



- 1. Vita Safeguarding Policy: Approved September 2020**
- 2. Vita Child Safeguarding Policy: Approved December 2022**
- 3. Vita Child Safeguarding Statement: Approved December 2022**



SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Revised: July 2020¹

Date Approved by Vita Board: 10 Sept 2020

¹ Separate Child Safeguarding Policy approved by the Board 15 December 2022

Contents

- Vita's Commitment to Safeguarding..... 2
- Safeguarding Responsibilities 2
- Vita Safeguarding Focal Persons 3
 - Responsibilities of Vita Safeguarding Focal Persons:..... 3
- Safeguarding in Programming 3
- Safeguarding and Vita Partners..... 4
- Safeguarding in Communications..... 4
- Safeguarding in Recruitment..... 4
- Vita Behaviour Protocol..... 5
- When to report a safeguarding concern? 6
- How to report a safeguarding concern?..... 6
- Monitoring and Review of this policy 7
- Associated policies..... 7
- Definitions/Glossary 7
- Appendix 1: Safeguarding Incident Recording Form 8
- Appendix 2: Vita Safeguarding Focal Persons..... 12

Vita's Commitment to Safeguarding

Vita is committed to the safeguarding of the welfare of children and vulnerable adults, and to providing a safe environment at all times. Vita acknowledges the rights of children and vulnerable adults to be protected, treated with respect, listened to and have their views taken into consideration. Vita recognizes the vulnerability of adults who may be restricted in their capacity to guard themselves against harm. Accordingly, Vita seeks to ensure that vulnerable adults are protected.

This policy has been developed to reflect Vita's moral and legal obligations to uphold children's rights and those of vulnerable adults in all aspects of the organization's work. This policy strives to develop a protective culture within the organization in which all people are safe and protected. This policy is based on the following principles:

- All children and vulnerable adults have an equal right to safety from harm.
- Vita has a duty of care to children and vulnerable adults that we work with, are in contact with or who are impacted by our programmes and operations.
- All Vita staff, volunteers, Directors and affiliates have a responsibility to ensure the rights of children and vulnerable adults to protection from harm is upheld.
- Vita has a responsibility to ensure that external affiliates and guests, who come into contact with the communities Vita works with and amongst at the invitation of Vita, are familiar with this policy and comply with it.

Safeguarding Responsibilities

- The **Directors of Vita** have overall accountability for this policy and will ensure that Vita monitors and reviews its safeguarding measures and policy. As such, the Directors of Vita will:
 - i. Approve plans and actions for the implementation of the Vita safeguarding policy and ensure that management assigns appropriate resources for implementing this policy.
 - ii. Undertake a review of the policy every three years. This period of three years will commence from the approval and implementation of this policy.
- **Vita senior managers** have overall operational responsibility for ensuring best safeguarding practice within Vita and for overseeing the implementation of this policy. This includes (a) ensuring safeguarding considerations are established within their area of responsibility, (b) staff, volunteers, affiliates and guests within their area of responsibility are oriented towards this policy including:
 - i. New staff should receive orientation to the policy upon commencing work at Vita, and are required to sign an acknowledgement to uphold the policy as a condition of their contract or agreement to work.
 - ii. Affiliates and guests of Vita, who are interacting with children and adults whom Vita works with and amongst, should be oriented towards the policy prior to this contact, and provide a signed acknowledgement to the appropriate Vita Safeguarding Focal Person.
- Vita senior managers will also ensure that systems are in place for regular monitoring of Vita's safeguarding policy and procedures in terms of progress, performance and lessons learned i.e. Are safeguarding measures working?, How well are they working?

Vita Safeguarding Focal Persons

The role of Vita Safeguarding Focal Person (SFP) is established under this policy. The SFPs will provide leadership on the implementation of this policy and integration of safeguarding measures throughout Vita. The SFPs will raise safeguarding awareness and promote safeguarding good practice in Vita and will act as a focal point for safeguarding concerns and disclosures.

Vita will appoint SFPs at different levels of the organisation including at Vita Country Office level. The Vita CEO has ultimate responsibility for the appointment of the SFPs in agreement with the respective Country Directors. SFPs must be provided with enough support and resources to carry out the role. This support includes relevant training that SFPs may require. SFPs will not be hindered from carrying out their role effectively and will not be penalized for implementing this policy.

Responsibilities of Vita Safeguarding Focal Persons:

The **Safeguarding Focal Persons** will have clearly defined designated responsibilities in line with the responsibilities outlined below.:

- The **Safeguarding Focal Person(s)**, with the support of senior management, is responsible for leading the development of country-appropriate policy that aligns with overall organizational policy and procedure, and meets or exceeds minimum behavior protocols.
- The **Safeguarding Focal Person(s)** is responsible for supporting programme staff to ensure effective, accessible, locally appropriate mechanisms are in place for community members and beneficiaries to raise any safeguarding concerns related to Vita staff, volunteers, affiliates and guests, and for supporting programme staff to assess, manage and mitigate safeguarding risks relating to specific projects.
- The **Safeguarding Focal Person(s)** has the mandate for direct access to the CEO should they have reason to believe that this policy is not being adequately or effectively upheld. Where, for any reason, the SFP considers it inappropriate to refer the matter to the CEO or Country Director, their concerns can be shared with to the designated Board contact per the Vita Protective Disclosure Policy.

All, staff, Board members, volunteers, affiliates and guests are expected to comply with this policy and associated policies, and report and respond to safeguarding concerns and breaches in line with the applicable procedures.

