

# Guiding Principles and Child Safeguarding Procedures

## Introduction

This document outlines ShoutOut's Guiding Principles and Child Safeguarding Procedures (GPCSP). This document is for the sole use of ShoutOut. ShoutOut will, where appropriate, adhere to the policies and procedures as laid out by any other organisation or party (e.g. a school or youth group) and follow their guidelines with regards to child protection and welfare. ShoutOut's GPCSP is a working document and will be regularly reviewed by both ShoutOut's Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and the Board of Directors.

This policy is due for review in February 2025.

Version	3
Date agreed	14 March 2023
Next review date	1st February 2025
Information manager	Ruadhán Ó Críodáin

## Scope

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, and Board members who have contact with children and young people through their work on behalf of ShoutOut.

## Overview of ShoutOut

Important details

Legal Name: ShoutOut

Charity Status Number: 20141769

Address: ShoutOut, Outhouse, 105 Capel Street, Dublin 1

Website: [www.shoutout.ie](http://www.shoutout.ie)

Contact details: [Director@shoutout.ie](mailto:Director@shoutout.ie)

ShoutOut is a registered charity committed to improving life for LGBTQ+ people by sharing personal stories and educating school students, parents & guardians, teachers, youth workers, and workplaces on LGBTQ+ issues. ShoutOut provides educational programmes on LGBTQ+ inclusion for a variety of different stakeholders including young people in secondary schools and youth groups.

ShoutOut has been operating since 2012 and received charity status in 2017. Since 2012 we have delivered over 2250 workshops and have spoken directly to over 67,000 people, most of whom are secondary school students. ShoutOut is governed by the Board of Directors which is led by the chairperson, Sean O'Sullivan.

## **Child Safeguarding Statement**

ShoutOut is committed to following the Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2017, as well as the Children First Act 2015. Our policy applies to all executive and non-executive members of ShoutOut including staff, volunteers, and the Board of Directors.

We respect the rights of all children and young people and believe they have the right to be safe from all harm. We also recognise the importance of providing staff and volunteers with the resources necessary to competently and confidently respond to child protection concerns within the framework of ShoutOut's remit.

We will review our guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures every two years or sooner if necessary due to service issues or changes in legislation or national policy.

### **Remit**

Due to the nature of our work, ShoutOut does not have sustained interaction with any particular child or young person. ShoutOut staff and volunteers do not form any kind of sustained relations with children or young people. At no point does the work carried out by ShoutOut staff and volunteers raise to the level of caregiving to children or young people, nor the supervision of children or young people.

### **ShoutOut's LGBTQ+ Inclusion Workshops with children and young people**

ShoutOut started with a mission to make life easier for LGBTQ+ students in secondary schools by creating inclusion through educational workshops. Research shows 69% of LGBTQ+ students were subject to homophobic remarks and 76% of LGBTQ+ students felt unsafe at schools (BeLongTo School Climate Survey 2022).

Under the Irish Constitution, all children and young people in Ireland have the right to access education. If a school is an unwelcoming environment for LGBTQ+ students then they are being denied that right. Helping to create inclusive environments for LGBTQ+ people is foundational to the mission of ShoutOut. We started working solely in schools in 2012 and since then have expanded to offering LGBTQ+ Training to children and young people in other established organisations such as youth groups.

ShoutOut delivers LGBTQ+ inclusion workshops to young people and adults. Where this training is taking place with young people it is always within the bounds of a separate organisation which is independent of ShoutOut. ShoutOut, therefore, organises LGBTQ+ training with young people through the adults working within these organisations such as teachers and youth workers. Therefore, ShoutOut will adhere to the Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures of that organisation, including their Garda vetting protocol. We will not engage with young people outside these bounds.

Separate organisations include schools, youth groups, state-run institutions and other formalised organisations.

Therefore, ShoutOut's remit with regards to contact with children and young people is limited. LGBTQ+ Training with young people is a once-off event where workshop facilitators deliver content designed to increase understanding of LGBTQ+ issues. Contact with young people outside the confines of the LGBTQ+ training is strictly prohibited except in the case of signposting children and young people to separate relevant organisations such as Childline, local youth services, and local authorities. No other contact with children and young people shall take place between ShoutOut training facilitators, which consists of both staff and volunteers.

LGBTQ+ Inclusion Workshops for young people are delivered by ShoutOut facilitators. ShoutOut facilitators are either ShoutOut staff or ShoutOut volunteers which have been trained by ShoutOut staff (see below for volunteer training).

Part of LGBTQ+ Inclusion Workshops for young people includes facilitators speaking about their personal experiences as a member of the LGBTQ+ community or as allies. This often covers coming out stories. The content of this is always age-appropriate.

