

Probation Service

Child Safeguarding Statement

Prepared in accordance with section 11 of the Children First Act, 2015

1. The Role and Work of the Probation Service

The Probation Service is part of the Civil Service and it operates under the aegis of the Department of Justice and Equality. It is the lead organisation with a statutory remit and responsibility for the supervision and management of offenders in the community.

The work of the Probation falls into two broad categories (1) offender assessment and (2) offender supervision and management. In any given year the Probation Service works with approximately 15,000 offenders and while the majority of service-users are adults, approximately 6% are children in the 12-18 age range.

Services provided by the Probation Service include:

- The provision of assessment report to the Courts, the Parole Board, the Department of Justice and Equality and the Irish Prison Service;
- Supervision of offenders subject to court orders in the community, including providing a number of targeted interventions to reduce the likelihood of reoffending;
- Implementation of the Community Service and Community Return Schemes, which are direct alternatives to imprisonment;
- Delivering Community Sanctions under the Children Act, 2001;
- Supporting sentence-management, rehabilitation and the reintegration of young persons in detention and those who serve prison sentences;
- Funding Community Based Organisations who support us in our work and in achieving our mission.

The Probation Service has a total staff complement of approximately 400, nearly three hundred of whom are Probation Officer grades and designated as Mandated Persons under the Children Act 2015. The remainder of staff are administrative or state industrial civil servants.

While the Probation Service has a national remit, services are provided locally from our thirty-five community based offices around the country. Probation Service interventions are designed to address criminogenic risk or needs and most are delivered on a one-to-one basis in Probation Service offices. Probation Officers also visit service users in their homes in order to develop effective partnerships with families to support the desistance process.

The Probation Service has two directorates, Corporate Affairs and Operations and the work of the Service is divided into seven areas, comprised of both geographical regions and specialist divisions.

Young Person's Probation (YPP) is a specialist division that operates in large urban areas, established to work with children and young people who come before the courts or who are in Children Detention School. The work of the Probation Service with children falls into three broad categories:

1. **Direct work with children:** Children in the 12-18 year age bracket are referred by the courts to the Probation Service for assessment and, if deemed suitable and appropriate, probation supervision and/or any of the community sanctions outlined in the Children Act 2001. This work involves seeing the children either with their parents/guardians or alone in Probation Service offices or in their homes, residential placements, schools or training centres.

The primary tasks are:

- Preparing pre-sanction reports for the courts to assist in determining sentences;
 - Supervising children in the community who are placed on court orders;
 - Supervising children who have been released conditionally from Children Detention Schools;
 - Implementing and overseeing provisions of the Children Act, 2001.
2. **Children of adult service-users.** Staff of the Probation Service may come in contact with the children of service-users when the children accompany their parents to the Probation Service office, or when Probation Officers conduct home visits.
 3. **Children attending projects funded by the Probation Service.** The Probation Service funds a number of projects nationwide to provide services to children on behalf of the Service. These projects may relate to supports relating to education or training, or substance misuse or counselling needs.

2. Commitment to Safeguarding Children from Harm

In pursuit of its mission, the Probation Service is committed to the protection of children and the provision of a safe and caring environment where children are treated with dignity and respect. The Probation Service is also committed to supporting staff in this work and to providing them with the necessary supervision, support and training to enable them to perform their duties to the highest professional standards.

The development of good practice and policy procedures in the area of child protection will ensure that the potential for abuse to go unrecognised and unreported will be minimised. These procedures will assist staff to recognise the indicators of abuse, handle disclosures from a child or adult and report the allegations. This will ensure that all disclosures are dealt with promptly and professionally.

The Probation Service recognises its duty to protect and safeguard those children and young people for whom it has responsibility. It is the duty of each member of the Probation Service to comply with the Probation Service Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. The Probation Service will take appropriate steps to ensure its implementation.

The Probation Service Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy and Procedures is based on the following principles:

- All children who come into contact with the Probation Service will be valued and treated in a fair and equitable manner;

- The safety, welfare and protection of children who come in contact with the Probation Service is of paramount importance;
- The safety and welfare of children is everyone's responsibility;
- The Probation Service is fully committed to meeting its statutory obligations in relation to responding to, and reporting, child protection and welfare concerns;
- Staff shall be provided with Children First training in accordance with their responsibilities and interactions with children;
- Staff need to be aware of best practice in working with children so that they do not expose children or themselves to unnecessary risk;
- On request, all applicable Probation Service policies and procedures shall be available to any child or their parent/guardian.

3. Risk Assessment

The Service has completed a risk assessment of any potential for harm to a child while they or their parents avail of our services. Overleaf is a list of potential risks identified, and the procedures to mitigate and manage these risks.

In this document, 'harm' in relation to a child means:

- 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.

