



A Framework, Principles and Standards for Specialist Domestic Violence Services in Ireland

2015

About SAFE Ireland

SAFE Ireland is a young, innovative and strategic national organisation.

We work with 40 specialist domestic violence member organisations across Ireland. Together we provide a range of services to support the safety and well being of 12,000 women and children annually. Through this work we understand the complexities, impact and pervasiveness of domestic violence in Ireland. We believe that Ireland has the potential to become one of the safest countries for women and children.

We work to centre stage the needs and experiences of women and children who are impacted by domestic violence. Through bringing a deeper understanding of women and children's needs and experiences we develop awareness and interventions to prevent domestic violence and to transform the state services and social responses to domestic violence. We lead research and disseminate good practice to our members, other professionals and statutory bodies.

We work in collaboration with our members, government departments, state agencies, relevant stakeholders and international partners to progress a change agenda. We want society to take responsibility for the eradication of violence against women.

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Foreword

Centre-staging the experience of women and children has been a key priority of SAFE Ireland and its members for the past decade. This priority has been an imperative at a time when the dividend of feminist activism is surfacing in national and European legislation¹ marking increasing engagement on violence against women and domestic violence at state, institutional, and international levels. If those affected by violence are to be supported to a safe, healthy and meaningful quality of life then legal instruments, political, social, cultural and economic responses must be informed by the experiences of survivors of violence and those who work to support and empower them.

In attending to women and their children, their experiences and their feedback, services have built up a store of specialised practice knowledge and skills in responding to those affected by domestic abuse. Individualised responses to women and children in crisis is time consuming, requires prioritising of pressing matters such as physical safety and protection and is generally inadequately resourced. However, through building a strong network together, acting on commitments to collective learning, systematically building a body of evidence based research, and collaborating with a variety of experts, the body of best practice knowledge of Irish specialist domestic violence services has finally been collated into this SAFE Ireland publication of principles of practice and related standards under the framework of social and emotional well-being.

The credibility of this document is based on SAFE Ireland members' experiences of attending to women and children for over 40 years. We know they are reflecting their service users' needs and interests because:

- SAFE Ireland talks directly to women and their children affected by domestic violence
- SAFE Ireland has evaluated and learned from women's experiences with their member services
- Irish women's experience of domestic violence and responses to domestic violence and what supports them is matched with experiences of women internationally
- The principles and standards emerging, based on this experience, match international best practice principles and standards as outlined in the accompanying framework document.

When a woman and her child, affected by domestic violence, come forward for support, the first point of contact can determine the trajectory of their personal circumstances either towards or away from the shame and secrecy of abuse. Beyond crisis, the empowering quality of their relationship with service personnel can determine the extent of growth of hopefulness, emotional well-being, autonomy and self-efficacy. To become survivors, the woman and her child require coordinated integrated responses which deliver safety, justice, social connectedness, and access to community resources. To flourish in the longer term, survivors and their children require fair and equal access to the same nurturing interpersonal, social and economic conditions that determine the social and emotional well-being of us all. The following principles and standards communicate the key criteria for services to ensure they achieve the desired outcome of high quality services and the long term safety and well-being of all who experience domestic violence.

Cris M. Sullivan PH. D
Michigan State University
USA



¹ Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (2011); European Unions' Victims' Rights Directive (2012); Child and Family Agency Act 2013;

Introduction

In keeping with its commitment to accountable, transparent and consistent quality services to those affected by domestic violence, SAFE Ireland is publishing a Framework, Principles and Standards to guide the provision of domestic violence services in Ireland.

This framework and standards has been drawn up following extensive consultations with domestic violence services for women, the HSE Children and Families National Office and more recently Tusla, the Child and Family Agency who hold statutory responsibility for services to those affected by domestic violence since 2014. The document articulates existing theory and good practice already operating in domestic services in Ireland, on emerging practice and feedback from women and children who have used our member domestic violence services.

In publishing this service model and standards, SAFE Ireland is clearly contributing to the government's National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence 2010-14 'to deliver an effective and consistent service' to those affected by violence². SAFE Ireland has been working towards a framework and national standards for a number of years³, systematically building an extensive body of knowledge to inform this framework. Since 2012, SAFE Ireland as part of its service level arrangement with the HSE, agreed to develop a framework and standards for domestic violence services in Ireland. This document strongly supports the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People (2014-2020)⁴ in ensuring better outcomes for children and Tusla's strategic objectives⁵ of improving the quality and focus of services to make life better, safer, happier for children, young people and their families.

