



**Roinn Cumarsáide, Gníomhaithe  
ar son na hAeráide & Comhshaoil**  
Department of Communications,  
Climate Action & Environment

# Children First

## Sectoral Implementation Plan

Published in accordance with section 27  
of the Children First Act, 2015  
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## Background

DCCAIE administers a very diverse, complex and technical brief across critical and strategic sectors of the Irish economy. DCCAIE employs approximately 345 full time equivalent staff. The safety, welfare and development of staff, children and young people are a core objective and key priority for this Department.

Relevant services provided by the Department are limited to the Transition Year Student placement programme. Some Divisions would, by virtue of the type of work they undertake at times, have third party contact with children but this would not be classified as a relevant service. Nonetheless the Child Safeguarding Statement has been brought to their attention in the context of their particular work. This will be monitored on an on-going basis.

This Department's remit includes some 17 agencies under the Department's aegis with varying levels of functional independence. A number of these agencies provide specific services to children within the meaning of Schedule 1 to the Children First Act.

The safeguarding of children is of paramount importance to the Department and we are collectively committed to taking all practicable steps to protect children from harm and to safeguarding them during the course of their interaction with any area of DCCAIE.

The Children First Act 2015 was fully commenced on 11 December 2017. The Act includes a statutory obligation on each Government Department to prepare and publish a Sectoral Implementation Plan (Section 27 of the Act).

The Sectoral Implementation Plan outlines the measures that have been put in place in the Department with a view to ensuring compliance with the Act and with *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* [2017] ("the National Guidance").

In line with section 27(5) of the Act, this Implementation Plan shall be reviewed and, as necessary, revised within three years of its publication, i.e. by March 2021.

This plan contains:

- a description of the relevant services provided by or on behalf of the Department;
- an outline of the programme of measures taken, or to be taken, to ensure that the Department and any body funded by the Department is in compliance with the Children First legislation and guidance [namely, the Children First Act 2015 and *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children [2017]*];
- an outline of the measures taken or proposed to be taken to promote, review and report on compliance under the legislation and guidance; and
- monitoring and review procedures in relation to the Sectoral Implementation Plan.

The Sectoral Implementation Plan, in accordance with Section 27(4) of the Act, must be laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas.

### **Relevant services provided by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment**

The Department offers occasional work experience placements for transition year students (“TY placements”). While incidental to the Department’s core business, the provision of TY placements is considered to be a relevant service as outlined 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 and is addressed in the Department’s overarching Child Safeguarding Statement and in associated policies.

The Department may also employ Temporary Clerical Officers [TCOs]. While this does not fall within the definition of the provision of relevant services to children as set out in Schedule 1 of the Children First Act 2015 there may be TCOs who are under the age of 18. DCCAE is committed to best practice in relation to child safeguarding. The risks to underage TCOs are considered to be identical to those applying to TYs, as set out in the Child Safeguarding Statement and in that context, the mitigating procedures set out for TY’s will be adapted for TCOs under the age of 18.

DCCAE have engaged with all agencies and bodies providing relevant services on behalf of the Department to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities and obligations under the Act and Guidance. A full list of the bodies under the aegis of DCCAE is available at Appendix 1.

In addition, activities may, on occasion, be carried out by this Department which are not classed as relevant services under Schedule 1 of the Act, but which involve interactions with children such as the An Taisce Green Schools and the School Digital Champion programmes. It is also the case that various Divisions of the Department, may in the course of their work, receive correspondence or other communications giving rise to child protection concerns. In line with best practice, this Department has in place policies, procedures and training to support staff and to ensure that Children First principles are understood and followed.

### **Key policies and procedures**

The Department has reviewed and, as necessary, updated its underlying policies and procedures to ensure compliance with Children First legislation and guidance. The following are among the matters addressed in such policies and procedures:

#### ➤ *Designated Liaison Person*

The Department shall, in line with the *National Guidance*, appoint at least one Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and at least one Deputy DLP. Each DLP shall act as the principal contact for information and advice regarding specific child safeguarding concerns. Each DLP shall also liaise with the statutory child protection authorities in reporting such concerns as required. All DLPs/Deputy DLPs shall be provided with training commensurate with their needs.