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No.	Identified Risk	Procedure to manage identified risks
1.	Risk of physical, sexual or emotional abuse to a child by a member of staff when working alone in the office with a child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Safe recruitment procedures as determined by the Central Civil Service, the Department of Justice and the Probation Service. ➤ Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour. ➤ Civil Service Disciplinary Code. ➤ Department of Justice Protected Disclosure Policy. ➤ Probation Service Professional Staff Supervision Policy. ➤ Probation Service Guidelines on Direct Working with Children and Young Persons. ➤ Probation Service Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures. The policy outlines that reporting requirements as outlined in Children First are to be adhered to, and it outlined <i>additional</i> measures to be taken in the event of an allegation of abuse against a member of staff. ➤ Procedure for the Management of Allegations, Abuse, or Misconduct against a staff member. ➤ Probation Service Customer Charter.
2.	Risk of staff not recognising abuse and/or not following appropriate guidelines for reporting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Probation Service Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures. ➤ Staff receive training in Children First, commensurate with their roles. ➤ Professional Staff Supervision Policy. ➤ Guidelines for conducting Home Visits. ➤ Dedicated location on the Probation Service intranet where all Child Protection Policy and Procedures are readily available to staff.
3.	Risk of physical, sexual or emotional abuse to a child by another client using the service.	
	(a)All clients known to pose risks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Resource Booking System in larger urban areas where there is substantial footfall, with local arrangements in place in other locations.
	(b)Violent Offenders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Guidelines on Preventing and Managing Violent Incidents (HS-06). ➤ Scheduling of appointments for clients where health and Safety concerns exist (HS-16).

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Clients seen promptly on arrival to the office (HS-07). ➤ Probation Service Health & Safety Client Risk Assessment.
	(c) Clients under threat from others;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Guidelines on Working with Clients under Threat from Others (HS-24). ➤ Scheduling of Clients where Health and safety Concerns exist (HS-16).
	(d) Persons on supervision who have been convicted of a sexual offence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Sex Offender Risk Assessment and Management (SORAM). ➤ Probation Service Supervision Policy – level of supervision commensurate with risk levels. ➤ Clients seen promptly on arrival to the office as per Customer Charter and HS-07.
	(e) Persons on supervision who have not been convicted of a sexual offence, but where there are concerns that they may pose a risk to children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Clients seen promptly on arrival to the office as per Customer Charter and HS-07. ➤ Procedure in place for a risk based approach to supervision of offenders - ‘Supervising the Probation Order – Policy and Procedures’.
4.	Risk of Harm to the welfare of a child as a result of exposure to behaviours and conversations they witness through their engagement with the Probation Service:	
	(a) Unaccompanied children calling to the office;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Appointment scheduling as per Young Person’s Probation staff for all service-users under 18 years of age. ➤ Clients seen promptly on arrival to the office as per Customer Charter and HS-07
	(b) Parents arriving to the office with small children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Appointments rescheduled unless children are very young; ➤ Parents expected to retain responsibility for their children at all times while on Probation Service premises.
	(c) Children may be present during home visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Probation Service guidelines regarding the conduct of Home Visits; ➤ Probation Service Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures. ➤ Professional Staff Supervision Policy
	(d) Children being exposed to harm when present in public areas of Probation Service Offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Probation Service: Protocols for interviewing clients identified as presenting a possible health and safety risk to staff in the Haymarket offices (HS-32); ➤ Clients seen promptly on arrival to the office as per Customer Charter and HS-07;
5.	That a child may be harmed while completing Community Service:	

	(a) Risk of Harm to Children undertaking Community Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Guidelines for the assessment and Management of Young Persons subject to Community Service Orders. ➤ Community Service Supervisors to receive training on Children First commensurate with their roles, including the eLearning module; ➤ Probation Service Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures.
6.	That a young person may be subjected to harm by a member of staff in the course of participating in a Transition Year work experience placement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Transition year placements managed as per Student Placement Guidance Document; ➤ Staff receive training in Children First commensurate with their roles and responsibilities.
7.	Staff receiving disclosures of retrospective abuse against identified person(s).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Probation Service Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures. ➤ Staff receive training in Children First, commensurate with their roles. ➤ Professional Staff Supervision Policy.
8.	The risk that Children using the Service might be exposed to abuse through the use of ICT.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Probation Service Acceptable Usage Policy. ➤ Guidelines re the use of mobile phones when working with children (For development)
9.	<p>That children would be exposed to risk through their involvement with Community Based Organisations which are funded by the Probation Service by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organisations funded through the Probation Service not having the appropriate policies. 2. Community based organisations and individuals used by POs to refer young people who may pose a risk or not have the appropriate policies. 3. Children placed in projects other than those for children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Probation Service has Service Level Agreements with all funded projects and all funded projects are obliged to submit a Statement of Compliance with the Children First Act.

4. Procedures

The probation Service 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 dealing with a member of staff against whom an allegation of abuse or misconduct against a child availing of our service has been made;
- Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of workers 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 in the Probation Service who are mandated persons;
- Procedure for appointing a relevant person;
- Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour;
- Civil Service Dignity at Work Policy;
- Civil Service Disciplinary Code.

All procedures listed are available upon request.

5. Implementation

We recognise that implementation is an on-going process. The Probation 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 is on display in prominent locations in all public offices operated by the Probation Service, and it will be made available to all staff of the Service. Parents and guardians, members of the public and TUSLA will be provided with copies of the Child Safeguarding Statement on request.

In accordance with section 11 (7) of the Children First Act 2015, this Child Safeguarding Statement be reviewed not later than two years from the date of publication. It will be reviewed in May 2021, or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers. The Statement will be reviewed every two years thereafter.

Signed:  (Director of the Probation Service) Email: corporatesecretariat@probation.ie Telephone: 01/8173600

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For Queries, please contact the local Senior Probation Officer _____