National Safeguarding Office
Annual Report 2024



HSE National Safeguarding Office

Annual Report 2024

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Foreword

1.0 Foreword

All adults have the right to live life free from abuse and harm. This includes adults using and receiving health and social care from the HSE and its funded services. This is especially true for adults who, for a variety of reasons, may find themselves at greater risk of harm and abuse. The HSE is committed to ensuring that our services are delivered in a way that upholds human rights, enables choice and that any abuse/harm that occurs to responded to in a way that is proportionate and person centred.

2024 marked another significant year for the HSE National Safeguarding Office. After many years in development the Online System for Adult Safeguarding (OSAS) went live in September 2024. This represents an important step for the NSO team, HSE safeguarding teams, and our wider stakeholders and colleagues in the following ways

- It is a further move towards system wide digital enablement in the HSE
- It increases visibility for adult safeguarding trends and themes enabling research and improvement initiatives
- It supports standardisation of practice across our new regional structures.

The work of the HSE Safeguarding and Protection Teams outlined in this report is supported and complemented by the many strategic, educational and support projects led and enabled by the National Safeguarding Office Team.

On a personal note, 2024 was a hugely important year. In August 2024 I took up my post as the first HSE Chief Social Worker. I look forwarded to continued work with the National Safeguarding Office as we progress the reform programme as outlined in the “Moving Forward; Adult Safeguarding in the HSE” report.





Amanda Casey

Chief Social Worker

Introduction

2.0 Introduction

The Health Service Executive (HSE) aims to provide integrated health and personal social services that meet the highest standards, where people are treated with respect and dignity and can live as independently as possible. The Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse – National Policy and Procedures' (2014) outlines a number of principles to promote the welfare of adults deemed at risk of abuse. This policy was developed to provide a consistent framework and process to prevent and respond to safeguarding concerns across older person's services and disability services. The HSE adult safeguarding policy and regional safeguarding operations are part of a wide range of measures to protect the welfare and safety of adults who may be in vulnerable circumstances and at risk of abuse. These measures also include the confidential recipient, complaints process, open disclosure, incident management framework and risk management policy and procedures.

Adult safeguarding is an evolving area. Current practice is informed by the strong person-centred principles and requirements of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015. Aligning with the strategic direction set out under Sláintecare (2017) the advancement of adult safeguarding is a priority for the HSE and has been identified as one of the common causes of harm in the HSE Patient Safety Strategy (2019-2024). Future reform of adult safeguarding policy and procedures are envisaged with the implementation of the Moving Forward Adult Safeguarding in the Health Services Executive Report (2024) and the health sector adult safeguarding Policy being finalised by the Department of Health and due for publication in 2025. There is an increased focus on the prevention of harm by empowering service users and staff, the anticipation and timely response to risks, as well as the promotion of collaborative integrated work in safeguarding across disciplines, sectors and environments.

The National Safeguarding Office (NSO) was established in 2015 to deliver on the HSE's commitment to promoting the protection, welfare and safeguarding of adults at risk of abuse. It works with many agencies, statutory, voluntary and private, to ensure the HSE adult safeguarding policy is implemented in a consistent manner based on strong human rights principles. The office develops educational/ training materials in safeguarding, prepares national data on safeguarding and develops allied safeguarding procedures, guidelines and other documentation.

Safeguarding and Protection Teams (SPTs) were developed as part of the HSE safeguarding policy implementation with a variety of functions including to undertake screening, assessment, safeguarding planning as well as educational support and oversight of safeguarding activity in older persons and disability services. The NSO has an

enabling and support role to the operational delivery side of adult safeguarding. The operation delivery of the HSE adult safeguarding policy is supported by a network of designated officers (DOs) across older persons and disability services. These DOs have a lead role for screening and notifying cases of alleged abuse and neglect.

The NSO has a role for policy oversight, the development of adult safeguarding education programmes (both eLearning foundation and for designated officers) and practice resources as well as the collection of data. This annual report contains information on significant improvement initiatives including an ICT system (Online System for Adult Safeguarding- OSAS) and the advancement of strengths-based practice known as Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP).

This annual report presents data returns and provides commentary on emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities in adult safeguarding during 2024. Due to the transition to a digital platform, detailed breakdowns are available for reports received from Quarter 1 to Quarter 3, totalling 14,752 concerns. Safeguarding data for Quarter 4 of 2024 will be incorporated into reporting of data for 2025.

The report highlights a continued upward trend in adult safeguarding notifications. As the volume and complexity of reports grow, the capacity to respond remains a significant challenge, particularly in light of ongoing recruitment and retention issues across several regions.

During 2024 the NSO came under the leadership of the Office of Chief Social Worker and as a national office it has a support role across the four defined HSE centre functions of planning, enablement, performance and assurance. The publication in June 2024 of “Moving Forward, Adult safeguarding in the Health Service Executive” sets out key actions and recommendations for reform of adult safeguarding policy, procedures and structures. There is a clear emphasis on embedding a strong safeguarding culture and increasing the visibility of adult safeguarding. The publication of the Department of Health sector wide policy will be a catalyst for changes in structure and operational policy update. In the meanwhile, the NSO under the leadership of the Chief Social Worker has been able to progress on recommendations such as advancing Making Safeguarding Personal and implementation of an Online System for Adult Safeguarding.

As highlighted in previous years, meaningful reform will also require investment and primary legislation. It is hoped that there will be progress in enacting legislation following the publication of the Law Reform Commission's regulatory framework for adult safeguarding and with the impending publication of a national policy on adult safeguarding for the health and social care sector. The impact during 2024 of the HSE pay and numbers strategy has been a real challenge for safeguarding teams and the implementation of the online system for adult safeguarding was very much constrained on supporting end users due to the lack of the Change Champion position. Strengthening the multi-disciplinary capacity of the SPTs remains a key priority including the provision of clinical nurse manager positions on each team.



The HSE National Safeguarding Office

3.0 The HSE National Safeguarding Office

3.1 Mission Statement of the National Safeguarding Office

The National Safeguarding Office (NSO) is committed to the delivery of high-quality adult safeguarding services and reforms that advance person-centeredness and integrated care.

The NSO promotes and advances human rights and autonomy for service users in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act (2015), as well as supporting safer and more responsive services that enhance the human rights of service users and in general promote a human rights agenda for adults.

3.2 Strategic Objectives of the National Safeguarding Office

- Supporting operational delivery.
- Enabling a reform programme and best practice standards.
- Promoting and increasing the visibility of adult safeguarding.
- Advancing and embedding a strong safeguarding culture.

3.2.1 Supporting operational delivery system:

- Support, enable and monitor effective and consistent implementation of HSE adult safeguarding policy and procedures by HSE Safeguarding and Protection Teams (SPTs) and HSE service providers.
- Retain and enhance key functions in areas such as planning, training, public awareness, and data collection.
- Contribute to the development of adult safeguarding performance and outcome-based measures meeting the reporting obligations of the HSE.
- Under the direction of the Chief Social Worker, contribute to the implementation of HSE service plan objectives in relation to adult safeguarding.
- Collect, collate, and publish business intelligence and data in relation to adult safeguarding.
- Develop, deliver, and update national safeguarding learning and development programmes.
- Enhance safeguarding systems and processes by improving and further expanding the Online System for Adult Safeguarding (OSAS).
- Function as a contact point for the Department of Health which monitors adult safeguarding delivery programmes in the HSE.
- Advise (both internally and externally) on policy and practice matters relating to adult safeguarding.
- Maintain a range of specific functions for national response to requests such as freedom of information (FOI) requests, parliamentary questions (PQs), etc.

3.2.2 Enabling reform programme and best practice standards:

- Play a leading role in developing and implementing the reform programme.
- Enable, support and facilitate the implementation of a revised and expanded HSE adult safeguarding policy under the direction of the Chief Social Worker.
- Develop resources and produce guidance materials to underpin a revised and expanded HSE adult safeguarding policy.
- Commission research that informs best practice and processes in adult safeguarding.
- Utilise research findings to drive quality improvement in adult safeguarding practice.
- Revise and update adult safeguarding delivery support materials in line with Sláintecare reforms (Houses of Oireachtas, 2017), the National Standards on Adult Safeguarding (HIQA and MHC, 2019), Moving Forward: Adult Safeguarding in the Health Service Executive (2024) and the Department of Health's policy on adult safeguarding.

3.2.3 Promoting and increasing the visibility of adult safeguarding:

- Lead public awareness campaigns relating to adult safeguarding including World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and Adult Safeguarding Day.
- Under the direction of the Chief Social Worker, facilitate the commissioning of research that drives evidence-based change which advances the rights, welfare and protection of adults at risk of abuse.
- Publish an annual report inclusive of data, emerging issues, and trends on safeguarding concerns.
- Develop a communication strategy with relevant stakeholders.
- Develop practice guidance and tailored resources for relevant stakeholders.
- Promote practice guidance materials and lead and monitor implementation.
- Act as a contact resource for members of the public, HSE staff, HSE funded agencies and other relevant organisations on adult safeguarding matters.
- Contribute to HSE and interagency committees to represent an adult safeguarding perspective.

