

Aware Child Safeguarding Statement

Document Title: Aware Child Safeguarding Statement

Document Developed by: Emma Barnes, Volunteer Training and Online Support

Document Approved by: Aware CEO

First Approval Date: 18th May 2018

Responsibility for Implementation: All staff/volunteers

Responsibility for Review and Audit: Service Management Team

1st Review date: 18th May 2020

Revised date: 1st June 2021

Next review date: 1st June 2023 or earlier if deemed necessary.

Reviewed: 11th February 2025 by Director of Services, Mr. Stephen McBride.

Safeguarding is the action that is taken to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. The safety and welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. As and from 1st July 2017 all staff, training partners and volunteers must comply with Aware's Child Safeguarding Statement. This document was developed in conjunction with:

- *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*
- *Guidance on Developing a Child Safeguarding Statement* (www.tusla.ie)
- *Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice* (www.tusla.ie)

1. Name of service being provided:

Aware undertakes to create a society where people affected by stress, depression, bipolar and mood disorders are understood, supported, free from stigma, and are encouraged to access appropriate therapies. Aware provides a range of supports and services which include:

- Life Skills in Schools. Support Services – Support and Self Care groups, Support Line and Support Mail. Adult educational programmes – Life Skills (online and group), Relatives and Friends Programme, Living Well With Bipolar Disorder Programme, Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Programme, The Solace Café Services, The Aware Counselling Service.

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

- Life Skills is a free programme delivered at the request of the school to senior cycle students aged 15 and over. Life Skills is designed to help young people learn new ways to deal with concerns and challenges in life and is delivered over 4 sessions of 90 minutes per session. It uses an approach based on the principles of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) which focuses on thinking and behaviour. This educational programme is delivered on school premises and in a virtual setting by an Aware training partner (paid contractors). A teacher must be present throughout programme delivery. Any issues or concerns which come to the attention of the training partners

are brought to the school's attention. All training partners comply with Aware Confidentiality and Risk Management Policy (updated April 2021):

https://www.aware.ie/images/uploads/general/Aware_Confidentiality_and_Risk_Management_policy_V8_April_2021.pdf

- Adult educational programmes (Life Skills (online and group) and Relatives and Friends programme), Living Well With Bipolar Disorder Programme, Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Programme are delivered by Aware training partners and mental health professionals. The programmes are for individuals aged 18 and over. All training partners comply with Aware Confidentiality and Risk Management Policy (updated April 2021). See above for the link to Aware's policy.
- Support services (Support and Self Care groups, Support Line and Support Mail) are delivered by trained volunteers. The services are for people aged 18 and over. The services delivered are non-directive and provide a proactive listening environment for individuals to gain support and explore helpful options. All volunteers comply with Aware Confidentiality and Risk Management Policy (updated April 2021). See above for the link to Aware's policy.
- Aware also provide a counselling service, as well as a Solace Café support service to people experiencing mental health challenges.
- Staff, volunteers, and training partners have access to relevant information and role description regarding the post prior to applying for the role. The selected applicants engage in a thorough selection process which includes an application form, interview, reference checks and Garda Vetting. They receive extensive initial and ongoing training/supervision and take part in regular quality checks. Prior to commencing in the role all staff, training partners and volunteer must complete the online Children First training and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults at Risk of Abuse training. Aware commits to ensure that where there is suspected harm, abuse or neglect occurring to a child or vulnerable adult that Aware staff, training partners and volunteers will effectively deal with the matter in a timely, appropriate, and professional manner.

We will adhere to the following:

- Recognise that the protection and welfare of children is paramount, regardless of all other considerations.
- Fully comply with its statutory obligations under the Children First Act 2015 and other relevant legislation relating to the protection and welfare of children.
- Fully co-operate with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters
- Adopt safe practices to minimise the possibility of harm to children, vulnerable adults at risk of abuse and staff.
- Fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.

3. Risk Assessment

Aware accepts that risk exists in all aspects and all levels within organisations. Risk management is undertaken to identify, mitigate and positively manage the level and types of risk. We have carried out an assessment of any potential form of harm to a child while availing of our services. Below is a list of the areas of risk identified and the list of procedures for managing these risks.

	Risk identified	Procedure in place to manage identified risk
1	Unsuitable adults having access to young people	Recruitment procedures: application process, interview, reference checks and online Children First training. Adherence to the statutory vetting requirements of the National Vetting Bureau.
2	Unsupervised access to a young person	A teacher must be present during the delivery of the programme
3	Disclosure of neglect, abuse or harm current or past	Induction training for all staff, training partners and volunteers. Any concerns or issues are brought to the attention of the school and actioned by DLP see Confidentiality and Risk Management Policy
4	Appropriate management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against staff, volunteers, or students	Online Children First training. Child protection training for DLPs Clearly defined Confidentiality and Risk Management Policy HR policies and procedures.

4. 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 safe recruitment, selection and training of staff, training partners and volunteers.
- Procedure for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla.
- Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against Aware's staff, training partners and volunteers.
- Procedure for appointing a relevant person.
- Procedure for maintaining a list of the persons (if any) in the relevant service who are mandated persons.
- Complaint's procedure.


All procedures listed are available upon request.

5. Implementation

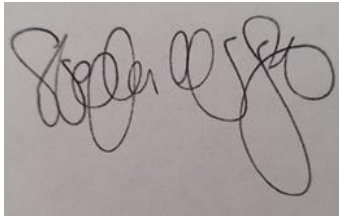
We recognise that implementation is an on-going process. Our service is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while availing of our service.

This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed 1st June 2023, or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

This statement was reviewed and edited by Director of Services, Mr. Stephen McBride on 11th February 2025.

Signed:  (Provider)
[Dominic Layden, CEO]

Date 1st June 2021



Signed:
[Stephen McBride, Director of Services]

Date: 11th February 2025

For queries, please contact Emma Barnes at confidentiality@aware.ie, Relevant Person under the Children First Act 2015.