Safeguarding in Programming

Vita recognizes there is a need to proactively assess, manage and mitigate the risk of harm to children and vulnerable adults in our programming. When appropriate, Programme staff will ensure that safeguarding is therefore mainstreamed into project design, alongside other cross-cutting themes, and periodically reviewed. While accepting that different types of programmes will require different risk assessments, guiding minimum standards are included in the Safeguarding section of Vita's Programme Quality Framework², including a "Do No Harm" framework³. It is the responsibility of the Programme Quality

² To be developed by August 2020

³ To be developed by August 2020, as applied to the thematic sectors we operate in

Manager or equivalent to ensure safeguarding is mainstreamed effectively throughout the project cycle, supported by the Safeguarding Focal Person.

Safeguarding and Vita Partners

All Vita partners must commit to keep children and other vulnerable persons safe. Vita and its partners should reach and agree on how we will support each other to achieve compliance and competence around child and vulnerable adult safeguarding.

Safeguarding in Communications

Vita is committed to respecting the rights and dignity of children and vulnerable adults at risk in all communications, including:

- Obtaining informed consent from the child, adult, or parent/guardian before taking and publishing images. Informed consent means the person/people in the photo has a general understanding of why the photo is being taken and how it will be used, and gives verbal or written permission thereof. Written permission is preferable but where this is not feasible informed verbal consent is acceptable.
- Only using images and personal information in fundraising, marketing and communications work in ways that portray children and adults with dignity and safeguard their rights.
- Vita is a signatory to the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages.⁴

Safeguarding in Recruitment

Vita is committed to taking appropriate steps during recruitment and selection of employees, volunteers and other representatives to ensure safeguarding issues are considered and addressed. This includes:

Job advertisements: All job advertisements should include a note that highlights Vita's commitment to safeguard children and other vulnerable persons and implements a Child & Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy to support this.

Job descriptions: Safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults should be referenced in all job descriptions and applies to all staff, volunteers, affiliates and guests.

Interviews: All interviews should include a discussion on safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, the candidate's understanding of this and Vita's commitment. It is not expected that candidate would have an in-depth knowledge of safeguarding, unless it is a specific requirement of the role. However, it is important that all candidates are aware of Vita's commitment to safeguarding.

Reference Checks: A thorough check of employment references is carried for the selected candidate and should the following question: "Vita aims to keep all people involved in our work safe from harm and abuse – is there any reason why this person would be unsuitable to work with children or adults who may be vulnerable?".

⁴ https://dochas.ie/sites/default/files/Images_and_Messages.pdf

Contract: This policy, a safeguarding acknowledge form and (where relevant) Vetting Form are attached to all contracts and sent to all new employees or representatives before commencing work with Vita.

Vita Behaviour Protocol

Vita staff, Board members, volunteers, affiliates, and guests are expected to behave in ways that protect children and adults, prevent exploitation and abuse, and prevent any harm whether intentional or unintentional. Vita staff, Board members, volunteers, affiliates and guests are expected to behave appropriately when interacting with children, members of the opposite sex, vulnerable adults and all people whom Vita works with and amongst and follow the minimum standards in the Vita Behaviour Protocol. All persons interacting with children and adults whom Vita works with and amongst at the invitation of Vita are expected to study this policy and provide a signed acknowledgement that they will uphold this policy, including the following behaviour protocols. The guidelines below are *minimum standards* and are not exhaustive; they will be periodically reviewed by Safeguarding Focal Persons, along with the wider safeguarding policy, to ensure conduciveness to evolving social, cultural and legal contexts in each country.

Acceptable Behaviours

- Accept responsibility for their behaviour as representatives of Vita.
- Treat all children and adults in a manner which is respectful of their rights, dignity and integrity.
- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of children and young people that Vita works with and amongst.
- Be conscious of the perception and appearance of their behaviour in their interactions with children and adults, both in person and online, demonstrating a respect for their rights and dignity.
- Always follow the “two adult” rule when conducting Vita business, ensuring two or more adults are visible and present at all times when conducting activities with children. The only exceptions to the “two adult” rule is if a child is in immediate danger and you are the only adult that can assist e.g. if a child has an accident and he/she needs to be driven to medical assistance.
- Remain accountable for their responses to the behaviour of a child or vulnerable adult, even if a child or vulnerable adult behaves in an inappropriate manner.
- Use positive, non-violent approaches to managing children’s behaviour.
- Comply fully with any internal or external investigations related to safeguarding.
- Comply with any applicable legislation and guidelines (internal and external) in relation to data privacy when handling data about individual beneficiaries.
- Create and maintain a culture of openness and mutual accountability in which the rights of children and vulnerable adults are respected, and effective action can be taken to prevent and respond to harmful behaviour.
- Ensure the design and implementation of Vita programmes and processes do not intentionally/unintentionally risk violation of this policy.

Unacceptable behaviours

- Abuse or exploit a child or vulnerable person or behave in a way that places them at risk of harm.
- Behave in an inappropriate physical or sexual manner or develop a sexual relationship with a child (under 18 years old), regardless of country-specific legislation. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence.

