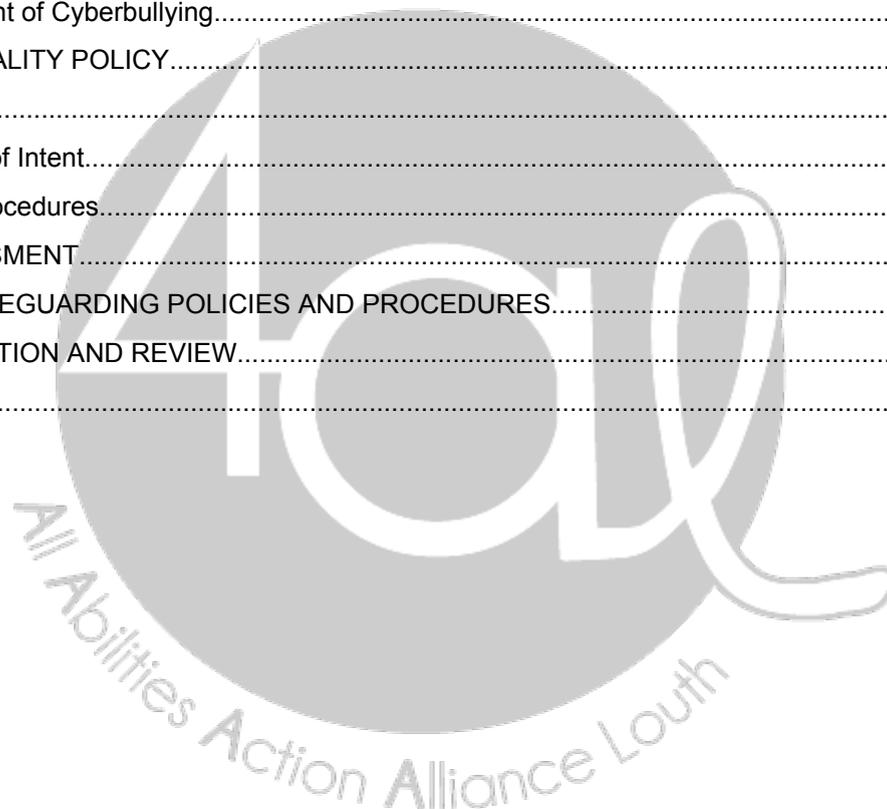


# CHILDREN'S CHARTER

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## CHILDREN'S CHARTER

### Principles

This code-named Children's Charter has been developed to inform and guide the decisions and behaviour of all volunteer members of 4AL.

### Statement of Intent

Children and young people rely on responsible adults to care for and protect them. Our 4AL volunteer members are in a relationship of special trust – one that is powerful and important. We recognise that our role is multi-faceted, and we have developed this code of ethics to assist us in providing the best quality service possible.

The following policy and procedure are compliant with the 2018 school-age regulations (adapted from Tusla, Child and Family Agency), and are available to all parents, volunteer staff, and children attending activities and clubs organised by 4AL.

### Policy & Procedure

This Code of Ethics is underpinned by the following principles.

- The well-being of the individual with additional needs and neurotypical children is of fundamental importance.
- We acknowledge the uniqueness of each additional needs/neurotypical child and young person attending 4AL activities and clubs.
- We consider the needs of the additional needs and neurotypical children as well as young people within the context of the family and culture, as the family has a major influence on the young child/person.
- We consider the critical impact of self-esteem on the individual child's development.
- We base practice on sound knowledge, research, and theories, while at the same time recognising the limitations and uncertainties of these
- We work to fulfil the right of all neurodiverse children/young people and their families for access to 4AL activities and clubs.

### Procedure

Based on the above principles 4AL has developed and adapted the following Children's Charter.

## CHILDREN'S CHARTER

- Additional needs children and young people's welfare and their rights to secure, healthy, and happy childhood are paramount.
- The experiences and additional needs children/young people receive are critically important in terms of future development and their well-being.
- Additional needs children and young people are entitled to expect that all adults will respect, uphold, and preserve their rights and ensure that their feelings and wishes are considered.
- Additional needs children and young people should have the opportunity to make choices and develop a sense of responsibility for their actions appropriate to their age and ability.
- Additional needs children, young people, parents, and carers should not be discriminated against, particularly concerning colour, age, race, religion, gender, disability, medical conditions, or background.
- Parents should be recognised and respected as their children's first and continuing educators.

List of Policies that inform the work of 4AL:

**Privacy Policy**

**Child Protection Policy**

**Code of Behaviour**

**Code of Conduct for committee members**

**Code of Conduct for Volunteers**

**Conflict of Interest of Loyalty Policy**

**Arrivals and Collection Policy (school-aged children)**

**Anti Bullying Policy**

**Complaints Policy**

**Risk Assessment**

**Child Safeguarding Statement**

## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

### Principles

All volunteering members and persons who are engaged in 4AL activities and clubs must observe the following policies and procedures. Clarification on any point may be sought from the Chairperson of 4AL.

### Statement of Intent

The welfare of the child/young person is paramount to 4AL. Therefore, we want to make sure that the additional needs children/young people attending 4AL activities and clubs are protected and kept safe from harm while they are with the volunteer members in this organisation by:

1. Making sure that our members/volunteers are carefully selected, trained, and supervised.
2. This includes Garda Vetting through 4AL and LVC (Louth Volunteer Centre) and Children First e-training on Tulsa's web page as mandatory while working with children. The above do not exclude any additional trainings or professional development.
3. Having clear codes of behaviour for volunteer members.
4. Giving parents, additional needs children/young people, and members information about what we do and what to expect from us at each activity.
5. Letting parents and additional needs children/young people know how to voice their concerns or complain if there is anything they are not happy about.
6. We have a clear reporting procedure to be followed should a volunteer member have a concern about an additional need's child/young person and ensure the members are aware of their responsibility as a mandated person.
7. This policy will be reviewed annually by the 4AL policy committee.