3.2.4 Advancing and embedding a strong safeguarding culture:

- Promote and contribute to stronger lines of accountability for adult safeguarding.
- Promote learning from review findings.
- Consider ways to establish a repository of adult safeguarding information and learnings from research and reviews.

- Contribute to and advance the work of Safeguarding Ireland (SI) and work to align HSE objectives and SI strategic objectives.
- Facilitate and promote interdisciplinary and interagency engagement with key stakeholders in adult safeguarding.
- Promote the development of regional safeguarding committees in all new regions in line with a revised HSE adult safeguarding policy.
- Recognise emerging developments and trends in adult safeguarding.
- Support the HSE in the implementation plans for service improvements regarding adults at risk of abuse.
- Improve interdisciplinary and interagency collaboration and coordination of responses around adult safeguarding.
- Advance partnership discussions and plans with educators and practice development leads to embed adult safeguarding into their existing education and practice.
- Advance and promote the Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) education and awareness programme and in particular the associated practice tools.
- Promote the use of auditing tools to evaluate consistent practice within adult safeguarding.

3.3 Key Strategic Issues and Areas of Work in 2024 for the National Safeguarding Office

3.3.1 Leading on the preparation and implementation Online System for Adult Safeguarding (OSAS):

2024 has been a very busy period preparing for the implementation of OSAS. The year involved extensive testing alongside user engagements with super users from HSE SPTs and with a range of service providers. Initial “Go Live” in November was paused for a period due to some system stability issues and a reset for early 2025 was agreed with the ICT Project Board. Having a digital platform as an avenue of safe and effective communication is vital. The NSO and the OSAS Governance Board are very mindful of the importance of this vital building block for adult safeguarding’s future developments and business intelligence. There is a need for greater investment in this initiative not just for system enhancements and improvements but acknowledging a risk that the full potential will not be adequately delivered without the support structures at both local and national level.

3.3.2 Preparing for the adult safeguarding reform programme and transition planning:

2024 saw the welcome appointment of a Chief Social Worker. With this development and with the publication of Moving Forward: Adult Safeguarding in the Health Service Executive (McIlroy Report), the NSO has begun preparations for the implementation of a revised HSE operational adult safeguarding policy. The NSO has moved from governance under the HSE Community Health Quality and Patient Safety Office to the Office of the Chief Social Worker, under the overall governance of the Chief Clinical Officer. The programme of reform will be informed and framed within the recommendations of the McIlroy Report and the Department of Health sector wide adult safeguarding policy. Meanwhile the NSO has been working on areas such as advancing Making Safeguarding Personal and looking at research opportunities to advance the reform programme.

3.3.3 Revising education framework and content:

During 2024 the NSO commenced a process to review and update the HSE's safeguarding eLearning programme, Safeguarding Adults at Risk of Abuse. In addition, work has been undertaken to revise the Managers Toolkit to Extend Safeguarding Learning. 2024 has also been a time to take stock of the Designated Officer education programme and there is a need for continual update of content material, greater provision of facilitators and consideration of the most effective delivery medium. Looking ahead to the upcoming reform programme there will need to be consideration of a competency framework and how this could be best applied to the education of Designated Officers.



Data on Safeguarding Concerns

4.0 Data on Safeguarding Concerns

In 2024, the NSO began the transition to the new Online System for Adult Safeguarding (OSAS), marking a significant milestone in how safeguarding concerns are recorded, managed, and reported, further discussed in section 6. This digital platform is a secure, standardised and efficient approach to data collection. As a result of this transition, 2024 will be the final year in which safeguarding data is reported using the previous Microsoft Excel-based system. OSAS was launched in a phased approach, with Phase 1 going live on 2nd September 2024 for community referrals. Phase 2, initially scheduled for 23rd September for service referrals, proceeded as planned but was later rescheduled to 11th November 2024 due to technical challenges. Due to the phased rollout and variation in adoption across CHOs, data for Q4 2024 will not be reported, and all figures presented for 2024 reflect activity from January to September 2024 only. This transition lays the foundation for future reporting to be grounded in a more dependable and consistent data infrastructure, enhancing oversight and informing better service planning.

OSAS and the associated adult safeguarding portals introduces enhanced validation, streamlined workflows, and greater transparency in reporting. These improvements will reduce duplication, improve timeliness, and support more accurate analysis in future reporting cycles.

4.1 Safeguarding Data

A total of 14,752 safeguarding concerns were reported to SPTs between January and September 2024. This represents a 7.5% increase compared to the same 9 month period last year.

CHO 7 recorded 2,800 safeguarding concerns over a nine-month period. This represents over 19% of the national total and the highest volume reported across all CHOs. This regional variation may reflect differences in population size, service configuration, or levels of reporting maturity, and will be further explored in future analyses to inform targeted support and resources. Also in this Community Health Area a resource intensive data review was completed in 2024.

Comparing 9 month data CHO 3 / HSE Mid West recorded the greatest percentage increase in safeguarding referrals, rising by 33%. The most significant relative increase compared to 2023 was observed in the community setting, highlighting a notable shift in referral patterns.

Table 1: Profile of Safeguarding Concerns 2016-2024

CHO	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024*
CHO1	683	764	885	877	828	791	993	1258	948
CHO2	694	678	739	649	650	664	721	859	720
CHO3	639	922	1115	888	697	865	953	1017	1033
CHO4	1026	1117	1733	1730	1342	1583	1880	2927	2213
CHO5	1345	1611	1483	1493	1400	1436	1687	1980	1668
CHO6	477	835	916	1000	955	1078	1166	1365	1173
CHO7	745	1521	2112	1979	1763	2143	2414	3521	2800
CHO8	1133	1445	1499	1339	1547	1627	1829	2693	2090
CHO9	845	1070	923	1264	1402	1457	2061	2670	2107
Total	7587	9963	11405	11219	10584	11644	13704	18290	14752

2024* data is all cases that are recorded in the legacy system (representing 9-month data)

4.1.1 Community/Service Classification by Age Category

Safeguarding concerns reported in the first nine months of 2024 show distinct patterns across age groups and settings. Among adults aged 18–64, the majority of concerns (9,243) originated from service settings, with a smaller proportion (437) from community settings. This age group accounted for a total of 9,680 concerns.

For adults aged 65 and over, 3,191 concerns were reported from service settings and 1,573 from community settings, totaling 4,764 concerns. Nine month comparative data indicates a 15.7% (4,118 in 2023) increase in elder abuse referrals with the increase more evident in the service setting. The community setting continues to show lower reporting rates, which may reflect ongoing challenges in detection and awareness.

Table 2: Safeguarding Concerns by Age Group and Setting

Age Group	Setting	9-Month Total
18–64	Community	437
18–64	Service	9,243
Total 18–64		9,680
65+	Community	1,573
65+	Service	3,191
Total 65+		4,764
All Ages		14,444

4.1.2 Referral Source - 9 month data

The data indicates that voluntary agencies are by far the most significant source of safeguarding referrals, accounting for 68.4% of all cases.

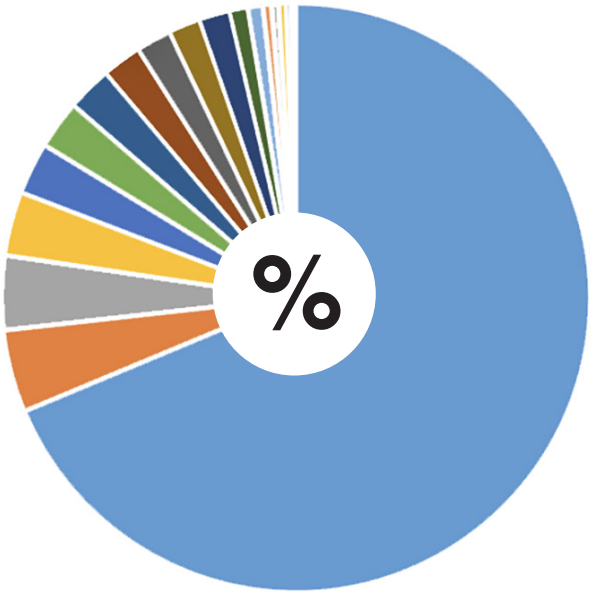
Other notable sources include:

- Hospital staff (4.5%) and PCCC staff (4.1%).
- Nursing homes contribute 5.4%, highlighting the relevance of residential care settings in safeguarding.
- Carers/home helps (2.8%) and private agencies (2.7%) show that community-based care providers are also active in reporting concerns.
- Self-referrals (1.7%) and family (1.7%) indicate a small but meaningful level of direct engagement from individuals and their families.

