

**CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT
SCIENCE FOUNDATION IRELAND**

June 2023

CSS Version 3.0

1. About

Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) invests in academic researchers and research teams who are most likely to generate new knowledge, leading-edge technologies and competitive enterprises in the fields of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM). The Foundation also promotes and supports the study of, education in, and engagement with STEM and promotes an awareness and understanding of the value of STEM to society and, in particular, to the growth of the economy. In this context, SFI aims to create a safe, creative and fun environment where children can engage with SFI volunteers and SFI staff, where their welfare is paramount. SFI is committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of children while they are participating in events run by or on behalf of SFI. SFI adheres to the requirements of the [Children First Act 2015](#) (“CFA”) and the National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2017-19 (“Children First Guidance”) developed by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and also requires those who run events on its behalf to do so. SFI is also committed to protecting the data rights of children and is in compliance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (“GDPR”).

This CSS and associated policies apply to employees of SFI and SFI Secondees, SFI Fellows, INTRA students and contractors other than SFI funded researchers for the purposes of this policy, collectively referred to as ‘SFI staff members’ or ‘staff members’.

SFI’s Education and Public Engagement (EPE) programme seeks to promote the awareness and engagement of the Irish public with STEM. This supports SFI’s strategy 2025 ‘*Shaping Our Future*’, specifically contributing to the themes of *Top Talent*, *Tangible Benefits* and *Cohesive Ecosystem*. Underpinning this is SFI’s ambition to empower and broaden participation in STEM, to nurture and grow STEM talent, and to be a beacon of best practice in STEM education and public engagement. SFI endeavours to achieve this through the spirit of inspiration.

Some of the services which SFI provides fall within the meaning of the term ‘relevant service’ under the CFA. Schedule 1, paragraph 5 of the CFA describes relevant services. SFI 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 SFI’s child safeguarding statement (a ‘relevant person’). SFI has appointed a Designated Liaison Person for child safeguarding in accordance with the Children First Guidance- who is also the relevant person for the purposes of the CFA.

2. List of services being provided:

SFI provides a range of directly managed programmes that engage children. SFI also delivers activities engaging families at a range of public events organised by third parties. As part of its remit, SFI funds third parties that potentially engage children in research activity or develop and deliver STEM engagement activities with children as primary participants. To deliver the list of services outlined below, SFI engages the SFI EPE team, and occasionally other SFI staff as volunteers and a range of volunteers who are not directly employed by SFI. The list of relevant services is detailed below:

Relevant Services Directly Managed by SFI:

I. Public Events and Festivals

SFI directly manages Science Week and participates in a range of public events throughout the year. These could include events such as Science Week Open Days and theatre events, the National Ploughing Championships, the BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition and a range of career events. This is not an exhaustive list. At these events SFI typically recruits and coordinates the attendance and participation of a mix of SFI employees, SFI non-employee staff members, SFI funded researchers and sometimes non-funded partners. The events and festivals may require volunteers to assist in hosting a stand. This involves directing people around the stand and speaking to children and their guardians about STEM career experiences. It can involve guiding children through workshop activities where they design or make objects. To engage students with our relevant websites, competitions may be run where prizes are awarded for correctly answering questions.

II. In-Classroom Events

SFI occasionally directly manages activity that involves SFI staff and SFI volunteers engaging with children in primary and post primary school classrooms. In this case, SFI has been responsible for coordinating the visit to the school, as opposed to funding a partner activity to engage with the school. SFI as a funding organisation of activity is discussed below.

III. Online Queries and Photos

Queries from websites such as www.smartfutures.ie, www.sfi.ie, and www.esero.ie are directly linked to general email within the EPE team. While queries are mostly from teachers and guardians, some may be received from children. Typical queries from children could be enquiries to have a role model speaker visit their school, or where to look for work experience. Where further contact is required, a standard reply is formulated to request the child to engage their teacher/guardian to contact SFI on their behalf. Where a general query is received from a child, links to relevant websites may be sent from the general email. As part of the promotion of SFI in the media and across other associated social media channels, photographs/video footage of children can be used if parental consent has been obtained. Where a child's image or footage of a child is taken, children will be identified by their full name or, if children are named alongside their school name, only their first name is provided. Guidelines for consideration to ensure Child Safety when using Digital Platforms are provided at Appendix 1.

IV. **Transition Year and Student Work Experience Placements, internal to SFI**

SFI supports developing the potential of children and young people. In this context, SFI occasionally facilitates the placement of post primary students in SFI, particularly those in Transition Year (TY). These students are under 18 and fall within the definition of a child.