### **LGBTQ+ Inclusion Workshops with adults pertaining to young people**

ShoutOut also provides training to adults who work with young people such as teachers, youth workers, and social workers. Our aim is to provide these professionals with the terminology pertaining to the LGBTQ+ community as well as best practices and signposting to other services.

Attendees at this training will have undergone Child Protection training and will be adhering to the Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures of the organisation to which they are affiliated. Our training is underpinned by the Children First National Guidelines and child protection and welfare is centered in every aspect of our training.

### **Digital Safeguarding**

Where workshops for children and young people are delivered online, special considerations must be made to ensure child safeguarding. Workshops may take place online using a video conferencing platform. ShoutOut will facilitate LGBTQ+ Inclusion workshops with young people online through an established organisation such as a school or youth group.

Therefore, supervision of all young people attending is carried out by staff members of the established organisation.

ShoutOut facilitators will clearly display their first name and have their video and microphones turned on for the duration of the workshop. However, no child or young person is required, by ShoutOut, to have their name displayed or the camera or microphones turned on. Different policies may exist in this regard within the school or youth group.

Workshops will not be recorded except in the instance of express permission by both young

people and their parents/guardians.

When ShoutOut workshops occur online children and young people are either within the premises of their school or youth group, or they may be at home. Where young people are at home, they are allowed to exit the workshop at any point. This is to ensure the safety of the young person in the instance that their parent/guardian or caregiver may have a negative reaction to LGBTQ+ content.

If for any reason somebody not invited into the online meeting appears the meeting will be terminated immediately.

## **Code of Conduct for the Safeguarding Young People**

Overview of Roles within the Code of Conduct:

“Everyone at ShoutOut” refers to anyone affiliated with ShoutOut through volunteer work, members of staff at ShoutOut, and the ShoutOut Board of Directors.

“ShoutOut facilitators” refers to anyone delivering ShoutOut LGBTQ+ Inclusion workshops, either staff or volunteers.

“The DLP” refers to the Designated Liaison Person, more details below.

Everyone at ShoutOut:

One of the key principles in Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children is that the safety and welfare of children is everyone’s responsibility. As such everyone at ShoutOut including staff, volunteers and Board members are committed to the following guidelines:

- Everyone at ShoutOut must be fully committed to ensuring the welfare of young people is of the utmost importance.
- Everyone at ShoutOut will treat young people equally, with respect and sensitivity. Integrity and dignity must be granted at all times.
- Everyone at ShoutOut must be knowledgeable about and follow ShoutOut’s Guiding Principles and Child Safeguarding Procedures and all other policies and procedures.
- Everyone at ShoutOut will give accurate and truthful information to ShoutOut staff or the Board of Directors.
- During a workshop with young people, ShoutOut facilitators should not be alone with a young person. There must always be another relevant adult (another ShoutOut facilitator, or a member of staff from the organisation we are working with) in the vicinity within earshot or eyeshot.
- All doors must remain open at all times. By no means, may anyone at ShoutOut

close a door to a room behind them in which they are alone with a young person, unless the door has a window where full view into the room is clear.

- No one at ShoutOut should promise a young person they will keep their secret, if to do so could put them at further risk.
- It is strictly forbidden to have any contact with a young person outside the bounds of the LGBTQ+ training session. This includes contact on social media or any other medium. Contact between ShoutOut facilitators and a young person who received a ShoutOut workshop (or a student from any school in which a ShoutOut workshop has taken place) is considered a breach of the code of conduct, regardless of the nature of the contact. If a student reaches out for support refer them to a support service such as Childline, Samaritans, LGBT Helpline, or Gay Switchboard.
- Photos taken during ShoutOut workshops should not have any young persons in it without the express consent of parents/guardians and the young people themselves.
- ShoutOut staff, volunteers, and Board must follow the Child Protection and Safeguarding policies of any organisation or school which they visit to carry out work with ShoutOut, including relevant Garda vetting protocol.
- If you witness anyone from ShoutOut disregarding any of the above guidelines you must report that to the DLP immediately. If the DLP is seen to be disregarding any of the above guidelines that must be reported to the Board of Directors immediately.

Any breach of ShoutOut's Code of Behaviour will be dealt with formally or informally depending on the nature of the breach.

## **Roles & Responsibilities**

Everyone at ShoutOut:

Everyone at ShoutOut has the responsibility to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the safeguarding of young people as previously outlined. Everyone at ShoutOut is also responsible for reporting any incidences of a breach to this conduct.

The DLP:

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) has oversight responsibility for child protection within an organisation. In ShoutOut, the DLP is the Executive Director of ShoutOut, Ruadhán Ó Críodáin. Ruadhán has been trained in Child Protection with Barnardos. The DLP is responsible for ensuring that reporting procedures are followed correctly and promptly and acts as a liaison person with other agencies.

