



An Roinn Iompair
Department of Transport

Children First Sectoral Implementation Plan

February 2022

Minister's Foreword



The Children First Act 2015 places a number of statutory obligations on specific groups of professionals and on particular organisations providing services to children. I am pleased to publish an updated Sectoral Implementation Plan for my Department in accordance with section 27 of the Act.

This Sectoral Implementation Plan sets out the safeguarding measures being undertaken by my department in respect of our relevant services to children. It also includes information on our engagement with agencies or other bodies, funded by my department, who provide relevant services to children.

The Department and I are committed to safeguarding the well-being of all the children and young people with whom we work, striving to implement child protection measures to the highest standard in my department and in the bodies and agencies under our aegis. This Sectoral Implementation Plan provides the framework to achieve this.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'E. Ryan', written over a faint, light blue circular watermark or seal.

Eamon Ryan T.D.

Minister for Transport

Background

The Children First Act 2015 requires each Minister of the Government to prepare and publish a Sectoral Implementation Plan (SIP) and to review it at regular intervals.

This SIP is prepared in accordance with section 27 of the Act and sets out the safeguarding measures being undertaken by the Department of Transport in respect of relevant services to children. Relevant services are specified in Schedule 1 of the Act.

This SIP contains:

- a description of the relevant services provided by the Department;
- an outline of the measures taken to ensuring compliance with the Act and with Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (the Guidance);
- the measures taken to promote, review and report on compliance under the Act and Guidance; and
- the monitoring and review mechanisms in respect of the Plan.

Mission and Goals of the Department of Transport

The Department of Transport is a central government department, serving the Government and the people of Ireland. Our mission is to deliver an accessible, efficient, safe and sustainable transport system that supports communities, households and businesses.

Our high-level goals are:

Connectivity: Maintaining and developing the transport links between households, communities and businesses on the island of Ireland and ensuring our international connectivity, a key element in growing our economy.

Climate & Sustainability: Ensuring that our transport modes are environmentally, economically and socially sustainable

Safety, Security & Accessibility: Putting safety, security and accessibility for all at the centre of our transport policies.

Effective Regulation: Anticipating change and creating regulatory frameworks which are fit for purpose, future-proofed and that ensure the highest standards.

Public Engagement: Listening to the public, protecting equality and human rights and using technological advances to improve services.

Organisational Excellence & Innovation: Working to best serve the public and their elected representatives, always innovating and improving.

More information on our mission and role can be found in our [Statement of Strategy](#).

Relevant services provided by the Department

Schedule 1 of the Act provides a list of 'work or activities' that constitute a relevant service to children. The Department provides two such relevant services:

- The Transition Year Placement Programme, a relevant service as specified in Schedule 1, part 5(a):
any work or activity which consists of the provision of educational, research, training, cultural, recreational, leisure, social or physical activities to children.
- Irish Coast Guard Search & Rescue Service, a relevant service as specified in Schedule 1, part 4:
any work or activity which consists of treatment (including assessment which may lead to treatment), therapy or counselling provided to a child.

A number of bodies carry out relevant services and are funded by the Department in that regard:

- Mountain Rescue Ireland
- Community Rescue Boats Ireland
- CHC Ireland

The services provided fall under Schedule 1, Part 4:

any work or activity which consists of treatment (including assessment which may lead to treatment), therapy or counselling provided to a child.

Agencies and Other Bodies

To carry out our role and achieve our mission and strategic goals as described above, the Department has a wide range of policy, governance, regulatory, safety, investment, investigatory and enforcement functions. Many of these functions are carried out by agencies and other bodies under the Department's responsibility. A list of all agencies under the aegis of the Department is included in Appendix 1.

In 2018, the Department notified all agencies under our aegis of the full commencement of the Act, and of the obligations and requirements of the Act and Guidance. We engaged with agencies to ensure they were aware of their responsibilities and obligations under the Act and Guidance. We also advised that it is considered best practice to have child protection policies in place for any interaction they may have with children.

We also asked each agency to ensure that any organisation or body which they may fund to provide a relevant service to children is aware of the requirements of the Act and Guidance. While a number of agencies under the aegis of the Department may provide relevant services to children that are not funded by us in that regard, we have advised all agencies of the responsibilities and obligations arising from the Act and Guidance. Similarly, some services provided by agencies may not be specified as relevant services under the Act. These services may be accessible by children along with the general public and mainly include public transport

services, airport and seaport services. While these are not relevant services as specified by the Act, we have engaged and will continue to engage with agencies regarding the importance of having child safeguarding measures in place for all children accessing their services¹.

In addition to the agencies under our aegis, the Department also fund a number of other bodies to provide relevant services. All bodies that provide relevant services and are funded by the Department have been notified of the obligations and requirements of the Act and Guidance.

In our review of our Sectoral Implementation Plan, we have reminded all agencies and funded bodies of their obligations under the Children First Act 2015.

Measures to ensure compliance with Children First Legislation and Guidance

The Department undertakes to keep children and young people safe while they are accessing our services, or those relevant services that we fund our agencies or other bodies to provide. We have taken a number of measures to keep children and young people safe, and to ensure awareness and compliance with the obligations under the Act and Guidance. These are outlined below.