### Policy

Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children was first published in 1999 and was fully revised and updated in 2017. In January 2019 the Guidance was amended by way of an addendum to ensure that online safety is

specifically accounted for in child safeguarding statements. They form the basis of 4AL protection policy and procedures.

Everyone must be alert to the possibility that children with whom they are in contact may be being abused.

Any reasonable suspicion of abuse must elicit a response. Ignoring the signals or failing to intervene may result in ongoing or further harm to the child. The welfare of children must always come first, regardless of all other considerations.

All volunteering members who work within 4AL must read and understand this policy and procedures and it will be part of a new member's induction. Clarification on any point may be sought from the members of the board and /or the Chair/Vice Person of 4AL.

### Recognising child abuse

*Children First* – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children

There are four principal types of child abuse as follows:

**Neglect:** An omission, where the child/young person suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to affection from adults, and medical care *Children First* 2.2.1

**Emotional Abuse:** When a child's/young person's need for affection, approval, consistency, and security are not met. Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a caregiver and a child *Children First* 2.3.1

**Physical Abuse:** Any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child *Children First* 2.4.1

**Sexual Abuse:** When a child/young person is used by another person for his/her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of other *Children First* 2.5.1

4AL endorses that the National Guidelines advise that the ability to recognise child abuse depends as much on a person's willingness to accept the possibility of its existence as it does on knowledge and information. It is important to note that child abuse is not always readily visible.

The recognition of abuse normally runs along three stages:

- i. Considering the possibility – if a child/young person appears to have suffered an inexplicable and suspicious-looking injury, seems distressed without obvious reason, displays unusual behavioural problems, or appears – fearful in the company of parents.
- ii. Observing signs of abuse – a cluster or pattern of signs is the most reliable indicator of abuse. Children/young people may make direct or indirect disclosures, which should always be taken seriously. Less obvious disclosures may be gently explored with a child, without direct questioning (which the Tusla or An Garda Síochána may more usefully carry out). Play situations such as drawing or storytelling may reveal significant information. Indications of harm must always be considered in the child's social and family context, and it is important to always be open to alternative explanations.
- iii. Recording of information – it is important to establish the grounds for concern by obtaining as much detailed information as possible. Observations should be recorded and should include dates, times, names, locations, context, and any other information that could be considered relevant or that might facilitate further assessment/investigation.

*Children First* – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children

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#### THE DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON

4AL will at all times have an appointed Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and a deputy in the event of the Designated Liaison Person being unavailable.

We will endeavour to send the Designated Liaison Person(s) on any necessary or new training courses available.

#### 4AL Designated Liaison Persons (DLP):

- Garda Vetting officer is the person who undergo garda vetting training. Chairperson is DLP and Garda Vetting Officer is DLP deputy. Their contact is:  
Chairperson Anna W. 089 203 5270  
Garda Vetting Officer Iwona G.G.: info.4alouth@gmail.com

#### The Role of the Designated Liaison Persons is to:

- Establish contact with the Duty Social Worker responsible for child protection in the organisation's catchment area (Tusla, Louth County Hospital Campus, Dundalk, Co Louth Tel 042 939 2200) and ensure that the organisation's child protection policy and procedures are followed where reasonable grounds for concerns exist about individual children/young person.
- To provide information and advice on child protection and training within the 4AL
- Ensure appropriate information is available at the time of referral and that the referral is confirmed in writing, under confidential cover
- Liaise with Tusla Duty Social Worker Department/An Garda Siochana and other agencies as appropriate
- Keep relevant people within the organisation informed
- Ensure that an individual case record is maintained of the action taken by the organisation, the liaison with other agencies, and the outcome

## The Designated Liaison Person is Responsible for

- Acting as a source of advice on child protection matters
- For coordinating action within the organisation, and
- For liaising with the Tusla and An Garda Síochána and other agencies about suspected or actual cases of child abuse where reasonable grounds for concern exist.
- Being accessible to volunteering members and have good listening and feedback skills
- Being familiar and updated on the topic of child abuse and associated issues

## MANDATED PERSONS

Mandated persons are people who have contact with children/young people and/or families who, by their qualifications, training, and experience, are in a key position to help protect children/young people from harm (TUSLA).

Mandated persons have two main legal obligations under the Children First Act 2015

- To report harm to children/young people, above a defined threshold, to Tusla
- To assist Tusla, if requested, in assessing a concern that has been the subject of a mandated report.

As a mandated person, under the legislation you are required to report any knowledge, belief, or reasonable suspicion that a child/young person has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed. The Act defines harm as assault, ill-treatment, neglect, or sexual abuse, and covers single and multiple instances.

The reporting requirements under the Children First Act 2015 apply only to information that you as a mandated person, received or became aware of since the

Act came into force. However, if you have reasonable concern about past abuse, where the information came to your attention before the Act and there is possible continuing risk to children, you should report it to Tusla under the Children First Guidance 2017.

## DISCLOSURES, WHAT TO DO, HOW TO REACT & LISTEN

There may be a time when a child/young person approaches a 4AL member or volunteer in the club or activity as a trusted adult to discuss their life outside the organisation. Individual adults in our organisation must know how to react to this sensitively and appropriately.