In documenting a rationale for the activities of services and setting standards, SAFE Ireland has worked closely with Professor Cris Sullivan, Director of the Research Consortium on Gender-based Violence at Michigan State University and Senior Research Advisor to the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, who has developed a national framework for domestic violence services in the United States. Prof Sullivan has worked with domestic violence services in Ireland to incorporate the evidence base in Ireland with emerging evidence from other countries to inform a national framework for Ireland.

It is important to note here that the principles and standards are grounded in the 'A framework for domestic violence service provision to women and children in Ireland' (2015) drawn up by SAFE Ireland under the direction of Professor Cris Sullivan and in consultation with member services. The framework documents comprehensively details why specialist organisations do what they do and what outcomes they expect to achieve (see diagram). The principles and standards contribute to further articulating and documenting the principles, theory and practice model through communicating the key practice criteria for services to ensure they achieve the desired outcome of women's and children's long-term wellbeing.

The 'A framework for domestic violence service provision to women and children in Ireland' provides extensive research evidence supporting the effectiveness of specialist services and, while a brief outline is presented here, the full publication can be accessed from SAFE Ireland. The framework echoes national strategies in seeking to promote recognition and understanding of domestic violence, and to provide responses with defined outcomes which are evidence-based. The factors targeted for change are described in terms of how they impact on wellbeing i.e. *risk factors* may lead to negative outcomes, *protective factors* reduce the likelihood of negative impacts, and *promotive factors* contribute to positive outcomes. Refuges and support services do reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors that have been linked to re-victimisation and

² Action 6.5 of the National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence. <http://www.cosc.ie/en/COSC/Final%20Electronic%20NS%20full%20doc%203%20March.pdf/Files/Final%20Electronic%20NS%20full%20doc%203%20March.pdf>

³ See SAFE Ireland Strategic Plan 2008 – 2012. <http://www.safeireland.ie/about-us/strategic-plan-2008-2012/>

⁴ http://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/cypp_framework/BetterOutcomesBetterFutureReport.pdf

⁵ http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/news/Tusla_Corporate_Plan_2015_-_2017.pdf

impaired wellbeing. However, they are interested in more than preventing a negative event (e.g., abuse, PTSD) from occurring. The primary focus of specialist domestic violence services is to enhance *promotive factors* that contribute to women and children's long-term wellbeing.

The empirical research presented in the framework informs us that intra-personal, e.g. *hope and self-efficacy*, and inter-personal and social factors, e.g. *social connectedness, equality and access to resources*, have a positive impact on emotional and social wellbeing. In addition, predictors of wellbeing for children are related to resilience arising from having a secure attachment to a non-abusive parent, a positive self-concept, social and relational competence and a strong support network. Specialist services and their activities are designed, therefore, to lead to those factors which we know have a positive impact on the long-term wellbeing of women and children affected by domestic violence.

Evidence is presented within the framework document that supports the effectiveness of specialist services. Findings show that women using specialist services feel safer, more hopeful about the future and have a strategy to keep themselves and their children safe. Access to support and advocacy services, women and children experiencing less violence, leads to increased access to resources and social supports and improved quality of life. Studies indicate that empowering practices lead to sustained engagement; reduced isolation, depression, anxiety and trauma-related symptoms; and increased self-efficacy and hopefulness towards long-term wellbeing and safety. There is evidence that support programmes to both children and their mothers reduce the negative impacts on their relationship arising from violence and abuse; increase safety and self-esteem for children; and increase parental skills and confidence for mothers.

Principles and standards are key components in ensuring the quality and safety of those using services. The principles and standards presented here are informed by existing standards and guidelines operating in services, by current legislation and research findings on best practice. As such, these standards are informed by women's and children's lived experiences of domestic violence and their need for non-judgemental acknowledgement and validation of these experiences as they receive a service. Each principle is described in terms of the intended outcome, and there is a brief description of how each principle applies in a domestic violence context. Standards provide a baseline for those with the responsibility for providing services to (i) assess the quality of delivery, (ii) strategically develop appropriate and sustainable improvements, and (iii) provide continuity and stability to those who seek support. The standards are therefore presented under four areas which reflect the dimensions of a quality service. Several standards relate to each principle and map how the service in its actions and activities meets the relevant over-arching principle.

