**Invitation to Tender**

Independent review of DSGBV Services

*A.S.S.C. Accompaniment Support Services for Children*

Supporting Children, Young People, & Families through the Criminal Justice System

**Issued by:**

A.S.S.C. Accompaniment Support Services for Children

Deadline for submission proposal: **Monday 7th July 2025**

### Invitation to Tender

Accompaniment Support Services for Children (A.S.S.C.) are seeking tender proposals for an independent review of the charity's services. The Invitation to Tender has been developed in conjunction with Cuan with the purpose of collaboration being to inform a process on service development. The review will produce a report with key findings and recommendations. The work should commence from 28th July to 13th October 2025.

### Background & Context

* 1. **About A.S.S.C.**

A.S.S.C. was set up to address the gap in service provision for children and young people impacted by crime. The services provided are accompaniment and ongoing support & advocacy for family members/carers. A.S.S.C. services went live in January 2021. These services are provided through onsite support and ongoing phone support. The accompaniment support is volunteer-led and is for any child or young person who attends certain Sexual Assault Treatment Units (SATU) or a Central Criminal Court to testify as a victim or witness to crime. The ongoing phone support is provided to any family member/carer supporting a child or young person negotiating the Criminal Justice System as a victim or witness to crime.

More information here: [www.assc.ie](http://www.assc.ie)

* 1. **Specialised Services for Children, Young People & Families**

These specialised support services are specifically aimed at children, young people, and their families as they move through the Criminal Justice System. A.S.S.C. specialises in the impact of trauma on families moving through these systems, including working in line with child protection protocols. The charity aims to support all children, young people, and their families who have experienced crime across the Republic of Ireland. It has a vision of a child-friendly justice system and a mission that supports all children and young people who are victims of or witnesses to crime. A.S.S.C. also supports children and young people —giving them a voice to facilitate choice and autonomy. A.S.S.C. values are guided by a child-centred and client-led approach, facilitating a culture of transparent communication with families, key stakeholders and the charity team.

Reporting on this journey for children, young people, and their families is a key area of A.S.S.C. activity. This enables the children's voices to be heard. This data also highlights the current service provisions and gaps and provides insight into future strategies for A.S.S.C. Furthermore, it serves as a benchmark for how Ireland is supporting child victims of crime when considering their rights.

* 1. **Legislative Landscape**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets out four guiding principles:

1. Rights under the UNCRC should be guaranteed to all children.

2. The child's best interest must be at the forefront of any actions involving the child.

3. Children have the right to life, survival and development.

4. Children's views must be considered

Article 12 also provides children with the right to be heard in proceedings affecting them, such as judicial proceedings.

These rights, detailed in the Convention of the Rights of the Child, align with A.S.S.C's aims, vision, and values.

More information can be found here:

<https://childrensrights.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/UNCRCEnglish.pdf>

In 2012, the European Union (EU) set minimum standards for the rights, support, and protection of victims of crime, as stated in the DIRECTIVE 2012/29/EU. In Article 1, under Objectives Part 2. It states that “where the victim is a child, the child’s best interests shall be of primary consideration and shall be assessed on an individual basis”.

A.S.S.C.'s client-led, case-by-case approach supports this objective.

More information can be found here:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32012L0029>

Underpinning the above EU Directive 2012/29/EU, Ireland enacted the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017. Therefore, this legislation has established minimum standards for victims of crime in Ireland.

Under this legislation, certain rights are afforded to children and families; some are as follows: Children are presumed to have protection needs, and these needs should be considered in their best interest; the child should be able to raise any “views or concerns”, this should be considered along with their age and maturity; This right should also extend to their family member to raise the same. A.S.S.C. services, particularly the ongoing Support & Advocacy Services, allow these views or concerns to be raised continuously by the family/child and fed back to relevant professionals working with them. Furthermore, what special measures can be provided to them.

Additionally, information on support services must be provided to the child and family on first contact with An Garda Síochána to allow appropriate support to begin. This is provided through accompaniment by a support person on the ground. A.S.S.C. provides this service either at the time of disclosure or concern of sexual violence or when they have been called to provide testimony in a criminal case.

More information can be found here:

<https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2017/act/28/enacted/en/html>

Considering the four pillars of the Istanbul Convention, developed by the Council of Europe to support agreements between EU member states, to stop DSGBV. These pillars are prevention, protection, prosecution, and integrated policy.

A.S.S.C. supports children, young people, and families throughout the Criminal Justice System, specialising in such areas and understanding the importance of prevention and protection of all children experiencing sexual violence. A.S.S.C. supports them through their journey in the criminal process and emphasises the importance of this being grounded in an excellent integrated policy.

These pillars also serve as a road map for Ireland's Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual, and Gender-Based Violence. The Department of Justice developed this strategy, which will be implemented between 2022 and 2026.

More information can be found here:

<https://assets.gov.ie/228481/69e48889-49ea-49d6-8143-982f6cc28bac.pdf>

* 1. **Irelands New Statutory Agency, CUAN**

A.S.S.C.'s primary funder was the Department of Justice. However, recent developments in the DSGBV sector and enacting the Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Agency Act (2023), passed in the Oireachtas in November 2023, created a new statutory state agency, CUAN.

This agency is responsible for coordinating government actions to tackle DSGBV and implementing the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual, and Gender-Based Violence. The five core responsibilities detailed in this legislation are

1. Service Delivery Development

2. Stakeholder Engagement

3. Governance & Corporate Services

4. Research & Data

5. Communications, Campaigns, and Education.

A.S.S.C. funding now falls under this new statutory agency. The Invitation to Tender has been developed in conjunction with Cuan with the purpose of collaboration being to inform a process on service development

### The Aim & Objectives of the Independent Service Review

* 1. **Aim**

Review the DSGBV areas of service provision in ASSC to develop an understanding of the successes and challenges, with a view to strengthen and streamline overall service delivery.