### *Response if a Child Discloses Abuse*

- Be as calm and natural as possible.
- Remember that you have been approached because you are trusted and possibly liked.
- Do not panic.
- Be aware that disclosure can be very difficult for the child
- Remember the child may initially be testing your reactions and may only fully open up over some time.
- Listen to what the child/young person has to say. Give them the time and opportunity to tell as much as they are able and wish to. Do not pressurize the child. Allow him/her to disclose at their own pace and in their language.
- Be careful when asking questions. Questions should be supportive and for clarification. Avoid leading questions such as asking whether a specific person carried out the abuse. Also, avoid asking about intimate details or suggesting that something else could have happened other than what you have been told. Such questions and suggestions could complicate the official investigation.
- Assure the child/young person that you believe them. False disclosures are very rare.
- It is important that the adult differentiates in their mind between the person who carried out the abuse and the act of abuse itself. The child/young person, quite possibly, may love or strongly like the alleged abuser while also disliking what was done to him/her.

- It is important therefore to avoid expressing any judgment on, or anger towards, the alleged perpetrator while talking with the child/young person.
- It may be necessary to reassure the child/young person that your feelings towards him/her have not been affected in a negative way as a result of what she/he has disclosed.
- Do not promise to keep secrets. Explain to the child/young person that you will only tell the people who need to know so that they are kept safe.
- By refusing to make a commitment to secrecy to the child/young person, you do run the risk that they may not tell you everything or indeed anything, there and then. However, it is better to do this than to tell a lie and ruin the child's/young person's confidence in yet another adult. By being honest, it is more likely, that the child/young person will return to you at another time.

*Do not make promises as you may not be in a position to follow through on them.*

#### *At the Earliest Possible Opportunity*

- Inform the Designated Liaison Person immediately and the following internal reporting procedure will be followed.
- Record in writing what the child/young person has said, including, as far as possible, the exact wording utilised by the child.

#### *Ongoing Support*

Following a disclosure by a child/young person, volunteer staff must continue in a supportive relationship with the child.

Disclosure is a huge step for many children/young people.

*Volunteer members should continue to offer support, particularly through:*

- Maintaining a positive relationship with the child/young person
- Keeping lines of communication open by listening carefully to the child/young person

- Continue to include the child/young person in the usual activities.
- Any further disclosure should be treated as a first disclosure and responded to as in Reporting Procedures in this policy

### Response to a concern about child protection or welfare

In situations where a suspicion/concern may be deemed vague i.e. where there is no specific allegation but there is some concern based on the emotional behaviour and/or physical presentation of the behaviour of a child/young person. It is recommended that the Designated Liaison Person consult with the Duty Social Worker in the Tusla to assess whether or not a report is warranted. Details of the consultation should be recorded. A formal report to the Tusla may follow as advised.

### RECOGNISING SIGNS OF ABUSE

For an adult to recognise child abuse they have to accept the fact that it does exist. Volunteer should be aware that child abuse is not always obvious, it is also very important to remember that there may be alternative explanations to your suspicions.

#### Reasonable Grounds for Concern- Children First 3.2.2

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

- Specific indication from the child/young person that he/she was abused
- An account by a person who saw the child/young person being abused
- Evidence, such as an injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way
- An injury or behaviour which is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where corroborative indicators support the concern that it may be a case of abuse. An example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse, or dysfunctional behaviour.
- Consistent indication, over a period that a child/young person is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

A suspicion that is not supported by any objective indication of abuse or neglect would not constitute a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern. Persons reporting suspected child abuse to the Tusla must establish the basis for their concerns. However, they should not interview the child/young person or the child's parents in any detail about the alleged abuse. This may be more appropriately carried out by the Tusla Duty Social Worker or An Garda Siochana. If staff, students, or volunteers have any concerns these should be discussed with the Designated Liaison Person.

### RESPONSIBILITY TO REPORT CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT *Children First 3.2*

Everyone must be alert to the possibility that children with whom they are in contact may be suffering from abuse or neglect. This responsibility is particularly relevant for professionals such as teachers, volunteer workers, health professionals, and those working with adults with serious parenting difficulties. It is also an important responsibility for staff and people involved in sports clubs, community activities, youth clubs, religious/faith sectors, and other organisations catering to children.

Volunteers should be aware of the 4AL's internal reporting procedures. Members of the Board and volunteers should also be aware of the appropriate authorities to whom they should report outside the organisation if they are inhibited for any reason in reporting the incident internally or where they are dissatisfied with the internal response.

#### *In making any report the following should be considered:*

- The safety and protection of the child/young people must take priority.
- That the principles of natural justice apply being a person is innocent until proven otherwise
- Confidentiality is vital, a need-to-know basis should apply

The Tusla Children and Family Services should always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected.

- Child protection concerns should be supported by evidence that indicates the possibility of abuse or neglect.

- A concern about a *potential risk* to children/young people posed by a specific person, even if the children/young people are unidentifiable, should also be communicated to the Tusla Children and Family Services.

The guiding principles regarding reporting child abuse or neglect may be summarised as follows:

- (i) The safety and well-being of the child/young people must take priority.
- (ii) reports should be made without delay to the Tusla Children and Family Services by DLP.

Any reasonable concern or suspicion of abuse or neglect must elicit a response. Ignoring the signals or failing to intervene may result in ongoing or further harm to the child/young person.

Section 176 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006 introduced the criminal charge of reckless endangerment of children. It states:

‘A person, having authority or control over a child or abuser, who intentionally or recklessly endangers a child by –

- (a) Causing or permitting any child to be placed or left in a situation which creates a substantial risk to the child of being a victim of serious harm or sexual abuse, or
- (b) Failing to take reasonable steps to protect a child from such a risk while knowing that the child is in such a situation, is guilty of an offence.’

The penalty for a person found guilty of this offence is a fine (no upper limit) and/or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years.

The Tusla has a statutory obligation to identify children/young people who are not receiving adequate care and protection, to provide family support services, and, where necessary, to take children into the care of the Tusla. People who report concerns need to be assured that their information will be carefully considered with any other information available, and a child protection assessment will only proceed where sufficient risk is identified.