The principles and standards are key priority actions in respect to developing standardisation within SAFE Ireland member services. They represent a model of policies and procedures which we hope will be incorporated into service level agreements and against which services will be quality benchmarked. SAFE Ireland will work diligently with its members to review policies and procedures to ensure equal access to consistent quality services for all women and children. A key factor for SAFE Ireland will be ensuring that standards are credibly evidenced. Many examples of presenting evidence of meeting standards are indicated and draw from agency documents, policies and procedures, but standards can also be assessed through structured conversations with management, staff and service users.

This document provides clear information for service users, other agencies and professionals about SAFE Ireland's members' expectations of themselves and their way of working, to uphold, assert and strengthen the right of women and children to a non-violent family life. It is hoped these standards will reinforce members' efforts to maximise access, quality and positive outcomes for women and children. They are also expected to positively contribute to the wider community of statutory bodies, agencies, professionals, advocates and community groups committed to working for the emotional and social wellbeing of women and children affected by domestic violence.

Figure 1. Theory of change underlying how domestic violence services activities impact adult and child service users' wellbeing.



The Principles

Principle 1: Safety of women and children:

Outcome: The ongoing threat to the safety and security of women and children due to domestic violence is prioritised while it cannot be guaranteed.

Women and children need immediate and long-term support to assist them towards safety from violence. Services to those experiencing domestic violence cannot guarantee the safety of those affected by domestic violence. It is understood that the abuser is ultimately responsible for his abusive behaviour. Victim safety is dependent on a diverse range of factors including the responses of state institutions and other agencies in relation to protection, deterrence and prosecution, and the level of understanding and support for those affected by domestic abuse in the local and wider community. Safety planning thus involves a multi-agency response to manage risk. Post crisis, services are focused on the psychological and emotional impacts of domestic abuse and advocacy to access justice, welfare, social and community supports to ensure long-term safety, health and wellbeing for both women and their children.

Principle 2: Confidentiality

Outcome: The service respects and upholds the right to confidentiality of information provided by women and ensures that they are informed of situations where that confidentiality may be limited.

Confidentiality in relation to written and spoken communication is extremely important when responding to women affected by domestic violence. A breach could jeopardise the safety of a woman, her children and her associates. Furthermore, observing commitments in relation to confidentiality and sharing information provided by women supports trust building, disclosures of abuse and continued engagement in seeking support. While some children will confide in adults other than parents to have their needs met, confidentiality has to be limited in relation to children because of their age and dependency on adults for their protection and care.

Principle 3: Diversity and fair access

Outcome: The service recognises and caters to the diverse needs of women and children.

All women must be able to access the resources and support systems necessary for their safety. Women from certain backgrounds may face additional barriers when accessing services such as racism or discrimination based on poverty, ethnicity, refugee status, immigrant and residency status, age, sexual orientation, employment status, mental health, substance misuse, disability, geographical location, or other social identity factors. Services operate an inclusive approach to meeting the diverse needs of women and children to enhance the likelihood of their receiving an equitable level of service in relation to their needs from domestic violence services and other agencies.

Principle 4:

Working from a gendered understanding of violence against women

Outcome: The service provides an approach that recognises the gendered dynamics, impact and consequences of violence against women and understands that violence against women is both a cause and consequence of inequalities between men and women.

Domestic violence is unacceptable and an abuse of human rights. It is understood as a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour which is rooted in issues of power and control and the perpetrator's sense of entitlement within relationships. Where domestic and sexual violence is perpetrated by men against women this is a consequence of, and reflects and reinforces, the historical unequal power relations between men and women in society. Children are also subjected to domestic violence through direct violence or witnessing violence or undermining of the mother's parenting capacity to protect them. The gender of children may be a potential factor in the dynamics of abuse within a family and lead to different experiences and effects of domestic violence for children within the same family.

Principle 5:

Advocacy for services and system change

Outcome: Women and children affected by domestic violence have access to appropriate advocacy for their needs.

Empowerment-based advocacy involves working actively with and on behalf of women and children to help them gain access to protection, justice, resources and opportunities. Advocacy may involve supporting a woman to advocate on her own behalf or advocating for her with her consent. Advocacy at individual and system levels is critical to removing barriers to living free of abuse for women and children. Responses may fail to help and some may re-victimise a woman and her children or make the situation worse. To advocate effectively, domestic violence services need to be seen to be acting independent of criminal justice, local authority and other statutory agencies.

