

ADAPT CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT¹

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Child Safeguarding Statement is prepared by **ADAPT Domestic Abuse Services**, Limerick.
- 1.2 This 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 *Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice* (2017).
- 1.3 ADAPT recognises that anyone working in ADAPT, whether paid or voluntary, has a legal duty of care in relation to children in the service. This means that they have a legal responsibility to act as a careful parent would.
- 1.4 This Statement and the related policies and procedures explain the roles and responsibilities of management and staff. It also identifies individuals who have specific responsibility for child welfare and protection. Such persons include: **Mandated Persons**; **Designated Liaison Persons (DLPs)** and the **Relevant Person/s**.
- 1.5 ADAPT takes its statutory obligations in relation to child welfare and protection seriously. It has put in place preventative and protective measures to support its intention to safeguard children while they are using our services, in as far as this is reasonably and practicably possible.

2. Nature of the Service

- 2.1 ADAPT Domestic Abuse Services supports women and their children who are affected by domestic abuse. It works with them to address their needs in relation to the impact of domestic abuse and to support women survivors to build a better and safer future for themselves and their children.
- 2.2 Services are provided for families and for individuals. By families we mean women who have children with them. By individuals we mean women on their own e.g. women who don't have children, whose children are in the care of someone else or whose children are adults.
- 2.3 Services are provided on a residential basis if the women and children had to leave home because of domestic abuse and need the safety of the refuge in the short term.
- 2.4 Services are provided on an outreach basis if the women and their children do not need refuge.
- 2.5 ADAPT provides an extensive range of practical and emotional **supports for women**. Services are provided in a group setting, on a one to one face to face basis or through the telephone helpline service.
- 2.6 ADAPT provides an extensive range of **services for children and young people** to address their emotional, developmental and practical needs. ADAPT is a registered pre-school and after school service.

3. Principles Underpinning the Work of ADAPT

- 3.1 ADAPT fully subscribes to the **Principles set out in *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (2017)**. In brief these principles are:
- The safety and welfare of children is everyone's responsibility.
 - The best interests of the child should always be paramount.
 - The overall aim in all dealings with children and their families is to intervene proportionately to support families to keep children safe from harm.
 - Interventions by the State should build on the strengths and protective factors in the family.
 - Early intervention is a key to getting better outcomes. Where the State has to intervene, the minimum intervention necessary should be used.
 - Children should only be separated from their parents/guardians when alternative means of protecting them have been exhausted.

¹ This document was last updated in March 2022

- Children have a right to be heard, listened to and taken seriously. They should be consulted in an age appropriate way and involved in all matters and decisions that may affect their lives.
- Parents/guardians have a right to respect, and should be consulted and involved in matters that concern their family.
- A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and protecting the rights and needs of parents/guardians. Where there is a conflict, the child's welfare must come first.
- Agencies and professionals must work together in the interests of children.

3.2 ADAPT adopts additional **principles that reflect the nature of the service** and its specialist role as a domestic abuse service. In brief these principles are as follows:

- ADAPT is committed to promoting the positive welfare of children by providing services that support their wellbeing and by promoting their right to be safe and protected from harm.
- We respect the role of mothers as primary carers of their children while they are in their care. As primary carers, they have a central role to play in safeguarding their children. Staff work in partnership with mothers and support them in their role as primary carers.
- We believe that women protection in domestic abuse situations is often the most effective method of child protection and that the wellbeing and safety of the child is often intrinsically linked with the wellbeing and safety of the mother.
- We believe in providing a client directed service. The women and children can choose whether to use our services. They are encouraged to engage at their pace and in a manner that suits their needs.
- We believe in treating service users with dignity and respect and creating supportive, non-judgmental relationships which promote open communication and encourage mothers to talk about their strengths and challenges as parents.
- We believe in being open and honest with mothers about our child protection responsibilities and any concerns we might have for their children.
- We believe that mothers want the best for their children. We work in partnership with them to help them identify and build on their strengths as parents and address any child protection concerns that might arise.
- We believe that advocacy is central to our work. In child protection situations, we will advocate for mothers to have access to any specialist services which could help them address their needs and support them to be better able to respond to their children's needs.
- We believe in a strengths based approach. We acknowledge the strengths of the mothers as parents and support them to build on these strengths and on the protective factors in the family.
- We respect the right of women and children to privacy and confidentiality. Information is only shared on a 'need to know' basis. However the safety of children is paramount and overrides the right to confidentiality.
- We believe that children have the right to have their welfare needs met in a culturally appropriate manner. However, we do not condone cultural 'norms' as a justification for abusive behaviour.
- We believe that where there is both domestic abuse and child protection concerns, any interventions should take account of the context of domestic abuse and include actions to support the protective parent and hold the perpetrator to account for their abuse behaviour.