Less frequent sources of referral such as GPs, Gardaí, and local authorities contribute under 1% each, suggesting potential areas for increased awareness or training to support safeguarding identification.

The “Other” category (2.4%) may warrant further breakdown in future reports to better understand emerging or less-defined referral pathways.

Figure to be included here



Voluntary Agency	10070	68.4%
Hospital Staff	662	4.5%
PCCC Staff	601	4.1%
Nursing Home	512	3.5%
carer/home help	419	2.8%
Private Agency	392	2.7%
Other	360	2.4%
PHN/RGN	317	2.2%
Private Nursing Home	286	1.9%
Self	254	1.7%
Family	249	1.7%
HSE Staff	146	1.0%
GP	123	0.8%
Gardai	67	0.5%
Acutes	60	0.4%
Neighbour/Friend	58	0.4%
Local Authority	39	0.3%
Manager	17	0.1%
CRGN	12	0.1%
Private Provider	11	0.1%
Total	14655	100%

Fig 1: Profile of Referral Sources (9-month data)

4.1.3 Profile of Person Causing Concern by Age Category (9 month data)

Of the 14,752 concerns reported in the first nine months of 2024, 14,572 involved a person allegedly causing concern. The remaining 180 were classified as extreme self-neglect. Among the concerns involving a person allegedly causing concern, 97% (14,110) specified the relationship of that person to the adult at risk of abuse.

For adults aged 18–64 years, peer-on-peer abuse accounted for most concerns (60%), followed by staff (17%) and immediate family members (9%). In the 65–79 age group, immediate family members were identified in 23.5% of cases, with peers and staff accounting for 40% and 17% respectively. Among those aged 80 and over, immediate family members were the alleged source of concern in 33% of cases, while peers and staff represented 26% and 20% respectively.

Table 3: Person Allegedly Causing Concern by Age Category 2024 (9-month data)

Person Allegedly Causing Concern	18-64		65-79		80+		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Other Service User/Peer	5522	60%	893	40%	677	26%	7092	50%
Staff	1555	17%	370	16%	521	20%	2446	17%
Immediate Family member	786	9%	526	23%	867	33%	2179	15%
Other	944	10%	318	14%	345	13%	1607	11%
Other Family Member	101	1%	61	3%	146	6%	308	2%
Neighbour/Friend	124	1%	61	3%	69	3%	254	2%
Stranger	191	2%	14	1%	19	1%	224	2%
Grand Total	**9223**	**100%**	**2243**	**100%**	**2644**	**100%**	**14110**	**100%**

4.1.4 Abuse types alleged by Age Category (9 month data)

In the first nine months of 2024, there were 17,193 abuse types alleged across 14,752 safeguarding concerns. Psychological and physical abuse remain the most frequently reported types.In the 18–64 age category, psychological abuse accounts for 50% of allegations, followed by physical abuse at 33%.

- Among those aged 65–79, psychological abuse represents 39%, with physical abuse at 30% and neglect at 12%.
- In the 80+ age group, psychological abuse (32%), physical abuse (27%), and financial abuse (17%) are the most prevalent.

Table 4: Abuse types (with person allegedly causing concern) by age of adult at risk of abuse (9-month data)

Abuse Types Alleged	18-64 Years		65-79 Years		80+ Years		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Physical	**3544**	**33%**	**860**	**30%**	**949**	**27%**	**5353**	**31%**
Sexual	**473**	**4%**	**92**	**3%**	**112**	**3%**	**677**	**4%**
Psychological	**5378**	**50%**	**1141**	**39%**	**1122**	**32%**	**7641**	**44%**
Financial	**558**	**5%**	**330**	**11%**	**592**	**17%**	**1480**	**9%**
Neglect	**602**	**6%**	**344**	**12%**	**519**	**15%**	**1465**	**9%**
Discriminatory.	**29**	**0%**	**7**	**0%**	**8**	**0%**	**44**	**0%**
Organisational	**147**	**1%**	**44**	**2%**	**76**	**2%**	**267**	**2%**
Self-Neglect	**95**	**1%**	**89**	**3%**	**82**	**2%**	**266**	**2%**
	10826	**100%**	**2907**	**100%**	**3460**	**100%**	**17193**	**100%**

4.1.5 Outcome of the Preliminary Screening (9-month data)

Following a preliminary screening, outcomes are recorded as:

- Reasonable grounds for concern
- No grounds for concern
- Additional information required

Outcomes are reviewed and updated as new information becomes available. Designated Officers determine the outcome, which is agreed with the SPT.

There were outcomes agreed in 13,328 cases on the 9-month 2024 data. Most concerns resulted in reasonable grounds for concern (75%), with smaller proportions classified as no grounds (17%) or awaiting further information (8%).

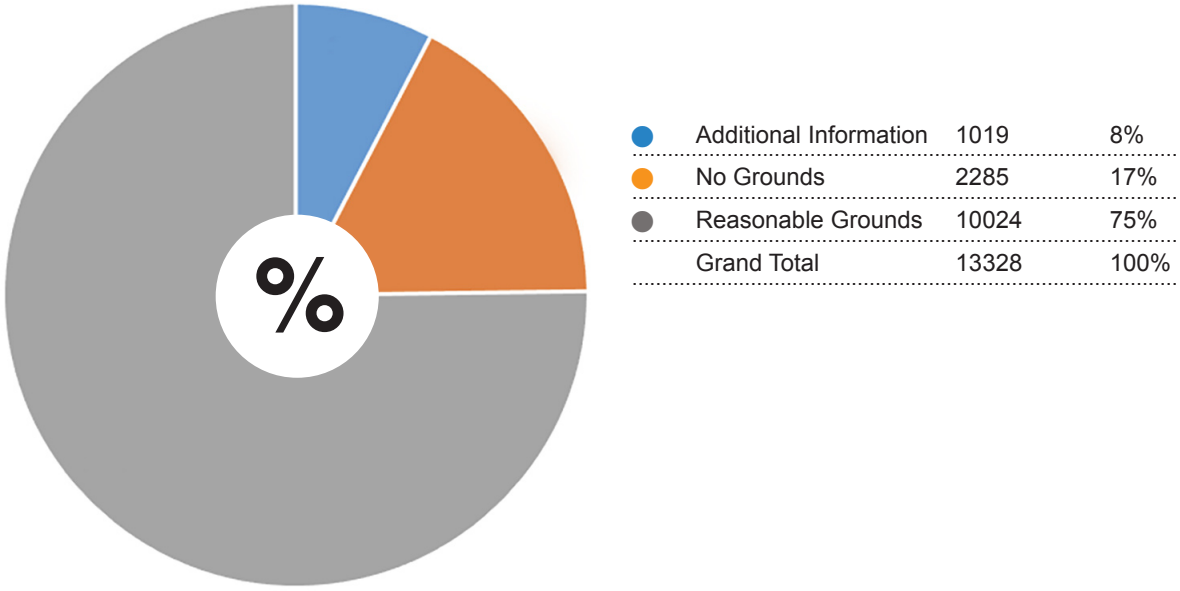


Fig 2: Profile of Outcome Agreed with the Safeguarding and Protection Team (9-month data)



Safeguarding Training, Initiatives and Learning and Development

5.0 Safeguarding Training, Initiatives and Learning and Development

5.1 Staff Safeguarding Training:

2024 saw the continued delivery of the two standardised safeguarding training programmes for staff: a safeguarding adults eLearning programme targeting all staff and a programme for designated officers and others responsible for responding to adult abuse concerns within services. In addition to these programmes a toolkit to extend safeguarding learning is available for services to supplement the minimum required eLearning programme.



5.1.1 Safeguarding adults at risk of abuse eLearning

Provision of the NSO eLearning programme, Safeguarding Adults at Risk of Abuse, on HSeLanD continued in 2024. There have been over 250,000 completions since the programme was launched in 2020.

This sixty-minute module aims to support the learner to recognise, respond and report safeguarding concerns regarding adults at risk of abuse.

Learners get to work through interactive scenarios, consider what their next steps should be in each situation and receive clarification on appropriate next steps.

In 2024, 70,396 staff completed the eLearning programme on HSELanD. This is an increase on the previous year's figure of 66,078 staff completions. The breakdown of completions per quarter is outlined in Table 5 and exceeds the key performance indicator set at 40,000. The breakdown by service area is shown in Figure 3 and is similar to previous years.