Principle 6:

Empowerment

Outcome: The skills and knowledge of women and children are acknowledged and they are actively involved in determining their needs and support responses towards greater emotional and social wellbeing.

Empowerment involves interacting with women and children to increase their personal, interpersonal and social power. Operating from a position of *power with* individuals rather than *power over* creates a non-judgemental, non-coercive and supportive environment. It is important to take into account the effects of the range of domestic abuses on a woman's confidence, self-esteem and capacity to meet her own and her children's needs. Engaging in a collaborative process with the woman may undo and mitigate these negative effects and may enhance the woman's self-efficacy. It is often not enough to change the way an individual thinks and feels, factors at interpersonal and societal levels need to be addressed as well. Empowerment outcomes may differ for women generally and where intercultural issues arise they may require sensitive consideration and respectful discussion. Empowerment requires that services work to support women and children in determining the service they receive but also requires that service providers actively consult with women and children in planning the development and delivery of services.

Principle 7: Consultative and coordinated response

Outcome: The service interacts with other relevant agencies to seek consistent quality responses to those affected by domestic violence and contribute to zero tolerance of gender-based violence.

Coordinated inter-agency responses to domestic violence are recognised as key to holding those who abuse accountable for their behaviour and key to effectiveness in providing services to those affected by domestic violence. Women and children's wellbeing is directly impacted by the level of supports and opportunities available in their environments. Social wellbeing has to do with the extent to which one has the material and interpersonal resources needed to be healthy, safe, and happy. Working together, coordinated responses represent a holistic response to optimise the safety and wellbeing needs of women and children. These responses involve agencies consulting together to create clear client-centred pathways through the justice, health, housing and other systems. They also aim to empower the woman, reduce duplication and any victimisation of the woman and her children by the system.

Principle 8: Understanding and being sensitive to the trauma caused by violence and abuse

Outcome: The service is delivered with understanding and sensitivity to the complex effects of trauma on a woman's body, behaviour, feelings, thinking and social engagement.

Providing for the emotional safety of service users is a crucial part of the work of domestic violence services. It is central to a woman-centred response to domestic violence, to acknowledge and work with the strengths and capacities of women in coping with domestic violence in order to draw on women's own resources to take control of their lives in a meaningful and sustainable way. However, some women and children need help to recover from the traumatic effects of domestic violence and other lifetime abuse. Intolerable levels of stress from persistent exposure to abuse can lead to women feeling overwhelmed emotionally and physically, and make it difficult to find emotional balance, to make decisions, follow plans, and tend to responsibilities. Trauma effects on children may include emotional and behavioural problems such as nightmares, tantrums, clinginess and poor impulse control. It is important that these effects are recognised as trauma impacts and not a reflection of the life skills capacity of women and children.

Principle 9: Governance and accountability

Outcome: Women and children are supported by a sustainable and effective organisation which operates with transparency and awareness of power in relation to authority, responsibility and accountability.

Effective boards of management operate collectively to ensure the delivery of the organisation's objectives, to set its strategic direction and to meet its financial, employment and legal obligations. Governance is about the way boards of directors and/or management committees work with all stakeholders to ensure clarity about the value base on which power and accountability in the organisation is exercised and the structures through which authority is delegated, decisions made and resources allocated in the interests of women and children. Domestic violence organisations need to be mindful of the use of power and control to promote equality, diversity and inclusiveness, respectful, fair relationships and non-violence across all role areas and in all aspects of their work.

The Standards for Service Provision

Service provision

Principle	Standard
Safety	The service is provided within a confidential, private, safe, separate, women-centred environment in accordance with women's and children's needs.
	The service has policies and procedures to meet all these standards and guide staff and volunteers in their interactions with and on behalf of women and children.
	The service utilises effective assessment for risks at the point of referral and, where services are ongoing, follows up with a comprehensive assessment of risks and priorities which is regularly reviewed.
	The service individualises safety planning through exploring with a woman the specific risks to her and her children, identifying the full range of safety options available and encourages her to select appropriate safety measures, taking on board her current priorities.
	The service, with the consent of the woman, seeks information from other agencies to enable effective assessment of risk and contributes to assessment for risks conducted by other agencies while operating within the confidentiality standards and Child Welfare and Protection Policy.
	The service plans and provides for the emotional safety of service users by addressing the impacts of violence and abuse, including traumatic responses, on women and children.
	Where there is a conflict of interest between the safety needs of children and their mother the service will privilege the child's welfare and the mother will be supported as far as possible to meet this priority.