Relevant Activities Funded by SFI, as a funding organisation:

V. **Engagement projects funded by SFI through a research or SFI Discover grant**

SFI wants to help people to consider, question and debate the key issues in science and society and in support of this, provides funding through a range of SFI research grants. This includes the SFI Discover Programme, which provides funding specifically for education and public engagement projects. The SFI Research Centres Programme was formed in alignment with SFI's strategic objective to develop a set of world-leading, large-scale research centres that will provide major economic impact for Ireland. SFI Research Centres are required to draw parallels with SFI's objectives and as such, manage their own bespoke Education and Public Engagement programme. There are researchers engaged in STEM awareness activity across the remaining SFI research grant programmes. In some cases, researchers may be conducting research where children are participants. SFI does not accept responsibility for the management of volunteers or staff that participate in these activities where SFI is not the 'provider of the service', as defined by the Act. It is the responsibility of the Organising Body to ensure that they are compliant with all applicable law.

SFI explicitly requires applicants for grants or funding from SFI to comply with the provisions of the CFA and guidance on child safeguarding issued by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Tusla in SFI's grant terms and conditions. Compliance with the CFA is specifically highlighted to all SFI Discover Programme award holders at the annual partners meeting. Attendees are required to confirm attendance at the session. All Funded Bodies are asked to confirm compliance with CFA in writing in advance of receipt of SFI funding. All Funded Bodies are also required to notify SFI of any complaint in relation to applicable child welfare and safeguarding law that has been made or upheld against any member of the Project Team either prior to the award of funding, or during the lifetime of the project.

VI. **Partner activity (non-funded)**

SFI works with many stakeholders across the STEM education and public engagement landscape. This can involve working with partners in a collaborative manner, rather than through a formal funded or contracted arrangement. This may involve SFI taking part in a third-party programme, where that programme involves coordination of volunteer interactions, site visits and workshops with children. In this case SFI is not the 'provider of the service' as defined by the Act.

As part of the suite of EPE related websites and social media channels, SFI may promote and support local activities, that it is not involved in organising or funding, with for example, industry, libraries, county councils and community centres. When promoting and supporting these events, SFI is clear that it is not the organising body (the provider of the service).

VII. Commissioned work/sub-contractors

An event that is managed by SFI, and will be attended by children, can require the engagement of sub-contractors. SFI requires parties/subcontractors commissioned in this context to comply with the provisions of the CFA, if applicable. This is reflected in the request for tender for any such work.

3. 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. A risk assessment has been prepared for activity where SFI is the 'provider of the service' as defined in the Act.

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 Child Care Act 1991 a "child" means a person under the age of 18 years other than a person who is or has been married.

SFI is committed to reviewing this risk assessment on a quarterly basis each year.

	Risk identified	Procedure in place to manage risk identified
1	Child is harmed by an SFI staff member, SFI volunteer or other person, while availing of our services or services supported by SFI.	<p>General</p> <p>a) All SFI staff and SFI volunteers will complete the induction briefing on the Child Safeguarding Statement, which is informed by the Children First e-learning training and incorporates training on the recognition of harm;</p> <p>b) SFI staff and SFI volunteers will be vetted in accordance with SFI's Garda Vetting Policy;</p> <p>c) SFI has appointed a Designated Liaison Person from the HR team. The Designated Liaison Person is responsible for ensuring that appropriate briefing and information is provided to staff members regarding SFI's Child Safeguarding Statement.</p>
2	The nature of the activity, or other material to which a child is exposed, may be inappropriate and potentially harmful.	<p>d) The EPE team will work closely with the Designated Liaison Person to ensure that SFI staff member and volunteer induction materials are relevant and up to date and will be responsible for delivering the briefing to SFI staff members and volunteers. These materials will be located in a central location for staff members. For volunteers, the EPE team will provide relevant materials as appropriate.</p> <p>e) A record of the induction briefing provided to SFI staff members will be maintained by the Designated Liaison Person and a record of induction briefings provided to SFI volunteers will be maintained by the EPE team. These records will include written confirmation that SFI staff members/ SFI volunteers agree to adhere to SFI's Child Safeguarding Statement, Child Protection Policy and Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct;</p> <p>f) Where competitions are run on behalf of SFI, parent/teacher contact details are requested and parental consent to entry to the competition is obtained;</p> <p>g) Where competitions are run on behalf of SFI through social media and parental consent is not obtained in advance, then prizes are sent to the child's school address.</p> <p>h) SFI iPads/other IT devices at public events are pin-coded and used under supervision;</p> <p>i) SFI obtains parental consent to take photographs and/or video footage of children. Individual or group photographs/or video footage of children is not permitted in the absence of this consent being obtained. Where a child's photograph or footage of a child is taken, children will be identified by their full name or, if children are named alongside their school name, only their first name is provided;</p> <p>j) Clear signs will be placed in areas where filming or photographs are taking place, notifying persons in the area of this fact;</p> <p>k) If a child is missing or found at an event managed by SFI, staff</p>