Table 5: Safeguarding Adults at Risk of Abuse, staff completions in 2024

Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total 2024
20,695	17,196	17,507	14,998	70,396

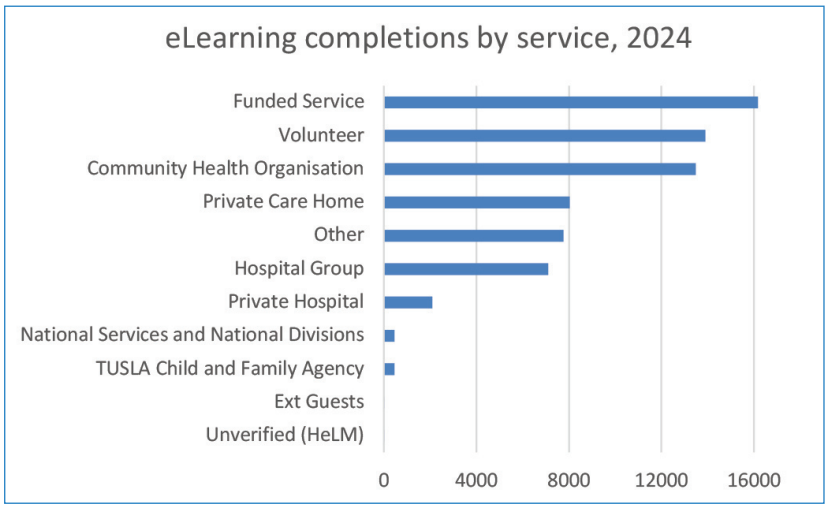


Fig 3: eLearning completions by service, 2024

5.1.2 Extending Safeguarding Learning

The eLearning module contains an 'extend my learning' section which includes resources and tools for staff and managers to extend learning beyond the programme itself and to help advance safeguarding learning in the workplace. This toolkit is designed to be used within services to supplement the minimum required training and promote safeguarding learning on an ongoing basis. It contains a number of activities that can be used to facilitate productive discussion on safeguarding issues to further staff learning. The toolkit is available here and is also available on the training section of the website www.hse.ie/safeguarding

5.1.3 Safeguarding Learning Reference Group

A safeguarding learning reference group was established in 2024. The purpose of this group is to make recommendations on two specific pieces of work being undertaken by the NSO in 2024:

1. Review and update of HSE's safeguarding eLearning programme Safeguarding Adults at Risk of Abuse.
2. Review and revision of the Managers Toolkit to Extend Safeguarding Learning.

Bridget McDaid chaired the group, NSO and membership was drawn from SPTs, voluntary disability services, older person's services, and practice development personnel.

Important revisions and updates to the Safeguarding Adults at Risk of Abuse eLearning programme were recommended by the group and accepted for action. A revised eLearning programme became active on HSeLanD in December 2024.

The group has undertaken significant work to expand on the toolkit to extend safeguarding learning. A substantial number of exercises have been identified for inclusion, and it is hoped this revised resource will be completed and published in 2025.

The NSO is extremely grateful to the membership for their vital contributions to these important pieces of work.

Safeguarding Learning Reference Group membership

Bridget McDaid, Senior Safeguarding & Older Persons Officer, NSO

Donal Hurley, Principal Social Worker, NSO

Eimear Colgan, Social Work Team Leader, Muiríosa Foundation, Tullamore

Florence Hogan, Quality and Patient Safety Manager, Leopardstown Hospital, Dublin

Kieran Barrett, Designated Officer & Social Worker, Brothers of Charity Southern Services, Cork

Lorna O'Neill, Social Work Team Leader, SPT, CHO3

Anne Corcoran, Practice Development Facilitator, St Finbarr's Hospital, Cork

5.1.4 Designated officer training:

The designated officer programme supports key staff to respond to safeguarding concerns in line with HSE Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse Policy and Procedures (2014). Upon completing this programme learners will have:

- Explored in detail the safeguarding coordinating role (incorporating the role of the designated officer/service manager/ safeguarding coordinator/manager):
- Considered relevant legislation and related policies to support effective safeguarding practice:
- Explored practice approaches with a specific focus on undertaking preliminary screenings and producing safeguarding plans:
- Considered effective practice approaches in the assessment and management of safeguarding concerns recognising the importance of risk consideration.

The six-and-a-half-hour programme is delivered in a blended format comprising of a number of stages:

- Prerequisite – complete Safeguarding Adults at Risk of Abuse eLearning programme on HSELanD.
- Stage 1 - safeguarding designated officer webinar and course reading (practice exploration of policy, safeguarding roles, related legislation, and key related policies).
- Stage 2 - complete and submit assigned case scenario work to consist of preliminary screening and safeguarding plan.
- Stage 3 - live interactive workshop (preliminary screening, safeguarding planning, risk management, peer-to-peer safeguarding concerns). This workshop is offered both as an online workshop or classroom workshop.

The designated officer programme was completed by 515 learners in 2024. There remains a steady increase in training uptake over recent years since the blended programme was introduced (in 2020).

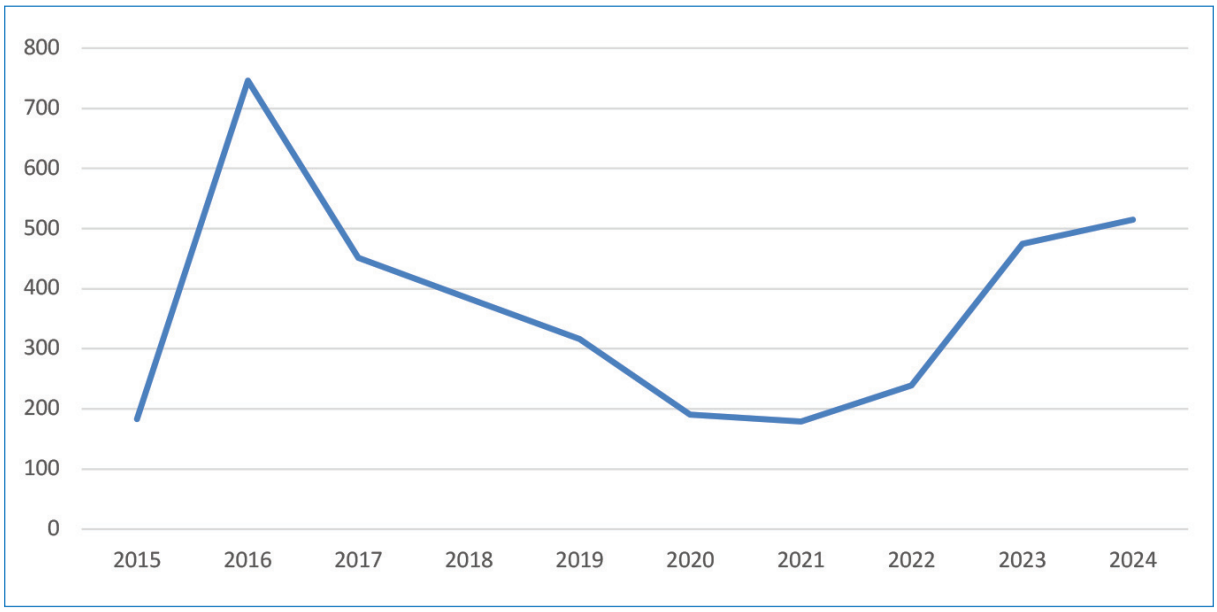


Fig 4: Attendances at designated officer training 2015-2024

{Note 2015-2016 capacity to deliver training was bolstered by the contract awarded to private provider. Since 2017 the designated officer training has been delivered by a small cohort of NSO approved facilitators.}

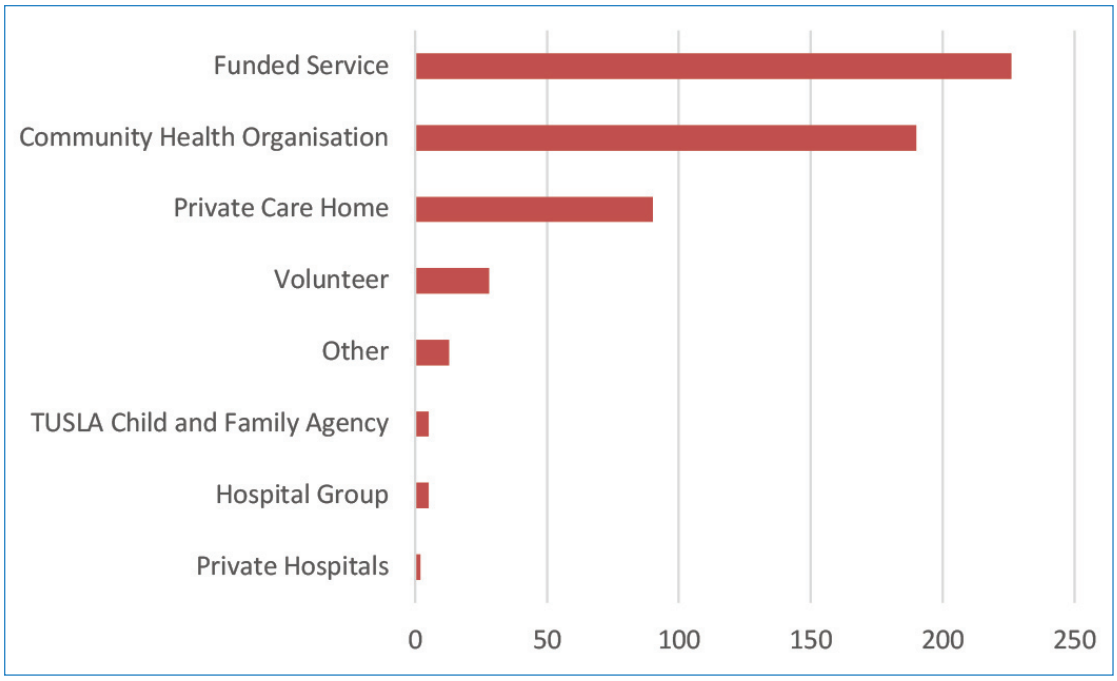


Fig 5: Designated officer completions by service, 2024

Throughout 2024 a mix of online and classroom attendance was available for learners to choose from. In total 51 workshops were offered, 46 were hosted online, 5 were in-person classroom workshops. One workshop was cancelled due to poor uptake.

