



**CHILD
SAFEGUARDING
STATEMENT
COMPLIANCE
UNIT**

**Child Safeguarding Statement
Compliance Unit
Strategy 2025 – 2027**

December 2024

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Child Safeguarding Statement Compliance Unit Strategy 2025- 2027

Purpose & Function of the Child Safeguarding Statement Compliance Unit (CSSCU)

The Children First Act, 2015 requires ‘a provider of a relevant service to ensure, as far as practicable, that each child availing of the service from the provider is safe from harm (s.10). The unit was established in March 2018 to provide compliance support¹ and necessary enforcement of the Child Safeguarding Statement requirements (s.11) designed to enhance the safety of children and young people while availing of services.

CSSCU Primary Functions



Background

Tusla Vision: *Recognising children and young people’s rights to protection, stability, education, and the support of a family and community network and the continued care of adult service users, our vision is “That children, young people, families and adult service users have timely and equitable access to integrated services, that enable positive outcomes, that the public trust and that staff feel supported by and have trust in.”*

¹ Compliance Support or Supportive Compliance uses collaboration between the regulator and service providers to achieve compliance as a primary intervention.

Tusla will focus on: Reviewing the implementation of the Child Safeguarding Statement Compliance Unit (CSSCU) Strategy 2018–2023 and developing a successor strategy to continue to raise awareness of the requirement to have a Child Safeguarding Statement.

Tusla Corporate Plan 2024-26

CSR Strategy 2025-30

Children Services Regulation Vision:

For all services regulated or assessed by Children's Services Regulation to be safe and happy places for children and young people to live, play, learn and develop.

The Children First Act 2015 recognises that there are a wide range of contexts in which children can be harmed. The Act intends to promote a societal wide response to the risk of harm to children. It creates a provision for a degree of compellability by providers of services by requiring compliance with Sections 10 – 13. Furthermore, its intent is to provide scope for proactive contextual safeguarding and the management of the risk of extra-familial harm. Accordingly, the act prescribes both general and specific duties to organisations² to take actions designed to mitigate against harm to children³ and present them in a child safeguarding statement.

From 2018 – 2023, the direction of CSSCU was informed by a strategy approved by Tulsa's Executive Management Team that set out the approach taken by the Agency to support the

² See Part 2, Section 10, Children First Act 2015.

³ 'Harm' means, in relation to a child— (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, whether caused by a single act, omission or circumstance or a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances, or otherwise.

content and implementation of CSSs within relevant provider organisations. This strategy was characterised by a 4-strand approach to fulfil the goals and objectives.

- **Strand 1:** CSS Content & Implementation Analysis
- **Strand 2:** Sharing and Dissemination of Learning with Key Partners
- **Strand 3:** Effective Partnerships with Agents of Inspection and Statutory Regulators of Children's Services
- **Strand 4:** Proactive Engagement with Relevant Providers

The approach was characterised by the concept of supportive compliance which emphasised the creation of safe environments over enforcement ⁴ as an immediate priority.

A report of the review of the previous strategy was produced and can be read in parallel with this document [here](#):

The CSSCU is a service delivery unit within the Child & Family Agency's Children's Services Regulation (CSR) sub-directorate. CSR sits within the Quality and Regulation directorate. The CSSCU is a small unit and relies upon the strategic deployment of resources and service delivery through targeted partnerships, the most essential of which being its work with the Tulsa's Children First Information and Advice Service (CFIAS)

Successor Strategy 2025 -2027

The focus of Tulsa's follow-on approach is informed by the principle that only implemented Child Safeguarding Statements will result in an effective safeguarding environment for children. The duty of providers must be considered in a context of increasingly complex societal challenges brought about by migration, digital dominance and family restructuring. The strategy will continue to be informed by an appropriate degree of supportive compliance, with emphasis on an expanded understanding of the duties averred in Section 10 of the act.

⁴ This was informed by the degree of risk posed by the operation of the relevant service.