- Fondle, hold, kiss or touch children or adults in an inappropriate and culturally insensitive way.
- Use language, offer advice or suggestions, or behave in a manner towards a child or adult that is inappropriate, belittling or causes shame and humiliation.
- Use physical punishment/discipline or use of physical force to manage the behaviour of a child or vulnerable adult.
- Disrespect the privacy and confidentiality of children and adults whom Vita works with and amongst. This includes:
 - a. asking for, initiating or accepting invitations to share personal contact details with children,
 - b. taking photos of children and adults without checking with Vita staff that it is appropriate to take pictures in the context, and requesting the consent of the children and adult (or in the case of young children, their parent or guardian),
 - c. take photos that impact negatively on or are disrespectful to the dignity and privacy of the individual(s)
- Communicate with a child online or via digital platforms without the consent and knowledge of their parents/guardian
- Exchange money, employment, goods and services for sexual or other exploitative demands
- Offer or imply that favours will ensure inclusion in programme activities, or access to services, goods or other supports and assistance.

When to report a safeguarding concern?

Reporting a safeguarding concern is required when:

- (a) an allegation of abuse⁵ is made
- (b) a case of abuse is either witnessed or suspected
- (c) A child or vulnerable adult discloses incidence of abuse

How to report a safeguarding concern?

The in-country Vita Safeguarding Focal Person is responsible for providing safeguarding support and advice within the organisation. If you have a suspicion, concern, allegation or disclosure of abuse then it is your responsibility to record the matter in the official Vita Safeguarding Incident Recording Form and share with the Vita Safeguarding Focal Person without delay, including any supplementary information which could be considered of importance (Appendix 1). A copy of the recording form must be passed on to the national children and family services at the earliest possible opportunity. If the child is considered to be at immediate risk of continued abuse or neglect, the relevant statutory authority should be contacted, and a report filed. All staff, consultants, volunteers and Directors have the responsibility of being familiar with and adhering to these procedures.

The best interest of the survivor will be the first priority throughout these procedures. Vita will link survivors of harm caused by staff or associated personnel to appropriate external support services where these services are available.

It is not the responsibility of Vita representatives to decide if an incidence of abuse has taken place or not, but it is their responsibility to pass their concerns about on. Vita has a responsibility to ensure complete

⁵ Please refer to glossary for definition of the term “abuse” used in this policy

confidentiality in this process and protect information relating to the party reporting, the party accused and the victim as appropriate.

Guidance when a child or adult discloses an incidence of abuse or harm to Vita representatives

The “*Five Rs*” of safeguarding provide useful practical guidance in this scenario:

- **Receive:** Listen to any child or adult disclosing information regarding abuse. Accept what they say, indicate that you take it seriously, and try not to show shock
- **Reassure:** Reassure the individual that they were right to bring the matter to your attention. Acknowledge how difficult it must have been to tell you what happened. Don't promise confidentiality – you have a responsibility to refer information – and don't make promises about action that cannot be kept.
- **React:** Do not ask leading questions or for further details – react only as far as is necessary in order to establish whether the matter requires referral or not. Explain what you need to do next or who you must talk to, and that you will only discuss the situation with the appropriate individuals on a “need to know” basis.
- **Record:** Make some brief notes and write them up as soon as possible using the suggested template. Ensure time, location, personnel and what was said is recorded. Don't include assumptions and personal interpretations in your recording of what was said.
- **Refer:** Refer the matter through the appropriate channels as quickly as possible and in a manner that is fully compliant with local child protection laws.

Monitoring and Review of this policy

A regular review of safeguarding policies and procedures is necessary to ensure implementation and efficiency. This policy will be reviewed every three years, or when it is shown that review is necessary to address additional issues, such as issues arising from a significant change in context, programme focus or legislation. The policy review should also include learning from any cases if they arise. The Directors of Vita will undertake a review of the policy every three years. Vita senior management are responsible for facilitating this review.

Associated policies

- Protected Disclosures Policy
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Vita HR Manual

Definitions/Glossary

Term	Definition
Safeguarding	Preventing, reporting and responding to abuse or harm of any kind to children and adults by Vita employees, affiliates and guests
Affiliates and Guests	Any individual external to Vita (with the exception of government officials and institutional donors) that is interacting, at the invitation of Vita, with children and adults whom Vita works with and amongst. Examples of affiliates include external consultants and contractors hired by Vita.
Child	Any person below the age of 18. Vita identifies a child as any person under the age of 18. This definition applies to all children, without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her

	parent's or legal guardian's race, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status. This is in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child ⁶
Safeguarding Focal Person (SFP)	Vita staff member(s) with designated responsibilities related to safeguarding including: to lead implementation of this policy and to be the first point of contact in relation to safeguarding concerns. NB: The responsibility to prevent and respond to exploitation and abuse is shared. It is incorrect to think that the person named as Safeguarding Focal Point is the only person with responsibility for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.
Safeguarding	The responsibility of the organisation in preventing, reporting and responding to abuse or harm of any kind to children and vulnerable adults by Vita employees, affiliates and guests
Sexual abuse	An actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions
Sexual exploitation	Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another
Survivor	The person who has been abused or exploited. The term 'survivor' is often used in preference to 'victim' as it implies strength, resilience and the capacity to survive.
Violence	Includes all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, emotional ill treatment or psychological violence, sexual abuse and exploitation, harassment, and any other commercial or other exploitation of a child or vulnerable adult. Acts of violence can also take place online through, for example, the web, social media or mobile phones. It may be an intentional act involving the use of physical force or power or it may be failing to act to prevent violence against a child or young person. Violence consists of anything which individuals, groups, institutions or organizations do or fail to do, intentionally or unintentionally, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in actual or potential harm to the child or young person's wellbeing, dignity and survival and development.
Vulnerable Adult	Adults who may be vulnerable are those who may be restricted in their capacity to guard themselves against harm or exploitation, possibly as a result of illness, dementia, mental health problems, physical disability or intellectual disability ⁷

Appendix 1: Safeguarding Incident Recording Form

1. Date of disclosure/concern	
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2. DETAILS OF PERSON MAKING DISCLOSURE / RAISING CONCERN TO YOU

First Name		Family name	
Address		Organisation	
		Position Held	

⁶ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a1481d-united-nations-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child/>

⁷ Department of Social Welfare, 2016

		Phone Number	
Email			
Relationship to Child/Victim			

3. DETAILS OF CHILD OR ALLEGED VICTIM

First name		Family name	
Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
Address		Date of birth	
		Estimated age	
Phone number			

4. DETAILS OF CONCERN/DISCLOSURE (Please include the parents and child's view, if known. Please attach additional sheets if necessary.)