Last year's report presented analysis on the dropout rate between enrolment on, and completion of, the designated officer programme. This remained a feature of 2024 workshops with an overall dropout rate of 42% (classroom 51% and online workshops 41%).

Two issues in particular were identified – the lower enrolment for classroom workshops and secondly, the extent of the dropout rate at the stage where deskwork is required to be submitted by the learner before they proceed to the final component of the programme. The NSO took measures in late 2023 to address this by increasing capacity across all workshops by 20% as evident is figure 6. While this resulted in greater attendance figures the dropout rate still persisted. Further measures were actioned in late 2024 to address this by reconfiguring the sequence of the programme components, ensuring the deskwork requirement is fulfilled before workshop dates can be selected.

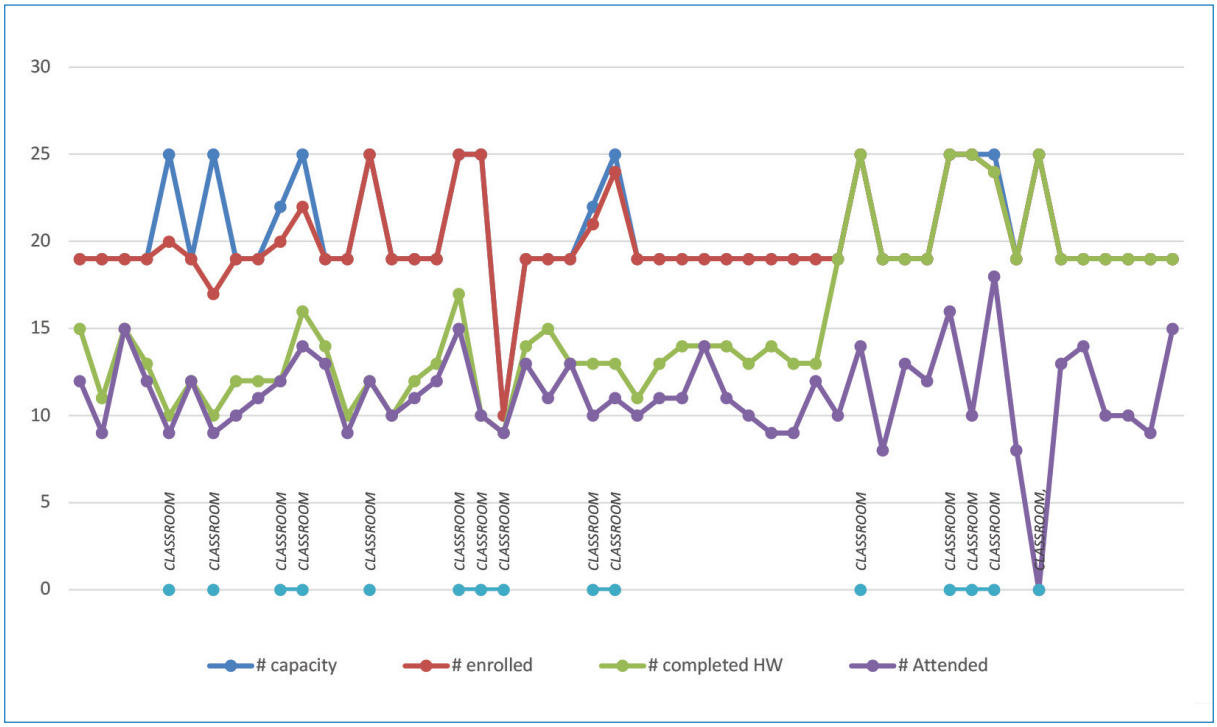


Fig 6: Drop-off throughout the stages of designated officer programme 2024 (classroom v online)

Table 6: Designated officer training attendances per quarter, 2024

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2023 total
137	123	127	128	515






A selection of photos from designated officer training throughout 2024

Further details relating to workshops dates and accessing the programme are available on the training section of our website (www.hse.ie/safeguarding)

5.1.5 Development Day for facilitators of designated officer training:

The NSO held a development day for facilitators of designated officer training in September. The day was well attended with 17 of 23 facilitators attending. The NSO were delighted to welcome the then newly appointed HSE Chief Social Worker Amanda Casey to address the audience for what was one of her first engagements since taking up the post. The Data Protection Commissioners Office; (David Murphy, Georgetta Botas and Lauren Burke) engaged with the designated officer facilitators on data processing and data sharing in safeguarding situations while the HSE's Leadership Learning and Talent Management specialists Tracey O'Neill and Karen McEvoy expertly guided the facilitators - through tips and tricks for hosting education workshops online.



NSO staff Sarah Mahon, Bridget McDaid, Teresa Cronin pictured with Chief Social Worker Amanda Casey

Donal Hurley, NSO with (from left), Lauren Burke, Georgetta Botas and David Murphy, all from the Office of the Data Protection Commission





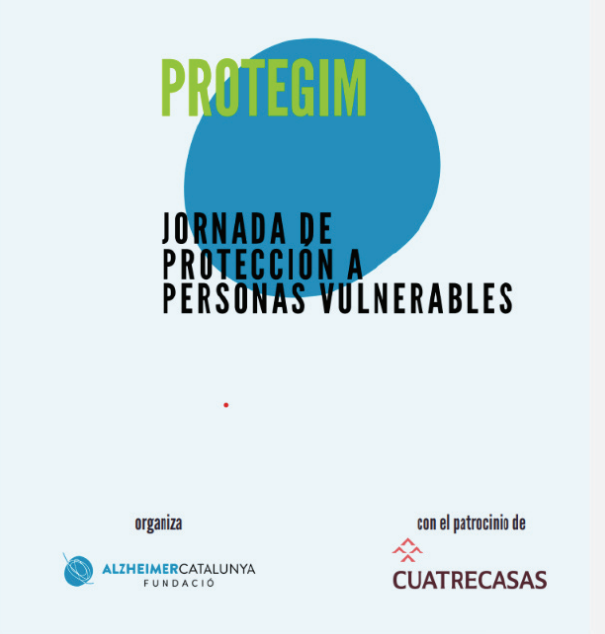
Facilitators Donal Hurley, Gillian McConnell, Kristen Murphy, Helena O'Reilly and Ruth Brogan

Bridget McDaid NSO with Tracy O'Neill and Karen McEvoy LLTM, HSE



5.1.6 Contribution to international conference:

The NSO was invited by the Alzheimer Cataluña Foundation to present at their inaugural safeguarding conference, in November. This followed from assistance provided by the NSO to the foundation, in the creation of their regional policy, procedures and training module. Sarah Mahon, Principal Social Worker, presented on the journey safeguarding has taken in the Irish context, the current model and future challenges. The NSO is grateful to the Alzheimer Cataluña Foundation for funding this project.



5.2 Learning and Development Seminar

The 2024 learning and development event for SPTs was held on 16th and 17th October in Tullamore, Co Offaly.

Reflecting the changing landscape of adult safeguarding, it had for its theme, Supporting Transformation in Adult Safeguarding.

This year the NSO was delighted to welcome a number of safeguarding leads from the adult mental health services, the adult safeguarding leads from the acute hospital groups and representatives from nursing leadership in the HSE.

Tim Hanly, General Manager of the NSO, chaired the opening session and began by welcoming delegates and speakers.

Kate Killeen-White, Regional Executive Officer, HSE Dublin and Midlands gave the opening address where she reflected



From left: Amanda Casey, Chief Social Worker, Bernard Gloster, CEO, Tim Hanly General manager, Lisa McDaid, HSE Organisation Development and Design, Kate Killeen-White REO, HSE Dublin and South East.

on the importance and the complexity of the work of adult safeguarding, calling on the attendees to redouble their efforts to safeguard those who are vulnerable.

