



## Child Safeguarding Statement

### Section 1

Cottage Autism Network Ltd. is a volunteer led organisation that supports families affected by autism. This support includes setting up and running youth groups and activities that enable those affected by autism and their siblings to participate in a range of activities that has the ability to enhance their development.

### Section 2 – Nature of Service and Principles to Safeguard Children from Harm

Here at CAN Cottage Autism Network Ltd., we provide a range of activities for children affected by autism, their siblings and families.

Our organisation believes that the best interests of children and young people attending our services are paramount. Our guiding principles are underpinned by *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*, Tusla's *Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice*, The United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, as well as current legislation including **Children First Act, 2015**, **Child Care Act, 1991**, **Protection for persons reporting child abuse Act, 1998**, and the **National Vetting Bureau Act 2012**.

Our guiding principles apply to all Directors, Volunteers and facilitators within our organisation. All Directors, volunteers and facilitators must sign up to and abide by these guiding principles and our child safeguarding principles.

We believe that:

1. Our priority, to ensure the welfare and safety of every child and young person who utilises our services, is paramount;
2. Our guiding principles and procedures to safeguard children and young people reflect national policy and legislation, and we will review our guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures every 2 years, or sooner if a relevant change occurs in legislation, guiding policies or our service structure;
3. All children and young people have an equal right to utilise a service that respects them as individuals and encourages them to reach their potential, regardless of their background;
4. We are committed to upholding the rights of every child and young person who uses our services, including the rights to be kept safe and protected from harm, listened to and heard;
5. Our guiding principles apply to everyone in our organisation;
6. Volunteers must conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of our organisation.