Date of incident	
Location of incident	
Were there any witnesses? (Who? How many? etc.)	
Details of the incident	
Does the child/alleged victim know the referral is being made? (Be clear that you cannot promise confidentiality, particularly to a child)	

5. TYPE OF CONCERN

Physical Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sexual Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exploitation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Emotional Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>

Neglect	<input type="checkbox"/>	General Child Welfare Concern	<input type="checkbox"/>
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6. PARENTS/GUARDIANS AWARE OF THE REPORT DETAILS (if alleged victim is a child)

Are the parent/parents aware that a concern has been reported?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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7. PARTNER/GUARDIAN DETAILS (Where appropriate)

Details of Mother			
First Name		Family name	
Address (if different for above)		Phone number	

Details of Father			
First Name		Family name	
Address (if different for above)		Phone number	

8. DETAILS OF PERSON(S) ALLEGEDLY CAUSING HARM

First name		Family name	
Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
Address		Date of Birth	
		Estimated Age	
		Phone number	
Job Title		Organisation	
Relationship to Child/Victim			
Address at time of alleged incident(s)			
Current contact with children if known (e.g. sits on board of school,			

teaches children, runs youth groups etc.)	
Any additional information	

8. ACTION TAKEN

Has the matter been referred to the relevant authorities?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, Date of Referral				
If No, explain why				
Who was it referred to? (Give name and position held)				
Address				
Phone number				
Has the matter been referred to Vita or a Vita partner?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, Date of Referral				
Who was it referred to? (Give name and position held)				
Address				
Phone number				
Email address				

9. NEXT STEPS

What actions were agreed and by whom when the matter was referred onto the relevant authorities/Vita/a Vita partner	
Are there any immediate child protection concerns? If so, please record what they are and state what actions have been taken and by whom.	

10. DETAILS OF PERSON COMPLETING THE FORM

First name		Family name	
Address		Phone Number	
		Email	
		Job title	
Date of form completion			
Date of form sent to Vita Designated Safeguarding Officer			
Signature			

Appendix 2: Vita Safeguarding Focal Persons

VITA SAFEGUARDING FOCAL PERSON, VITA ETHIOPIA COUNTRY OFFICE

Name: Mr. Akalu Gebreyes

Address: Vita, House No. B41_21 Gurd Sholla, Woreda 12, Yeka Sub City, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

VITA SAFEGUARDING FOCAL PERSON, VITA ERITREA COUNTRY OFFICE

VITA SAFEGUARDING FOCAL PERSON, VITA DUBLIN OFFICE

Name: Ms. Emily Hosford

Address: Vita, Equity House, 16 -17 Upper Ormond Quay, Dublin 7, Ireland



Child Safeguarding Policy – Ireland

This Policy applies to the Vita Board, all Vita (and subsidiary company) employees, including affiliate organisations, and to all paid and unpaid consultants, contractors, interns, secondees and volunteers that provide supplies, services or support, to Vita or promote its work at any location in Ireland. All such parties are referred to as “employee” in this document. All visitors to Vita projects will be bound by this policy.

This Policy also applies to Vita’s partners, vendors and other third parties, where it is included or referenced in relevant bid or tender documents, agreements, memorandums, purchase orders or contracts. It applies to Vita international staff who are in Ireland, for both private or professional reasons.

Version control

Version no.:	Date	By (Name, Position)	Details of changes	Reviewed and approved by: (name and Position)
1	Nov 2022	Emily Hosford (Programme Officer, Safeguarding Focal Person)	n/a	
	15 Dec 2022			Approved by Board

Signed:

John Weakliam
Vita CEO

Signed:

Céline Reilly
Chair of Vita Board

Policy Statement

Vita recognises that all children have a right to be protected from harm in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Vita acknowledges the rights of children to be protected, treated with respect, listened to and have their views taken into consideration. Vita takes its duty of care seriously and is committed to ensuring that our organisation is safe for children, where all efforts are made to prevent abuse. Vita believes that:

- All children have an equal right to safety from harm.
- The best interests of the child are paramount.
- Child safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. As such, all Vita employees, volunteers, Directors and consultants hired by Vita are expected to comply with this policy, and report child safeguarding concerns and breaches to the Vita Ireland Safeguarding Focal Person.

Vita is taking the following steps to keep children safe:

- Implementing procedures to protect children through best recruitment practices, staff induction and training, creating an open and aware culture, and assigning clear management responsibilities.
- In the event of disclosure or discovery of abuse, following clear guidelines and procedures for reporting and responding, dealing promptly and properly with incidents, supporting victims and holding perpetrators to account.
- Appointing a Child Safeguarding Focal Person at the Vita Ireland Head Office to be a resource person for safeguarding and to deal with child protection concerns.

The responsibility for managing this policy and its implementation lies with the **Vita CEO** with the support of the Child Safeguarding Focal Person. The CEO is responsible for ensuring that a Child Protection Focal Person is nominated for Vita Ireland.

