



Child Safeguarding Statement

Created By: (Initials & Date)	SL December 2017
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Approved by Board:	13 th March 2019

1. Name of service being provided:

Sonas Domestic Violence Charity

2. Nature of service and principles to safeguard children from harm

Sonas is the largest provider of domestic violence support services in the State, with over 1,200 women and children supported in 2018 across the greater Dublin region. We support victims of domestic abuse through dedicated support teams working across services. For more information on services see www.domesticabuse.ie

Our approach is client-centred, needs-led and outcomes focused. Our model of work is informed by a public health analysis of domestic abuse recognising the disproportionate impact of domestic abuse on women and children. Our guiding principles include early intervention and prevention with particular strengths in secondary prevention, working with families, diversity of client base/ service users and additional and complex needs. We work from a rights based perspective.

We provide the most comprehensive range of support services in the country to victims of domestic abuse including: refuge, helpline, community-based services including visiting support, outreach and court accompaniment, accommodation based services including Safe Homes and supported housing for victims with additional and complex needs.



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A list of all Sonas services and locations is included in Appendix 1. Services are delivered to children and young people in the following services: refuge, Safe Home, and supported housing. Support to children and young people in community based services (Visiting Support Service and Outreach) are primarily provided through their mothers and take the form of safety and parenting advice in the context of domestic abuse.

Key Principles of best practice in child protection and welfare:

- The welfare of children and young people is of paramount importance.
- A proper balance must be struck between protecting children / young people and respecting the rights and needs of parents/carers and families. Where there is conflict, the child's welfare must come first.
- Children and young people have a right to be heard, listened to and taken seriously. Taking account of their age and understanding, they should be consulted and involved in all matters and decisions that may affect their lives.
- Parents/carers have a right to respect and should be consulted and involved in matters that concern their family.
- Factors such as the child's / young person's family circumstances, gender, age, stage of development, religion, culture and race should be considered when taking protective action. Intervention should not deal with the child / young person in isolation; the child's / young person's circumstances must be understood within a family context.
- The criminal dimension of any action must not be ignored.

3. Risk Assessment

We carry out an assessment of any potential harm to a child while they are in our services. Below is the list of the areas of risk identified and the list of procedures for managing the identified risks.



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	Risk Identified	Procedure in place to manage risk identified
1	Risk from staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sonas has robust policies and procedures in place relating to the recruitment of staff, and working with children which are in line with HSE guidelines and The Children First Act 2015. • Sonas provides significant time and resources to the selection and recruitment of all staff. • All Sonas staff are Garda Vetted, as part of the recruitment process, and re-vetted every three years thereafter. • Sonas provides ongoing training and support to staff in relation to child welfare arrangements. • All staff receive Children First training, which is updated every three years. • Sonas has 7 Designated Liaison Persons (with at least 1 of them on duty at all times). • All staff are skilled and trained to identify any potential risks of harm to a child or young person and contact the designated liaison person (DLP) to discuss devising a report to Tusla in accordance with the Children First Act 2015. • Sonas Children and young peoples’ rooms (in the supported housing complexes) are equipped with recording cameras. • Sonas will always have two staff members present when working with children and young people groups and 1 to 1 unless the child’s mother is present. • All Sonas complexes have CCTV monitoring the external perimeters of buildings, and in some services, the communal areas of buildings.
2	Risk from alleged perpetrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sonas staff carry out risk assessments with every client to develop risk management plans. • All visitors to Sonas clients are required to sign in and out of refuge, and if staying overnight in Sonas accommodation based services. Visitors are not permitted in Safe Homes. • All Sonas complexes have CCTV monitoring the external perimeters of buildings, and in some services, the communal areas of buildings.
3	Risk from a client (mothers) and other adults living in a Sonas service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All women that access a Sonas service are aware of policies and procedures in place relating to work with children and are in line with HSE guidelines and Children First Act 2015. • All front line staff are trained to support women - or their children but also to identify and report any potential risks of harm to a child or young person.



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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All visitors to Sonas clients are required to sign in and out of refuge, and if staying overnight in Sonas accommodation based services. Visitors are not permitted in Safe Homes. • All Sonas complexes have CCTV monitoring the external perimeters of buildings, and in some services, the communal areas of buildings.
4	Risk from other adult clients (Visitors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All visitors that access Sonas refuge have to sign in and out of the building, and all external professionals that visit clients in Sonas supported housing complexes sign in and out. • Visitors are not permitted in Safe Homes. • There will be always another staff member onsite when a visitor is in the building. • Following best practice guidelines 2 staff members will be onsite when children are availing of the children’s service. • All Sonas complexes have CCTV monitoring the external perimeters of buildings, and in some services, the communal areas of buildings.
5	Risk from other workers on site (including Contractors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sonas uses a selection process to ensure that any contractor appointed to do work for, or on behalf of, Sonas has the necessary competence for the work that they are engaged to do. • Sonas contractors sign a declaration that they will comply with all policies and procedures. • All contractors have to sign in and out of a Sonas service when carrying out work. • Sonas staff are onsite when works are being carried out to offices and children’s rooms. • All Sonas complexes have CCTV monitoring the external perimeters of buildings, and in some services, the communal areas of buildings.
6	Risk from other adult clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All visitors that access a Sonas accommodation based service must sign in and out of the building. • All Sonas complexes have CCTV monitoring the external perimeters of buildings, and in some services, the communal areas of buildings.



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4. Procedures

Our Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, The Children First National Guidance For the Protection of Children 2017 and Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice (2017). 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 services:

- Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child availing of a Sonas 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.

5. Implementation

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 every year, or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers. For queries, please contact Todd Prevost (Relevant Person under the Children First Act 2015).

Signed: Fiona Ryan, CEO

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