



## **CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT**

**December 2024**

## FOR REFERENCE

### Checklist

<b>Women's Aid Child Safeguarding Statement</b>	<b>Complete</b>
Carry out the Risk Assessment	✓
List details of the services provided and management structure	✓
List principles to protect children from harm	✓
Appoint Relevant Persons	✓
Draw up a list of Mandated Persons	✓
Check you have all the required policies and procedures.	✓
Amend your child protection and welfare reporting procedures, to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>information on Mandated Persons and how they report.</i></li><li>• <i>information from Children First, National Guidance, 2017</i></li></ul>	✓
Develop new procedures to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Appoint a relevant person.</i></li><li>• <i>Draw up list of Mandated Persons</i></li></ul>	✓
Provide all staff and board members with information about their responsibilities under the Children First Act, 2015	✓
Include details on review and implementation	✓

## Child Safeguarding Statement

### 1. NAME OF SERVICE AND ACTIVITIES PROVIDED

#### **Women's Aid**

Women's Aid is a national, feminist organisation working to prevent and address the impact of domestic violence and abuse. We do this by advocating, influencing, training, and campaigning for effective responses to reduce the scale and impacts of domestic abuse on women and children and providing high quality, specialised, integrated, support services. Our vision is an equal Ireland with zero tolerance of all forms of violence against women, including domestic abuse

#### **Our Direct Services for Women**

##### **1. National Freephone Helpline**

The Women's Aid [National Freephone Helpline](#) 1800 341 900 operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and provides support and information to callers experiencing abuse from intimate partners.

The Women's Aid Helpline is the only free, national, domestic violence helpline with specialised trained staff, fully accredited by The Helplines Partnership and with a Telephone Interpretation Service facility covering 170 languages for callers needing interpreting services. Women's Aid could come into a contact with a caller who is under the age of eighteen, who is accessing the service for support.

##### **2. One to One Support Service**

Women's Aid also offers a Dublin-based One to One Support Service. Our Outreach Support Team provides in-depth [one to one information and support](#), Monday to Friday, in five locations throughout Dublin and its surrounding areas including:

- Ballymun
- Dublin City Centre - North and South sides
- Dun Laoghaire
- Swords.
- Other meeting points for Support Meetings include hospitals, or other locations chosen by women for safety reasons.

Referrals to our Support Services come via the National Freephone Helpline, the Domestic Abuse Information and Support Service in Dolphin House, as well as from a range of other services such as An Garda Síochána, GPs, social workers and hospital staff. This service does not offer direct support to minors; however, Women's Aid may come into contact with children/young people under the age of eighteen who are accompanying a woman accessing the service provided.

### **3. Court Accompaniment Service**

- The Outreach Support Team also offer a [Court Accompaniment Service](#), which provides advocacy and support specific to the particular needs of women seeking legal redress regarding violence by a current or former husband or partner. This service does not offer direct support to minors; however, Women's Aid may come into contact with children/young people under the age of eighteen who are accompanying a woman accessing the court accompaniment services provided by Women's Aid.

### **4. Domestic Abuse Information and Support Service**

Women's Aid operates the Domestic Abuse Information and Support Service, A Drop in Service in Dolphin House Family Law Court, in partnership with the Inchicore Outreach Service. Though not the norm, as this service is a drop-in service, it is possible that a young person, aged under 18 may attend, seeking support, without being accompanied by a parent/guardian.

### **5. Women's Aid Maternity Project**

The Women's Aid Maternity Project is a specialist domestic violence and abuse (DVA) training, awareness and referral programme. The Maternity Project Outreach Support Services provides support, information and advocacy to women engaging with the three Dublin-based maternity hospitals. The majority of referrals to this service are received via the Medical Social Work Department from the three Dublin based Maternity Hospitals. Though not the norm, referrals for young, pregnant or post-partum women, aged under 18 can be received. Where this happens, the young woman is accompanied to support meetings by her mother/legal guardian.

### **6. Other Services**

Women's Aid also refers women to local domestic violence refuges and support services around the country.

Working for Justice and Social Change

- In addition to our direct services, Women's Aid acts for justice and social change by engaging in [policy](#) and [communications](#) and [campaigns](#) activity at a national level. Women's Aid also provides extensive [information and statistics on domestic violence](#) in print and online.
- We also provide [specialised training](#) on responding to domestic violence.
- It is our sincere hope that by increasing understanding and awareness of domestic violence we will improve societal responses to, and increase protection for, women and children affected by abuse.

