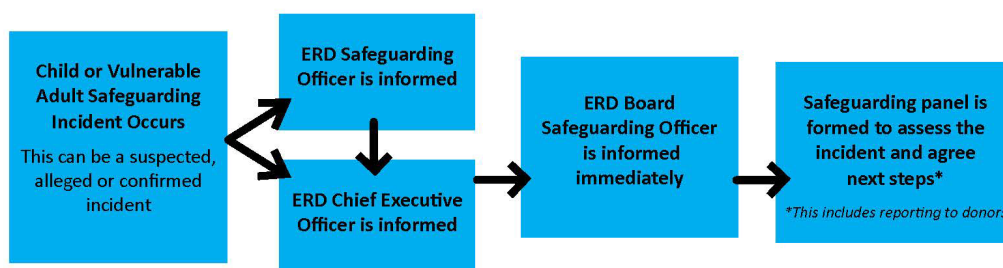
- Ensure the alleged victim is safe
- Review the Safeguarding Incident Report Form
- Gather more information if necessary (using principles of investigation detailed in Appendix 5)
- Decide on next steps in relation to
  - disciplinary procedures;
  - referral to relevant statutory authorities;
  - investigation;
  - informing relevant donors as required;

- If an investigation is undertaken, the panel reviews the report and findings e.g. Allegation upheld/ not upheld due to evidence to disprove the allegation/ not upheld due to insufficient evidence to prove allegation
- If disciplinary procedures and/or reporting to the statutory agencies is involved, the panel follows the procedures detailed in Sections 7.2 and 7.3.
- Feed learning from case findings back into ERD and its Safeguarding Policy

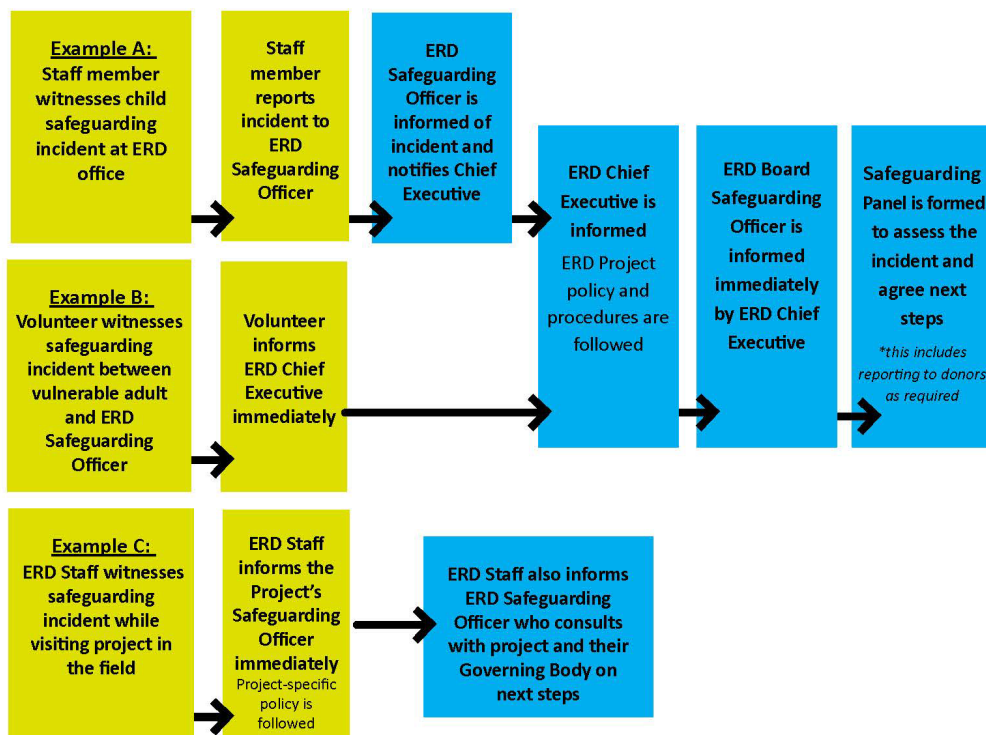
In the situation where the complaint is about any member of the Safeguarding Panel, they must stand aside and another member of the Panel will assume their role.

## **ERD REPORTING**

### **Procedures**



### **Examples**



## **7.2 Reporting to the Statutory Authorities**

Where the ERD Safeguarding Panel considers that a Safeguarding concern meets the reasonable grounds for concern, then a report must be made to Tusla or the HSE Safeguarding & Protection Department for Vulnerable Adults.