members/volunteers should inform the SFI project lead who should inform event organisers immediately;

- l) Queries from websites such as www.smartfutures.ie, www.esero.ie, and www.sfi.ie are directly linked to general email within the EPE team. Typical queries from children could be an enquiry to have a role model speaker visit their school, or where to look for work experience. Where further contact is required, a standard reply is formulated to request the child to engage their teacher/guardian to contact SFI on their behalf. Where a general query is received from a child, links to relevant websites may be sent from the general email by a member of the EPE team.

TY and Student Work Experience Placements in SFI

- m) TY students will be given an induction briefing which will incorporate briefing on SFI's Child Safeguarding Statement, Child Protection Policy and Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct and they will be requested to confirm their understanding of these policies by signing them. The signed policies will be maintained by the Designated Liaison Person in the compliance file on Sharepoint;
- n) HR will refresh the staff member supervising the student on SFI's child safeguarding policies;
- o) SFI has web filtering software in place and students working within SFI will be reminded of the acceptable usage and social media policies;
- p) SFI will assign work that is deemed appropriate for the student;

Specific to public events

- q) All SFI staff and SFI volunteers are given a verbal or electronic refresher briefing on SFI's Child Safeguarding Statement, Child Protection Policy and Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct by the EPE team in advance of an SFI managed event;
- r) At events directly managed by SFI, SFI will have oversight of the content to ensure it is appropriate;

Specific to in-classroom events

- s) All SFI staff and SFI volunteers attending a school must be accompanied by a teacher or other person assigned by the school to supervise the class at all times and should not allow themselves to be left unattended with children;
- t) All SFI staff and SFI volunteers are asked to consider SFI's Child Safeguarding Statement and relevant Department of Education guidance when reviewing and selecting material for an in-classroom event appropriate for the intended audience;

		<p><u>Funded/commissioned activities</u></p> <p>u) An EPE event that is managed by SFI can require the engagement of sub-contractors. SFI will require parties/subcontractors commissioned in this context to comply with the provisions of the Children First Act 2015, if applicable.</p> <p>v) Parties carrying out commissioned/sub-contractor/funded activity at such an event will be required to meet with an EPE team member to be briefed about SFI’s child safeguarding policies.</p> <p><u>Partner activity (non-funded)</u></p> <p>w) SFI is not the provider of the service in this case, nor does it provide funding to support the activity. In this case, SFI is clear in any promotional support that it is not an SFI event.</p>
3	<p>A child discloses to an SFI staff member or SFI volunteer that they are being harmed by persons either within or outside SFI and this disclosure is not appropriately reported to the Designated Liaison Person or Tusla.</p>	<p>x) SFI has developed a guide for SFI staff and volunteers for reporting child welfare and protection concerns;</p> <p>y) If any disclosures of harm are made to an SFI staff member or volunteer they should contact the Designated Liaison Person as a matter of urgency to seek advice on any necessary steps to take.</p>

SFI 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.

4. Procedures:

4.1 Procedure for raising a complaint.

4.2 Procedure for the management of allegations of harm to a child availing of our services

4.3 Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of SFI staff members or SFI volunteers to work with children

4.4 Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding briefing and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm

4.5 Procedure for reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to the Designated Liaison Person and Tusla

4.6 Procedure for maintaining a list of persons (if any) in the relevant service who are mandated persons:

4.7 Procedure for appointing a relevant person under the CFA

SFI's Designated Liaison Person and relevant person under the CFA is:

Dermot Brennan | HR

Three Park Place, Hatch Street Upper, [Dublin 2. D02 FX65](#)

Telephone: +353 1 607 3200

Email: childrenfirst@sfi.ie

The SFI EPE Team Lead on CFA is:

Alison Boyle | Education & Public Engagement

Three Park Place, Hatch Street Upper, [Dublin 2. D02 FX65](#)

Telephone: +353 1 607 3200

Email: childrenfirst@sfi.ie

5. 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 in June 2025, or as soon as practicable after any legislative changes which arise in the area of child protection, any changes to SFI's services or any material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

Appendix 1

Guidelines for consideration to ensure Child Safety when using Digital Platforms for education and/or public engagement events:

Note: Registration for SFI Online events is aimed at parents/guardians or teachers. SFI does not engage with registered participants other than communication relating to access to the event.