Any professional who suspects child abuse or neglect should inform the parents/carers if a report is to be submitted to the Tusla Children and Family Services or An Garda Síochána unless doing so is likely to endanger the child/young person.

The Tusla will respect the wishes of non-professionals reporting concerns in good faith who ask to remain anonymous as much as possible but cannot give a guarantee that the information would not be sought and given within judicial proceedings. (The Data Protection Acts offer protection under privacy, but should the information be sought directly within legal proceedings, there is no guarantee.)

#### THE REPORTING PROCEDURE

1. Any volunteering member who has a concern about a child/young person in the service currently being abused, abused in the past, or likely to be at risk of abuse, is obliged to verbally relay their concern to the Designated Liaison Person as a matter of urgency.
2. The volunteering member, who has the concern should record in writing what the child has said, including as far as possible, the exact words utilised by the child/young person.
3. The Designated Person and the Mandated Person must then record the details of this report, on the Tusla Standard Reporting Form, which is in the Forms Folder maintained by the Designated Liaison Person and/or Deputy Liaison Person, which must then be signed by the person making the report.
4. Unless it would put the child/young person at further risk to do so, the Designated Liaison Person will make every effort to contact the parents to discuss the concern made by the child/young person. A written record will be kept of this meeting with the parents.
5. The Designated Liaison Person will examine the information received to determine if it constitutes reasonable grounds for concern see Reasonable Grounds for Concern paragraph above.

6. Immediate action must be taken to protect the child/young person in question and indeed any other children who may be considered at 'risk'.
7. A child/young person will never be interviewed regarding the concern by any volunteering member of the 4AL however all comments made by the child/young person will be noted.
8. Allegations against volunteering members will be dealt with separately and the disciplinary procedure will be followed as necessary
9. In cases of emergency, where a child/young person is deemed to be at immediate and serious risk and a Duty Social worker is unavailable, An Garda Siochana should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child/young person be left in a dangerous situation pending Tusla's intervention.
10. 4AL will take care to ensure that actions taken by them do not undermine or frustrate any investigations being conducted by the Tusla or An Garda Siochana. Close liaisons will be maintained with these authorities to achieve this.
11. Where there are reasonable grounds a report should be made to the Tusla in person, by phone, or in writing without delay by the Designated Liaison Person in cooperation with the Mandated Person. Each Tusla has a social worker on duty for a certain number of hours each day. The duty social worker is available to meet with or talk on the telephone, to persons wishing to report child protection concerns.
12. If the Designated Liaison Person makes a decision not to report to Tusla, full details of the decision must be recorded including the reasons for not reporting plus any action taken. This report should be stored as confidential by the Designated Liaison Person in the child's/young person's records and kept by the 4AL in a secure place until the child/young person has reached the age of twenty-one. A Mandate Person can make a report to Tusla even if the Designated Liaison Person chooses not to.
13. Allegations or concerns should not be investigated by the Designated Liaison Person or a volunteering member but passed on to the Tulsa /Gardaí to follow through.

14. Once a report is received by Tusla the first consideration is always the immediate safety of the child/young person. All reports and information are checked on the day that they are received. Emergency action is taken if it is necessary to protect the child/young person. Some reports may not require the intervention of Tusla and can be dealt with through other types of Services. A lot of children/young people can be kept safe from harm and have their needs met through this wide range of excellent health, education, and social support.

When a report is received Tusla “screens” or reviews the information provided to see whether the child’s/young person’s needs could be met through these other services and if so Tusla directs the reporter to these services. Through this screening process, they also consider where children’s needs might be more complex. Where mandated reports are received by Tusla, the authorised person will arrange for the mandated report to be formally acknowledged – as per requirements of the Children First Act. Such cases will be required to be allocated to a social worker to begin the assessment process. The purpose of the assessment is to gather and analyse the information about the danger or risks of harm to the child/young person, the factors that are making it harder to keep the child safe, the strengths or safety that is present in the family and the things that need to change for the child/young person and family. The assessment involves meeting and talking to the child/young person, parents, their extended family network, and other relevant professionals. Effective safeguarding requires the involvement of all those who are naturally connected to a child/young people through personal or professional relationships. When the assessment is concluded there are 2 key outcomes on child abuse cases i.e. founded or unfounded outcomes. Tusla Social Workers will liaise with An Garda Síochána on such cases.

## ALLEGATIONS AGAINST VOLUNTEER MEMBERS

The same person should not have responsibility for dealing with both the reporting issues and the membership issues. It is preferable to separate these issues and manage them independently. These reporting procedures should be followed in the event of suspicion or disclosure of abuse against a volunteer member. Volunteers may be subjected to erroneous or malicious allegations. Therefore any allegation of abuse should be dealt with sensitively and support provided for members including counselling where necessary. However, the primary goal is to protect the child/young person while taking care to treat the volunteer member fairly.

***The Person for dealing with allegations against volunteer members of 4AL is Chairperson and Secretary of 4AL.***

## Policy and Procedure on Response to Allegations of Abuse against Volunteer Members

Child Protection is about promoting the welfare of children who attend 4AL activities and programmes. To this end, it also encompasses the monitoring of professional practice within an organisation.

An organisation has a legal and moral responsibility to respond to any allegation of abuse either verbal or physical of a child/young person by a volunteering member.

4AL'S procedure is in line with the guidance given in Children First- National Guidance

Response to allegations of abuse against volunteers

### **Page 43 *Children First* – 6.2. Guidance on allegations against employees and volunteers**

Allegations of abuse may be made against adults working with children, employees, volunteers, students, and childminders. The National Guidance is there to assist the Designated Liaison Persons in having due regard for the rights and interests of the child on the one hand, and those of the employee against whom the allegation is made on the other hand.