Contact Details for DLP  
Ruadhán Ó Críodáin  
[director@shoutout.ie](mailto:director@shoutout.ie)  
087 403 1798

Role of the DLP:

- To report suspicions and allegations of Child Abuse to TUSLA and the Gardaí.
- To report suspected issues, not amounting to Child Abuse, to school staff, parents/guardians and caregivers.
- To provide information and advice on Child Safeguarding within the organisation.
- To ensure that the Guiding Principles and Child Safeguarding Procedures are adhered to, and to inform TUSLA of relevant concerns about individual children.
- To ensure that all staff and volunteers are familiar with them and also that they each receive appropriate Child Safeguarding training, briefing and/or information as appropriate.
- To give advice on individual cases, where appropriate.
- To advise on good practice and guidelines on Child safeguarding.
- To liaise with TUSLA, Gardaí and other agencies as appropriate.
- To maintain proper records on all referred cases in a secure and confidential manner.
- To keep informed about current developments regarding the provision, practice, support services, legal obligations etc. with regards to Child safeguarding and to inform the volunteers, board members and staff about these developments where necessary or beneficial.
- To ensure that the issue of Child safeguarding is considered and the policy implemented as an integral part of the delivery of all events, and programmes organised by the ShoutOut.

### **Volunteers & Volunteer Training**

Volunteers at ShoutOut must be 18 or over. ShoutOut Volunteers undergo training to learn how to facilitate ShoutOut workshops which primarily take place in schools. Occasionally ShoutOut volunteers will facilitate ShoutOut workshops outside the remit of a school; this will be with a different established organisation such as a youth group.

Child safeguarding is covered during volunteer training, and volunteers agree to the code of conduct as outlined above.

It is a requirement of all ShoutOut volunteers to undertake TUSLA's Children First E-Learning Programme to further ensure they are prepared to handle any child safeguarding issues.

### **Recognising Abuse**

Concerns that do not rise to the level of abuse regarding a young person can be discussed with one of the professionals working with the young person in the organisation with which ShoutOut is engaged, for example a teacher or a youth worker.

Concerns about abuse and dealing with declarations must be handled properly and swiftly. Recognising abuse is paramount to child safeguarding.

Examples of reasonable grounds are concern are:

- A specific indication from the young person that they were abused.
- An account by the person who saw the young person being abused.
- Evidence of abuse such as visible injury.

Further information can be found on the Tusla website, specifically at [www.tusla.ie/services/child-protection-welfare/children-first/](http://www.tusla.ie/services/child-protection-welfare/children-first/)

### **Peer to peer abuse**

It is important to note that in some cases of child abuse, the alleged perpetrator will be another child. In a situation where child abuse is alleged to have been carried out by another child, the child safeguarding procedures should be adhered to for both the victim and the alleged abuser, i.e. it should be considered a child care and protection issue for both children. Abusive behaviour that is perpetrated by children must be acted upon. If there is any conflict of interest between the welfare of the alleged abuser and the victim, the victim's welfare is of paramount importance. Concerns about peer abuse must be escalated to TUSLA.

### **Responding to a declaration of abuse**

Should a young person disclose an incident of abuse or an ongoing abusive situation this must be dealt with sensitively and professionally. The following guidelines must be followed:

- React calmly.
- Listen carefully.
- Do not question the young person with regards to the validity of the accusation; young people must be listened to.
- Thank them for speaking to you.
- Do not promise to keep this a secret.
- Be careful when asking questions. Your job is not to investigate but to support the young person. Avoid leading questions such as whether a specific person carried out the abuse, or whether specific acts mentioned by the young person occurred. Such questions may complicate an official investigation.
- Make a written record of the conversation as soon as possible.
- Pass the information to the DLP at ShoutOut and, if possible, the DLP at the organisation in which ShoutOut is working (in schools, the principal is the DLP).
- Do not tell anyone else about the declaration.

### **Reporting & Declarations**

Regardless of how a concern comes to a worker/volunteer's attention, it must be reported to

the DLP. The DLP, in consultation with the person who raised the concern, will decide if reasonable grounds for concern exist. An informal consultation with a Tusla, Child and Family Agency Duty Social Worker could be made to seek advice and to decide whether a formal referral to the Child and Family Agency is warranted. If reasonable grounds for concern exist, the DLP will report to the Tusla Duty Social Worker. Reasonable grounds for a child safeguarding or welfare concern are outlined in the Children First National Guidance 2017 and include:

- Evidence, for example an injury or behaviour, that is consistent with abuse and is unlikely to have been caused in any other way.
- Any concern about possible sexual abuse.
- Consistent signs that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.
- A child saying or indicating by other means that he or she has been abused.
- Admission or indication by an adult or a child of an alleged abuse they committed.
- An account from a person who saw the child being abused.

