

## Information for HSE Funded Agencies on the Implementation of and Compliance with Children First National Guidance 2011 and the Children First Act 2015

### Children First National Guidance (2011):

It is the policy of the HSE that all HSE services funded under Section 38 and 39 of the Health Act 2004 must make themselves aware of, and comply with their obligations under [Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children \(2011\)](#).

The key messages in this national policy document are that the safety and welfare of children is everyone's responsibility and that children will have safer lives where everyone is attentive to their wellbeing. Each HSE Funded Service must implement policies, procedures and practices which are consistent with Children First. The level of implementation will vary depending on the amount of contact the services provided have with children.

The [Children First Act 2015](#) places elements of the *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011)* on a statutory footing. The Act which is being commenced on a phased basis provides for a number of key child protection measures:

- ✚ A requirement on organisations providing services to children to keep children safe and to produce a Child Safeguarding Statement;
- ✚ A requirement on defined categories of persons (mandated persons) to report child protection concerns over a defined threshold to the Child and Family Agency (the Agency);
- ✚ A requirement on mandated persons to assist the Agency in the assessment of a child protection risk, if so requested to do so by the Agency;
- ✚ The abolition of the defence of "Reasonable Chastisement". This section of the Act has been commenced and from 11<sup>th</sup> December 2015 a person who administers corporal punishment to a child will no longer be able to rely on the defence of reasonable chastisement in the courts.
- ✚ Putting the Children First Interdepartmental Group on a statutory footing. This is covered by Sections 20 – 26 of the Act which were commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2016.

### Checklists have been developed to assist HSE funded agencies to assess their implementation of Children First:

- ✚ [Children First Implementation and Compliance Checklist for HSE Funded Agencies 2016](#)

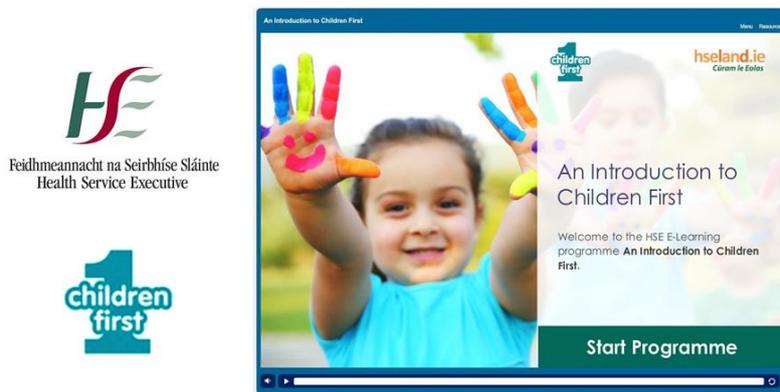


The Checklists are consistent with the following documents:

- ✚ [Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011](#)
- ✚ [Our Duty to Care Department of Health & Children 2002](#)
- ✚ [Tusla Interim Guide for the Development of Child Protection and Welfare Policy, Procedures and Practices 2015](#)

## Training and Support for HSE Funded Agencies in Children First

The HSE has developed an e-learning programme *An Introduction to Children First*. The programme has been developed with the assistance of our Colleagues in the Child & Family Agency, is approved by the HSE, the Department of Health and the Inter Departmental Over-Sight Group of the Irish Government.



This is available through [HSeLanD](#) the HSE Learning and Development Website. It is an interactive programme which is 1.5 hours in duration and issues a certificate of completion at the end of the programme. This certificate should be retained on the individual personnel file to meet regulatory requirements of HIQA, the MHC and other bodies.

This e-learning training programme is available to staff in HSE Funded Agencies. It is free of charge and a HSE email address is **not** required to register with HSeLanD.

The e-learning programme covers:

- ✚ Personal, legal and organisational responsibilities in relation to protecting children and reporting a concern about child welfare or abuse.
- ✚ Recognising a child protection or welfare concern.
- ✚ Responding appropriately to a child protection or welfare concern.
- ✚ Reporting a child protection or welfare concern.

A separate generic e-learning training programme is available to HSE contracted services also and can be accessed at <http://childrenfirst.hseland.ie>.

If following completion of the e-learning programme staff and volunteers identify unmet training needs in their role or service relating to Children First and/or child protection issues please contact your own organisation for details on training programmes provided.

Keep up to date by checking the HSE Children First Website for information: [www.hse.ie/childrenfirst](http://www.hse.ie/childrenfirst)