The following guidelines should be followed in the event of such an allegation of abuse against an employee during the execution of that employee's duties or where information about an employee about a situation outside of the work context is reported.

Our first duty of care in this situation is to the child and our priority is to ensure that no child is exposed to unnecessary risk.

- If an allegation is made against a volunteering member or other person working within the 4AL to another member or other person, they must inform the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) verbally and simultaneously record what they have been told or what they may have observed. Action taken in reporting an

allegation of child abuse against an employee should be based on an opinion formed reasonably and in good faith.

- The details of this concern must be recorded on the Standard Reporting Form, which is in the Forms Folder kept by DLP, which must then be signed by the person making the report and they will be reminded of the need for confidentiality in this matter.
- The DLP will inform the volunteer member that an allegation has been made against them. The disciplinary procedure for members will be followed in this instance.

The DLP must privately inform the volunteer member, about whom the allegation is made, of the following:

- The fact that an allegation has been made against him/her
- The nature of the allegation
- The volunteer member should be allowed to respond. The DLP should note the response and pass on this information when making a formal report to the Tulsa.
- The volunteering member should also be informed of their right to an adjournment of the meeting until they can seek appropriate representation (e.g. Union Rep./Legal Rep.). The action will be guided by the agreed procedures (Disciplinary Procedure), and the rules of natural justice. While adhering to the principle of natural justice enshrined within our constitution concerning the rights of the accused, the vulnerability of the alleged victim must be foremost in our mind, therefore any postponement must be afforded within a reasonable time frame that is 24 hours.
- The Parents/guardian of the alleged victim must be informed immediately by the Designated Liaison Person.
- The name or any identifying information of the reporting adult will not be given to the volunteering member or other member against whom the allegation has been made by the DLP, pending Tulsa advice or consultation.
- When an allegation is received it will be assessed promptly and carefully.

- The DLP may then ask the member whom the allegation has been made against to leave the premises immediately and they will be suspended from all activities within 4AL until the matter has been fully investigated.
- However, all allegations may not require a volunteering member to be sent home i.e. allegations of poor practice or conduct where increased levels of supervision may be sufficient until the matter is sorted out. Poor practice will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure as necessary.
- At this point in the process, it will be necessary to decide whether a formal report should be made to the TULSA – this decision should be based on reasonable grounds for concern
- If it is felt that there are grounds for concern in all matters relating to the allegations, it should be reported to the Duty Social Worker
- At this point the Disciplinary Procedure will be invoked. This will be a separate process and will be overseen by the Chairperson.

**The Protections 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 TULSA or 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. A person who makes a report in good faith and in the child's best interests may also be protected under common law by the defence of qualified privilege.

In the case where the Designated Liaison Person concludes that reasonable grounds do not exist that she will not report the concern of the staff/volunteer to the relevant Tulsa or An Garda Síochána, the individual staff member or volunteer who raised the concern should be given a clear written statement of the reasons why the centre is not taking action. The staff member or volunteer should be advised that, if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free to consult with or report to, Tulsa or An Garda Síochána.

## DATA PROTECTION AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is of the utmost importance at 4AL and extends to all areas of our activities and programmes. Confidentiality is about treating sensitive information that arises in a trusting relationship and doing so in a manner that is respectful, professional, and purposeful.

All information regarding concern or assessment of child abuse should be shared on a “need to know” basis in the interests of the child/young person. No undertakings regarding secrecy can be given. Giving information to others for the protection of a child/young person is not a breach of confidentiality. It must be clearly understood that information that is gathered for one purpose must not be used for another without consulting the person who provided that information. Children First advises that the issue of confidentiality should be part of the training necessary for staff who work in the area of child protection and the general training of staff in organisations that work with children/young people. Each organisation should have a written policy in this regard – Children First pg. 92

It is our policy to keep all personal information about our children, young people, families, and volunteer members private. Confidential and personal information about our children/parents will only be shared by the Designated Liaison Person and Deputy Liaison Person about child safety, in line with this Child Protection Policy. Any breach of confidentiality by any volunteering member of will lead to disciplinary action.

## COLLECTIONS AND ARRIVALS POLICY

### Principle

4AL is committed to ensuring the safety and care of the children upon arriving and leaving the activities, clubs, and programmes. Our policy is communicated to all parents, guardians, and young people who attend activities, clubs, and programmes with 4AL.

The following policy and procedure are compliant with the 2018 school-age regulations.

### Statement of Intent

Volunteering members must follow the 4AL’s collections policy and procedure.

- 4AL does not take responsibility for the transportation of children and young people to its activities, clubs, and programs.
- At registration of activity when a parent/guardian fills out the attendance record form they are asked to name the people who will collect their child/children if that situation will occur.
- Children **must only** be collected by named persons on the registration form. Additionally, parent can confirm the person by text mgs or phone call.
- Children & and young people can only be collected by a person over the age of 18
- The collection point is agreed at the beginning and end of activity and is operated by volunteers or committee members.
- In cases the parents are late, one volunteer will stay with child at all times until parent or agreed person don't collect child.

Parents/Guardians are requested to follow our Policy and Procedure:

#### Arrivals

- Register your child on arrival with a volunteer member
- Support your child to be independent and actively involved at all stages
- Please ensure that all external doors are securely closed for the safety of all the children when you leave
- It is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to make contact with the 4AL if their child will not be attending.

#### Collection

- ❖ Parents or guardians must pick up their child at the agreed time. They should provide the names of at least two people authorized to collect the child. If a parent is late, the person in charge of the activity, club, or program will try to contact the parent. If they cannot reach the parent, they will contact the other authorized persons to pick up the child.

- ❖ Make sure that the person collecting your child is authorised and named on the application form or communicated to 4AL volunteer.
- ❖ Please ensure that you park safely and do not cause an obstruction, even for a very short time.

