



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

# Children First Sectoral Implementation Plan

Published by the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and  
Employment in accordance with section 27  
of the Children First Act, 2015

October 2024



## Minister's Foreword

It is my pleasure to publish this revised Sectoral Implementation Plan which has been prepared in accordance with section 27 of the Children First Act, 2015.

This plan sets out the programme of measures in place to ensure that my Department, and the relevant bodies under my Department's aegis, will meet their obligations to ensure compliance with the Act and with best practice as set out in Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children.

As Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, I am committed to ensuring that the protection of children and young people is implemented to the highest standards by the officials in my Department, and in the relevant bodies, in their interaction with or relating to children.

Arrangements have been put in place to ensure that the sector meets its obligations under the Children First Act and also observes non-statutory best practice in this area. These arrangements include: preparing risk assessments, Child Safeguarding Statements and associated policies and procedures; raising awareness and providing appropriate instruction; and developing appropriate governance, risk management, monitoring and reporting measures. These arrangements are subject to monitoring and review on an ongoing basis and are revised as necessary.

This Sectoral Implementation Plan provides the framework to ensure that the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment plays its part in making Ireland a safer place for children.

Peter Burke T.D.

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

## 1. Introduction

1.1. This Children First Sectoral Implementation Plan relates to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, which includes the Department, the agencies and offices under its aegis and services funded by the Department.

1.2. It has been prepared and published in accordance with the Children First Act 2015. Section 27 of the Children First Act 2015 requires each Minister to prepare and publish a Sectoral Implementation Plan in relation to services to children delivered or funded by the Department. Relevant services in this context are defined in Schedule 1 of the Act. The Sectoral Implementation Plan must contain the following:

- a) A description of the relevant services provided by or on behalf of the Department.
- b) 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 the guidance issued under Section 6 of the Act;
- c) An outline of the measures taken or proposed to be taken to promote, review and report on compliance under the legislation and guidance; and
- d) Monitoring and review procedures in relation to the Sectoral Implementation Plan.

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

## 2. Relevant Services Provided

### Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment:

2.1. The Department is working for the period 2023 to 2025 towards achieving the following Strategic Goals:

Goal 1: Sustain full employment and strong regional economic development.

Goal 2: Advance the low carbon and digital transitions to ensure the competitiveness and sustainability of Irish based enterprise.

Goal 3: Deepen and extend Ireland's global business and trade in a responsible, fair and sustainable manner.

Goal 4: Improve our business regulatory environment to enhance Ireland's attractiveness as a place to do business.

Goal 5: Promote safety in the workplace, quality employment and uphold employment rights.

Goal 6: Build an innovative, inclusive and agile Department with a strong public service ethos driving effective and responsible policy implementation.

2.2. There are a number of Bodies and Offices under the aegis of the Department with roles relating to the achievement of the Department's Strategic goals. Details in relation to these are at paragraph 2.6 below and at Appendix 1.

### Relevant services provided by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

- 2.3. The Department does not provide relevant services (as defined under the Act) directly to children. However, it may occasionally employ staff who are under the age of 18. In addition, the Department supports the development of the potential of children by facilitating the placement of Transition Year (TY) students for short unpaid periods of work experience within the Department. These TY students are usually under 18 years of age. The Department is committed to safeguarding all children working or training in the Department, in line with Children First Act 2015, the Children First Guidelines and best practice.
- 2.4. The Department may also occasionally have direct interaction with children through its social activities (e.g. Christmas events). It is the Department's practice that the parents or responsible adults will accompany their children at all times while attending such events and consequently such events are not covered by this Plan.
- 2.5. Labour Inspectors working in the Inspection Services division of the Workplace Relations Commission will have direct interaction with children in the course of their inspection work under the Protection of Young Persons legislation. While this is not covered by the definition of relevant services in the Children First Act, nonetheless in the spirit of the legislation, all inspection staff are required to complete the online Tusla Children First training module.

### Relevant services provided by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment – Bodies Under its Aegis

- 2.6. As noted above, there are a number of the Bodies and Offices under the Aegis of the Department. The Department has notified all of these of the Children First compliance requirements and guidelines. They have been asked to carry out a comprehensive risk assessment and, where appropriate, to prepare Child Safeguarding Statements in respect of any services that they provide to children. They have also been asked to ensure that any bodies, agencies or services that they fund (including contracts for services, ongoing funding and ad-hoc funding) that have or may have direct contact with children are made aware of their obligations under the Act and that they put in place arrangements to ensure that they are addressing these obligations.
- 2.7. A list of these bodies, and details of the Children First Act obligations that they have advised are relevant to them, are set out at Appendix 1.