4. Risk Assessment

4.1 ADAPT has carried out a risk assessment to identify any potential risks that a child might be harmed while availing of the services of ADAPT. These risks are outlined in the Table below as are the procedures and practices to manage and minimise the risks and address any breaches.

4.2 As and when other risks are identified, these risks will be assessed and appropriate procedures and practices put in place to minimise the risks and address any breaches.

4.3 Staff members are provided with information, training, guidance and support to assist them to implement agreed procedures and practices and to recognising and responding appropriately to child welfare and protection concerns.

Risk identified	Risk Management Procedures and Practices	Post Holder/s Responsible
Physical, emotional, psychological or sexual abuse by another adult service user	<p>We work to ensure that we have appropriate procedures and practices in place and that these are followed at all times. This includes procedures and practices to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Minimize the opportunity for service users to have unsupervised access to children of other service users. b) Support women and children to talk to staff if they have any concerns. c) Help assess the safety risks to others when admitting service users to refuge and throughout their stay; and to maintain the security of ADAPT House. 	Refuge Co-ordination Team
Physical, emotional, psychological or sexual abuse by another child service user	<p>We work to ensure that we have appropriate procedures and practices in place and that these are followed at all times. This includes procedures and practices to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Minimize the opportunity for service users to have unsupervised access to children of other service users. b) Support open discussion of bullying and related behaviours with children in the service and address such behaviours if they arise. c) Promote respect and respectful behaviour between children. d) Support women and children to talk to staff if they have any concerns. 	Women's Services Co-ordinator, Refuge Co-ordinator and Child & Youth Co-ordinator
Physical, emotional, psychological or sexual abuse by a staff member	<p>We work to ensure that we have appropriate procedures and practices in place and that these are followed at all times. This includes procedures and practices to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Support the recruitment and appointment of staff² so that those appointed have the expertise and experience required for each position. This includes reference checks, Garda/police vetting, induction and supervised probation. b) Support the ongoing assessment of the suitability of staff to work with vulnerable children. This includes 3 yearly updating of Garda vetting, regular professional supervision, ongoing training and yearly performance reviews. c) Adhere to preschool regulations and ensure appropriate adult / child ratios d) Provide direction for staff in relation to their conduct towards children in the service and appropriate strategies to manage challenging behaviour of children. e) Support women and children to talk to staff if they have any concerns. 	Relevant Person/s, DLP and Deputy DLPs
Failure to recognise and respond effectively to child abuse	<p>We work to ensure that we have appropriate procedures and practices in place and that these are followed at all times. This includes procedures and practices to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Require staff to complete relevant training. Such training to include recognising and responding to child protection concerns and reporting appropriately. b) Facilitate designated staff to access training in relation to their specific responsibilities as a) the Relevant Person, b) DLP, c) Mandated Persons. c) Provide information, guidance and support to staff in relation to recognising and responding to child protection concerns and reporting them appropriately. This includes support regarding dealing with disclosures of child abuse. d) Provide information, guidance and support to staff regarding the roles and responsibilities of a) the Relevant Person b) the DLP, c) Mandated Persons. 	Relevant Person/s, DLP and Deputy DLPs
Failure to safeguard children's right to privacy and confidentiality	<p>We work to ensure that we have appropriate procedures and practices in place and that these are followed at all times. This includes procedures and practices to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Inform service users of the importance of respecting and protecting the privacy and confidentiality of others. b) Provide information, guidance and support to staff in relation to appropriate recording and secure storing of information regarding children. This includes report writing and sharing information on a 'need to know' basis only. c) Provide ongoing information, guidance and training to staff regarding any regulation changes with regard to data collection and protection. 	Relevant Person/s, DLP and Deputy DLPs
Failure to respond effectively to the support needs of children in relation their exposure to	<p>We work to ensure that we have appropriate procedures and practices in place and that these are followed at all times. This includes procedures and practices to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Support children to give expression to their experience re domestic abuse and find effective ways to move on from this experience. b) Support mothers so that they can be open to their child's experience and help their child deal with the impact of this experience. c) Facilitate children to access specialist support if needed to deal with the impact. d) Provide information, guidance and support to staff in relation to recognising and 	Women's Services Co-ordinator, Refuge Co-ordinator and Child & Youth Co-ordinator

