

VANTASTIC: SAFEGUARDING OF PERSONS AT RISK OF ABUSE AND CHILDREN-FIRST POLICY

Vantastic CLG operates as a Social Enterprise, Irish registered Charity (Irish Charities Regulatory Authority registered Number # 20043728) that offers accessible transport services for people with permanent or temporary mobility difficulties, physical & sensory disabilities and not for profit organisations.

Policy Statement

1. Vantastic CLG recognises that all people, regardless of their age, gender, race, religious beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse, neglect or exploitation.
2. Vantastic CLG commits to promoting and protecting the welfare and human rights of external people that interact with, or are affected by, our work - particularly those that may be at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation. We have no tolerance for abuse, neglect or exploitation. We will take a survivor-centric approach in all that we do.
3. Vantastic CLG recognises and upholds the dignity and rights of all children and is committed to ensuring their safety and well-being.
4. Vantastic CLG recognises that all staff have a responsibility to safeguard children by providing a safe and caring environment that supports their best interests and prevents abuse.
5. All staff, volunteers, partners and third parties of Vantastic CLG share responsibility for protecting everyone from abuse, neglect or exploitation. Beyond this, particular people have specific responsibilities, and they must carry out their duties without exception.
6. Vantastic CLG has a process for managing incidents that must be followed when one arises.

Purpose

7. The purpose of this policy is to:
 - a. Help protect everyone (Adults & Children) that interact with or are affected by, Vantastic CLG.
 - b. Define the key terms we use when talking about protecting people or safeguarding.
 - c. Set out and develop the way Vantastic CLG manages safeguarding risks.
 - d. Set out the specific roles and responsibilities of persons working in and with Vantastic CLG.
 - e. Facilitate the safe management of incidents.
 - f. To support a positive and effective internal culture towards safeguarding.

Legislative requirements

8. Vantastic CLG will ensure that all implements of legislation in relation to the abuse of or neglect of people at risk of abuse are met. This includes but is not limited to
 - *Criminal Justice withholding of information against children and vulnerable persons Act 2012*
 - *Children and vulnerable Act 2012-2016*
 - *Criminal Justice sexual offences Act 2015*
 - *Criminal Justice Act 2006 (section 17.6)*
 - *Children-First Act 2017*

Definitions

9. 'Safeguarding' means protecting the welfare and human rights of external people that interact with, or are affected by, Vantastic CLG, particularly those that might be at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation. This refers to any responsibility or measure undertaken to protect a person from harm.
10. "Children-First" mean protecting children (persons under 18 years of age) in accordance with the requirements of the Children First Act 2015, and the Children First national guidance for the protection and welfare of children 2017.

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11. “Abuse, neglect or exploitation” means all forms of physical and mental abuse, exploitation, coercion or ill-treatment. This might include, for example:
 - a. Sexual harassment, bullying or abuse;
 - b. Sexual criminal offences and serious sexual criminal offences;
 - c. Threats of, or actual violence, verbal, emotional or social abuse;
 - d. Cultural or identity abuse, such as racial, sexual or gender-based discrimination or hate crime;
 - e. Coercion and exploitation;
 - f. Abuse of power.
12. “Reasonable grounds to suspect” is a situation where a person has some information that leads them to believe that abuse, neglect or exploitation has taken place, is taking place or may take place. It comes with a low burden of proof (in fact, no proof is needed at all), but is based on some information. Questions that may help a person to determine whether they have “reasonable grounds to suspect” might include:
 - a. Could you explain to another person why you suspect something? This helps to make sure that your suspicion is based on information, even if you have no proof.
 - b. Would an objective other person, with the same information as you, come to the same conclusion? This helps to make sure that your suspicion is as objective as possible.
13. A ‘survivor-centric approach’ means considering and lawfully prioritising the needs, right and wishes of survivors.

Roles and responsibilities

14. While the responsibility to protect people is shared by all who work at or with Vantastic CLG, some individuals have specific obligations with which they must comply.
15. The members of the board of Vantastic CLG has agreed the Child Safeguarding and People At Risk of Abuse statements set out in this document and are responsible for:
 - a. Protecting all people that interact with, or are affected by, Vantastic CLG;
 - b. Ensuring that there are appropriate and effective ways for Vantastic CLG to do this;
 - c. Ensuring that Vantastic CLG observes all relevant laws relating to safeguarding and Children-First.
 - d. Ensuring that Vantastic CLG takes a survivor-centric approach.
16. The Chief Executive Officer of Vantastic CLG must:
 - a. Ensure Vantastic CLG has effective and appropriate ways to manage safeguarding and legal compliance;
 - b. Ensure that, within the charity’s approach, reasonable steps are taken to protect people;
 - c. Ensure that reports to external parties are made where required.
17. The Operations Manager of Vantastic CLG has been appointed by the CEO as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) as the “*relevant person*” as defined in legislation, and must:
 - a. Manage reports of abuse, neglect or exploitation;
 - b. Ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, policies and procedures, and Vantastic CLG’s Code of Conduct;
 - c. Ensure that all staff, contractors and volunteers are aware of their obligations to report suspected incidents of abuse, neglect or exploitation;
 - d. Manage reports of abuse, neglect or exploitation;
 - e. Provide support for staff, contractors and volunteers in undertaking their responsibilities.