### Services funded by the Department

- 2.8. The providers of relevant services funded by the Department will be informed as the need arises of the provisions of the Children First Act 2015 and the National Guidance and will be asked to provide assurance that they meet the necessary requirements.

### 3. Measures taken to promote, review and report on compliance with the provisions of the Act

#### Children First Interdepartmental Group (CFIDG)

3.1. The Minister for the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth has established a statutory Children First Interdepartmental Group (CFIDG) to bring central government oversight to the implementation process. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment is represented on the CFIDG Group by an Assistant Principal from its Workplace Relations Liaison Unit.

#### Child Safeguarding Statement

3.2. The Department's Children First Child Safeguarding Statement sets out the potential interactions the Department has with children and lays down principles and procedures to be observed in order to ensure, as far as practicable, that a child interacting with the Department is safe from harm. This includes procedures to be followed to identify and mitigate any risks to TY students while working in the Department, children attending social events in the Department such as Christmas parties and children who engage with staff of the Inspection Services of the WRC during the course of Protection of Young Persons (PYP) inspections. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been circulated to all staff members, is available on the Department's intranet and has been published on the Department's website. It will be formally reviewed at least every two years, or more regularly as required.

#### Reporting Protocol

3.3. Procedures for reporting concerns are outlined in the Safeguarding Statement. A record of any such concerns made to the Designated Liaison Person will be maintained in a confidential and secure manner. Reporting of concerns will be made in the appropriate way to Tusla in accordance with the requirements of the Children First Act 2015.

#### Relevant Persons

3.4. The Department has appointed a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) as the relevant person for the Department's Child Safeguarding Statement who is the resource person for any child protection concerns within the Department. Responsibilities include ensuring that reporting procedures within the organisation are followed, so that child welfare and protection concerns are referred promptly to Tusla and to act as a point of contact for reporting child protection concerns and liaison with outside agencies, as required.

#### Training and awareness raising

3.5. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) along with other relevant staff will undergo the relevant training in the application of Children First Act 2015 and the Children First National Guidance. This will include the requirement to complete the Children First E-Learning Programme.

3.6. The Department's Sectoral Implementation Plan and Child Safeguarding Statement will be central to raising awareness among staff of: (i) who the designated liaison persons are, (ii) the procedures they should follow in the event of their having concerns about the well-being of children with whom they interact in the provision of the Department's services, and (iii) the obligations on them to report these concerns.

### Sectoral Implementation Plan

3.7. The Department's Sectoral Implementation Plan sets out the high-level sectoral guidance principles to be applied across the Department and the bodies under its aegis, in the ongoing implementation of the Children First Act 2015 and Guidance principles. The Plan will be published on the Department's website. It will be reviewed every three years, or more regularly as required.

### Bodies under the aegis of the Department

3.8. The Department has notified the bodies under its aegis of the requirements of the Children First Act 2015 and also of the relevant guidelines, including the need to prepare a Child Safeguarding Statement where they provide relevant services to children. As noted above, they have also been asked to ensure that any bodies, agencies or services that they fund (including contracts for services, ongoing funding and ad-hoc funding) that have or may have direct contact with children are made aware of their obligations under the Act and that they put in place arrangements to ensure that they are addressing these obligations.

3.9. Department's Corporate Governance Framework is designed to ensure that the Department's systems of accountability and responsibility, including its compliance arrangements, are effective, robust, clear and identifiable. The Framework has been updated to take account of the requirements of the Children First legislation.

### Monitoring and Review

3.10. The Workplace Relations Liaison Unit has developed this Sectoral Implementation Plan and the Department's Human Resources Strategy Unit has developed the Department's Child Safeguarding Statement. The Sectoral Implementation Plan will be reviewed every three years or more regularly as necessary. The Department's Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed every two years, or more regularly as necessary.

### Annual Compliance Report

3.11. An annual compliance report will be prepared. This report will set out: details on any relevant activity for the Department for the preceding year, including details of the Department's designated liaison persons, training provided, number of reports, if any, submitted to Tusla; and issues of concern or of broader interest to the bodies under the Department's aegis notified to the Corporate Governance Unit in the context of the Department's oversight and engagement framework for such bodies.