These guidelines are non-platform specific.

As per the Tusla advice, mobile phones, social networking sites and the internet can be great tools for SFI to engage with children and young people. They are often confident and competent users of new technologies and will often have online access through their own mobiles, consoles and other devices. It is important to ensure that any online/digital engagement with and for young people is designed and delivered to ensure that no harm arises to them while participating in that engagement. The following policy steps are outlined to mitigate this risk.

In advance of the digital event

- Design and deliver using the three C's:
 - Content - Ensure that the content is appropriate for the intended audience age and that this is clearly communicated in the event booking information.
 - Conduct - The team should consider and remind themselves of the SFI Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct for working with young people, taking time to discuss any potential risks that might arise and identifying mitigation measures.
 - Contact - Target online registration to adults e.g. (teachers, parents, guardians) and include an age tick-box in the registration for on-line events, where appropriate. Moderate any live engagements where interaction, such as live chat, is permitted and remind participants that the chat or discussion can be seen or heard by others. Only use official platforms in SFI's name, that are set up for purely professional purposes.
- Make sure to choose the most appropriate and safest platform for your event and audience. (i.e., choose platforms that can enable high level privacy settings and where possible use platforms which can enable/disable communications functions. Choose platforms that are suitable for the participant age group, which have adequate security measures in place and remove the opportunity for external interference).
- Ensure the engagement is inclusive, aiming to prevent the use of tools that exclude groups of participants.
- Ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of your chosen platform to ensure the highest levels of security are in place.
- Be familiar with the security elements of your chosen platform.
- Test and trial any proposed platforms so you can understand the challenges and opportunities for ensuring a safe engagement for young people. This will help the team understand the functionality and the mitigating measures available to the team (including the ability to block/report users, to manage new people joining, how to share screens and how to mute/prevent video sharing.)
- Ensure there is an appropriate number of team members allocated to manage moderation if required.
- Ensure that anyone involved in the moderation of a digital event for children is Garda vetted.
- Try to ensure that the devices that will be used for the event are for work purposes only. If this is not possible establish clear guidelines on how the team will interact with others and how to protect data/personal information.
- Discuss and agree amongst the team what will be done if an event is disrupted or hacked, and who is responsible for the taking that action. If the disruption is significant, such as sharing of very harmful content, the best course of action is to shut the event down and explain afterwards.
- Be familiar with the SFI Social Media and Acceptable Usage Policies

During the digital event

- Ensure the event has a moderator in place to manage any issues which may arise during live events which include audience interaction.
- Ensure the background for the engagement is safe and appropriate and does not risk visibility of inappropriate or personal information.
- If sharing screens or content, ensure that there is no content open on the screen that would be inappropriate for the participant group, to avoid accidentally sharing it.
- Housekeeping and rules of the digital event should be clearly explained at the outset of the event. Be firm about any sanctions if participants breach any of the guidelines, explaining it is to protect everyone.
- The chat function should be disabled for any digital event without a moderator.
- Participants should be prevented from screen-sharing or obtaining a copy of the event illegally.
- The recording function on the platform used should be disabled when engaging young people, unless active consent has been received by all participants in advance of the event and a reminder that recording is taking place is made at the start and end of the recording.
- SFI will not reveal the identities of those involved in the digital event before, during or after the event unless agreed with the participant.

Note: Regardless of whether an event is run face to face or online if a child makes a disclosure or if you hear/see something which requires to be reported to Tusla then you should follow the reporting procedure.

Appendix 2

Contact Details for SFI's Designated Liaison Person

Child Safeguarding

Science Foundation Ireland is committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of children while they are participating in events run by or on behalf of Science Foundation Ireland. We adhere to the requirements of the Children First Act 2015 and guidance on child safeguarding issued by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Tusla. If you wish to request a copy of our child safeguarding statement or have a query or concern about child safeguarding with regard to any of our activities, please contact our Designated Liaison Person for child safeguarding (name and contact details below).