The **Directors of Vita** have overall accountability for this policy and will ensure that Vita monitors and reviews its safeguarding policy every two years, or sooner if necessary due to changes in legislation or national policy.

For the purpose of this policy Vita defines children as those under the age of 18.

What is Child Abuse?

According to the World Health Organisation, "Child abuse" or "maltreatment" constitutes 'all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.'

There are 4 categories of abuse generally defined:

Physical abuse: Physical abuse is when someone deliberately injures a child physically or puts them at risk of being physically hurt.

Sexual abuse: Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others. It includes the inappropriate use of technology and social media; e.g., the storage or dissemination of pornography, the recording or sharing of abusive images using technology such as mobile phone texting, instant messaging and chat apps, social networking websites and other multimedia or communications platforms.

Emotional abuse: Emotional abuse is the systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment of a child as part of the overall relationship between a caregiver and a child. It includes humiliation, persistent criticism, blaming of the child, ridiculing, and other non-physical forms of rejection or hostile treatment.

Neglect: The ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs. Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission of care, where a child's health, development or welfare is impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, medical care, intellectual stimulation or supervision and safety.

Identifying Abuse and Taking Action

It is everyone's responsibility to report any potential or actual abuse to a child's wellbeing and safety. Any abuse, attempted abuse or suspected abuse of a child must be passed to the Executive Director, or his/her delegate, in this case the Vita Ireland Child Safeguarding Focal Person.

Vita Safeguarding Focal Person (also known as the Designated Liaison Person)

The role of Vita Safeguarding Focal Person (SFP) is established under this policy. The Vita CEO has ultimate responsibility for the appointment of the Vita Ireland SFP.

The responsibilities of the Vita Ireland SFP are:

- Lead the development of Vita Ireland Child Safeguarding Policy and procedures and ensure they are in line with current Children First or other national guidance.
- Progress the implementation of this policy in Vita, raise safeguarding awareness and promote safeguarding good practice in Vita.
- The SFP is the focal point for children safeguarding concerns and disclosures. The SFP will receive child safeguarding concerns from Vita staff and volunteers and consider if reasonable grounds for reporting to Tusla exist.
- Record all child protection or welfare concerns, or allegations of child abuse, brought to his/her attention as well as any action taken in response to these concerns.
- Ensure that a secure system is in place to manage and store confidential safeguarding records.
- The SFP has the mandate for direct access to the Vita CEO should they have reason to believe that this policy is not being adequately or effectively upheld. Where, for any reason, the SFP considers it inappropriate to refer the matter to the CEO, their concerns can be shared with the designated Board contact per the Vita Protected Disclosure Policy.

The Vita Ireland SFP should maintain good knowledge of Vita's child safeguarding procedures so that they can carry out their role effectively. The SFP must be provided with enough support and resources to carry

out the role. This support includes relevant training that the SFP may require. The SFP will not be hindered from carrying out their role effectively and will not be penalized for implementing this policy.

GUIDING LAWS, DOCUMENTS AND PRINCIPLES

Republic of Ireland law, policy and guidance

- Children First Act, 2015
- Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, DYCA 2017
- National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act, 2012 to 2016
- Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences Against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act, 2012
- Criminal Justice Act, 2006
- Protected Disclosures Act 2014
- Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998
- Child Care Act, 1991
- The Constitution of Ireland

Training

- 1) Relevant Vita staff must undergo child safeguarding training.
- 2) Awareness and update training will be arranged and provided as necessary.
- 3) All staff members have a responsibility to consider and help minimise child safeguarding risks within their own areas of responsibility.

Building Awareness of the “Keep Children Safe” Message

Vita’s child safeguarding policy and procedures can only be effective if our stakeholders are aware of them, can contribute to their implementation and provide feedback. Therefore, we commit to the following:

- Vita employees know who has responsibility for child safeguarding and how to contact them.
- Information about our commitment to keeping children safe is openly displayed and available to the public.

Safe Recruitment

Vita is committed to taking appropriate steps during recruitment and selection of employees, volunteers and other representatives to ensure child safeguarding issues are considered and addressed. This includes:

Job advertisements: All job advertisements should include a note that highlights Vita’s commitment to safeguard children from harm and the Vita Child Safeguarding Policy.

Job descriptions: Child safeguarding should be referenced in all job descriptions and applies to all staff and volunteers.

Interviews: All interviews should include a question related to child safeguarding and a statement about Vita's commitment to safeguarding. Candidates are not expected to have an in-depth knowledge of safeguarding, unless it is a specific requirement of the role. However, it is important that all candidates are aware of Vita's commitment to child safeguarding.

Reference Checks: A thorough check of employment references is carried out for the selected candidate and should include the following question: "Vita aims to keep all people involved in our work safe from harm and abuse – is there any reason why this person would be unsuitable to work with children?"

Contract: Safeguarding policies, the Vita safeguarding acknowledgement form and (where relevant) Vetting Form are attached to all contracts and sent to all new employees or representatives before commencing work with Vita. The Vita safeguarding acknowledgement form must be signed during the onboarding process.

Safeguarding in Communications: Photos and Videos

Vita is committed to respecting the rights and dignity of children in all our communications. Vita is a signatory to the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages ¹ and applies this code to our use of images (photographic/film or other). The following guidelines must be adhered to: i) Ask the child(ren)'s parent's/guardian's permission to take the photograph/image; ii) Individuals must be appropriately dressed according to their choice and country of origin; iii) Any complaints or concerns about inappropriate or intrusive images must be reported and recorded; iv) The recorded images should focus on an activity and, where possible, feature groups of children rather than individuals; v) Make sure that photographers and film makers are not allowed to spend time with or have access to children without supervision.