The Safeguarding Panel will seek informal advice from Tusla or HSE Safeguarding & Protection if there are any uncertainties around the threshold for reporting.

The Safeguarding Panel will ensure that the parents or guardians are informed that a report had been made, unless doing so could endanger the child or vulnerable adult.

**Under no circumstances should a child or vulnerable adult be left in a situation that exposes him or her to harm or risk of harm pending the intervention of the statutory authorities.** In the event of an emergency where the panel decide a child or vulnerable adult is in immediate danger, and they cannot get in contact with Tusla or HSE Safeguarding & Protection, An Garda Síochána must be contacted. The ERD Safeguarding Panel must ensure that the first priority is always for the safety and welfare of the child or vulnerable adult and that no child or vulnerable adult is ever left in a situation that could place them in immediate danger.

In cases where Panel deems reporting is not necessary, the person who raised the concern will be given a clear written statement of the reasons why the ERD Safeguarding Panel is not taking such action. The person will be advised that if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free as individuals to consult with, or report to the statutory authorities.

### 7.3 Internal Employment & Disciplinary Procedures

If a formal report is being made against an ERD employee, the ERD Safeguarding panel will work in close co-operation with the relevant authorities during the investigation. The following steps will be taken:

1. The CEO will notify the ERD employee that an allegation has been made and the nature of the allegation. The Employee has the right to respond to this and this response should be documented and retained.
2. The employee will be made aware of ERD's Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy. Furthermore, ERD will ensure that the principle of 'natural justice' will apply whereby a person is considered innocent until proven otherwise.
3. The ERD Board Chairperson will suspend the employee with pay (where relevant and appropriate). In the case where the employee is not suspended the level of supervision of the employee will be increased.
4. The CEO in conjunction with the ERD Board Safeguarding Officer will liaise closely the relevant authorities to ensure that the actions taken by ERD will not undermine or frustrate any investigations.
5. The CEO will notify the ERD employee of the investigation findings and subsequent disciplinary actions if required.

Disciplinary Action, which could include suspension or termination, will also be taken against any ERD employee who:

- Fails to report a child or vulnerable adult safeguarding concern or incident;
- Intentionally makes a false allegation;
- Breaches the Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy. Minor breaches may result in action such as refresher training or increased supervision.

## Section 8 Image and Video Footage of Children and Vulnerable Adults

ERD complies with the '*Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages*' (see Appendix 7). The guiding principles of the Code stipulate that use of images and messages will be made based on the paramount principles of:

- Respect for the dignity of the people concerned;
- Belief in the equality of all people;
- Acceptance of the need to promote fairness, solidarity and justice

The family of a vulnerable adult or child must always be asked for consent when taking their images or video. When asking for consent to use the image or video, details on how and where the image/video will be used must be provided.

## **Section 9 Child and Vulnerable Adult Participation**

ERD must involve children and vulnerable adults in the development and review of their safeguarding policies. Children and vulnerable adults should also have opportunity to input into the Safeguarding Code of Conduct and their feedback should help to inform what is considered to be appropriate and inappropriate behaviours.

## **Section 10 Safeguarding Policy Roll-out and Ongoing Training**

ERD is committed to educating ERD personnel on our Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy, on how to reduce risks and create a safe environment. It is the responsibility of the Board to ensure that all aspects of the policy are clearly understood by ERD personnel.

## **Section 11 Policy Review**

The ERD Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy is reviewed every two years. The ERD Safeguarding Officer manages the review of this policy, in consultation with ERD personnel and the Board. ERD partners will be consulted in this process. Any changes made to the Policy are approved by the ERD Board.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Code of Conduct

ERD personnel are responsible for maintaining a professional role with children and vulnerable adults. This means establishing and maintaining clear professional boundaries that serve to protect everyone from misunderstandings or a violation of the professional relationship.

All ERD personnel must conduct themselves in a manner consistent with their role as an ERD representative and be a positive role model to children and vulnerable adults. We have developed a Code of Conduct to protect children, vulnerable adults, staff and the organisation by providing clear behavioural guidelines and expectations. By signing a contract with us, all ERD personnel agree to adhere to the Code of Conduct set out below.

#### **I will**

- Treat all children and vulnerable adults with respect;
- Conduct myself in a manner that is consistent the values of ERD;
- Provide a welcoming, inclusive and safe environment for all children, young people, parents, staff and volunteers;
- Respect cultural differences;
- Encourage open communication between all children, vulnerable adults, parents, staff and volunteers and have children and vulnerable adults participate in the decisions that affect them;
- Report any concerns of abuse involving a vulnerable adult or child;
- Be transparent in my actions and whereabouts;
- Take responsibility for ensuring I am accountable and do not place myself in positions where there is a risk of an allegations being made;
- Self-assess my behaviours, actions, language and relationships with children and vulnerable adults;
- Speak up when I observe concerning behaviours of colleagues or others.

