



CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT

July 2020

Child Safeguarding Statement

1. NAME OF SERVICE AND ACTIVITIES PROVIDED

Women's Aid

Women's Aid is a leading national organisation that has been working in Ireland to stop domestic violence against women and children since 1974.

We work to make women and children safe from domestic violence, offer support, provide hope to women affected by abuse and work for justice and social change. Over the course of 40 years the organisation has built up a huge body of experience and expertise on the issue, enabling us to best support women and children and share this knowledge with other agencies responding to women experiencing domestic violence.

Since our foundation in 1974, there has been a profound shift in social, cultural and political attitudes towards abused women in Ireland. Women's Aid has played a crucial part in this shift. Our direct services to women have been supported by our efforts to change and improve societal and political responses to domestic violence. Our ultimate aim is to stop domestic violence and make women and children safe.

Our Direct Services for women experiencing domestic violence underpin and inform all of our work to end domestic violence.

Our Direct Services for Women

The Women's Aid [National Freephone Helpline](tel:1800341900) 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 National Freephone Helpline also operates an Instant Messaging Support Service, an Email Support Service (helpline@womensaid.ie) and a Text Service for deaf and hard of hearing women (contact number 087 959 7980).

Women's Aid offers a Dublin-based One to One Support Service. Our Support Services Team provide more in-depth [one to one information and support](#), Monday to Friday, in six 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 drop in Support and Referral Service in Dolphin

House, as well as from a range of other services such as An Garda Síochána, GPs, social workers and hospital staff.

The Support Services 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.

Women's Aid operates the [Dolphin House Support and Referral Service](#), in partnership with the Inchicore Outreach Centre in the Dublin District Family Law Court in Dolphin House.

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](#), [representation](#) 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](#).

Management Structure

See Organogram Appendix 1

2. COMMITMENT TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN FROM HARM

Principle

- This Child Safeguarding Statement is guided by Women's Aid Child Protection Policy
- This Child Safeguarding Statement is guided by the *Children First Act 2015*, and 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. Women's Aid does not work directly with these children however 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.

Guiding principles of Child Safeguarding Statement:

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.
- We also understand our responsibilities around finding a proper balance between respecting the rights and needs of a parent and protecting children and we acknowledge that where there is a conflict, the child's welfare comes first.

- The safety of the victim of domestic violence and abuse and particularly for the children is paramount at all times.
- Women's Aid will strive for effective partnering with the woman as the non-abusing parent in the relationship. We will support the women to refer concerns as comprehensively and openly as possible and outline the protective steps she is taking. We will promote her as the non-abusing parent, and that responses need to react as such, and to place the blame for the abuse on the abuser.
- We will also promote, if the child is of suitable age and ability, that their views be sought and taken into account.
- 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/neglect/harm. In these instances, we must adhere to Children First Guidance that the 'best interests of the child is paramount' and act accordingly. We recognise that experiencing domestic abuse can negatively impact on the woman's parenting capacity and ability to act protectively.
- 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

We will endeavour to safeguard children and young people by:

- Adopting child protection guidelines through a code of conduct for employees, interns and volunteers
- Following carefully the procedures laid down for the recruitment and selection of employees, interns and volunteers
- Informing/sharing guidelines with employees, interns and volunteers who agree to follow organisational policies and procedures
- Reporting concerns to statutory agencies

- Our policy and procedures to safeguard children and young people reflect national policy and legislation and are underpinned by Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017, the Tusla Children First - Child Safeguarding Guide 2017, and the Children First Act 2015.
- Our policy declaration applies to all paid staff, volunteers, committee/ board members and students on work placement within our organisation. All committee board members, staff, volunteers and students must sign up to and abide by the policies, procedures and guidance encompassed by this policy declaration and our child safeguarding policy and accompanying procedures.
- We will review our child safeguarding statement and accompanying child safeguarding policies and procedures every 2 years or sooner if necessary, due to service issues or changes in legislation or national policy.

Designated Liaison Persons for Child Protection

DLP:	DLP:	Deputy:
Eavan Ward, Services Manager	Linda Smith, Helpline Manager	Sarah Benson, CEO
01- 6788858	01- 6788858	01- 6788858
eavan.ward@womensaid.ie	linda.smith@womensaid.ie	sarah.benson@womensaid.ie

3. RISK ASSESSMENT

In accordance with the Children First Act 2015, the Board of Management/Service Provider has carried out an assessment of any potential for harm to a child while attending the service or participating in service activities. A written assessment setting out the areas of risk identified and the service procedures for managing those risks is summarised below:

Risk Identified	Policies and/or Procedures in place to manage Risk
Suitability of candidates in recruitment/selection of members of staff, volunteers, committee/board members and students on work placement to work with children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment/selection procedures for staff, volunteers, committee/board members and students on work placement ensure person's suitability to work with children.
Staff, volunteers, committee/ board members and students on work placement are not aware of Child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A copy of the Child Safeguarding Statement as well as a copy of Women's Aid <i>Child Welfare and Protection Policy</i> are furnished to all paid staff, volunteers, committee/ board members and

Safeguarding Statement and reporting procedures	<p>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</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All paid staff, volunteers, committee/ board members and students on work placement within our organisation, complete the Children First Elearning Programme https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/children-first-e-learning-programme/ • A copy of the Child Safeguarding Statement is displayed in a prominent place where the service is provided • Procedure in place for reporting to The Child and Family Agency in accordance with the Children First Act 2015 • 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 • Relevant Person appointed. • Child Safeguarding statement to be reviewed at intervals of not more than 24 months
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4. CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Amend as appropriate – other policies and procedures may be required in your service

As required by the Children First Act, 2015, Children First National Guidance for Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 and the Guidance for Developing for a Child Safeguarding statement for Early Years Services 2018 the following safeguarding policies/procedures/measures are in place:

- Procedures to maintain a list of mandated persons under the Children First Act, 2015
- A Relevant Person has been appointed
- A Designated Liaison Person and Deputy have been appointed
- All relevant staff, volunteers and contractors have completed the Tusla eLearning module – *Introduction to Children First* and relevant staff have attended Always Children First Child Protection Training.
- Data Protection Policy
- Staff have access to regular Supervision and Support in line with the service policy.
- Feedback Policy

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

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 on March 2023 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 displayed in the service. It has been provided to all staff, volunteers and any other persons involved with the service. It is readily accessible to parents and guardians on request. A copy of this Statement will be made available to the HSE/Tusla if requested.

Signed:



Date: 05 March 2021

Service Provider's name and contact details:

Women's Aid
Sarah Benson, CEO
(01) 6788858

For further information on this Statement, contact Relevant Person:

<p>DLP:</p> <p>Eavan Ward, Services Manager</p> <p>01-6788858 eavan.ward@womensaid.ie</p>	<p>DLP:</p> <p>Linda Smith, Helpline Manager</p> <p>01-6788858 linda.smith@womensaid.ie</p>
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Relevant Person under Children First Act 2015

Appendix 1: Women's Aid Organogram