*In the event of a parent collecting another fellow child a prior arrangement must be made.*

### Early Collection of Children and Young People

We ask that parents let us know if you will be picking up their child early so that we can have your child ready for you and minimise disrupting the rest of the group.

### Late Drop off

We ask parents to drop their children off at the correct time to avoid disrupting the group once they have started and so that your child benefits from our full programme.

## COMMENTS & COMPLAINTS POLICY

### Principle

It is the policy of the 4AL Club to welcome children with additional needs and their families in the development of the service. At 4AL Club our ethos is to provide all enrolled with the highest quality of care and commitment. Our policy/policies are/are communicated to all parents, guardians, and young people who use the service in 4AL Club.

### Statement of Intent

Our children/staff/parents have the right to voice their opinions and concerns. It is our policy to welcome all suggestions, or comments about our service. Any comments or suggestions can be made to any member of staff. We will give careful attention and prompt and courteous responses to any suggestions, comments, or complaints.

## Policy & Procedures

We always welcome feedback (positive or otherwise). If this does not have a satisfactory outcome or if the problem reoccurs, the parent should put their concerns or complaints in writing or request a meeting with the steering committee.

From time to time children may want to speak to a member or volunteer regarding a complaint they may have. To ensure the voice of the child/young person is heard the following steps should be followed:

- The child should speak to the club's volunteer
- The child with assistance from the parent 4AL staff should complete the child-friendly suggestion and complaint form. (Appendix 3)
- If the child feels that their complaint has not been listened to they can request to speak to the Chairperson and Vicechair.

From time to time parents may want to speak to a member of the 4AL Club. In this case, the staff should follow these steps:

- If parents ask to speak to you at the start or the end of a session you must ask about the nature of their query
- To give the parent your full attention it may be necessary to ask them to wait a few minutes
- If a parent cannot wait then you must arrange to meet the parent at a time suitable for them
- You must inform the rest of the 4AL team of the query
- All meetings with parents should be held in a quiet area with at least 2 4AL staff members
- After the meeting you need to make written notice or a written record of the meeting

If for any reason a parent feels they have cause for complaint the following procedure should be in place:

- The parent needs to submit a written complaint to the 4AL Club steering group where this will be discussed, and the parent will be notified in writing.

## General Policy and Procedure

- Complaints will be dealt with openly and impartially. The complaint will be documented and remain confidential.
- Every attempt will be made to resolve the matter as quickly and amicably as possible, and to the parent's satisfaction
- The parent will be sent an acknowledgement that the complaint has been received and told how it will be dealt with, and in what a time frame
- The 4AL will keep the records as per GDPR policy and procedure.
- In the case of a complaint made against a staff member, the staff member involved will be informed that a formal complaint has been made and given full details
- If a parent is not satisfied with the outcome, they may make a further written request to go to an independent mediator, one who is acceptable to both parties, to listen to both sides and offer advice.
- A mediator has no legal powers but can help to clarify the situation.
- The mediator will help define the problem, review the actions taken so far, and suggest further ways in which to resolve the problem.
- The mediator will keep all discussions confidential. He or she will meet with the group if required and will keep an agreed written record of any meetings that are held and of any advice given.
- If a complaint involves a child protection concern, a separate reporting procedure will be followed in line with our Child Protection Policy (please see our child protection policy for details on how complaints are not managed by the service).
- The Chairperson of the 4AL will inform all parties involved of the outcome of the complaint made
- All completed forms/correspondence will be recorded in the child's file and a copy kept in a separate complaints file. All information will be kept on the 4AL file for 2 years from the date on which the complaint has been dealt with (completed).

Please note a copy of the suggestion and complaints form can be found in the Appendix.

## Recruitment and Selection Procedures Policy

4AL carries out a comprehensive and detailed recruitment procedure to protect all children attending the club and 4AL-organised activities and programmes.

All volunteer applicants should be made aware and reminded throughout the recruitment period that their application and the follow-up process of recruitment will be dealt with in the strictest confidence. The information supplied by the applicant and any other information supplied on their behalf should only be seen by persons directly involved in the recruitment procedure.

Applicants will receive a clear description and information on the organisation as well as volunteer duties, responsibilities and activities 4AL is undertaking.

4AL volunteer members are expected to have a minimum Level 5 award in Special Needs Assisting or related and recognised qualification, be Garda Vetted and have completed Children First training through Tusla e-learning platform.

Additional information including a copy of the 4AL's Child Protection Policy, Codes of Conduct, Code of Behaviour, membership form and any other required forms and policies should also be supplied to each applicant, signed and kept on record.

## RECORD KEEPING Policy

4AL will conform to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018. 4AL has appointed a Data Protection Officer (Secretary and Vice-secretary) who will deal with the situation regarding data, records storage, complaints storage, and child protection documents.

- We aim to ensure that all records are factual and written impartially.
- Parents will have access to all records pertaining to their child only.
- Volunteer members will only have access to general records of children involved in the activity
- 4AL will only share information with other professionals or agencies, with consent from parents or without their consent in terms of legal responsibility in relation to a Child Protection issue.
- All record-keeping is stored by the Secretary.
- Records or reports should not be altered or adjusted, if there are new developments then a new record of this information should be completed.

(For further information see our policies on Data Protection)

## PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS/CARERS Policy

4AL recognizes the importance of working with parents. It has an “open door” policy where families are always welcome but where the needs of all of the children/children with additional needs and their families in our care are always the priority.

Parents will be made aware of any observations, records, and notes kept by 4AL about their children including photos, activities, conversation or comments.

All records will be made available upon request and are kept confidentially and securely for the time of one year after activity is finished.

All parents/carers will be made aware of our policies and procedures.