Principle	Standard
Confidentiality	<p>The service ensures confidentiality at all times and that women are fully informed as early as possible about the exceptions to confidentiality outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to act and provide information to statutory agencies for the protection of a child as required under Children First ● to protect the woman where there is material evidence of real intent and risk of serious harm or danger ● to protect the safety of others when there is reason to believe that they may be at serious risk. <p>In as far as possible, in such exceptional cases, a full explanation will be given to women regarding the necessary procedures that need to be taken.</p>
	There is a policy of signed consent from a woman for the release of confidential information and where confidentiality is breached, because of the exceptions outlined above, the woman is informed and supported.
	Children who disclose abuse to staff ⁶ are informed (appropriate to age) that this information must be shared with others who can help and to prevent further harm and hurt. It is good practice to seek the consent of the mother, where appropriate, when making a report in relation to child protection and welfare, but, regardless of consent, all abuse of children must be reported to the appropriate authorities.
	The service has a confidentiality, data protection and freedom to information policy for service users and providers of services, which includes a policy on record keeping which makes clear how information is recorded, who can access files, how and for how long client records are stored and informs women how they can access their files.
	Women are informed about their role in maintaining the confidentiality and safety of other service users with whom they may come in contact.
	Support is conducted in a way that protects the safety and privacy of staff as much as possible.
Diversity and fair access	The service clearly defines to whom it can and cannot provide services, safety and capacity considerations which may at times restrict access and has an intake process which clearly explains what the service can provide.
	The service provides, and distributes widely, written and accessible information on the organisation, the services available and how to access them, in plain English and other languages and formats, as appropriate and within available resources.
	The service has links with specialist services lead by and for Traveller women, addiction, mental health services, disability, black and ethnic minority groups, lesbian groups and other social identity factors, and uses multi-agency networks to promote awareness and access to services.
	Staff are assisted to improve their practice in working with cultural diversity through supervision, training and peer support.
	Staff are aware of and inquire about the specific needs of women from diverse backgrounds and ensure practices and policies are as inclusive as possible and they are aware of relevant referral options.

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⁶ Staff refers to paid staff and volunteers.

Principle	Standard
Working from a gendered understanding of violence against women	<p>There is an agency definition of domestic violence incorporating the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it is an abuse of power • it is largely perpetrated by men against women • it has gender, social, cultural, political and institutional dimensions • it is most commonly perpetrated by an intimate partner • where it is perpetrated within an intimate relationship, it forms a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour
	Staff and management can describe and work with women regarding the links between gender-based beliefs and domestic and sexual violence against women and the abuse and neglect of children.
	Staff recruitment, inductions and supervision ensure that this gender analysis and rights-based approach is understood and promoted.
	The service makes clear to women and all relevant parties that those who are violent and abusive to other family members need to be held accountable for their behaviour.
	The service operates to support women to assert their rights and abilities to control their own lives and provide a non-blaming, non-judgemental response where service users are listened to and heard with empathy and respect. Case notes and information given to service users show that staff take this approach in their work.
Empowerment	The service will provide timely, proactive support for women that is rights-based, non-judgemental and supports them to exercise control over their own lives, to live without abuse, to fulfil their potential, and to make informed positive choices for themselves and their children. Case notes and information given to service users show that staff take this approach in their work.
	Women's right to receive support will not be conditional on taking legal action against her abuser or on agreeing to attend any kind of programme or service.
	The service will work to support as necessary, children and mothers' (or the relevant non-abusing adult caregiver) relationships and also recognise that each have their own as well as inter-related needs.
	The service has a process for managing the work that includes consulting about and reviewing support plans, assessment for risk, referral and agreeing appropriate levels of support in relation to the needs of women and children.
	Support planning and case management meetings are purposeful collaborative interventions with the woman and her children (of appropriate age), and include identification of their current strengths and skills and case records to show how the service user has been the lead participant in devising, implementing and modifying support plans.
	In support planning and one-to-one contact, staff consider the impacts of domestic violence on women's help-seeking capacity and responses to the abuser's threats and violence (e.g. level of stress and trauma, confusion, diminished entitlement to respond to their own needs, lack of confidence and self-esteem).