Bernard Gloster, Chief Executive Officer of the HSE, spoke about the importance of safeguarding in a changing environment. He asked the audience to think about safeguarding through the lenses of care, culture and governance.

Lisa McDaid from HSE Organisation Development and Design then led a session which challenged delegates to consider organisational change both in the context of Slaintecare reform but also in the context of the recommendations of the McIlroy Report.

On the afternoon of day one, actress Mary McEvoy delivered a reflective piece to the delegates on ageing, both from a personal but also a professional perspective.

Safeguarding colleagues in CHO5 and CHO9 reflected on the introduction of a nursing role into the work of the SPT and Dr Tony Foley, GP and Professor of General Practice, UCC spoke on the theme of Supporting and Safeguarding People Living with Dementia.

On day two, Amanda Casey, Chief Social Worker, HSE spoke on her role and developments in the adult safeguarding reform plan. Dr Sarah Donnelly delivered a paper on Private Troubles or Public Issues? Collective Advocacy and Social Workers as Change Agents.

As with previous years, there were a variety of workshops for delegates to attend:

- *The Work of the Sexual Assault Treatment Unit*, (Nessa Gill, RGN Forensic Clinical Examiner)
- *Online System for Adult Safeguarding: Realising IT Potential. The Next Step*, (Marguerite Clancy and Don Munro, National Safeguarding Office)
- *Human Trafficking in Ireland Today: Policy and Practice Work,* (Odette Reidy and Stephan Lynch, HSE Anti Human Trafficking Team)



Bernard Gloster, CEO addresses delegates at the learning event.

- *Supporting the Transformation and Implementation of ADM and Safeguarding in Acute Hospitals,* (Eimear Kennedy, Katie Lynch, Dearbhla Ni Riordan and Geraldine Farren, Safeguarding PSWs Acute Hospitals)
- *Coercive Control of Older Adults in Filial (adult-child to older-parent) Relationships, A Hybrid Concept Analysis,* (Freda Quinlan, SWTL, CHO West)
- *Assisted Decision Making through a Community Safeguarding Lens*, (Darragh Bergin, SWTL, Safeguarding and Protection Team and Jim Lane, Principal Social Worker, QSSI)
- *Professional Supervision when Working with Complex Safeguarding Matters in a Time of Change (The importance of professional curiosity, making safeguarding personal and governance/oversight)*, (Colm Lehane, Clara Learning).

This year the NSO organised a poster competition to allow delegates who had been involved in an initiative, project or a piece of research to share their experiences and insights. Entries were received on the following subjects:

- 'Building the Capacity to say No'
- Development of a Procedural and Guidance document
- Creating a Safeguarding Culture in an Acute Hospital Setting
- Partnership in Safeguarding
- Implementation of the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act across the RCSI Hospital Group.
- Developing a Duty Service
- Safeguarding Awareness Sessions

Dr Sarah Donnelly and Amanda Casey judged the entries, and the winning entry was that of Gillian McConnell and Gerard Chadwick, SPT team members from CHO6 for their poster on partnership in safeguarding. This poster focused on the identification of an issue with the quality of preliminary screenings being submitted by a service in their area and the subsequent piece of capacity building work undertaken to address this issue.

The NSO would like to congratulate Gillian and Ger and to thank all the entrants for their contributions to a very successful initiative.



Poster competition entrants

5.3 Additional Learning and Development Initiatives:

5.3.1 Contributions to nurse & other education programmes:

The NSO, in collaboration with Deirdre Lang Head of Older Persons, Office of Nursing and Midwifery Services Development, piloted a safeguarding education session as part of the Fundamentals of Frailty national education program. This is now being rolled out nationally and delivered in areas where new adult safeguarding CNM 2s are in place. The programme is a unique well-established interdisciplinary facilitated programme informed by The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA). It is delivered in 26 networks nationwide to a multidisciplinary audience from acute, residential, community and primary care sectors. As frail older people are at a higher risk category for abuse, integrating safeguarding education into the programme will add to the promotion of safeguarding awareness to a wider multidisciplinary audience across all sectors of health care. The national frailty programme is being adapted currently for health and social care professionals working with individuals that have intellectual disability and a designated module on safeguarding, communication and assisted decision-making is being developed for submission to this programme.

Safeguarding education sessions have also been delivered in the five-day Overseas Induction Programme for Nurses and within a Foundation Gerontology Nursing Programme at St James Hospital Dublin.

Pictured at the launch of the HSE's "Making Safeguarding Personal" toolkit at Dungarvan Community Hospital were (from left); Minister of State at the Dept. of Health for Mental health and Older Persons, Mary Butler, T.D., Fr. John Kiely, (Dunabbey House/ Dungarvan Community Hospital Residents Committee), Tim Hanly, (General manager, NSO) and Paula French, (Director of Nursing, Dungarvan Community Hospital).



5.3.2 Making Safeguarding Personal:

Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) is a practice approach that seeks to move away from risk averse safeguarding interventions to more collaborative, person-centred, strengths-based assessment, and planning. In the United Kingdom, the Local Government Association produced the MSP toolkit, containing 26 practice tools. The toolkit guides social workers and other practitioners on how to focus on the service user and their perception of what is happening. The toolkit includes resources in risk enablement, solution-focused communication and restorative justice.

The NSO has continued to develop an MSP toolkit in an Irish safeguarding context in 2024. The NSO education and design group reviewed the UK toolkit and made recommendations as to the adaptability and suitability of these tools. In total twelve tools have been adapted for use in the Irish context. Minister, Mary Butler, TD, officially launched the toolkit in September 2024, in the Community Nursing Unit Dungarvan.

A training video illustrating the use of the restorative justice tool was produced in September 2024. The tools and the video can be accessed here or on the NSO web page.

5.4 Collaboration and Interagency Work

During 2024 the NSO collaborated with various groups and was represented on several HSE and interagency committees and groups:

- Community Healthcare East Regional Safeguarding Committee.
- Community Operations Assisted Decision-Making Sub-Group.
- HIQA working group (How to put National Standards into Practice: key steps for health, mental health and social care services. Dublin HIQA and MHC 2024).
- HSE Consent Policy Review Group.
- HSE National ADM transitional oversight group.
- HSE ADMA Mentor/Mentee working groups.
- Joint working with SPT business managers.
- Midlands-Louth/Meath Community Healthcare Regional Safeguarding Committee.
- National Advisory Oversight Group for CNM 2 transition to safeguarding.

- HSE Steering group-adapting national frailty programme for healthcare professions working with individuals with intellectual disability.
- HSE working group on the development of module for ID NFEP on Safeguarding, ADMA & Communication.
- HSE Human trafficking subgroup (national social inclusion governance group)
- Older Persons Service Model Steering Group.
- Resident's Personal Property, Personal Finances, and Possessions Guiding Principles Subgroup.
- Safeguarding Ireland Advisory Committee.
- Safeguarding Ireland State Payments Group.



National Digital Transformation in Adult Safeguarding

6.0 National Digital Transformation in Adult Safeguarding

The Online System for Adult Safeguarding (OSAS) is a landmark digital initiative developed by the HSE's NSO to protect adults at risk of abuse. Launched in 2024, OSAS is a secure platform that supports timely, person-centered interventions and real-time collaboration across health and social care services..

6.1 Background and Rationale

Prior to OSAS, safeguarding concerns were managed differently across Ireland's nine Community Healthcare Organisations (CHOs). The need for a national solution was clear: one that could standardise workflows, improve responsiveness, and ensure equitable safeguarding services across the country.

OSAS was designed to digitise the full safeguarding lifecycle from the receipt of a concern to case closure, while enabling secure collaboration between HSE teams, funded services, and external partners such as An Garda Síochána, and the Department of Social Protection.

6.2 Key Features

- **Adult Safeguarding Portal:** Allows members of the public, professionals and services to submit safeguarding concerns and preliminary screenings securely.
- **Delegation Portal:** Allows external agencies to engage directly with HSE Safeguarding and Protection Teams (SPTs).
- **Case Management System:** Supports clinical decision-making and embeds person-centered safeguarding plans and facilitates outcome-driven care.

6.3 Implementation Timeline

The OSAS project followed a structured, phased roadmap to ensure successful delivery as outlined in the high-level project timeline. The OSAS Board and project teams were very mindful of the challenges for all stakeholders with such a significant change management initiative when developing the implementation road map.

6.3.1 Project Timeline and Key Milestones

- Early 2024: Configuration and environment setup, including cloud infrastructure and security protocols.
- Spring–Summer 2024: Completion of User Acceptance Testing (UAT) involving frontline staff and CHO-level testers.
- 2nd September 2024: Internal OSAS system go-live for Safeguarding Protection Teams (SPTs) delivered on schedule to case management functionality.
- 23rd September 2024: Initial go-live date for portal submissions, requirement to revise due to system challenges
- 11th November 2024: Revised portal go-live date for external service providers and agencies.