## Complaints Policy

- Our children/children with additional needs and their families/staff/parents have the right to voice their opinions and concerns. It is our policy to welcome all suggestions, comments, and complaints to our 4AL Committee. Any comments or suggestions can be made to any member of the 4AL Committee. We will give careful attention and prompt and courteous responses to any suggestions, comments, or complaints. (For further information see our Comments and Complaints policy)
- If a complaint involves a child protection concern, the reporting procedure will be followed in line with our Child Protection Policy

## Anti-Bullying Policy and Procedure concerning children.

No form of bullying is tolerated within the 4AL by children or adults.

Bullying is defined as:

Repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical, or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place

of 4AL volunteering activities and/or in the course of regular 4AL meetings, AGM meetings, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity while undertaking volunteering activities. An isolated incident of the behaviour described in this definition may be an affront to dignity at work, but a once-off incident is not considered to be bullying.

Bullying can include conduct offensive to a reasonable person, e.g., oral or written slurs, physical contact, gestures, jokes, displaying pictures, flags, emblems, graffiti, or other material that state or imply prejudicial attitudes that are offensive to others.

Examples of bullying behaviour include:

- Personal insults or name-calling
- Persistent unjustified criticism or sarcasm
- Public or private humiliation
- Shouting
- Sneering
- Instantaneous rage, often over trivial issues
- Aggression
- Continuously refusing reasonable requests without good reasons
- Intimidation and threats in general.
- Isolation or non-co-operation or exclusion from social activities
- Vandalism of personal property

This is not an exhaustive list, and offences of a similar nature are also prohibited and will be dealt with appropriately.

#### Bullying amongst children and young people:

If a bullying concern is raised, every effort will be made to establish the facts. Action will be taken to address the concerns, and to ensure that there is no reoccurrence. If a child is accused of bullying, they also will be listened to in a suitable setting and efforts will be made to collect all the facts.

We believe that every child has the right to expect an environment in which

- Is safe and caring
- Provides challenges but is non-threatening
- Encourages children to feel secure
- Values children's opinions as it is stated in UN Children's Rights
- Shows an awareness of children's individual needs and attempts to meet them.
- Allows them to develop to their full potential.

Volunteers will:

- Take all forms of bullying seriously and intervene to prevent incidents from taking place. All forms of bullying will be recorded in written format.
- Deal with incidents of bullying as soon as they become aware of them. This may involve an action plan and support for the victim of the bullying and bully.
- Spend time talking to the child who has been bullied and support the child.
- Support all children in their environment to establish a climate of trust for all. By acknowledging, supporting, rewarding, and celebrating the successes of all children, we will aim to prevent incidents of bullying.
- If a child is repeatedly involved in bullying other children, the parents will be informed, and the situation will be discussed with them

We ask Parents/Carers to:

- Support the 4AL anti-bullying policy, and actively encourage their child/ren to be a positive member of the group.

If your child/young person is involved in an unacceptable incident the following procedure will be followed:

- 1st unacceptable incident; the child/young person will be removed from the situation to another supervised room/ space/area if outdoors for the remainder of the session and the parent/carer will be informed when they collect their child/young person.
- 2nd unacceptable incident; the parent/carer will be contacted to come and collect their child immediately

## Management of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying refers to bullying that is carried out using the internet, mobile phone, or other technological devices. While not always appreciated, PlayStations, Xboxes, Nintendo Switch and other such devices can also be used to bully (using text and voice messages) where games are being played across the Internet against remote opponents as well as various social media messaging applications such as Whatsapp, Instagram, Snap Chat, Facebook or TikTok and similar.

While once of negative behaviour is not usually deemed to be bullying, the once-off posting of nasty comments on someone's profile, or the uploading to the Internet of photographs intended to embarrass or shame someone or the 'liking' of such postings may well be seen as amounting to bullying because anyone posting such material has to be aware that it is going to be viewed and/or repeated by many others.

Cyberbullying will not be tolerated by the 4AL.

The procedure for cyberbullying in the 4AL will correspond with the 4AL policy and procedure for anti-bullying.

## CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

### Principles

Confidentiality is of the utmost importance at 4AL Club. It is our policy to keep all personal information about children, families, and volunteers private. Confidential and personal information about children/parents will only be shared by volunteers if it is connected to the activity or project and within the club. Confidentiality is about

treating sensitive information that arises in a trusting relationship and doing so in a manner that is respectful, professional, and purposeful.

### Statement of Intent

4AL Club respects the right for all information, records, and observations to be treated with respect and with due attention to confidentiality and privacy.

### Policy & Procedures

We will ensure that:

- All application forms and records of children attending the service will be kept confidentially by our volunteers accordingly to GDPR policy and procedures.
- Parents may have access to the records of their children but may not have access to information about any other child or young person
- All volunteers and parents/carers will be made aware of this confidentiality policy. The policy implementation will be reviewed regularly at 4AL AGM meetings.
- Any breach of confidentiality by any member of 4AL will be seriously discussed at regular committee meetings.
- In the case that a child's welfare is at risk, it is permissible for the volunteers of 4AL to share confidential information with Tusla as in line with our Child Protection Policy.