All of our work is made possible by a combination of [statutory funding](#), [regular and once-off donations](#), our [Charity Shop](#) and [fundraising activities](#).

## 2. COMMITMENT TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN FROM HARM

### Principle

- This Child Safeguarding Statement is guided by Women’s Aid Child Welfare and Protection Policy
  - This Child Safeguarding Statement is guided by the *Children First Act 2015*; the *Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2017, as supplemented by the January 2019 addendum in relation to online safety*; the *Criminal Justice (Reckless Endangerment of Children) Act 2006*; the *Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences Against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012*; the *Protected Disclosures Act 2014*; and the *Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998*.
- Women’s Aid in almost all cases works with adult clients. Therefore, the vast majority of the children that Women’s Aid comes in contact with are the children of our clients. While Women’s Aid does not provide a direct support service to children/young people under 18 years of age, on occasion it may come in to contact with a young person, aged under 18, via the National Freephone Helpline, the Domestic Abuse Information and Support Service in Dolphin House or the Maternity Outreach Project. Such contact has the potential to constitute the following ‘relevant services’ under Schedule 1 of the 2015 Act:
    - *the provision of ... formal consultation with, or formal participation by, a child in respect of matters that affect his or her life* (Number 5(c) of Schedule 1 of the 2015 Act); and
    - *the provision of advice or guidance services (including by means of electronic interactive communications), a necessary and regular part of which consists, mainly, of the person having access to, or contact with, children* (Number 6 of Schedule 1 of the 2015 Act).
  - As an organisation we are committed to creating a safe environment for the children we come in contact with during the course of our work.
  - We are committed to upholding the rights of every child and young person who attends our service, including the rights to be kept safe and protected from harm, listened to, and heard.

Our Child Safeguarding Statement is based on the *principles* that:

Women's Aid believes that in domestic violence and abuse situations the safety of a child is paramount and is often linked to the safety of their mother (in line with international best practice) and that by supporting a woman to secure protection and by providing support and advocacy to her, that the well-being of her child/children will be promoted.

We believe that a non-abusing parent in the relationship should not be held accountable or responsible for the abuse perpetrated by her spouse/partner/ex-partner or by another individual, subject to their compliance with *The Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012, The Criminal Justice Act 2006 and other applicable laws*. We also understand our responsibilities around protecting the safety and welfare of children and we acknowledge that the child's safety and welfare is paramount.

Women's Aid will strive for effective partnering with the woman as the non-abusing parent in the relationship and will promote her as such. We will support the women to report any child safety and welfare concerns as comprehensively and openly as possible to the appropriate authorities.

We will also promote, if the child is of suitable age and ability, that their views be sought and considered.

In most instances the abuse to the woman will be disclosed or will become apparent in the course of our support work on the helpline or face to face support work with women. It may also be disclosed in the course of training and information sessions.

Women's Aid also recognises that sometimes we may have reasonable grounds for concern that the person we are supporting (the woman/mother) may be the person causing abuse/harm/neglect to the child or putting the child at risk of abuse/harm/neglect. We recognise that experiencing domestic abuse can negatively impact on the woman's parenting capacity and ability to act protectively. In these instances, we must adhere to the 2015 Act, the Guidance and all applicable laws and act accordingly.

All reports to Tusla and/or the Gardaí on foot of such concerns should be made with the woman's/ mother's knowledge if it is safe for the child at risk to do so. Where possible, Women's Aid will note a safe way that the mother can be contacted by Tusla social workers,

and where appropriate may recommend that she be met with first to discuss possible interventions.

The Guidance notes that it is good practise that parents be informed that a report is being made, unless to do so would put the child/ren at further risk. Women's Aid will **never** inform the abusive person in the relationship. In the majority of situations that Women's Aid becomes aware of, informing the abuser of a report to Tusla and/or the Gardaí could increase the risk to both mother and child and impinge on the implementation of an effective child protection plan. In addition, the woman may want to keep the fact that she is in contact with Women's Aid confidential for her safety.

For Tusla to deliver a safe and effective response and to allow for the safety of the victim and the children to be paramount, the risk to the woman and the effect of the domestic violence and abuse on her will be outlined alongside the direct risks to the children.

In all cases Women's Aid will try to reassure the woman that this is not about placing blame on her, but that we have a statutory requirement to report child protection and welfare concerns, and that any intervention is aimed to support and overcome the issues that are causing the harm. A key message in the Guidance is that the prevention, detection and treatment of child abuse requires a co-ordinated multi-disciplined approach, and we will outline how we can support her to address the concerns, and detail how they are being addressed to the social workers.

- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity, have the right:
  - to live in safety and protection from abuse or fear of abuse by others.
  - be treated with respect, kindness and understanding.
  - have their emotional, physical and sexual integrity respected.
  - have their ethnicity and gender respected.
  - be supported in making their own decisions.
  - have allegations of abuse investigated.
- Parents and guardians have the primary responsibility for the care and protection of children.

### 3. RISK ASSESSMENT

In accordance with the Children First Act 2015, we have carried out an assessment of any potential for harm to a child while attending the service or participating in service activities including the area of online safety when accessing the internet. A written assessment setting out the areas of risk identified and the procedure for managing those risks is summarised below:

Risk Identified	Policies and/or Procedures in place to manage Risk
<p>Suitability of candidates in recruitment/selection of members of staff, volunteers, committee/board members and students on work placement to work with children</p>	<p>Recruitment/selection procedures for staff, volunteers, committee/board members and students on work placement ensure person's suitability to work with children.</p>
<p>Staff, volunteers, committee/board members and students on work placement are not aware of Child Safeguarding Statement and reporting responsibilities and procedures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A copy of the Child Safeguarding Statement as well as a copy of Women's Aid Child <i>Welfare and Protection Policy</i> are furnished to all paid staff, volunteers, committee/board members and students on work placement within our organisation, and procedure in place furnish it on request to parents, the Child and Family Agency or members of the public.</li> <li>• All paid staff, volunteers, members and students on work placement within our organisation, complete the Children First eLearning Programme <a href="https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/children-first-e-learning-programme/">https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/children-first-e-learning-programme/</a>. Training is repeated every three years for all frontline staff.</li> <li>• Frontline staff are trained and skilled at identifying potential risks of harm to children and young people and at bringing those concerns to their D.L.P., for discussion and completion of a report to Tusla, in accordance with the Children First Act 2015.</li> <li>• A copy of the Child Safeguarding Statement is displayed in a prominent place where the service is provided.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procedure in place for reporting to The Child and Family Agency in accordance with the Children First Act 2015.</li> <li>• Procedure in place for maintaining a list of persons in the service who are mandated persons, according to the categories of person mandated under the Children First Act 2015</li> <li>• Two Designated Liaison Persons and one Deputy Designated Liaison Person appointed. (at least 1 is available at all times</li> <li>• Child Safeguarding statement to be reviewed at intervals of not more than 24 months.</li> </ul>
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#### **4. CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

As required by the Children First Act, 2015, Children First National Guidance for Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 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 service:

- i. Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child availing of our service.
- ii. Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers to work with children.
- iii. Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm.
- iv. Procedure for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla.
- v. Procedure for maintaining a list of the persons (if any) in the relevant service who are mandated persons.
- vi. Procedure for appointing a relevant person.
- vii. Data Protection Policy.
- viii. Staff have access to regular internal and external supervision and support in line with the Service Policy; Supervision is a formal process that promotes professional development and learning; it takes place within agreed parameters and assists the supervisee to progressively develop knowledge and competence that will enhance the quality and consistency of services offered by the agency.
- ix. Feedback Policy: Feedback is information received by Women’s Aid from any person about their experience of any aspect of Women’s Aid services or how these services are provided. Feedback can generally be a comment, compliment or

complaint. Feedback that is critical of Women’s Aid and requires a different response is a complaint and dealt with separately

- i. Policy for Managing Accidents and Incidents.
- ii. All staff inductions include procedures to inform new staff about the Child Safeguarding Statement and accompanying safeguarding policies and procedures.

All procedures listed are available upon request.

## 5. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

- We recognise that implementation is an ongoing process. Our service is 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 service.
- This Statement will be reviewed in July 2026 and every 2 years thereafter 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 on the service website and is accessible to parents and guardians on request. A copy of this Statement will be made available to the HSE/Tusla if requested.

**Signed:**



**Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> December 2024

**Service Provider’s name and contact details:**

Women’s Aid  
Sarah Benson, Director  
(01) 678858

**For further information on this Statement, contact Relevant Person:**

<b>DLP:</b> Eavan Ward, Head of Regional Services.	<b>DLP:</b> Linda Smith, Head of National Helpline Services.	<b>Deputy DLP:</b> Sarah Benson, CEO  01-6788858
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## Appendix One-Women’s Aid Organogram