Child Safeguarding Statement

Under the Act, organisations that provide relevant services to children must develop a Child Safeguarding Statement (CSS). This statement describes the services being provided and the principles and procedures to be observed to ensure, as far as practicable, that a child availing of these services is safe from harm².

In preparing our CSS and in subsequent reviews, we have identified all services provided by the Department that fall under the definition of relevant services. The services identified as relevant services are:

- The Transition Year Placement Programme
- Irish Coast Guard Search & Rescue Service

These services were examined for the potential risk of harm to children or young people while availing of them. Where necessary, we updated our protocols and procedures to mitigate any risks identified. These risks are summarised in our CSS, along with the procedures in place to manage them. As required under the Children First Act, the CSS has been reviewed and is available here or on request from the Department by phoning (01) 670 7444 or emailing childprotection@transport.gov.ie.

¹ For example, Bus Eireann, an agency under the aegis of the Department, currently provides a school transport service for the Department of Education and is funded by them in that regard. As such this service is not deemed a relevant service to the Department of Transport.

² “Harm” in relation to a child is defined in the Act as (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.

Staff advice, information, and training

The staff of the Department may also interact with children and young people outside the relevant services identified in our Child Safeguarding Statement.

The Department has a number of policies in place to safeguard children and young people accessing our services. These include a Code of Practice for the Protection and Welfare of Young People and a Protocol for Responding to Child Protection Concerns:

- the Code of Practice for the Protection and Welfare of Young People outlines best practice for all staff in their interactions with children and young people;
- the Protocol for Responding to Child Protection Concerns provides clear guidance to staff of the Department on how reporting should take place, by whom and in what circumstances. Reporting of concerns will be made in the appropriate way to Tusla in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

These policies are reviewed regularly and updated where necessary to take account of the Act and Guidance and are made available to all staff.

All staff are encouraged to participate in the online training provided through the Tusla eLearning Introduction to Children First Programme. This programme outlines the safeguarding responsibilities of organisations working with children and includes how to recognise and report child abuse.

A dedicated Child Protection and Welfare page has been established on the Department's internal intranet site, providing relevant documents, guidance and links to training materials. We will continue to identify appropriate training materials for staff and update the intranet page with these.

Engagement with agencies

The Department has provided information on the Act and Guidance to our agencies, including circulation of:

- Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children
- A Guide for the Reporting of Child Protection and Welfare Concerns
- Best Practice Principles for Organisations in Developing Children First Training Programmes
- Guidance on Developing a Child Safeguarding Statement
- Children First eLearning Programme

The Department has and will continue to engage with agencies and other bodies that provide relevant services regarding the policies and procedures arising under the Act and the Guidance.

Participation in the Children First Inter-Departmental Implementation Group

Part 4 of the Act provides for the establishment of the Children First Inter-Departmental Implementation Group. The Implementation Group is a forum for members to raise child welfare and protection issues of general concern, or with a cross-departmental or cross-sectoral dimension across the various sectors.

This group is chaired by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and membership comprises nominated persons from each Government Department, plus a representative from Tusla, An Garda Síochána and the Health Service Executive.

The functions of the Implementation Group are to:

- promote compliance by Government Departments with their obligations under the Act;
- monitor the implementation by Government Departments of the guidelines issued by the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth;
- provide support to Government Departments regarding the preparation and publication of sectoral implementation plans;
- promote a consistent approach by Government Departments to the preparation and publication of sectoral implementation plans;
- report to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, when requested, on the implementation of the Act and of the Guidelines issued by the Minister, and
- provide information or advice, or make proposals, to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth on any of the above matters

The Department has participated in the Implementation Group since its establishment in November 2016 and will continue to do so.

Measures to promote, review and report on compliance

The Department's Child Safeguarding Statement was updated in January 2022. Agencies and funded bodies have been reminded of their obligations under the Children First Act 2015.

Each year Agencies are required to complete a checklist under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies under the aegis of the Department of Transport. This document states that the provisions of the Code do not override any other relevant legislation (e.g., child protection legislation, equality legislation, employment legislation).

Monitoring and review mechanisms in respect of the Plan

This SIP will be reviewed and, if appropriate, revised no later than 3 years from the date of the publication of this document.

APPENDIX 1

Bodies under the aegis of the Department of Transport
Bus Átha Cliath
Bus Éireann
CIÉ
Commission for Aviation Regulation
Commissioners of Irish Lights
Commission for Railway Regulation
daa plc
Dublin Port Company
Iarnród Éireann
Irish Aviation Authority
Marine Casualty Investigation Board
Medical Bureau of Road Safety
National Transport Authority
Port of Cork Company
Port of Waterford Company
Road Safety Authority
Shannon Foynes Port Company
Shannon Group
Transport Infrastructure Ireland

Department of Transport Sectoral Implementation Plan Revision List

Revision No.	Date	Description
0.1	19/05/2020	Changes to list of Agencies, links and email address
0.2	31/12/2021	Full review



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