## Section 3 – Risk Assessment

	Risk Identified	Procedure in place to manage risk identified
1.	Recruitment of volunteers	<p><b>Safe Recruitment Practices</b></p> <p>CAN Ltd. Recruitment of Volunteers/ Facilitators/Other Personnel CAN Ltd. shall ensure that all persons working directly with children are vetted and have received the relevant training. The Designated Child Welfare Officers shall ensure that independent contractors, volunteers and external personnel are aware of and adopt best practice at all times.</p> <p>The following principles shall be adopted by the CAN Ltd. in recruitment for positions involving work with children;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roles shall provide a clear description to ensure independent contractors and volunteers understand the extent and nature of their role.</li> <li>• Advertisements for a role involving work with children shall stipulate that Garda vetting shall be required.</li> <li>• Persons applying for a role or for an event shall complete an application form which shall include a section allowing the individual to self declare any convictions.</li> <li>• At least two written references, one of which should include someone who can comment on their previous work with children, shall be requested and shall be contacted to confirm.</li> <li>• Those roles shall involve an interview or meeting with at least two representatives of the organisation face to face or otherwise.</li> <li>• All offer of work shall be dependent on Garda vetting and persons will be advised of the process pending record checks being completed.</li> </ul> <p><b>CAN Ltd. Induction and Training</b></p> <p>The recruitment and selection process for those engaged by CAN Ltd. shall be followed up with relevant training for those working with children. In particular new volunteers, independent contractors and those engaged to work with children should be;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brought through the policy and made aware that child abuse can occur.</li> <li>• Made aware of how to recognise abuse.</li> <li>• Made aware of the reporting procedures.</li> <li>• Made aware of the importance of listening to children and taking their concerns seriously.</li> <li>• Complete a basic awareness training course.</li> </ul>
2.	Recruitment of facilitators	<p><b>Safe Recruitment Practices</b></p> <p>CAN Ltd. Recruitment of Volunteers/ Facilitators/Other Personnel CAN Ltd. shall ensure that all persons working directly with children are vetted and have received the relevant training. The Designated Child Welfare Officers shall ensure that independent contractors, volunteers and external personnel are aware of and adopt best practice at all times.</p> <p>The following principles shall be adopted by the CAN Ltd. in recruitment for positions involving work with children;</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roles shall provide a clear description to ensure independent contractors and volunteers understand the extent and nature of their role</li> </ul> <p><b>Conduct and Behaviour towards Children</b></p> <p>All adults involved in CAN Ltd. have an important role to play in promoting good practice. Their first priority has to be the children’s welfare, safety and enjoyment of the game. Adults should be aware of the emotional, physical and personal needs of children and should ensure that children are treated with integrity and respect. The trust implicit in adult child relationships places a duty of care on all adults, voluntary or professional to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the child while engaged in activities organised by CAN Ltd.</p> <p>In particular all adult-child relationships should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• open, positive and encouraging;</li> <li>• defined by a mutually agreed set of goals and commitments;</li> <li>• respectful of the creativity and autonomy of children;</li> <li>• carried out in a context where children are protected and where their rights are promoted;</li> <li>• free from any abuse or any threat of such abuse;</li> <li>• respectful of the needs and developmental stage of the child;</li> <li>• aimed at the promotion of enjoyment and individual progress.</li> </ul>
3.	Reporting procedures	<p>CAN Ltd shall appoint a Designated Child Welfare Officer. The Designated Child Welfare Officer and/or Liaison Officer shall</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be responsible for all matters pertaining to the protection and welfare of children</li> <li>• Be informed and knowledgeable about child protection and welfare including the provisions of the Policy</li> <li>• undertake any training considered necessary to keep themselves updated on new developments.</li> </ul> <p>The role includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting best practice and procedures within the organisation.</li> <li>• Receiving reports and being familiar with and able to carry out reporting procedures.</li> <li>• Communicating with parents and/or authorities as appropriate.</li> <li>• Assisting with the ongoing development and implementation of the organisation’s child protection training needs.</li> <li>• Being aware of local contacts and services in relation to child protection, i.e. principal and duty social workers and their contacts.</li> <li>• Informing Statutory Authorities of relevant concerns about individual children.</li> <li>• Reporting poor practice to the Board having ensured that any concerns regarding child protection issues have been reported to the relevant statutory authority.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advising Board members and volunteers on issues of confidentiality, record keeping and data protection.</li> </ul>
4.	Use of facilities	
5.	Complaints and discipline	<b>Complaints Policy</b>
6.	Communications	<b>Social media policy</b> <b>Photography policy</b> <b>Confidentiality Policy</b>
7.	General risk of harm	<b>Accidents policy</b>  Any accidents or incidents involving children should be reported in full to the Designated Child Welfare Officer by completion of the appropriate report in Appendix 3 and/or Appendix 4. If a child is referred for medical treatment contact should immediately be made with the child's parent/ guardian and the relevant consent form located for medical treatment. The child should be accompanied by the person in charge of the child, if for any reason enquiries should be made regarding any diagnosis or treatment. An incident report form should be completed in all cases whether medical treatment is required or not. In all cases insurers should be notified of the incident and the report form submitted for their records.  <b>General Supervision of Children</b> It is important to create a safe and enjoyable environment. Children need to be supervised at all times as the likelihood of accidents happening increases when adequate supervision is not in place. In particular the following should be adhered to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure adequate Adult: Child ratios.</li> <li>• There should be at least one adult of each gender with mixed parties.</li> <li>• Children should be supervised at all times.</li> <li>• Adults should avoid being left alone with children.</li> <li>• If a child suffers an injury or accident the parents/guardians should be informed and necessary reports completed.</li> <li>• Activities being undertaken should be suitable for the ability, age, and experience of the participants.</li> <li>• Equipment and facilities should meet the highest possible standards and be appropriate to the maturity of the participants.</li> <li>• Where protective equipment is deemed necessary it should be used.</li> <li>• First Aid should be available.</li> </ul>

## Section 4 - Procedures

Our Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with the 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 services:

- Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against volunteers / facilitators of a child availing of our services;
- Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of facilitators and volunteers to work with children;
- Procedure for the provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm;
- Procedure for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla;
- Procedure for maintaining a list of the persons (if any) in the relevant service who are mandated persons;
- Procedure for appointing a relevant person.

All procedures listed are available upon our website [www.cottageautismnetwork.com](http://www.cottageautismnetwork.com), and hard copies can be provided upon request.

## Section 5 – Implementation

We recognise that implementation is an ongoing process. Our service is committed to the implementation of the Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while availing of our services. This Child Safeguarding Statement will be **reviewed on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2023**, or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this statement refers.

All Directors and volunteers will be provided with a copy of this Safeguarding Statement.

Signed:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of CAN