## Appendix 1: Bodies under the Aegis of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

### **Offices:**

#### **Workplace Relations Commission (WRC)**

The WRC has advised that Inspectors from the inspection division do come into contact with children during labour inspections regarding employment rights of young workers. Furthermore, the WRC facilitates Transition Year work experience placements and there is potential for direct engagement with children in the context of the adjudication and mediation services.

Inspectors from the Workplace Relations Commission are authorised officers who carry out announced and unannounced inspections at employers' premises in relation to employment legislation, including the Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act 1996. A Child Safeguarding Statement has been prepared to address the issues arising.

#### **Labour Court**

The Labour Court has advised that it does not provide any services to children.

#### **Companies Registration Office (CRO)**

The office also facilitates a Children's Christmas Party; all children are accompanied by an adult.

#### **Registry of Friendly Societies (RFS)**

The office also facilitates a Children's Christmas Party; all children are accompanied by an adult.

#### **Registrar of Beneficial Ownership (RBO)**

The office also facilitates a Children's Christmas Party; all children are accompanied by an adult.

#### **Intellectual Property Office of Ireland**

The Intellectual Property Office has advised that on occasion staff do provide general information on Intellectual Property to students at our public office.

Furthermore, there can be engagement with students at various competitions that are specifically organised for second level students e.g. *BT Young Scientist* and *Student Enterprise Awards*.

Presenting at a small number of secondary schools, usually to transition year students, on the topic of Intellectual Property.

The office also facilitates a Children's Christmas Party; all children are accompanied by an adult.

## **Agencies:**

### **Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs)**

The LEOs have advised that the 31 LEOs across the country (in every Local Authority (LA) area) coordinate the delivery of the Student Enterprise Programme (SEP) to second level schools in their constituent area. It is considered that their work would be encompassed within the definition of 'relevant service' in the Children First Act.

The LEOs are funded by Enterprise Ireland and that agency has confirmed that it is the responsibility of each LEO/LA to ensure that the individual selected to deliver the SEP in each area has been Garda vetted for that specific purpose.

### **Enterprise Ireland**

Enterprise Ireland has advised that it provides funding through its Centre of Excellence (CoE) to the Local Enterprise Offices which in turn administer the Student Enterprise Programme at secondary school level.

Enterprise Ireland operates a framework to deliver enterprise education to primary schools. It is the responsibility of each individual supplier to ensure that the individual selected to deliver the primary schools programme meets all relevant regulation requirements on child safeguarding and has been Garda vetted for that specific purpose.

### **IDA**

The IDA has advised that it does not provide any services to children.

### **Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC)**

The CCPC has advised that it continues to provide online financial education resources for students and teachers via its Junior Cycle Money Matters programme and its Money Counts Leaving Certificate Applied programme. Currently, there is no direct delivery to students by CCPC staff, however this could change in the future with CCPC staff attending secondary schools as requested by teachers.

In addition, to the above the CCPC sponsors Junior Achievement Ireland (JAI) and 'JA Finance Park'. JA Finance Park is a Junior Cycle gamified interactive personal financial literacy activity. During the pilot sessions of JA Finance Park in 2023 two members of the CCPC delivered talks in a secondary school. Both staff members were Garda Vetted.

In 2024, the CCPC coordinated Global Money Week (GMW) events in Ireland. GMW is a worldwide youth financial literacy campaign organised by the OECD International Network on Financial Education (INFE). In addition to coordinating the event, the CCPC participated by visiting a number of schools around the country. The schools had all the relevant parental/guardian consent forms for all attending students.

### **Corporate Enforcement Authority (CEA)**

The CEA has advised that it facilitates Transition Year work experience placements.



### **Health and Safety Authority (HSA)**

The HSA has indicated that it has direct contact with children in the delivery of its services through:

- talks on safety delivered to primary students as part of the HSA's 'Keep Safe' Programme;
- Presentation of certificates to teachers in the presence of students as part of the HSA's 'Choose Safety' Programmes.
- Running of competitions relating to occupational safety by contractors where the finalists (potentially primary, secondary or third level) are brought together for workshops or for interview by a judging panel.
- Inspections at places of employment where children could be present e.g. farms or workplaces where apprentices under 18 are present.

### **National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI)**

NSAI has advised that it does not provide any services to children.

### **Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority (IAASA)**

IAASA has advised that it does not provide any services to children.

### **Injuries Resolution Board (IRB)**

IRB has advised that it does not provide any services to children.

### **InterTradelreland**

InterTradelreland has advised that it does not provide any services to children.

### **Design & Crafts Council Ireland (DCCI)**

DCCI has advised that it does not provide any services to children.