Risk Assessment and Safe Activities

Child safeguarding considerations such as exploitation and abuse should be included in all risk assessments to ensure that all activities are conducted in a safe and dignified manner.

Reporting, Responding and Monitoring

All Vita employees have a responsibility to report any concerns about the exploitation and abuse of children.

¹ https://dochas.ie/sites/default/files/Images_and_Messages.pdf

How to report a safeguarding concern?

The Vita Safeguarding Focal Person is responsible for providing safeguarding support and advice within the organisation. **If you have a suspicion, concern or have received a disclosure or allegation of abuse, you must report it to the Vita Ireland Safeguarding Focal Person without delay.**

In Ireland, if Vita receives specific reports or allegations of abuse, this will always be referred as soon as possible to the appropriate authorities for investigation. Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis and will be shared with relevant people in authority: this would include members of the Vita senior management team if appropriate, and child protection personnel in civil authorities.

When the allegation/complaint relates to a Vita employee, they will be informed at the appropriate time of the allegation/complaint/suspicion and the external reporting requirements that must be followed by the organisation. The employee will also be informed of any decision to remove or suspend them from any or all duties or duties that involve working with children. This decision will be made using the guiding principle that the safety of the child is always the most important consideration.

Procedures will be conducted in accordance with national guidelines. If necessary, Vita will conduct its own internal investigation to assess whether a breach of organisation policy has occurred. If founded, a breach of policy will result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

The best interest of the child will be the first priority throughout these procedures.

Guidance for Vita staff who receive a child safeguarding complaint

Vita employees must report any suspected incident of exploitation or abuse (both current and historical) without delay. Reports may relate to, but not be limited to: physical abuse, emotional abuse, exploitation, sexual exploitation or neglect. However, it is not the role of the individual staff member to investigate beyond the need to ensure that any report of an incident is recorded accurately and is sufficiently detailed to be the basis for a decision regarding next steps to be taken.

Actions to be taken when a concern, suspicion, disclosure or allegation of child abuse is received:

- Respond immediately to any concern, suspicion, disclosure or allegation of child abuse.
- As soon as possible refer all information to the Vita Ireland Safeguarding Focal Person.
- The SFP will assess the information and will follow up on the matter with the civil authorities if necessary.

IRELAND SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

Obligations under Irish Law are encompassed by the term Children First. Children First deals with the recognition of child abuse and neglect, the reporting of same to Tusla – the Child and Family Agency, and the best practice which organisations should adhere to, to keep children safe while availing of their services. Non statutory obligations for all persons coming into contact with children are set out in the

Children First Guidance, and the Children First Act 2015 sets out additional statutory obligations for defined categories of persons and for organisations providing relevant services to children.

Organisations working with children and young people

Children First: National Guidance requires that all organisations working with children and young people should create a culture of safety that promotes the welfare of children and young people availing of their services. Vita Ireland is a 'relevant services' provider as defined in the Children First Act 2015 and therefore has specific statutory obligations under the Act. Set out below are statutory obligations of relevant services and [Safeguarding Best Practice Procedures](#).

Statutory obligations of relevant services

As per statutory requirements under The Children First Act 2015, Vita commits to:

- Keep children **safe from harm** while they are using the service.
- Carry out a **risk assessment** to identify whether a child or young person could be harmed while availing of the service.
- Develop a **Child Safeguarding Statement** that outlines the policies and procedures which are in place to manage the risks that have been identified.
- Appoint a **relevant person** to be the first point of contact in respect of the organisation's Child Safeguarding Statement.

Training on Children First is available at: <https://childrenfirstuniversal.hseland.ie/>

RESPONSIBILITY

I accept that I must:

1. Never abuse and/or exploit a child or act/behave in a way that places a child at risk of harm.
2. Always follow the “two adult” rule when conducting Vita business, ensuring at least two adults are present at all times when conducting activities with children.
3. Report any child abuse and protection concerns that I have. This is a mandatory requirement under this policy.
4. Cooperate fully and confidentially in any investigation of concerns and allegations.
5. Contribute to an environment where children are respected and encouraged to discuss their concerns and rights.
6. Be aware that, if a legitimate concern about suspected child abuse is raised, which proves to be unfounded on investigation, no action will be taken against the reporter.
7. Never share my personal contact details (this includes email, phone numbers, social media contacts, address, webcam, Skype, WhatsApp, Snapchat etc.) with, nor ask for, or accept such details from any child associated with Vita’s work.
8. Never make any unsupervised direct/indirect contact that is intended to establish personal relationships with any child associated with Vita. Such contact may include but is not limited to visits and any form of communication via social media, emails, letters etc.
9. Uphold the principles of the Child Safeguarding Policy outside work/in my personal life.

I have read, agree with, and will adhere to Vita’s Child Safeguarding Policy.

Name (block letters): _____

Signature: _____

Position/relationship to Vita: _____

Date: _____

Annex 1: Vita Safeguarding Focal Person Contact Details

VITA IRELAND SAFEGUARDING FOCAL PERSON / DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON

Name: Ms. Emily Hosford

Address: Vita, Equity House, 16 -17 Upper Ormond Quay, Dublin 7, Ireland

Email: emily.hosford@vita.ie

Annex 2: List of Mandated Persons in Vita (Vita Ireland)

Under the Children First Act 2015, mandated persons have a statutory obligation to report concerns which reach or exceed the legally defined threshold of harm (see the Children First Act 2015) and to cooperate with Tusla, the Irish Child and Family Agency, in the assessment of mandated reports, where requested to do so.