Methodology for the Development of the Strategy

This strategy seeks to build on the achievements of its predecessor. An online feedback survey was developed in order to ascertain stakeholders' opinions of both its perceived impact and input into the priorities of approach going forward.

The survey was circulated to both internal and external stakeholders, including the Children First Interdepartmental Implementation Group (IDIG),⁵ children's services regulatory and oversight bodies, and with colleagues in the Tusla Children First Information and Advice Service (CFIAS). Following this survey, a focus group was facilitated to further explore these opinions. Participants volunteered to engage with this process following on from their participation in the online survey.

The strategy is also informed by consideration of international approaches to child safeguarding at an organisational level through consideration of the work of children's rights advocacy bodies particularly UNICEF, Keeping Children Safe, and the Australian Childhood Foundation as well as strategies developed by Tusla and Children's Services Regulation.⁶

Strategic Direction

Priorities

This strategy is being developed against a backdrop of significant global challenges and heightened socio-economic uncertainty. Internationally, children have never been more vulnerable due to harms caused by war, the climate emergency and the increasing degree of integration of technology and the internet in the immediate environments that young people occupy. Children and young people are forced to migrate or manage the highly challenging imposed crises. As a result, children are substantively at risk of exploitation and trafficking.

Young people have borne significantly the impact of the global COVID pandemic on which has had a detrimental impact on their mental health, with reports of increased need for critical

⁵ See Part 4, Section 20, Children First Act 2015.

⁶ Children's Services Regulation Strategy 2025-2030

intervention to address anxiety and depression disorders. Children who lived through 2020 – 2022 lost out on educational and socialisation opportunities, the impact of which is still being felt.

Despite these collective challenges, a proactive development of national and international organisations whose sole focus is to provide education and advocacy of child safety has occurred. As a result, more children than ever are aware of their rights, and more adults conscious of the importance of a healthy safe childhood on positive outcomes for children.

Overarching Thematic Focus

This strategy is built on the recognition that for children to grow, develop and learn, they need to be provided with safe spaces where the risk of harm is both recognised and minimised. We aim to galvanize and inform systems to achieve greater safety for children. To achieve this impact the CSSCU will continue to strengthen its work through focus upon specific themes set out as follows

- **Governance:** To effectively address the behavioural, social, and cultural determinants of child safeguarding concerns using the CSS and Section 10⁷ as a mechanism to inform the awareness within organisations of the risks they may encounter and ensuring participants in their services remain safe from harm in so far as is possible.
- **Risk:** To support inclusive and effective risk assessment that creates a wide understanding of safeguarding in a wide range of circumstances.
- **Services of Concern:** To effectively identify and respond to services of concern using the CSS as a core intervention in demonstrating safeguarding implementation.
- **Enforcement and referral:** Take a proactive but proportionate risk-based approach to enforcement to ensure effective and robust approach to safeguarding.

⁷ Part 2, Section 10, Children First Act 2015.

Strategic Programming Approach

A child centred rights-based approach to improving the quality of safeguarding within Relevant Services underpins the way we work with all stakeholders. The four Programming Strategies work concurrently and influence each other in how they impact to achieve outputs of improved safeguarding for children.