#### ➤ *Reporting and recording of safeguarding concerns*

Each Division has issued, or shall issue, a general instruction to their staff to immediately notify their local DLP of any child safeguarding concern, allegation or incident that comes to their attention, whether it be something a staff member has observed or whether it has been disclosed by a child availing of the service, by a parent or guardian, or by any other person. Each Division shall retain, in a secure and confidential matter, comprehensive records of all notifications made to DLPs and of all reports transmitted to the statutory child protection authorities by DLPs.

## **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 services that we fund our agencies or other bodies to provide. We have taken a number of measures, outlined below, to do so and to ensure awareness and compliance with the obligations under the Act and Guidance.

### *➤ Awareness-raising*

The Department has engaged, and will continue to engage, with all staff to ensure awareness of the Children First Act. This will be conveyed directly to all staff by way of email correspondence which is planned to coincide with the publication of this Implementation Plan, and the organisation's Child Safeguarding Statement and related policies shall also be widely promulgated along with Tusla's Children First e-learning programme.

The designated DLP will undertake the necessary training to fulfil the obligations under the Act.

### *➤ Engagement with agencies*

We regularly provide information on the Act and Guidance to our agencies, including the circulation of the Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 document, along with information on how to access online resources.

The Department have and will continue to engage with agencies and other bodies that provide relevant services regarding the policies and procedures that are or should be in place to meet their obligations under the Children First Act.

All of the Agencies under the aegis of the Department have been instructed to implement the requirements under the Children First Act 2015 in their organisation.

### *➤ Participation in the Children First Interdepartmental Implementation Group*

Part 4 of the Children First Act 2015 provides for the establishment of the Children First Interdepartmental 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.

The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs established this group and it is chaired by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. Its membership is composed of nominated persons from each Government Department, plus a representative from Tusla – Child and Family Agency, An Garda Síochána and the Health Service Executive.

The functions of the Implementation Group are to:

1. Promote compliance by Government Departments with their obligations under the Act.
2. Monitor the implementation by Government Departments of the guidelines issued by the Minister.
3. Provide support to Government Departments regarding the preparation and publication of sectoral implementation plans.
4. Promote a consistent approach by Government Departments to the preparation and publication of sectoral implementation plans
5. Report to the Minister, when requested, on the implementation of the Children First Act 2015 and of the guidelines issued by the Minister
6. Provide information or advice, or make proposals, to the Minister on any of the above matters

The Department has participated in the Implementation Group since its establishment in November 2016 and will continue to participate as the Act is implemented.

➤ *DCCAE Child Safeguarding Statement*

This Sectoral Implementation Plan has been prepared in conjunction with the Department's Child Safeguarding Statement. Both have been prepared on the basis of an assessment at Division level of the relevant services for children provided directly by the Department, and relevant services funded by the Department. This assessment highlighted the TY placement programme as the only relevant service and that all other interactions are on a third party basis.

As the Department directly provides services to children in respect of some of its functions, it is required to prepare and publish a Child Safeguarding Statement [CSS] under section 11 of the Children First Act 2015. The CSS includes a risk assessment in respect of certain services provided directly to children and young people by the Department, and sets out the mitigating measures in place to address those risks.

The Department's CSS will be available to view in the Department's headquarters, as required by the Act.

### **Measures to promote, review and report on compliance**

The Department will review our Child Safeguarding Statement within 24 months of publication, as required to be in compliance with the Act.

We will also continue to engage with agencies and other funded bodies on their compliance with the Act and Guidelines, including incorporating compliance with the Act as part of general Corporate Governance reporting requirements.

### **Monitoring and review of the Sectoral Implementation Plan**

This is the first iteration of DCCAE's Sectoral Implementation Plan, and follows an assessment by all Divisions of the Department who have undergone an exercise of explicitly identifying the funding of children's services [as defined in the Children First Act] and setting out the programme of measures to ensure compliance with the Children First legislation and guidance.

The Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment is required, under section 27(5) of the Children First Act 2015, to review and revise a sectoral implementation plan not later than 3 years from the date of publication. This plan will be reviewed no later than March 2021, unless the Minister determines another period, as provided for in the Act.

## APPENDIX 1 - State Bodies and Regulators

	<b>Organisation</b>
1	NORA
2	INPC
3	Mining Board
4	Inland Fisheries Ireland *
5	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
6	Eirgrid
7	ComReg
8	CER
9	BnM
10	RTE
11	TG4*
12	BAI
13	An Post
14	Loughs Agency*
15	SEAI*
16	ESB
17	DHDA*

\*State funded Bodies