SFI's Designated Liaison Person and relevant person under the CFA is:

Dermot Brennan | HR

Three Park Place, Hatch Street Upper, [Dublin 2. D02 FX65](#)

Telephone: +353 1 607 3200

Email: childrenfirst@sfi.ie

The SFI EPE Team Lead on CFA is:

Alison Boyle | Education & Public Engagement

Three Park Place, Hatch Street Upper, [Dublin 2. D02 FX65](#)

Telephone: +353 1 607 3200

Email: childrenfirst@sfi.ie

Appendix 3

SFI's Child Protection Policy

Policy Summary

Science Foundation Ireland is committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of children while they are participating in events/activities run by or on behalf of Science Foundation Ireland. Our aim is to create a safe, creative and fun environment where children and young people across all levels can engage with STEM volunteers and where their welfare is paramount. To realise this aim, we will adhere to the recommendations of [Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children](#), published by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

Science Foundation Ireland, and people working on our behalf, undertake to:

- Treat children with care, respect and dignity.
- Ensure communication with children is open and clear.
- Assess the risks posed to children when undertaking activities.
- Ensure volunteers never spend time alone with children away from other adults.
- Recognise that all children have a right to protection from harm or abuse.
- Ensure best practice in the recruitment of staff or volunteers, which includes good HR practices in interviewing, induction training, probation, Garda vetting (where required).
- Provide guidance for staff and volunteers, who may have grounds for concern about the welfare of children involved.
- Fully co-operate with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters.
- Fully adhere to the requirements of the GDPR.
- Fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.

Contact

It is the responsibility of all staff and volunteers to promote the protection of children (under 18) and to comply with this policy. Please contact childrenfirst@sfi.ie to discuss any aspect of our Child Protection Policy.

This policy will be reviewed by Science Foundation Ireland on at least a biennial basis and in light of experience, any legislative changes which arise in the area of child protection, or any changes to SFI's services.

Appendix 4

SFI's Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct

SFI staff and SFI volunteers are expected to work within the policies and procedures of the Science Foundation Ireland's programmes and adhere to its ethos. As representatives of SFI, volunteers and staff members are expected to adhere to the Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct when engaging with children.

Volunteers will:

- Follow all SFI policies and procedures that apply to their role and commit to delivering content in an appropriate manner, relevant to the audience.
- Review and comply with SFI's Child Protection Policy, Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct and SFI's Child Safeguarding Statement.
- Prepare for the volunteer role by reviewing briefing materials and the SFI Child Safeguarding Statement, reviewing presentation materials and referencing websites' resources.
- Wear clothes appropriate to their responsibilities.
- Report for their volunteer role in a timely manner and free from influence of alcohol and drugs.
- Show respect and consideration at all times for fellow volunteers and members of the public.
- Encourage a young person with positive words at all times.
- Contact the relevant supervisor/event organiser in the event of a lost child to ensure they are re-connected with their parent/guardian.
- Keep staff informed of progress, concerns and problems with the role.
- Keep personal opinions and actions separate from those made as representatives of Science Foundation Ireland.
- Avoid activity that could be considered detrimental to Science Foundation Ireland and which could specifically result in personal injury to themselves, other volunteers or a member of the public.
- Report any accidents, incidents or injuries involving children while volunteering to the Designated Liaison Person.
- Where there is immediate risk to a child, inform Tusla or An Garda Síochána.

The nature of volunteering with Science Foundation Ireland means that volunteers will come in contact with young people (less than 18 years of age). It is important that volunteers should not be in a situation where they are left alone with a young person.

Volunteers will not:

- Touch a young person inappropriately (e.g., handshakes are appropriate);
- Contact a young person directly in any way (via email, text, befriend on social media, phone or arrange to meet in person after the activity).
- Take photos/videos of a young person unless their parent/guardian has completed an SFI approved consent form.
- Use vulgar or inappropriate language, or make remarks that could be considered offensive.
- Discriminate on the grounds of race (including skin colour, nationality or ethnic origin), religion, sex, age, civil status, family status, disability, sexual orientation or membership of the Traveller community.
- Take any action which could harm or threaten the health or safety of themselves, a child, a young person, other volunteers or members of the public.

Appendix 5

Child Protection and Welfare Report Form

Available at: http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Child_Protection_and_Welfare_Report_Form_FINAL.pdf

This document was last updated on 16 June 2023. For more information, please contact childrenfirst@sfi.ie