² Staff referred to paid employees, contracted personnel, volunteers, students and any other personnel involved in service provision in ADAPT

domestic abuse.	<p>responding to child welfare or protection concerns and reporting them appropriately. This includes dealing with disclosures of child abuse.</p> <p>e) Talk with mothers about any child welfare or protection concerns and support them to address such concerns; taking into account their strengths as parents and protective factors in the family.</p>	
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5. Procedures

5.1 ADAPT has a range of policies, procedures and practices in place to support our intention to safeguard children and young people while they are using our services.

5.2 Many of these are listed in Section 4 above in relation to assessing and managing risk.

5.3 We have a number of other policies, procedures and practices in place that support our intention to safeguard children while they are using our service. These include procedures and policies:

- ✓ To manage allegations of abuse or misconduct by staff towards a child in our service.
- ✓ To manage allegations of abuse of a child in our service by another service user (adult or child).
- ✓ To address needs of children in the services who display bullying or other inappropriate behaviour.
- ✓ To support service users who want to make a complaint and to deal with such complaints.
- ✓ To manage accidents and incidents and to take corrective action if needed.
- ✓ To manage the use of social media within ADAPT – by staff and service users.
- ✓ To deal with disclosures and reporting of child protection concerns to Tusla or the Gardaí.
- ✓ To manage outings and other activities organised by ADAPT.
- ✓ To identify and maintain a list of **Mandated Persons**, ensure that they are aware of their legal responsibilities and provide support to assist them in carrying out these responsibilities.
- ✓ To appoint a **DLP and Deputy DLPs**, ensure they are aware of their roles and responsibilities and they have access to appropriate training and information.
- ✓ To appoint **Relevant Person/s**, ensure they are aware of their roles and responsibilities and they have access to appropriate training and information.

5.4 Most of these procedures are included in our Child Safeguarding Policy. All are available on request.

6. Implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement

6.1 ADAPT is committed to implementing this Policy Statement and the related policies and procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while using our services.

6.2 The designated **Relevant Person/s** (as prescribed under Children First 2017) has overall responsibility for the implementation of this Statement.

6.3 The implementation of this Statement depends on the co-operation of all involved with ADAPT. This co-operation is a condition of employment. Staff must read this Statement and follow the recommended practices outlined in this Statement and in the related policies and procedures.

6.4 ADAPT makes this Statement and related policies and procedures available to staff to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities under the Children First Act 2015. ADAPT also facilitate staff to avail of appropriate training to support them in carrying out their responsibilities.

6.5 This Statement is available to service users and is displayed on the premises and on our website.

6.6 ADAPT recognises that the implementation of this Statement and the related policies and procedures is an ongoing process. The organisation is committed to reviewing this Statement on a regular basis (at least once every 24 months) and updating it as required in light of experience, recommended best practice and other developments including any changes in legislation.

6.7 The process for review of this Statement will include consultation with staff and service users.

6.8 Any queries about this Child Safeguarding Statement should be directed to the **Relevant Person/s**:

- Denise Dunne, Director of Services, email: director@adaptservices.ie; Tel: 061-412354
- Claire Anderson, A/Director of Services, email: assistantdirector@adaptservices.ie; Tel: 061-412354

6.9 Other individuals within ADAPT with specific responsibilities regarding Child Welfare and Protection are:

- **DLP:** Stefanie McCarthy **Deputy DLPs:** Simone Fox and Patricia O'Carroll
- **Mandated Persons.** A list of Mandated Persons is available.

Signed: Leonie Kerins, Chairperson, Board of ADAPT Domestic Abuse Services