6.4 Role of the Super Users

In June 2024 a super user workshop was held to support super users in the leadership and

implementation of the project within their teams. Topics included:

- Training strategy overview
- Super users: role, challenges, opportunities, supports
- Resources overview quick user guide, ME Learning
- Internal SPT training: scenario development and activities
- Next Steps: MS Teams channel, FAQ creation, feedback loop
- Implementation plan for go live: key dates and actions

Super users provided the necessary feedback loop to the core project team in the implementation and more importantly the go live phase. They assisted in trouble shooting issues, testing new workflows all while providing training and support within their teams.

6.5 Impact of OSAS in 2024

- 120+ SPT members are utilising the case management system
- 1,608 portal users registered across 291 unique domains illustrated in fig 7
- 2,200+ successful portal submissions, utilising the service/professional and public pathway across all CHOs
- 3,254 contacts completed, with 62% submitted via the portal.
- 1,296 delegated tasks, over 90% completed.

These figures reflect a significant shift toward digital-first safeguarding, improving responsiveness and reducing administrative burden.

6.6 Legacy and Future Outlook

OSAS has set a new benchmark for digital health innovation in Ireland. It has transformed safeguarding workflows, fostered a culture of collaboration and accountability, and delivered a system that is now central to Ireland's adult safeguarding infrastructure. Lessons learned from OSAS particularly around phased rollout, stakeholder continuity, and vendor engagement will inform future digital projects across the HSE.

Looking ahead, OSAS will continue to evolve, with enhancements planned to further support service providers and strengthen national oversight. Its success demonstrates the potential of digital transformation to improve outcomes for vulnerable adults and deliver safer, more responsive care.



Fig 7: Distribution of Registered Portal Users by Domain from Sept-Dec 2024

Opportunities and Challenges in Adult Safeguarding

7.0 Opportunities and Challenges in Adult Safeguarding

7.1 Clinical Nurse Managers in Safeguarding and Protection Teams

The second adult safeguarding CNM2, Fiona Murphy commenced in the Dublin North City & County community safeguarding team in June 2024. The integration of a nurse's unique skill set and perspective into the adult safeguarding landscape supports a more holistic approach to adult safeguarding from prevention to post abuse care. The adult safeguarding CNM2 on the team also supports the need to enhance the safeguarding proficiency of all nurses working in adult care as well as instilling a culture of safeguarding as an essential component of daily practice for all staff engaging with adults in a health and social care setting.

The role of CNM2 is to provide expert nursing knowledge and support to facilitate adult safeguarding specifically in a nursing practice context. The role is pivotal in complex case management, where high care and support needs are present. Consultation and teaching requests from nurse colleagues across sectors are increasing, demonstrating the significant appetite for safeguarding information, procedural compliance and enhanced confidence in practice. A person's health status can be their greatest vulnerability, and nurses can address this area. The integration of nursing in adult safeguarding advances improvement in partnership working, strategic planning, and quality assurance. Nursing input is also crucial when advising on the development and provision of services in health and social care sectors.

An inter-disciplinary national advisory group has been established to support the development and integration of this role. Work needs to continue on fully understanding and optimising the skills and scope of the nurse in relation to safeguarding practice and the development of standards of practice and outcome measurements regarding the significant impact of nurses in adult safeguarding.

The NSO's strategic plan to integrate nursing input and resources within SPTs remains a continuing priority. While acknowledging recent cost containment measures have had an impact on new developments the NSO remains committed to advancing this resource.

7.2 Nursing and Social Work partnership

The NSO continues to establish connections with leaders across nursing sectors on current and future working arrangements and cooperation in managing safeguarding matters. However, a strategic commitment from senior leadership is required to foster a collaborative partnership grounded in a shared vision, aligned goals and effective multidisciplinary cooperation. This includes a dedication to continuous education, best practices, and a unified approach to ensure optimal outcomes in safeguarding adults across the health and social care sector.

7.3. Monitoring and responding to emerging trends

Nine month comparative data shows a 7.5% increase in safeguarding reporting.

A continuing trend in 2024 has been the increase in reports of elder abuse concerns, which are mainly from services. In 2023 the year-end total for over 65 service cases was 3231 and this figure was almost reached in 2024 over a 9 month data period. This reflects an increased focus on supporting the private nursing home sector when responding to safeguarding concerns On the community referral side some initial research on notifications from the community nursing sector would indicate that greater collaboration, support and education, is required to generate higher levels of community reporting from community personnel across all age groups. (Cronin & Duffy, 2024) Considering feedback from community health and social care colleagues it will be important to look at the application of referral thresholds and to undertake further analysis on threshold referral criteria and how this is consistently applied.

Looking at trends over the past ten years of data, one would expect an overall higher level of elder abuse notification given the aging population. This is also in the context of expanding variety of health, social & voluntary services who engage daily/regularly with older persons in their own communities and own homes. International prevalence studies (Yon et al, 2018) indicate that up to one in six people over the age of 60 annually experience elder abuse or neglect. Working with the Chief Social Worker, the NSO will consider how to - strategically position public awareness initiatives and campaigns (such as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and Adult Safeguarding Day) to deliver on the goals of greater recognition of, and response to concerns of abuse across all age groups. As part of the upcoming reform programme the NSO will also consider avenues for further research in areas such as collaborative working to address concerns of self-neglect.

The high level of peer-to-peer notifications from services where there is an agreed outcome with the safeguarding service highlights the need for action-based practice level research on managing service user-to-service user aggression. In the 18-64 year age category, psychological abuse accounts for 50% of allegations, followed by physical abuse at 33%. Further analysis and practice guidance will be needed to consider responses to peer to peer aggression and how thresholds could be appropriately applied on low level incidents. This work can build on the recommendations of a - recent study by Safeguarding Ireland which considered definitions and thresholds (Safeguarding Ireland, 2024). This study recommended enabling responses to aggression contexts, clarifying definitions and supporting staff in assessment work.

7.4 Impact on capacity with cost containment

During 2024 there has been constraints in progressing the filling and recruitment of vacant SPT social worker positions. In some cases, SPTs with staffing limitations have implemented prioritisation processes to manage demand and respond proactively to adults with the highest level of risk.

Despite these pressures, SPTs have continued to respond to increased referrals from the private nursing home sector, provide enhanced support and engagement with providers, and adapt to digitalisation. It is acknowledged that implementation of OSAS was a significant digital change management initiative for staff which still requires additional support resources. These efforts reflect the commitment to maintaining service quality during a period of significant constraint.

Looking ahead to the future, the priority for development and reform remains focused on the interest of the person at risk of harm and in promoting quality standards for the delivery of adult safeguarding. The NSO will support the regions in their local decision-making remit and will advance the case for future adult safeguarding investment.



Glossary of terms

8.0 Glossary of terms

ADMA	**Assisted Decision-Making legislation**
CHO	**Community Health Organisation**
CNM	**Clinical Nurse Manager**
DO	**Designated Officer**
HIQA	**Health Information and Quality Authority.**
HSE	**Health Service Executive**
ICT	**Information and Communication Technology**
KPI	**Key Performance Indicator**
MHC	**Mental Health Commission**
NIRP	**National Independent Review Panel**
NSO	**National Safeguarding Office**
SPT	**Safeguarding and Protection Team**
TILDA	**The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing**
TRIO	**Tool for Risk, Intervention and Outcomes**
PCCC	**Primary Community and Continuing Care**

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Appendices

10.0 Appendices

Appendix 1: External Training Initiatives

10.1 Healthy Age Friendly Homes:

The Healthy Age Friendly Homes initiative is a joint health and local government programme, which coordinates support services, to assist up to 10,500 older adults each year through timely interventions. The programme aims to support older people to live in their own home with dignity and independence, for as long as possible. It is about providing a range of alternatives for older people who may otherwise transition into long term residential care prematurely.

The NSO worked with the National Age Friendly Homes Network in 2024 to deliver training to forty-three programme coordinators to assist them in recognising when abuse may be taking place and equip them to respond appropriately. Further engagements are planned for 2025.

From left, Bridget McDaid, Donal Hurley both NSO, Mark Harrington National Manager Healthy Age Friendly Homes with Ann Moran, Regional Manager Age Friendly Homes.











Age Friendly Homes coordinators attending adult safeguarding training

10.2 The 5 Nations conference series

The NSO continued to support Safeguarding Ireland with the hosting of the 5 Nations Conference series in 2024. These seminars are a series of learning and professional development events with a focus on the topic of adult safeguarding.

A total of five were held in 2024 with the topics ranging from rights choices and decisions, learning from adult reviews, nursing and safeguarding, financial harm, and coercive control.

10.3 Joint conference with Irish Association of Social Workers

The NSO in conjunction with the Irish Association of Social Workers (IASW) hosted a seminar in Dublin on the 14th of May.