Delivery Focus

Programming Strategies	Governance: To effectively address the behavioural, social, and cultural determinants impacting child safeguarding using the CSS as a mechanism to inform and raise awareness within organisations of the risks they may need to consider in ensuring children using their services remain safe from harm. Risk: To support inclusive and effective risk assessment that creates a broader understanding of safeguarding in contexts for children.
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	Services of Concern: To effectively identify and respond to services of concern using the CSS as a tool to identify and assess the implementation of safeguarding practices. Enforcement: Take a proactive but proportionate risk-based approach to enforcement to promote effective compliance by relevant providers with their legislatively prescribed safeguarding duties.⁸
Thematic Priorities	<i>Child Exploitation & Child Victim of Trafficking</i> <i>Online Safety</i> <i>Youth mental health</i>
We will measure success by:	1) Supporting Relevant Services to achieve effective governance using the Child Safeguarding Statement to assess and support safeguarding in their organisations. 2) Strong interagency and intra agency partnerships through engagement with the Interdepartmental Interagency Group as convened by the Department of Children Equality Disability Integration and Youth under Part 4 of the Children First Act 2015. 3) Focusing on thematic priorities of Online Safety, Child Exploitation and Child Victims of Trafficking, and Youth Mental Health, for informing the Risk Assessment framework and engagement with services prioritising a child centred approach to service provision. 4) Enforcement used in a strategic way to inform a robust approach to safeguarding
Support to effective governance in Relevant Services using the Child	• By supporting services to develop leadership and governance of safeguarding practice and procedures. • By providing information, guidance, and support to provider organisations the CSSCU will enable them to effectively implement child safeguarding statements at a service delivery level. • By ensuring services are informed of their oversight responsibilities.

⁸ See Part 2, Section 10, Children First Act 2015.

Safeguarding Statement.	• Using the CSS to continue to support relevant services to implement effective governance of safeguarding practices and structures. • By building capacity to impact and influence a wide range of stakeholders through proactive engagement and partnerships with oversight bodies. • By publication of regular data trends in compliance and enforcement.
Strong interagency and intra agency partnerships	• Through engagement with the Interdepartmental Interagency Group as convened by the Department of Children Equality Disability Integration and Youth under Part 4 of the Children First Act 2015. The CSSCU will develop engagements with Coimisiun na Meán (the Media Commissioner) to support the development of safer online environments for children to interact. • Continue to work with oversight and provider bodies that educate and identify young people at risk of exploitation and trafficking. • Enhanced partnership with the Mental Health Commission and other youth mental health services and organisations. • Enhanced partnership with CFIAS
Focus on thematic priorities of Online Safety, Child Exploitation and Child Victims of Trafficking, and Youth Mental Health, for informing the Risk Assessment framework	• By supporting the upskilling and knowledge of relevant organisations to equip them in the development of appropriate responses to these challenges. • Identify and support access to compliance supports for non-funded providers. • By taking a risk-based approach to formally requesting CSS from Relevant Services and reviewing for compliance particularly with services of concern • Using the CSS risk assessment process to enhance awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation, Child Trafficking and Harmful practices towards Children.
Enforcement used in a strategic way to	• Risk informed reduction of the supportive compliance methodology • The publication of statistics concerning enforcement action.

inform a robust approach to safeguarding	• Promoting a wider awareness of the complementarity between the duties of care mandated by regulations and the Children First Act 2015 in regulated children’s services. • Expansion of the intelligence-based approach to enforcement, • Expansion of the compliance judgement framework to include suitability of underpinning policy and procedures
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Conclusion

This strategy is intended to inform the business priorities of the CSSCU from 2025 – 2027. It reflects an approach where each strand enhances the other. A programme of specific project and business plans will be developed for each year of the strategy.

At a minimum, parents should be afforded assurance that relevant services for children are better equipped to face the growing complexity of effective safeguarding in the digital and transglobal age.

References

- Unicef Child Protection Strategy <https://www.unicef.org/documents/child-protection-strategy>
- Unicef Strategic Plan 2022 – 2025, <https://www.unicef.org/reports/unicef-strategic-plan-2022-2025>
- Unicef’s Child focused Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 16, <https://www.unicef.org/media/138161/file/SDG%2016%202023%20rev.pdf>
- Keeping Children Safe <https://www.keepingchildrensafe.global/>
- Keeping Children Safe in education <https://www.gov.uk/education/safeguarding-pupils>
- Australian Childhood Foundation <https://professionals.childhood.org.au/safeguarding-children-services-old/how-we-help/>
- Tusla Corporate Plan 2024-2026 [Corporate Plan 2024 - 2026Tusla - Child and Family Agency](#)
- Tusla Children’s Services Regulation Strategy [CSR- STRAT CSR Strategy.pdf](#)

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