#### **I will not**

- Engage in behaviour intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children or vulnerable adults;
- Use inappropriate, offensive or discriminatory language with children or vulnerable adults;
- Do things of a personal nature that a vulnerable adults or child can do for themselves, such as assistance with toileting or changing clothes;
- Take children or vulnerable adults to my own home/hotel or sleep in the same room or bed them;
- Smack, hit or physically assault children or vulnerable adults;
- Develop sexual relationships with children or vulnerable adults;
- Develop relationships with children or vulnerable adults that may be deemed exploitative or abusive;
- Provide or supply alcohol or drugs to children or vulnerable adults;
- Give gifts to children or vulnerable adults;
- Behave provocatively or inappropriately with a child or vulnerable adult;
- Condone or participate in, behaviour that is illegal, unsafe or abusive to a child or vulnerable adult;
- Act in a way that shows unfair and differential treatment of children or vulnerable adults;
- Photograph or video a vulnerable adult or child without the consent of their parents or guardians;
- Deal with a child or vulnerable adult in an inappropriate, unnecessary or culturally insensitive way;

- Seek to make contact and spend time with any child or vulnerable adult project beneficiary outside development project times when visiting projects;
- Use ERD computers, mobile phones, video and digital cameras inappropriately, nor use them for the purpose of exploiting or harassing children or vulnerable adults;
- Hire minors as domestic labour.

## Appendix 2: Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Self-Declaration and Agreement

Edmund Rice Development considers abuse of vulnerable adults and children unacceptable in all circumstances. We are committed to ensuring that all possible and necessary steps are taken to acknowledge the rights, and protect the wellbeing, of vulnerable adults and children that we work with.

It is of utmost importance that abuse is not perpetrated nor compounded by those that ERD puts in contact with vulnerable adults and children. It is essential that all ERD personnel understand their own role in protecting vulnerable adults and children. That all practical and reasonable steps are taken to counteract the risk of harm to vulnerable adults and children.

This self-declaration and agreement form relates to all individuals who come in to contact with vulnerable adults and/or children (in Ireland and overseas) due to their relationship with ERD.

Please read ERD's Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy. If necessary, seek clarification with an appropriate ERD staff member and thereafter sign on this page to show you have understood and agree to abide by the contents outlined in these documents.

I (your full name) \_\_\_\_\_

Of (current address) \_\_\_\_\_

Declare that:

- I have been given a copy of, read and understand the ERD Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy and its Code of Conduct.
- I agree to abide by the behaviour protocols and follow the reporting procedure set out in the ERD Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy and its Code of Conduct.
- I do not have a criminal record nor have I undergone disciplinary action relating to forms of vulnerable adult or child abuse, neglect, or violence of any type.

I hereby agree to the conditions and guidelines set out by ERD with regard to any contact with vulnerable adults and children in Ireland and overseas. I understand that ERD reserves the right to take legal action against me if I breach local or international vulnerable adult and/or child protection laws.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## **Appendix 3: Additional Recommendations for Reporting Safeguarding Incidents**

### **1. Responding to Disclosure by a Vulnerable Adult or Child**

When a child or vulnerable adult discloses abuse, they may be feeling scared, guilty, ashamed, angry and powerless. You, in turn, may feel a sense of outrage, disgust, sadness, anger and sometimes disbelief.

Any disclosure of abuse must be taken seriously. It is important for you to remain calm and in control and to reassure them that something will be done to keep them safe.

When a vulnerable adult or child discloses they are being harmed you can show your care and concern for them by:

- Listening carefully;
- Telling them you believe him or her;
- Telling them it is not their fault and they are not responsible for the abuse;
- Telling them you are pleased they told you.

You will not be helping the vulnerable adult or child if you:

- Make promises you cannot keep, such as promising that you will not tell anyone;
- Push them into giving details of the abuse. Your role is to listen to what they want to tell you and not to conduct an investigation. Beware of asking any leading questions as this may prejudice any subsequent investigation;
- Indiscriminately discuss the circumstances of the vulnerable adult or child with others not directly involved.

Try to obtain some details such as:

- Where the abuse is taking place: at school, home, work etc.;
- Whether it is currently occurring or did occur in the past;
- The name of the alleged perpetrator.