If the DLP decides not to make a report, the worker/volunteer with reasonable concern is still entitled to make a report to Tusla under Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, should they wish to do so. The individual worker has protections under the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998, should they report independently. The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 makes provision for the protection from civil liability of persons who have communicated child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to designated officers of the HSE or to any member of An Garda Síochána. This protection applies to organisations as well as to individuals. This means that even if a communicated suspicion of child abuse proves unfounded, a plaintiff who took an action would have to prove that the person who communicated the concern had not acted reasonably and in good faith in making the report.

In the event of an emergency, where a young person is at immediate danger and it is not possible to contact the HSE Child and Family Agency Duty Social Worker, ShoutOut will contact An Garda Síochána

The provision of information to the statutory agencies, or relevant others for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality or data protection.

In the event that a report is made, ShoutOut volunteers may be called to give evidence should legal action be taken. Everyone at ShoutOut will cooperate with Tusla and law enforcement in this regard.

### **Allegations & Complaints against ShoutOut staff, volunteers or Board Members**

Allegations and complaints against ShoutOut staff, volunteers or Board members are taken very seriously, regardless of whether the allegation or complaint pertains to a recent situation or one from the past. Allegations and complaints against ShoutOut staff, volunteers or Board members should be brought to the DLP.

Should allegations be made against the DLP the Board of Directors will contact TUSLA and, where appropriate, An Garda Síochána directly.



Contact details for complaints to the board:

Email: [complaints@shoutout.ie](mailto:complaints@shoutout.ie)

Informal conversations may take place between ShoutOut and Tusla with regards to allegations and complaints in order to seek guidance. The safety of children and young people is the first priority and all necessary measures will be taken to ensure that no child or young person is put at risk.

The following steps will be taken after an allegation or complaint has been made against someone at ShoutOut:

1. The staff member, volunteer or board member (henceforth known as the individual) will be informed that an allegation or complaint has been made against them and while an investigation takes place they are temporarily suspended from working on behalf of ShoutOut.
2. The individual will have their access to ShoutOut accounts such as email, videoconferencing, social media etc temporarily revoked pending an investigation.
3. Any response from the individual will be recorded. If a response is given through a phone call then an email outlining the details in the phone call will be sent to the individual for written confirmation.
4. Appropriate members of ShoutOut (the DLP, the chairperson etc) will liaise with the Child and Family Agency and where appropriate An Garda Síochána to ensure that the actions taken by ShoutOut are within reason.

Even where allegations or complaints do not raise to the level of reporting, ShoutOut reserves the right to terminate a volunteer or Board member's involvement in ShoutOut in the interest of child safeguarding. Termination of staff will follow employment legislation.

For complaints not pertaining to child protection issues please see our complaints policy.

## **Record Keeping, Data Protection and Confidentiality**

The effective protection of a child often depends on the willingness of the staff and volunteers in organisations involved with children and young people to share and exchange relevant information. It is therefore critical that there is a clear understanding of professional and legal responsibilities with regard to confidentiality and the exchange of information. Any person who receives information from fellow volunteers about possible or actual Child Abuse must treat it as having been given in confidence and follow the ShoutOut reporting procedures. All information regarding concern or assessment of child abuse should be shared on a 'need to know' basis in the best interest of the child or young person.

## **Concerns**

Any correspondence pertaining to concerns regarding the safeguarding of children or young people will be kept in a secure digital location, or locked in a cabinet. No matter how small the concern may seem, ShoutOut commits to rigorous record keeping in order to ensure the

best possible protection for children and young people, as past concerns or allegations may become more relevant in the future. As such, any concerns which are conveyed to the DLP verbally, in person or over the phone, will be followed up with in writing (by email or letter) from the DLP outlining what was discussed.

As outlined above, ShoutOut may seek informal advice from Tusla regarding a child safeguarding concern. These conversations will also be put in writing and kept in a secure digital location.

## **Reports**

Should a child safeguarding concern be elevated to the level of reporting we will then consult Tusla with regards to providing as much information as possible. The ability of Tusla and An Garda Siochana to assess and investigate suspicions or allegations of child abuse or neglect will be depend on the amount of quality of information given to them by those raising the concerns. Tusla's standard reporting form can be found here:

[https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Child\\_Protection\\_and\\_Welfare\\_Report\\_Form\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Child_Protection_and_Welfare_Report_Form_FINAL.pdf)

## **Retention of Information**

Once concerns and reports have been recorded and stored they cannot be amended, however new developments can be added to the secure digital file. These documents belong to ShoutOut and not the individual who brought up the concern or made the report. The nature of the individual situation will stipulate what is considered a "reasonable amount of time" to store this information.