Principle	Standard
Understanding and being sensitive to the trauma caused by violence and abuse	The service provides a non-violent, calm, clean, secure and consistent environment for women and children and reviews practices and interactions with service users to ensure they do not contribute to increasing hyper-vigilance in service users.
	Service staff attend to the unique aspects of each woman's and child's story and act in a way that shows they understand recovery is a personal path for each person.
	Service staff are informed and raise women's awareness about traumatic effects on them and their children and how interactions with others may exacerbate fears, anxiety and trauma symptoms, and discuss with them the emotional, physical, spiritual, health and social resources which can support recovery.
	The service provides information about vicarious trauma to staff, and reviews staff policies and procedures, including supervision arrangements, to make sure they support and encourage employee wellbeing.
	The service informs and educates others regarding the impact of domestic violence and traumatic stress on women and their children.
	The service gathers information on contact details about professional counsellors and agencies that understand the impacts and dynamics of domestic violence and can provide trauma-focused interventions.

Multi-agency work

Principle	Standard
Advocacy for services and systems change	Advocacy practice is based on the needs of service users and not those of other agencies and bodies ⁷ . The service prioritises, as the primary responsibility in any multi-agency group, keeping central the safety through empowerment of women and children.
	Advocacy for systems change involves services increasing the understanding of relevant agencies and professionals of the abuser's intent, the types and pattern of abusive behaviours, and the consequent risks and impacts for women and children in order to promote the responses which best meet women's and children's safety, social and emotional wellbeing needs.
	Staff understand and know about legislative and multi-agency service provision relevant to women's and children's needs and are able to support access to these, in particular the criminal and civil justice systems and processes.
	The service should identify, document and update women and children's support plans and file notes to show the work with other agencies to meet the range of needs of the service user.
Consultative and coordinated response	Service staff actively develop professional and collaborative relationships with other relevant services and agencies to enhance access and improve responses to women and children.
	The service participates in policy and strategy developments or reviews locally and nationally (within their given capacity), and contributes to national census or data collection of local services coordinated through SAFE Ireland.
	The service contributes to awareness-raising amongst the judiciary, courts and solicitors, health professionals, the local community and others of domestic violence.
	The service is represented on and participates in relevant inter-agency and community fora to represent the needs of service users, promote understanding of the causes and consequences of violence in intimate relationships and seeks changes in service, social and institutional responses.

⁷ This relates to empowerment and centre-staging experiences of women and children and ensuring services respond to service users' needs and continue policy efforts to make systems flexible and responsive to their needs.

Human resources

Principle	Standard
Governance and accountability	The service works towards providing job descriptions for all staff which make clear their areas of responsibility and to whom they are accountable and provides all staff with a handbook of their terms and conditions which includes processes for addressing staff complaints.
	All relevant volunteers, staff and the governing body are subjected to Garda clearance checks and participate in an induction process which includes training in the gendered dynamics of violence, diversity, rights-based and empowerment practices, an overview of service provision, the management structure and their part in it.
	The board ensures that the service manager has regular support and oversight and that policies and procedures necessary for effective service and staff management are in place, adhered to and undergo regular review.
	Staff have appropriate qualifications and/or experience, receive domestic violence training and are provided with timely guidance, direction and support to ensure effective practice with regular access to supervision, training on emerging issues, and skills development.
	The service provides information about vicarious trauma to staff, and reviews staff policies and procedures, including supervision arrangements, to support and encourage employee wellbeing.
	Safety issues for staff are identified and addressed and there is a policy and procedure for handling safety risks and critical incidents on and off site.

Governance and finance

Principle	Standard
Governance and accountability	Boards of directors accept ultimate responsibility for directing the affairs of the organisation ensuring it is solvent, well-run, and delivering the outcomes for which it has been set up and meets its legal and funding obligations.
	There are documented lines of accountability, communication and reporting within the service, including an effective data collection, financial control and accounting system, clear statements of decisions reserved for the governing body and responsibilities delegated to the service manager.
	The service has a strategic planning and review process to develop and improve services which takes into account national and local priorities, and feedback from external and internal sources.
	The service encourages and addresses feedback from service users and other agencies, especially when planning and evaluating activities.
	The service provides a written statement on the rights and responsibilities of women and children, including giving feedback and making complaints, which is displayed, accessible and brought to their attention on entry to the service and reinforced where necessary.

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SAFE IRELAND

Unit 5, Centre Court

Blyry Industrial Estate

Blyry, Athlone

Co Westmeath

Tel: +353 (0)906 479078

Email: info@safeireland.ie

Website: www.safeireland.ie

Download the SAFE Ireland App



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