

## 37.Safeguarding of Children/Young People & Vulnerable Adults Statement

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Wexford Rape Crisis (WEXRC) is fully committed to the safeguarding of children, young people and adults who come in contact with our services. All permanent, temporary and contracted staff, board members, volunteers and interns working for or on behalf of the WEXRC recognize that the welfare of children, young people and adults is paramount. WEXRC endeavors to safeguard all individuals who are engaged with our services. As an organisation, our aim is to create a safe and healthy environment for all our clients, and we are committed at all times to ensure the safety and protection of children and vulnerable adults.

### **Services provided by WEXRC to adults:**

- WEXRC operates a telephone line where callers can ring in to make contact and arrange an appointment to access face-to-face counselling. On occasion support can be provided over the phone for clients in distress. There is currently no unique safeguarding legislation for helplines in Ireland, so our procedures are guided by the (HSE) Safeguarding persons at Risk of Abuse National policy and National Standards for Adult Safeguarding 2019 published by HIQA and MHC. Just like face-to-face support services, the telephone line must have adequate Safeguarding policies in place. While contact is indirect, we understand that there is still potential for harm to occur.
- WEXRC provides a face-to-face counselling service to adults (18+) who have been impacted by Domestic, Sexual or Gender-based violence (DSGBV). All appointments are made by contacting the landline number.
- WEXRC provides a Garda and Court accompaniment service which is provided by trained staff. The service aims to provide appropriate support to people who are witnesses in any criminal trial related to sexual violence.
- WEXRC trained Education Worker provides a consent and sexual violence prevention programme to secondary school students in junior and senior cycles, at the invitation of the schools.

### **Services provided by WEXRC to children/young people, are as follows:**

- WEXRC provides a dedicated counselling service for children aged 12 years and upwards who have been impacted by DSGBV. Parental or guardian consent is required, and the parent/guardian must accompany the young person to the first appointment and some other subsequent appointments.
- WEXRC provides a garda and court accompaniment and support services by trained staff. The service aims to provide support to young people who are witnesses in any criminal trial related to sexual violence.

### **Risk Assessment:**

WEXRC has carried out an assessment of any potential for harm to a child or vulnerable adult while availing of our services, and other risks we may become aware of, directly or indirectly through adults or child disclosures. Below is a list of the areas of risk identified and the list of procedures for managing these risks.

The potential risk in relation to any of the types of disclosure listed in points 1-4 would be that the disclosures might not be handled correctly and the opportunity to protect or help the child/children at risk/vulnerable adult would be lost. The procedures outlined at 1-4 are designed to manage this risk.

Other issues with potential risks are listed from 5-11 below, together with the WEXRC procedures designed to manage these issues correctly.

Risks Identified:	Procedures in Place to Manage Risk:
<p>1. An adult or child may disclose abuse/risk of abuse to a child to a staff member or volunteer on the phone</p>	<p>Contacting WEXRC service by phone offers an opportunity for parents and concerned adults to allow them to explore, sometimes anonymously, their concerns regarding any child/young person. Children/young people themselves may use the phone anonymously to speak about their experiences of abuse and to seek some guidance as to how to access help. Concerned parents or professionals seeking referrals for services will receive information and appropriate referral to Tusla or other counselling agencies that will assist them.</p> <p>The administrator/staff member/volunteer follows the guidelines in WEXRC's Child Protection Policy (henceforth CPP) for handling a disclosure of child abuse. Counsellors/Relevant trained personnel assist children and young people to explore their situation and identify adults to whom they may disclose their abuse. Adults are supported in taking any steps towards reporting reasonable concerns to the statutory services.</p> <p>If identifying information is received, the personnel answering the phone reports the disclosure to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP), who liaises with a Clinical Support Worker, who then completes the Tusla Child Protection &amp; Welfare Report Form and forwards it onto Tusla.</p>
<p>2. Direct disclosures of sexual/domestic/gender-based violence in counselling by young clients aged 12 years and upwards.</p>	<p>WEXRC provides counselling for young people aged 12 years and upwards who attend for DSGBV. Prior to starting counselling, the CSW/Therapist will explain to the child and their parents the requirement to notify Tusla of all cases of child abuse and will obtain their written consent where possible. In the case where consent is not given a CP report must still be sent to Tusla, if a child is at risk. Therapist must discuss each case involving an underage client with the DLP and CSW who will complete the Tusla standard report form. The CSW will notify Tusla of all cases of alleged child abuse.</p>