### RISK ASSESSMENT

By *Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017*, the member of the 4AL Club has assessed any potential for harm to a child while attending the club or participating in club activities. A written assessment setting out the areas of risk identified and procedures for managing those risks is summarised below:

Risk Identified	Policies and/or Procedures in place to manage Risk
-----------------	----------------------------------------------------

<p>Collection of Children</p>	<p>As stated in our collection policy parents and guardians must collect their child by the agreed collection time. No child will be released to any person unless they are on the collection list and are 18 years old or over and in possession of a current form of photographic ID.</p>
<p>Missing Child</p>	<p>As stated in our policy grounds will be searched, the local Guards will be called, and parents will be informed</p>
<p>Disclosure of abuse</p>	<p>As stated in our policy Tulsa will be informed of the concern or disclosure. <i>Children First, National Guidance, 2017</i></p>
<p><b>Risk of harm</b></p> <p>Risk of harm or abuse by 4AL members/volunteers.</p> <p>Risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Volunteers shouting at or chastising children to the extent that it causes harm to a child.</li> <li>- Rough handling of children by volunteers in a way that causes harm to a child.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complaints policy &amp; procedure</li> <li>- Volunteers training policy &amp; procedure</li> <li>- Child safeguarding training</li> <li>- Volunteers' induction policy &amp; procedures</li> <li>- Child safeguarding policy &amp; procedures</li> <li>- Garda vetting policy and procedure</li> <li>- Code of Behaviour for volunteers policy &amp; procedure.</li> <li>- Allegation of abuse against volunteers' policy and procedures.</li> <li>- Reporting Policy &amp; procedure</li> <li>- Managing behaviour policy &amp; procedure</li> </ul>

<p><b>Risk of Abuse</b> (volunteers not knowing the correct procedures)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training policy &amp; procedure</li> <li>- Volunteers' supervision policy &amp; procedure</li> <li>- Child safeguarding policy &amp; procedure</li> <li>- Allegation of abuse against volunteers' policy &amp; procedure</li> <li>- Complaints policy &amp; procedure</li> <li>- Code of behaviour policy &amp; procedure</li> <li>- Managing behaviour policy &amp; procedure</li> </ul>
<p>Concern for Welfare</p>	<p>As stated in our policy Tulsa will be informed if we have reasonable grounds for concern as it is our duty to safeguard all children.</p>

Risk assessment will be carried out at beginning of each activity and will be signed by volunteers in charge.

### CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

As required by the *Children First Act 2015* and *Children First National Guidance for Protection and Welfare of Children, 2017* the following safeguarding policies/procedures/measures are in place:

- Procedure to maintain a list of all mandated persons under the Children First Act, 2015
- A Designated Liaison Person and Deputy have been appointed to support any mandated person with their concern.
- Child Protection and Welfare Reporting Procedures
- Confidentiality Policy
- Policy for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse or Neglect Against Volunteers
- Procedure for Managing Child Protection Records
- Garda Vetting Policy-need update as per new amendment July 2025
- Code of Behaviour for Working with Children
- Induction Policy (which includes procedures to inform new volunteers about the Child Safeguarding Statement and accompanying safeguarding policies and procedures)

- All volunteers have completed the Tusla eLearning module – *Introduction to Children First*. Their Certificate kept on file for duration of validity (TUSLA- three years).
- All volunteers are Garda Vetted
- Complaints Policy
- Policy for Managing Accidents and Incidents

## IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

We recognise that implementation is an ongoing process, and we are committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the accompanying child safeguarding policies and procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while availing of our club.

- This Statement will be reviewed at every AGM or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.
- This statement has been published and displayed in the 4AL club. It has been provided to all volunteers and any other persons involved with the 4AL. It is readily accessible to parents and guardians on request.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ *4AL team* **Date:** 1/09/2025

**For further information on this Statement, contact 4AL chairperson.**

This policy and procedure were completed and updated by *Lara Schmit* and *Anna Wrobel*.

Revised and proofread by *Vesna Radosevic* date 1/09/2025

## Appendix

### 4AL Suggestion and Complaint Form

Your details

Surname:

Forename(s)

Title: Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/if other please state: bi

Address

Your email address

Daytime phone number

Mobile number

Please state by which of the above methods you would like us to contact you

Your requirements

If our usual way of dealing with complaints makes it difficult for you to use our services, please tell us so that we can discuss how we might help you.

The person who experienced the problem should normally fill in this form. If you are filling this in on behalf of someone else, please fill in section B. Please note that before taking forward the complaint we will need to satisfy ourselves that you have the authority to act on behalf of the person concerned.

B: Making a complaint on behalf of someone else: Their details

Their name in full

Their address

What is your relationship with them?

Why are you making a complaint on their behalf?

C: About your complaint (Please continue your answers to the following questions on a separate sheet(s) if necessary)

What do you think we did wrong or failed to do?

Describe how you personally or the person you are representing suffered or has been affected

What do you think should be done to put things right?

Have you already put your concern to the 4AL volunteer members responsible for delivering the service?

If so, please give brief details of how and when you did so.

Signature:

Date:

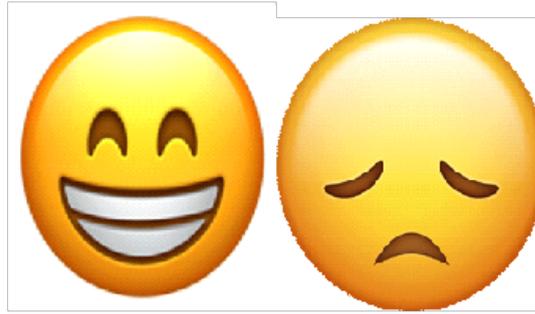
When you have completed this form, please send it to:

4AL Secretary: [info.4alouth@gmail.com](mailto:info.4alouth@gmail.com)

[4alouth.2024@gmail.com](mailto:4alouth.2024@gmail.com)



CHILD'S SUGGESTION AND COMPLAINTS FORM



I am feeling happy

I am feeling sad



I am feeling Frustrated

Draw or write your suggestion/complaint



Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you

Appendix 2

Membership Form attached on the web

Volunteer Form attached on the web

Appendix 3

Photo slip

Appendix 4

**4AL's Register of Conflict of Interests**

**Register of interests**

Name of charity trustee	Date of appointment	Description of interest	Has the board of charity trustees been notified of the interest?	Date of disclosure


Signed:

Insert the committee member's name

Date:

Risk assessment template