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18. All Managers of Vantastic CLG must:

- a. Promote a positive culture towards safeguarding;
- b. Implement this policy in their area of responsibility;
- c. Ensure that the risks of incidents have been considered in their area of responsibility;
- d. Ensure that there are appropriate controls in place to prevent, detect and respond to incidents;
- e. Facilitate the reporting of any suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation;
- f. Take a survivor-centric approach to potential incidents and ensure that any incident is dealt with transparently and accountably.

19. All Staff of Vantastic CLG must:

- a. Undertake HSE online Safeguarding Training.
- b. Familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, the Code of Conduct, policies and procedures for safeguarding;
- c. Comply with all requirements;
- d. Report any incident to the appropriate authority when it is reasonable to suspect that a person's safety or welfare is at risk
- e. Report any suspicion that a person's safety or welfare may be at risk to the appropriate authority; and
- f. Provide an environment that is supportive of everyone's emotional and physical safety.

20. All partners and contractors of Vantastic CLG must:

- a. Implement the provisions of this policy and Vantastic CLG's procedures in their dealings with Vantastic CLG;
- b. Report any suspicion that an incident may have taken place, is taking place, or could take place.

Managing safeguarding risk

21. The way Vantastic CLG manages the risks of safeguarding will be:

- a. Holistic. Vantastic CLG and its stakeholders will work to prevent, detect and take action on incidents.
- b. Risk-based and proportionate. Vantastic CLG will regularly assess the risks to people in its operations and develop proportionate controls to mitigate those risks.
- c. Survivor-centric. Vantastic CLG will put survivors at the heart of its approach to safeguarding.
- d. Lawful. Vantastic CLG will ensure that it understands and complies with the law in everything it does, in all jurisdictions in which it works.
- e. Persons carried on behalf of an organisation will be subject to the contracting organisation's policies, procedures and risk assessments. Vantastic services will be treated as an extension of the contracting organisations service and any safeguarding risk will be reported by Vantastic Management to the relevant Safeguarding Manager within the contracting organisation in line with service agreements.

22. **Vantastic CLG** will manage the risk of safeguarding by:

- a. Having up-to-date and documented risk assessments;
- b. Only allow children under 18 years of age to access its service under the supervision of their parents, guardians, carer or other responsible adult.
- c. Maintaining a register of Vantastic CLG legal obligations for safeguarding and workplace health and safety in all the jurisdictions in which it operates;
- d. Having an response plan that sets out how it will manage safeguarding;
- e. Adhering to this Safeguarding and Children First Policy and its Company Code of Conduct;
- f. Doing due diligence checks of staff.

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- g. Implementing policies, procedures and systems that introduce controls to reduce the likelihood and consequence of incidents;
- h. Conducting awareness-raising for stakeholders on risks, expectations, and individual responsibilities;
- i. Maintaining two reporting processes: the confidential reporting process, and the overt reporting process;
- j. Monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness and proportionality of its safeguarding approach.

Managing incidents

23. Harassment, abuse, neglect and exploitation are all serious misconduct and Vantastic CLG reserves the right to:
- a. Take disciplinary action against those it believes are responsible, which may include dismissal;
 - b. Take civil legal action;
 - c. Report the matter to law enforcement.

Reporting suspected incidents

24. All staff, volunteers and third parties must, as soon as practicable, report any suspicion that an incident has taken place, may be taking place, or could take place.
25. They may do this through direct reporting to:
- a. Any member of the Board;
 - b. The Chief Executive Officer;
 - c. The Operations Manager;
 - d. The Transport Manager or Supervisor.
26. If a person wants to report confidentially, including with anonymity, they may use the confidential reporting system, which is: A written report marked Private & Confidential addressed to the CEO at Vantastic CLG, Digital Office Centre Swords, Balheary Road, Swords, Co. Dublin K67 E5A0. The report should take into consideration Number12 above "Reasonable grounds to suspect" and consider questions a & b.
27. If a person believes that another person is at risk of immediate harm or the victim of a criminal offence, they must dial 999 or 112.

Responding to suspected incidents

28. All suspected, perceived, potential or actual incidents will be managed through the incident response plan.

External reporting

29. Vantastic CLG will:
- a. Report any suspicion of a criminal offence to the police or the relevant criminal judicial body;
 - b. Meet all donor requirements regarding the reporting of incidents;
 - c. Report any qualifying matter to the ACNC.

Privacy and data protection

30. All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety. Vantastic CLG will protect personal information.
31. Vantastic CLG's Privacy Policy applies.

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Administration of this policy

32. This Policy will be reviewed every two years. The next review will be in December 2022.

Procedures created by the policy

33. Safeguarding Incident response plan.

Related policies and procedures

34. The following policies and procedures interact with this procedure. Privacy Policy, Staff recruitment and Company policies and procedure.