



**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 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, a copy of which is available for reference.

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:

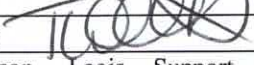
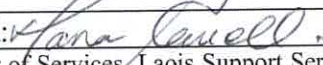
- Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child availing of our service.
- Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers to work with children.
- Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training 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: 21/3/22	Date: 1/3/22

Laois Support Services Against Domestic Abuse CLG, Mountrath Road, Portlaoise, Co. Laois, R32 KX8E.
For queries, please contact:

Marna Carroll, 057 86 71100,

marna@laoisdomesticabuseservice.ie,

Relevant Person under the Children First Act (2015)

Glossary of Terms

Categories of Abuse:

Neglect:

Neglect is the most common type of child abuse. Neglect is defined in terms of an omission, where a child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, and/or medical care.

Harm can be defined as the ill-treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child. Whether it is significant is determined by the child's health and development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a child of similar age.

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a time rather than at one specific point. For example, a child who suffers a series of minor injuries may not be having his or her needs met in terms of necessary supervision and safety. A child whose height or weight is significantly below average may be being deprived of adequate nutrition. A child who consistently misses school may be being deprived of intellectual stimulation.

The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that his or her well-being and/or development are severely affected.

A distinction is made between 'wilful' neglect and 'circumstantial' neglect. 'Wilful' neglect would generally incorporate a direct and deliberate deprivation by a parent/carer of a child's most basic needs, for example, withdrawal of food, shelter, warmth, clothing, contact with others. 'Circumstantial' neglect more often may be due to stress/inability to cope by parents or carers. It is useful to consider this differentiation and to be familiar with the different instances of neglect.

Emotional Abuse:

Emotional Abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a parent/carer and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's developmental need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms.

Examples of Emotional Abuse include:

The imposition of negative attributes on children, expressed by persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming
Conditional parenting in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his or her behaviours or actions
Emotional unavailability by the child's parent/carer
Unresponsiveness of the parent/carer and/or inconsistent or inappropriate

expectations of the child
Premature imposition of responsibility on the child
Unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of the child's capacity to understand something or to behave and control himself or herself in a certain way
Under or over-protection of the child
Failure to show interest in, or provide age-appropriate opportunities for, the child's cognitive or emotional development
Use of unreasonable or over-harsh disciplinary measures
Exposure to domestic violence
Exposure to inappropriate or abusive material through new technology

Emotional abuse can be manifested in terms of the child's behavioural, cognitive, affective or physical functioning. Examples of these include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental under-achievement and oppositional behaviour. The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/carer.

Physical Abuse:

Physical Abuse of a child is that which results in actual or potential harm from an

interaction, or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents.

Examples of Physical Abuse include:

Severe physical punishment
Beating, slapping, hitting or kicking
Pushing, shaking or throwing
Pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling
Terrorising with threats
Observing violence
Use of excessive force in handling
Deliberate poisoning

Suffocation
Fabricated/induced illness
Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child.

Sexual Abuse:

Sexual Abuse occurs when a person uses a child for gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others.

Examples of Sexual Abuse include:

Any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child
An invitation to sexual touching or intentional touching or molesting of a child's body whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification
Masturbation in the presence of a child or the involvement of a child in an act of masturbation
Sexual intercourse with a child, whether oral, vaginal or anal
Sexual exploitation of a child, which includes: Inviting, inducing, or coercing a child to engage in prostitution or the production of child pornography [for example, exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, videotape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of an image by computer or other means] Inviting, coercing or inducing a child to participate in, or to observe, any sexual, indecent or obscene act Showing sexually explicit material to children, which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse Exposing a child to inappropriate or abusive material through information and communication technology
Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person. In relation to

child sexual abuse, it should be noted that, for the purposes of the criminal law, the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years for both boys and girls. An Garda Síochána will deal with the criminal aspects of the case under the relevant legislation.

Usual Grounds for Concern:

An account from a person who saw the child being abused

Evidence such as an injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way.

An injury or behaviour which is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse

Any concern about possible sexual abuse

Consistent indication, over time, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

Disclosure by a child that they are being/have been abused.

Admission or indication by an adult or a child of an alleged abuse they committed.

In circumstances where a woman/client does not have the capacity to protect her child/children, and it becomes known to the service.

Children who are exposed to ongoing DV and the mother is unable at that time to protect her children.