



**Laois Domestic  
Abuse Service**

## **Child Safeguarding Statement**

- 1. Name of service provider:** Laois Support Services Against Domestic Abuse CLG trading as Laois Domestic Abuse Service.
  
- 2. Key principles of best practice in child protection:**
  - The welfare of children and young persons is always our primary focus.
  - The organisation promotes a considered balance between protecting children and respecting their rights and needs and having regard to the rights and needs of the parent/family. Should a conflict of priority arise, the welfare of the child will be prioritised.
  - The status of the child or young person as an independent advocate for change and empowerment is respected and taken into consideration.
  - Impartial and non-judgemental support for the children and young people is provided regardless of race, religion, sexuality, gender, or culture.
  - The pursuit of justice and criminal action should not be ignored.
  
- 3. Nature of services we provide:**

Laois Support Services Against Domestic Abuse CLG works to provide support, information and advocacy to women and children subjected to domestic violence and coercive control. The organisation supports the right of everyone to live and grow in a peaceful non-violent home environment and promotes a culture of responsibility and equity. The services provided are as follows:

  - One to one support and information: Provision of a safe environment for women and children to discuss concerns and experiences. Provision of informational; legal process; and relevant referral support in session. This service is delivered confidentially and provides women and children with an opportunity to sit down and be heard. Should it be necessary, meetings can also be arranged at a different safe location.
  - Court accompaniment service: A court accompaniment service is available to clients engaging in any court proceedings related to Domestic Violence or coercive control, including applications for protection, safety and barring orders; breaches of orders; access and maintenance proceedings and any other relevant appearances. This accompaniment is limited to Portlaoise court currently.
  - Legal Processes Support: Support through the completion of legal paperwork and court applications.
  - Group support: Group support programmes are available for women or women who have been subjected to domestic abuse and coercive control.
  - Counselling and therapy services: Counselling and therapy is available to women and children who have been subjected to domestic violence or coercive control.
  - A referral service to refuge, and other external partner services that may be able to support women and/or children around a specific need.

- Safety planning: To develop and set a safety plan in place to help protect women and children in the event of a crisis of safety or emergency.

#### 4. Principles to safeguard children from harm:

Our approach is person-centred, client-led and needs focused. The promotion of women and children's safety is central to our aims and objectives and complies with best practice and the national standards outlined by Tusla, The Children First Act, and all guidelines set by The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

#### 5. Risk Assessment

We have carried out a comprehensive assessment of any potential for harm to a child while availing of our services, as part of the overall Risk Management process:

	Risk identified	Procedure in place to manage identified risk
1	Risk of harm to a child from a member of staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LDAS staff recruitment, operation and service policies are all in line with government guidelines and The Children First Act (2015).</li> <li>• Recruitment is carried out with strict garda vetting and reference checks. Staff are also subject to repeat checks.</li> <li>• Staff are educated to national standards, trained in child protection and welfare and are trained and upskilled on an ongoing basis as needed.</li> <li>• Staff are all made aware of and issued with copies of staff policies and codes of behaviour. Staff are also subject to disciplinary measures should any breaches be reported or observed.</li> <li>• Staff are trained to adhere to GDPR guidelines to protect confidentiality. However, there are incidences where provision of information may be essential to address child welfare or protection concerns.</li> <li>• Staff attend regular case management</li> <li>• Our service's premises are monitored by CCTV</li> <li>• A second staff member will remain on-site during any/all children's appointments. If for any reason this is not possible, the child's Mum/protective guardian will be asked to remain on-site.</li> <li>• If children attending the service may require help with toileting or personal care, Mum or the non-abusive guardian will be asked to remain on-site (including in the carpark) and will be asked to provide this care in lieu of a staff member.</li> </ul>
2	Risk of harm from a service user, visitor, or member of public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff are always present to supervise attendance.</li> <li>• Should contract or maintenance work be needed it will be carried out during out of business hours and/or clients will be not permitted on the premises during maintenance works unless deemed absolutely necessary.</li> <li>• Our service's premises are monitored by CCTV.</li> <li>• Visitors are not permitted to access any safehouses or refuges to which we refer our service users.</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visitor access is supervised by staff and visitors and will adhere to company policies and guidelines.</li> <li>• Children availing of the children's and youth services must be dropped off and collected by the mother or one other designated and identified non-abusive adult.</li> <li>• Adolescents attending the service may attend alone but with the knowledge and agreement of their mother/non-abusive guardian.</li> <li>• Any changes to collection or drop offs must be notified to staff before the appointment.</li> </ul>
3	Risk of harm or concern not being reported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff are trained to identify and assess risks. Categories of abuse and grounds for reasonable concern (as per Children First legislation) are included in the glossary of terms.</li> <li>• An identified designated liaison person (DLP) and a deputy liaison person are available to assist in handling concerns and submitting reports</li> <li>• Staff will support investigations by An Garda Siochana and Tusla where requested.</li> <li>• Safeguarding and welfare are central to the agendas for all meetings and discussions of our Board of Directors</li> <li>• Disciplinary measures are in place to deal with failure to report welfare concerns</li> <li>• Our clients are advised that when in doubt, it is always best to raise a concern</li> </ul>
4	Risk to confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All information regarding a concern or an assessment of child abuse should be shared on a need-to-know basis in the best interest of the child.</li> <li>• Client records are kept secure and access by outside personnel is not permitted.</li> <li>• Cases are not referred to by name and client numbers are used to identify casework.</li> <li>• It is clearly understood that information gathered for one purpose must not be used for another without the expressed consent of the client providing the information; with the exception of child protection concerns or risk to the physical safety of the client.</li> </ul>
5	Risk of exposure to COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff will adhere to guidelines set forth by the Health Service Executive (HSE) and public health guidelines regarding the reduction of risk of transmission of COVID-19. This includes wearing masks on the premises and in any one-to-one setting with service users; ensuring adequate ventilation; regular sanitisation of surfaces and any other relevant safeguarding measures.</li> <li>• Staff will continue to adhere to best practice guidelines for as long as necessary to limit any spread of COVID-19 in the service, safeguarding both staff and service users.</li> <li>• Contact records are maintained for contact-tracing purposes.</li> </ul>

## 6. Procedures

Our Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, *Children First: National Guidance for the 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:


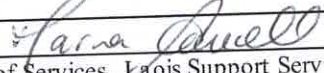
- Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child availing of our service.
- Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers to work with children.
- Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm.
- Procedure for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla.
- Procedure for maintaining a list of the persons (if any) in the relevant service who are mandated persons.
- Procedure for appointing a relevant person.

All procedures listed are available upon request.

## 7. Implementation

We recognise that implementation is an on-going process. Our service is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while availing of our service.

This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed annually and/or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

Signed: 	Signed: 
Chairperson, Laois Support Services Against Domestic Abuse CLG	Director of Services, Laois Support Services Against Domestic Abuse CLG
Date: 2/3/22	Date: 1/3/22

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Relevant Person under the Children First Act (2015)