	<p>If the parent or child informs the therapist that there is already a Tusla Social Worker involved in the case, the CSW will contact Tusla (with client's consent) to verify this.</p> <p>If consent is not forthcoming, the CSW will send a report to Tusla.</p>
<p>3. Disclosures of current abuse of children and or risk of current abuse, by adults in the course of therapy in WEXRC.</p>	<p>Some adults may disclose in therapy that one or more of their own children, or a child or children know to them, is currently being abused or has recently suffered abuse, or is currently at risk of abuse.</p> <p>The therapist will remind the client of WEXRC's CPP. The situation will be explored, and the therapist will inform the client that he/she will have to discuss the current risk to the child/children with the DLP and the risk to the child will be to be reported to Tusla. The DLP and Therapist will liaise with the CSW who will report the case immediately to the relevant Tusla Social Work Department, or to the Garda, in the case of an emergency where a social worker is not available. The standard report form will be completed and will then be forwarded to Tusla, by the CSW, as a matter of urgency.</p>
<p>4. Retrospective disclosures of historic abuse, by adults, in the course of therapy with WEXRC:</p>	<p>Some adults may disclose in therapy abuse that took place during their childhood or teens. In the case of a retrospective disclosure from a client that they were abused as a child or teenager; for all cases in which it is the professional judgement of the DLP, together with the relevant staff member, that a child or children may currently be at risk from a known offender, the DLP will liaise with the CSW who will notify Tusla, using the Standard Report form.</p> <p>All potential clients are informed of WEXRC CPP from the outset. Some sessions will be given to exploring the clients' fears about reporting to Tusla, to help them to come to terms with the need for reporting. However, under the Children First Guidance, WEXRC will report such cases/concerns, even when the client does not consent.</p> <p>If a client indicates that a report has already been made re historical abuse, the CSW will ask for their consent to verify this with the relevant</p>

	social worker. If the client does not consent, the CSW will make a report.
5. Contact of WEXRC volunteers or staff with children/young people under 18 through its services e.g., education programmes.	<p>WEXRC volunteer/staff who provide accompaniment for underage clients/their family members at Garda stations or court, receive intensive training in relation to maintaining boundaries in their role, in each situation. They will not meet a young person on their own. Back up support from the CTL/Centre Manager is available if they have any concerns.</p> <p>For those staff engaged in school talks, any disclosures must be dealt with in accordance with the procedures set out in WEXRC's CPP. Prior to the commencement of the school talk, the worker must outline to the young people that if a disclosure occurs in the absence of a school staff member, WEXRC worker is obliged to notify their contact within the school as well as to WEXRC Manager/CTL, if they have any child protection concerns.</p>
6. An Allegation of abuse or misconduct in relation to a child availing of WEXRC services is made against an employee or volunteer.	<p>In the event of allegations being made against a WEXRC staff member or volunteer, the protection of the child/young person is the first and paramount consideration.</p> <p>WEXRC's CPP clearly outlines the procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against staff/volunteers of a child availing of our service. The child protection issues, including the reporting of concerns or allegations, fall within the remit of the DLP/CSW.</p>
7. Confidentiality, and data protection, in particular regarding child protection.	<p>WEXRC is committed to ensuring people's rights to confidentiality. Adherence to strict confidentiality regarding information received relating to service-users and related issues form part of the contracts of both employees and volunteers of WEXRC.</p> <p>Therapists will discuss the limits of confidentiality with clients from the outset. However, in relation to child protection and welfare WEXRC undertakes that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any information with child protection implications will be shared with relevant individuals/agencies on a need-to-</li> </ul>

	<p>know basis in the best interest of the child/young person.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents and children have a right to know if personal information is being shared, unless doing so could put the child at further risk.</li> <li>• With regard to reporting under the Children First guidelines, staff and volunteers have 'privilege' in relation to such cases, as set out in the legislation – the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998. However, such information must never be disclosed inappropriately, either inside WEXRC or in the public domain. Before disclosure to a third party, staff must discuss the matter fully with the DLP.</li> </ul> <p>Staff should only access records on a 'need to know' basis in relation to their role. Records of child protection referrals are stored securely in a specific file, securely locked by the DLP. All client information is of a sensitive nature and information regarding Child Protection is of particular concern. The DLP has responsibility for the safety of this information.</p>
8. Communication regarding issues of alleged child abuse between WEXRC and other agencies, especially Tusla.	<p>WEXRC's CPP outlines co-operation with Tusla, Child and Family Agency on the sharing of their records, where a child welfare or protection issue arises. WEXRC seeks to work in partnership with any other agency/service when such a liaison will benefit the child and their family. This includes statutory and non-statutory services.</p> <p>WEXRC is committed to sharing information in relation to child protection with Tusla, Child and Family Agency and therapists are available to liaise in the best interest of the child. WEXRC will share what is necessary and proportionate in the circumstances of each individual case. This is in keeping with the principles of Data Protection which recognize that in certain circumstances information can be shared in the interest of child protection.</p>
9. Disclosure of Rape/Sexual Assault by a vulnerable adult.	<p>Where the identity of the perpetrator is known, the Clinical Support Worker is obliged to make a report to the Gardaí, following approval by</p>

