



An Roinn Iompair
Department of Transport

Children First

Sectoral Implementation Plan

June 2024


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. In accordance with section 27 of the Act, I am pleased to publish an updated Sectoral Implementation Plan for my Department.

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

I and the Department are committed to safeguarding the well-being of all children and young people that we encounter, endeavouring to implement child protection measures to the highest standard both in the Department of Transport and in the bodies under our aegis. This Sectoral Implementation Plan provides the framework to achieve this.



Eamon Ryan, T.D.
Minister for Transport

June 2024

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 2017 \(the Guidance\)](#);
- 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, Goals and Values 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 strategic goals are:

Connectivity: Maintaining and developing our transport system, linking households, communities and businesses both rural and urban, on the island of Ireland while also ensuring Ireland's international connectivity which is key to maintaining our global economic competitiveness.

Sustainability: Economy, Environment and Society: Ensuring that our transport system is integrated, resilient and decarbonised in a manner that is environmentally, economically and socially sustainable.

Safety, Security and Accessibility: Putting safety, security and accessibility for all at the heart of our transport system policies and services, including road users, users of public transport, pedestrians, cyclists and air and sea travellers.

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

Stakeholder Engagement: Listening, communicating, and engaging with all of our stakeholders using data and evidence to make the most impact, and protecting equality and human rights.

Organisational Excellence and Innovation: Working to best serve the public and their elected representatives, through a resilient organisation with the right people, leadership, structures, and systems, always innovating and improving.

Our Values are:

Ambition: We are Future focused.

Quality and Delivery: We strive for Excellence.

Collaboration: We do our best work together.

Public Service Ethos: We have public service at our core.

More information 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 three 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.

- Educational Events, 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, 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 on behalf of the Department and are funded by the Department in that regard:

- Mountain Rescue Ireland;
- Community Rescue Boats Ireland;
- Search and Rescue Helicopter contract provider.

The services provided also 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.

Since the commencement of the Children First Act, the Department notified all agencies under its aegis of the obligations and requirements of the Act and the associated Guidance. The Department engaged directly with agencies to ensure they were aware of their responsibilities and obligations under the Act and Guidance. The Department further advised that it is considered best practice to have child protection policies in place for any interaction they may have with children.

The Department also asked each agency to ensure that any organisation or body which they may fund and that provides 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 the Department in that regard, all agencies of the Department of Transport have been advised 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, the Department has engaged and will continue to engage with agencies regarding the importance of having child safeguarding measures in place for all children accessing such services¹.

In addition to the agencies under its aegis, the Department also funds 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 each review of our Sectoral Implementation Plan (SIP), the Department has 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. The Department has 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

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.

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:

- Transition Year Placement Programme;
- Educational Events;
- Irish Coast Guard Search & Rescue.

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.

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 under 18 years of age interacting with staff of the Department of Transport (Code of Practice) and a Protocol for Responding to Child Protection Concerns:

- the Code of Practice 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.

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.

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 the agencies under its aegis, 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 June 2024. 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
AirNav Ireland
Bus Átha Cliath
Bus Éireann
CIÉ
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
The Shannon Airport 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
0.3	04/06/2024	Full review



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