It is possible that some children or vulnerable adult will make a disclosure and then ask you not to tell anyone. It is important you seek guidance from the Safeguarding Officer to discuss how the vulnerable adult or child can be supported and the disclosure managed.

### **2. Protecting the Child or Vulnerable Adult**

Once an allegation is made there must be an immediate response that protects the vulnerable adult and/or child from further potential abuse or victimisation. They may require medical assistance or counselling support.

Exceptions may be made where the child or vulnerable adult is deemed to be at risk of victimisation by peers as a result of the allegation or because the alleged abuse has occurred in home-based care. If the vulnerable adult and/or child is in immediate danger arrangements must be made for them to go to a safe place.

### **3. Response to the Alleged Perpetrator**

The best interest of the child or vulnerable adult may warrant the suspension of a staff member. Any staff member suspended in this manner must continue to receive full pay; this measure recognises

that the staff member is entitled to a just process that does not pre-judge guilt or innocence. Any volunteers who are suspended should similarly receive reasonable reimbursement of costs.

#### **4. Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is a key principle of reporting and managing safeguarding concerns. All information regarding a safeguarding concern must only be shared with the designated Safeguarding Officer and the ERD Board. The names of people involved, and the details of the report must remain confidential. Information must only be released on a “need to know” basis, or when required by Irish or overseas law, or when a report to police or child protection authorities is made.

#### **5. Record keeping**

When an incident is reported, details must be recorded as soon as possible after speaking with the informant, before the end of that day. The form must be signed and dated. This form becomes the basis of a Case File, which includes a log of actions taken, events and information received. Copies of any documents or written records in relation to the alleged incident must be kept in this file. Managing each case file is the responsibility of the Safeguarding Officer.

## **Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding**

Please contact Naidi McDonnell for help if:

- you have a complaint or concern about this facility or someone who works here



Safeguarding Officer- Naidi McDonnell

+ 353 87 393 2971



[naidi@edmundricedevelopment.org](mailto:naidi@edmundricedevelopment.org)

[www.edmundricedevelopment.org](http://www.edmundricedevelopment.org)

You can also contact:

Tusla - The Child Protection Agency Tulsa



01 8567704

Store Street Garda Station



01 666 8002

## Appendix 5: Principles of Investigation

1. **Be fair and objective.** Everyone involved in an investigation deserves to be treated with respect and dignity.
2. **Do not pre-judge.** Wait until all witnesses have been interviewed and evidence examined before reaching factual determinations and ultimate conclusions.
3. **Avoid the appearance of bias.** If the key parties to a dispute or allegation of misconduct are personally known to the investigator, or if the allegation of misconduct is against a high-level university official, someone more independent should be brought in to conduct the investigation.
4. **Plan and outline the investigation before starting.** Think through who should be interviewed and in what order; what documents and evidence should be gathered before interviewing certain witnesses; and what interim measures are needed (e.g., temporarily restricting access to computers).
5. **Investigate promptly.** Certain investigative steps may need to be done immediately – for example, preserving electronic and other evidence. But rarely should an investigation be rushed and prematurely concluded due to some arbitrary deadline.
6. **Keep the investigation separate and independent from the stakeholders.** Especially in sensitive matters, the university president, provost, general counsel, or board members may wish to be kept apprised of the investigation's progress and preliminary findings. This should generally be avoided so as not to compromise the integrity and independence of the investigation itself.
7. **Never mislead a witness.** Do not disclose details of the investigation to your witnesses, do not make promises that cannot be kept, and do not lie to or make misleading statements to the witnesses.
8. **Protect confidentiality.** Failure to take reasonable precautions to protect the confidentiality of the investigation and the witnesses being interviewed can damage reputations and potentially lead to cover-ups, liability, and retaliation.
9. **Protect reputations.** Nothing can undermine the credibility of a university-based investigation more severely than if the investigation fails to adequately protect the reputations of students, university employees, and witnesses.
10. **Investigate acts of retaliation.** If during the investigation a report or allegation of retaliation against the person who reported the misconduct or any other witness is received, the alleged retaliation must be immediately and thoroughly investigated.
11. **Seek every witness's cooperation.** Try to obtain the cooperation of all potential witnesses, not only those who may support or corroborate one side of a dispute.
12. **Reach a conclusion.** Even in difficult cases involving conflicting accounts from equally credible sources, it is important to make determinations regarding credibility and reach reasonable fact-based conclusions based on a thorough evaluation of the evidence.

## Appendix 6: ERD Safeguarding Incident Reporting Form

See separate attachment

## Appendix 7: Dóchas Code of Conduct

See separate attachment