	<p>the Clinical Team Leader. Staff should liaise with Emma Dempsey (Clinical Team Leader) or Clare Williams (Centre Manager) and pass their report to Pauline Lawlor or Clíodhna Cotter (Clinical Support worker) in line with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedure.</p> <p>Mandatory reporting requirements exist to keep clients safe and are not considered a breach of confidentiality or data protection. Obligations in this respect area made clear to the client from the outset.</p>
10. Disclosure that an adult or child is at risk of harming themselves	<p>In the provision of our services, we recognize that it is our responsibility to take action before harm occurs. Having a central point of contact for disclosures ensures a consistent and practical approach across the organisation while ensuring accountability for decisions made.</p> <p>Where there is an obvious risk of the client or caller harming themselves, then the center's policy for suicidal clients and callers should be followed.</p>
11. Disclosure that a vulnerable adult or child is at risk of harm by somebody else or due to other personal circumstances.	<p>All disclosures by clients at risk should be reported to the designated officer Emma Dempsey (CTL), if not to Clare Williams (Manager), who will liaise with the Clinical support workers, contact the relevant agency and ensure all reporting obligations are met.</p> <p>Details of procedures are set out in the center's Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding of vulnerable adult policy.</p>
12. The risk of delay in providing counselling and support to young people on our waiting list who have suicidal ideation or are self- harming.	<p><b>Procedures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Placing the young person on a Priority List to be seen as soon as possible given the constraints of our staffing level.</li> <li>• Work on coping and self-management skills in the initial contact by the CTL/CSW/Counsellor/Manager.</li> <li>• Involvement of parents or guardians.</li> <li>• Provision of information re other supports the young person can access while waiting: GP, Samaritans and other helplines and</li> </ul>

	<p>agencies such as Jigsaw and Pieta House, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training for staff re managing suicide risk.</li> <li>• Making funders aware of the need for increased funding to manage our waiting times.</li> </ul>
13. Fear and distress expressed by the young person involved in relation to reporting.	<p><b>Procedures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support and reassurance by the CSW/ CTL/counsellor/Manager.</li> <li>• Explanation of the procedure and purpose in relation to reporting.</li> <li>• Involvement of parents and guardians as appropriate.</li> </ul>
14. Counsellors' negative experiences of referral outcomes in the past.	<p><b>Procedures</b></p> <p>Increased contact with local social workers and Tusla Personnel and ongoing monitoring and discussion in relation to outcomes.</p>
For queries, or concerns regarding Child protections or safeguarding of vulnerable adults, please contact:	<p>Emma Dempsey (Clinical team Leader &amp; WEXRC's Designated Liaison Person for Child Protection and Relevant Persons under the Children First Act 2015.</p> <p>Emma@wexfordrapecrisis.com</p> <p>Phone: (053) 9122722 During office hours.</p> <p>Clare Williams, Manager WEXRC.  <a href="mailto:clare@wexfordrapecrisis.com">clare@wexfordrapecrisis.com</a>          Phone: (053) 91 22722.</p>

Conclusion: WEXRC's Safeguarding statement 2023 has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, the Children First: National Guidance, Tulsa's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice, The National Standards for Adult Safeguarding published by Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) and the Mental Health Commission (MHC) in 2019.

In addition to the procedures listed in our risk assessment, the following procerus support our intention to safeguard children and vulnerable adults while they are availing of our service.

**WEXRC's Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults policy includes:**

- Procedures for provision of and access to safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm
- A clear reporting procedure to respond to concerns around individual's welfare and safety.

- A code of behavior for staff and volunteers
- A safe recruitment and selection procedure, including vetting for all staff and volunteers who work with young people
- A procedure to respond to accidents
- A procedure to respond to complaints
- Having a Designated Liaison Person
- Induction and ongoing training to staff in relation to WEXRC's Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adult's Policy
- Provision of supervision and support for staff and volunteers in contact with children and vulnerable adults
- Sharing information about the Child Protection Policy and good practices with families and children
- Sharing information about the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy with adults using our services
- Reviewing WEXRC's Child Protection Policy, Safeguarding Vulnerable Adult's Policy and other internal processes regularly. All WEXRC policies are available on request.

#### **Implementation:**

We recognize that implementation is an on-going process. Our service is committed to the implementation of this Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children and vulnerable adults safe from harm, while availing of our services. This Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed in (Sept 2023), or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

Signed: Clare Williams Signed: E Dempsey 8/12/2025.

Clare Williams, Manager, Wexford Rape Crisis.

Emma Dempsey, Clinical Team Leader, Wexford Rape Crisis.

<b>Title:</b>	WEXRC Safeguarding Statement
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