The Vita Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is a mandated person in Vita. The DLP will be informed of this on his/her appointment to the role.

The DLP reviews the following list of mandated persons in Vita annually, in consultation with the Vita CEO, and updates this list with names and contact details of mandated person in Vita's relevant services.

MANDATED PERSONS		
Name	Title	Email
Emily Hosford	Vita Ireland Safeguarding Focal Person / Designated Liaison Person	emily.hosford@vita.ie



Child Safeguarding Statement

About

Vita is an international NGO dedicated to a vision of climate-smart communities with access to services and sustainable livelihoods in rural Africa. Our projects in Africa work with rural households and communities to build water, food and energy security. We work with rural communities to create long-term access to basic services like safe water and efficient cook stoves. We work with smallholder farmers, farmer cooperatives and rural enterprises to help farmers grow and sell more food while adapting to climate change and protecting the environment. This improves diets, diversifies incomes and builds sustainable livelihoods. We also work to increase awareness of issues affecting rural communities in Africa, with a specific focus on how communities are affected climate change, both in Africa and in Ireland.

Climate action and efforts to tackle of global inequality require global connections and engagement across Africa, Europe and beyond. With this in mind, Vita brings development issues and climate change to a wider audience, including in our communications and public engagement activities with the Irish public. Vita comes into contact with children through some of these activities.

In this context, Vita aims to create a safe, interesting and fun environment where children and families can engage with Vita staff, where children's welfare is paramount. Vita is committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of children while they are participating in events run by or on behalf of Vita. Vita adheres to the requirements of the Children First Act 2015 ("CFA") and the National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2017 ("Children First Guidance, 2017") developed by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and also requires those who run events on its behalf to do so.

Some of the services which Vita provides fall within the meaning of the term 'relevant service' under the CFA. Schedule 1, paragraph 5 of the CFA describes relevant services. Vita has specific legal responsibilities under the CFA, including to prepare a risk assessment of any potential for harm to a child while availing of their services, to prepare a 'child safeguarding statement' and to appoint a person to be a first point of contact in respect of Vita's child safeguarding statement (a 'relevant person'). Vita has appointed a Designated Liaison Person for child safeguarding in accordance with the Children First Guidance, 2017 who is also the relevant person for the purposes of the CFA.

List of services being provided:

Vita delivers activities engaging families at a range of public events. Some of these public events are directly managed by Vita. Others are organised by third parties, such as events held as part of Dublin Climate Action Week and Climate Fest Mayo. To deliver the list of services outlined below, Vita

engages the Vita Communications team and the Vita Programmes team, employees of Vita's partners, paid consultants, and volunteers. The list of relevant services is detailed below:

List of relevant services being provided:

1. Public Events and Festivals

Vita participates in a range of public events throughout the year. These include all-ages and family-friendly events held as part of Dublin Climate Week (e.g. the Eat The Streets Festival) and one-off events held by Dublin City Council, Dublin City Libraries and Teagasc. This is not an exhaustive list. At these events Vita recruits and coordinates the attendance of a mix of Vita staff, consultants paid by Vita, and employees of Vita partners. Occasionally, Vita recruits and coordinates non-employee volunteers to support our work at public events. The events and festivals require volunteers to assist in hosting a stand. This involves directing people around the stand and speaking to children and their guardians about Vita and the work we do. It can involve guiding children through development education activities like short quizzes and games, or explaining posters and pictures. Volunteers are always supervised by Vita staff.

Vita also hosts online webinars to engage the Irish public in development issues. While these events are not aimed at children, we are conscious that children may attend these virtual events and are careful to not use sensitive images or messages that may be inappropriate for children.

Vita aims to create inclusive, safe spaces at public events where children can participate and share their opinions. In this context, we sometimes invite children to speak at our public events and share their perspectives on certain issues. This is done with the full consent, understanding and guidance of the child's parent or guardian. Vita communications with children are via a parent or guardian, who also accompany the child at the public event.

2. Transition Year and Student Work Experience Placements

Transition Year and Student Work Experience Placements, internal to Vita. Vita supports developing the potential of children and young people. In this context Vita occasionally facilitates the placement of post-primary students, particularly those in Transition Year (TY). These students are under 18 and fall within the definition of a child, but must be over 16.

3. School outreach

Occasionally, Vita employees visit Irish primary and post-primary schools to deliver one-off classroom-based presentations and educational activities. School-based activities may cover topics like Vita and the work we do, the Sustainable Development Goals, climate justice and sustainability, climate-smart agriculture, and food security. This school outreach aims to raise students' awareness of international development and promote a sense of global citizenship.

Relevant Activities Funded by Vita, as a funding organisation:

Where a consultant is hired to assist with a Vita-organised public event, Vita requires consultants to comply with the provisions of the CFA, if applicable. This is reflected in the request for tender for any such work. Vita does not sub-contract overall management and coordination of Vita-organised public events, and manages the content and staffing of all such events.

Risk assessment

Section 11 of the CFA mandates that providers of relevant services must prepare a risk assessment of any potential for harm to a child while availing of such services.

Section 2 of the Act defines harm as follows:

“harm means in relation to a child –

(a) Assault, ill-treatment or neglect of the child in a manner that seriously affects or is likely to seriously affect the child’s health, development or welfare, or

(b) Sexual abuse of the child, whether caused by a single act, omission or circumstance or a series or combination of acts, omission or circumstances or otherwise.”