This half-day seminar was titled Social Work in action-Sharing the Learning on Capacity Building. The seminar provided an opportunity for social workers to showcase their projects and share their learning. The seminar was chaired by Sarah Mahon of the NSO and speakers included Cliona Murphy (IASW), Renee Summers (Senior Medical Social Worker), Amanda Casey (Chief Social Worker), Katie Lynch (Principal Social Worker), Lucy O'Hara (Social Work Team Leader), Ciara Lynam (Social Work Team Leader), Ciara Reilly (Professionally Qualified Social Worker), Aoibheann Barnes (Professionally Qualified Social Worker), Blathnaid McCabe (Principal Social Worker) and Tim Hanly (General Manager).

Topics included building decision making capacity with people with learning disabilities, implementing ADMA, ways to promote capacity in acute hospitals, court capacity applications and orders, support, education & training for people with disabilities, working effectively with people with autism, and capacity building when highlighting the issue of child sexual exploitation.

10.4 Sexual safety learning events:

A HSE sexual safety task and finish group, under the direction of the former National Director of Community Operations, was established in 2023. The main objectives of the group were to:

- Produce a national sexual safety framework for approved and designated centres.
- Develop and launch an education and training framework for sexual safety in approved and designated centres.
- Launch a safeguarding network for approved and designated centres.

The group continued its work throughout 2024 and held an education learning event on the 22nd of January (following from the learning event held on the 14th of December 2023). Speakers included Dr JP Nolan (HSE Assistant National Director Access & Integration), Nessa Gill (Sexual Assault Treatment Unit), Detective Sergeant Denise Donegan (An Garda Síochána), Sarah Mahon (Principal Social Worker HSE NSO), Dr Kathleen McLoughlin (UCC), and Sarah Moynihan (HSE Quality and Patient Safety Manger Access and Integration).

Appendix 2- OSAS Governance

10.5 Governance

10.6 Project Board

The project was governed by a Project Board, which provided strategic oversight, vendor management, and milestone tracking. This governance structure ensured alignment with national strategies such as Sláintecare and the Digital for Care 2030 Framework and helped navigate challenges including leadership transitions and varying digital readiness across CHOs.

Membership of Project Board
JP Nolan Assistant National Director, Quality and Patient Safety, Chair (Jan-Aug 2024)
Amanda Casey, Chief Social Worker, Chair (Aug 2024- to date)
Tim Hanly, General Manager NSO
Marguerite Clancy, Senior Research & Information Officer NSO
Stephen O'Connell, Programme Manager, Technology and Transformation
Paul O'Byrne, Senior Project Manager, Technology and Transformation
Aoife Lenihan, Head of Quality Safety and Service Provision CHO9

10.7 Core Project Team

The success of OSAS was made possible by the dedicated core project team within the NSO and HSE Digital supported by the wider project group, who carried out the foundational work that underpinned the system's delivery.

This team:

- Conducted national consultations and process mapping.
- Led stakeholder engagement and training design.
- Managed the technical build and testing cycles.
- Maintained close collaboration with System C, the system vendor, to ensure the platform met the complex needs of safeguarding services.
- Their commitment to co-design, responsiveness, and problem-solving ensured that OSAS was delivered on time and within budget.

Membership of Core Project Team

Tim Hanly, General Manager NSO

Marguerite Clancy, Senior Research and Information Officer, NSO

Don Munro, Systems Administrator NSO

Stephen O'Connell, Programme Manager, Technology and Transformation

Paul O'Byrne, Senior Project Manager, Technology and Transformation

Deirdre Morgan Project Manager, Technology and Transformation

Wider Project Team

Darragh Bergin, Social Work Team Leader CHO4

Rob O'Connor, Principal Social Worker CHO5

Ruth Brogan, Social Work Team Leader CHO6

Maggie McNally, Principal Social Worker CHO3

Louise Madden, Administration CHO2

Jennie Moore, Business Manager, CHO9

Fidelma Brady, Cheeverstown Centre- representing funded services



Members of the Project Group attending the Learning and Development Seminar 2024

From left: Darragh Bergin, Rob O'Connor, Jenny Moore, Tim Hanly Marguerite Clancy Ruth Brogan, Maggie McNally and Don Munro - full membership listed above

10.8 Engagement and Collaboration

The success of OSAS was underpinned by extensive stakeholder engagement.

Regional engagement sessions held in July 2024 across seven locations brought together HSE staff and funded agencies to discuss portal functionality and address concerns.

Webinars in September and November focused on training professionals in submitting community referrals and preliminary screenings, with recordings made available for ongoing learning.

A dedicated OSAS Portal Services Go Live Support Group was established in collaboration with disability umbrella organisations to address service provider needs and ensure a smooth transition.

A suite of user manuals and training materials was made available to support services in navigating the portal and case management system.

These engagements helped build trust and fostered ownership in the system.

10.9 Sub Groups

10.10 Educational Subgroup

A training strategy, developed by the Educational Subgroup, ensured readiness across all user groups. The strategy followed a five-stage, stepped approach.

Stage 1. Readiness Questionnaire which was conducted in March 2024 confirmed high levels of equipment access and digital readiness.

Stage 2. A resource bank of system functionality training materials including cheat sheets, explainer videos through the melearning platform, and guides was made available from July 2024

Stage 3. End user training was delivered online by System C with a 96% recommendation rate. The overall rating was 4.35/5 and demonstrated a confidence increase of 4.17/5.

Stage 4. SPT CHO peer training: Super users led in-person sessions within CHOs during July/August 2024 supported by weekly national super user calls, that extended for the remainder of the year. The focus of these calls was to support implementation through shared learning.

Stage 5. Portal webinar and resources for services and professionals

Membership of ICT Education Subgroup

Marguerite Clancy, Senior Research & Information Officer, NSO Chair

Bridget McDaid, Senior Safeguarding & Older Persons Officer, NSO

Kevin Collins, Acting Principal Social Worker CHO4

Maggie McNally, Principal Social Worker CHO3

Rob O'Connor, Principal Social Worker CHO5

Ruth Brogan, Social Work Team Leader, CHO6

Fidelma Brady, Cheeverstown Centre - representing funded services

10.11 Services Subgroup Contributions

The Services Subgroup enabled external stakeholders to engage with the portals by:

- Supporting on-boarding of over 1600 portal users across 291 domains.
- Delivering in person roadshows, webinars and training materials for Designated Officers and service managers.
- Facilitating engagement and transitional support plan with voluntary organisations and HIQA-registered services.



Selection of photographs from the roadshow events

Services Go-Live Support Group

Tim Hanly, General Manager NSO- Chair

Marguerite Clancy, Senior Research & Information Officer NSO

Gerard McCormack, HSE Older Persons Services

Sarah Mahon, Principal Social Worker, NSO

Aimee Dunne, St. Michaels House/rep. National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers

Denise Moran, Irish Wheelchair Association/rep. Disability Federation of Ireland

Bridget Walsh, Business Manager, NSO

Kristen Murphy, Principal Social Worker, HSE Safeguarding and Protection Team

Maura McCrudden, Rehab Group/rep. National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers

Noreen Hynes, HSE Older Persons Services

Emma Hannigan, St Aiden Services/rep. National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers

Kieran Barrett, Brothers of Charity/rep National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers

Cathy McGrath, Disability Federation of Ireland

Sorcha Mills, St Michael's House/rep National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers

Jillian Sexton, National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers

Niall Myres, Cheshire Ireland

Una Tomany, HSE Disability Services

Amanda Ni Ghabhann, Special Olympics

Darragh Kennedy, Irish Wheelchair Association/rep Disability Federation of Ireland

David Tuomey, Western Care/rep. National Federation of Voluntary Service Providers

Patricia O Connor, Business Manager HSE Safeguarding and Protection Team





Members of the super user group attending the Super User Workshop



Super user Representatives attending the Learning and Development Seminar 2024 From left: Darragh Bergin, Ciara Hogan, Sophie Gorman Rob O'Connor, Ruth Brogan Anne Deane, Deirdre Clancy, Kevin Collins, Stephan Sperberg, Siobhan Maher, Michaela Pickman, Jennie Moore, Kate Ward, Tim Hanly, Marguerite Clancy, Patricia O'Connor, Lisa Stewart, Lisa Daly, Vivienne Nixon

Additional members: Arlen Grey, Celine Ward, Ciara Reilly, Deirdre Morgan, Don Munro, Emily Kearns, Ger Chadwick, Jason Donohue, Jennifer Trimble, Jenny O'Reilly, Joan o'Connor, Kara Mulligan, Kristen Murphy, Louise Kane, Louise Madden, Mary Griffin, Paul O'Byrne, Rachel Lynch, Shirley Owens, Siobhan Maguire and Stephan Sperber.

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