Under Section 2 of the Childcare Act 1991 a “child” means a person under the age of 18, other than a person who is or has been married.

No.	Risk identified	Procedure in place to mitigate identified risk
1	Recruitment	<p>Vita ensures that appropriate steps are taken during recruitment and selection of employees and representatives, to ensure that issues relating to safeguarding children are considered and addressed. The following have special considerations with reference to child safeguarding:</p> <p>Job advertisements: All job advertisements should include a note that highlights Vita’s commitment to safeguard children from harm and the Vita Child Safeguarding Policy.</p> <p>Job descriptions: Child safeguarding should be referenced in all job descriptions and applies to all staff and volunteers.</p> <p>Interviews: All interviews should include a question related to child safeguarding and a statement about Vita’s commitment to safeguarding. Candidates are not expected to have an in-depth knowledge of safeguarding, unless it is a specific requirement of the role. However, it is important that all candidates are aware of Vita’s commitment to child safeguarding.</p> <p>Reference Checks: A thorough check of employment references is carried out for the selected candidate and should include the following question: “Vita aims to keep all people involved in our work safe from harm and abuse – is there any reason why this person would be unsuitable to work with children?”.</p> <p>Contract: Safeguarding policies, the Vita Safeguarding Acknowledgement form and (where relevant) Vetting Form are attached to all contracts and sent to all new employees or representatives before commencing work with Vita. The</p>

		Vita safeguarding acknowledgement form must be signed during the on-boarding process.
2	Failure to report allegation of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child availing of our Vita-provided service	<p>Vita responds to allegations abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child availing of our service in Ireland in accordance with the Children First Act 2015 and Tusla Guidelines.</p> <p>Vita has appointed a Designated Liaison Person. Vita employees/volunteers are aware of the DLP responsibilities and know how to contact the DLP if they have a concern.</p>
3	Child is harmed by a Vita staff member, volunteer, consultant hired by Vita, or other person, while availing of our services or services supported by Vita	<p>Vita ensures that appropriate steps are taken during recruitment and selection of employees and representatives, to ensure that issues relating to safeguarding children are considered and addressed. See 1 above.</p> <p>Vita assesses the organisation’s level of contact with children in the “relevant services” that we provide. In the most recent assessment, the level of contact with children in relevant services was deemed to be low – medium. Vita operates a “two-person rule” to ensure a minimum of two adults are present at all times when conducting activities with children. Volunteers are always supervised by Vita paid employees.</p> <p>Vita workers sign a Code of Behaviour and a Safeguarding Declaration.</p>
4	Safe use of children’s images (photos and videos)	<p>Vita will only use children’s images or personal information in our marketing, fundraising, communication and programme work in ways that will safeguard their dignity and protect their rights. Vita seeks permission for use of children's images and information.</p> <p>Vita is a signatory of the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages which provides a set of guiding principles on communicating programmes and values in a coherent and balanced way.</p>
5	Accidents and injuries on site	<p>Accidents and injuries that occur on the premises shall be managed in accordance with the Vita Health and Safety Policy.</p> <p>This policy will be discussed with all staff at induction and at any other point required.</p>

Vita considers the likelihood of any of the risks set out above occurring to be low in light of the policies and procedures it has in place, and our infrequent contact with children.

PROCEDURES

Our Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, the Children First: National Guidance, and Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice. In addition to the procedures listed in our risk assessment, the following procedures support our intention to safeguard children while they are availing of our service:

1. Procedure for reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Tusla.
 - 1.1. The DLP shall act as a resource to the Mandated Person to ensure the reporting procedures are followed correctly and promptly. On completion, a report shall be forwarded to the relevant Duty Social Worker by the DLP, Mandated Person.
 - 1.2. In the event the report is forwarded by the DLP, the Mandated Person shall be informed in writing that the report has been forwarded.
 - 1.3. In the event that the report is forwarded by a Mandated Person without the assistance of the DLP, the DLP shall be informed and any copies provided to be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet.
2. Procedure for raising a complaint as outlined in the Vita Complaints Policy and the Vita Protected Disclosures (Whistleblowing) Policy.
3. Procedure for the management of allegations of harm to a child availing of our services as outlined in our Child Safeguarding Policy.
4. Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of Vita staff members, volunteers or other Vita representatives e.g. consultants to work with children.
5. Procedure for induction at which staff are introduced to our Child Safeguarding Policy, Safeguarding Statement and the Designated Liaison Person is identified to them.
6. Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information.
7. Procedure for maintaining a list of persons (if any) in the relevant service who are Mandated Persons.
8. Procedure for appointing a relevant person under the CFA (in Vita the relevant person is also the Designated Liaison Person and Child Safeguarding Focal Point as referred to in our Child Safeguarding Policy 2022).

Vita's Designated Liaison Person/Safeguarding Focal Point/relevant person under the CFA is:
Emily Hosford

Vita, 16 -17 Upper Ormond Quay, Dublin 7, D07H7DE Ireland

Tel. +353 (0)1 873 4303

Email: emily.hosford@vita.ie

All procedures listed above are available upon request.

Implementation:

We recognise that implementation is an ongoing process. Our service is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while availing of our service. This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed on the 1 December 2025, or as soon as practicable after any legislative changes which arise in the area of child protection, any changes to Vita's services or any material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Weakliam', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John Weakliam, CEO Vita
(Provider under the Children First Act 2015)
16 -17 Upper Ormond Quay
Dublin 7
D07H7DE
IRELAND

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