*Note: due to ethical considerations, this review will engage solely with professionals and staff. While direct client participation is not included at this stage, the review may recommend future engagement with clients. Cuan is committed to developing such pathways for involvement by clients in due course.*

* Forensic Accompaniment

Forensic accompaniment is provided to any child, young person, and family attending a Forensic medical examination. A.S.S.C. volunteers provide this support.

* Court Accompaniment

Court accompaniment is provided to any child, young person, and family attending a criminal court to provide testimony. A.S.S.C. volunteers and staff provide this support.

* Support & Advocacy Phone Support

This support is provided by A.S.S.C. Support & Advocacy Officers, through the phone and/or video chat. This is for any family member supporting a child or young person through the Criminal Justice System.

**3.2 Objectives**

The following objectives have been developed and relate to the three core areas of direct service provision for review – forensic accompaniment, court accompaniment and support and advocacy phone support.

**Objective 1** Define the purpose of ASSC’s DSGBV service provision

* Detail an account of service development and provision to date, in line with the defined goals and objectives of the service.
* Detail the evidence base informing current practices, service delivery and development. For example, how have the needs of victims/survivors been identified (through research etc) that has led to the forming of current service provision.
* Detail the referral pathways to/from the service– provide a representative case study on most frequent referral pathway.
* Describe the existing collaborative approach to meeting the client’s needs in partnership with other statutory and non-statutory organisations.
* Identify for comparison purposes, other models of similar service provision and literature / research to provide a comparable for ASSC service provision.

**Objective 2** Resources and capacity

* Describe the current staff/volunteer roles for successful delivery of services and the training, education and experience levels of staff.
* An overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the current volunteer-led service provision.
* An analysis of how funding is utilised across the service to inform future service/business planning.

**Objective 3** Measure service outcomes

* Determine how and whether the service is achieving its intended outcomes, from a qualitative and quantitative perspective with a focus on the ‘care/support’ received by clients.

Note: due to ethical considerations, this review will engage solely with professionals and staff. While direct client participation is not included at this stage, the review may recommend future engagement with clients. Cuan is committed to developing such pathways for involvement by clients in due course.

**Objective 4** Identify gaps and challenges on

* Accessibility (complexity and intersectionality of need)
* Referral pathways
* Collaborative partnerships
* Waiting list and refusal rate
* The impact to staff and volunteers of working in the area of DSGBV

**Objective 5** Recommendations for future policy and practices

* Offer recommendations to inform the development of a model of service provision.

### Methodology

A qualitative research approach is required engaging with ASSC Management, staff and other professionals.

Due to ethical considerations, this review will engage solely with professionals and staff. Direct client participation is not included at this stage. This includes both in person and other forms of engagement such as surveys or questionnaires. The review may recommend future engagement with clients. Cuan is committed to developing such pathways for involvement by clients in due course.

Conduct desktop research on comparable models of service provision, internationally.

### Scope

An independent body should conduct the review. It will provide a neutral, summative analysis of the charity's success and areas of limitations.

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| **Aspect** | **Independent Review** |
| Purpose | Review and evaluate the DSGBV areas of service provision in ASSC. |
| Position | This review is external to the project and the charity's primary funders (CUAN) |
| Focus | Review of ASSC’s Cuan funded DSGBV service provision and process. |
| Methodology | Desk based research/analysis and stakeholder (non-client based) engagement |
| Engagement | Neutral and Independent |
| Outputs | Review including an independent review including recommendations as per objectives 1 – 5. |
| Timescale | 3-6 months from onboarding the successful applicant to issuing the final report |

### Output

A detailed final report that can stand up to scrutiny in line with the above aims and objectives. This must be finalised within the timeline, which is detailed below, and recommendations must be included.

The report may identify opportunities for further research, review or development initiatives. Where such recommendations arise, Cuan will consider allocating resources to support these efforts in the future, aligning with Cuan’s commitment to service development.

### Ownership

The final report will be the property of A.S.S.C. which can be referenced to inform service development.

### Timeframe

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| **Activity** | **Deadline** |
| Tender issue | Starting end of May |
| Deadline for receipt of proposals | 7th July 2025 |
| Contract start date | 28th July 2025 |
| Draft report completed | 29th September 2025 |
| Final report | 13th October 2025 |

* 1. **Submission**

Please forward an application before 7th July @ 4pm, via email to [administration@assc.ie](mailto:administration@assc.ie)

Tender submissions should include

1. CV
2. Cover letter
3. Proposal for independent review, including details per the assessment criteria below.
4. Disclosure of any conflict of interest
5. Two Referees (please include contact information)
   1. **Assessment of Tender**

Please ensure your proposal provides information that allows assessment against the following criteria.

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| **Criteria** | **Description** | **Marks Available** |
| Experience | Relevant experience designing and delivering independent reviews.  Relevant experience in the areas of the DSGBV Service provision and Criminal Justice System. | 30 |
| Project Plan | Outline of milestones and deadlines. Including client/stakeholder meetings for completing the review | 10 |
| Approach & Methodology | Detail regarding the proposed approach and methodology in delivering the independent review– including any safeguarding measures, if applicable | 40 |
| Value for Money | Quotes must not exceed €15,000 (including. VAT) | 15 |
| Total Marks |  | 100 |

### Management of the Review Process

As stated above, the overall review will be independent. A.S.S.C. support the day-to-day project management through the Co-Executive Director of Service Delivery & Development. They will act as the key contact person when the project is underway [grace@assc.ie](mailto:grace@assc.ie)

### Further Information

Requests for further information or clarification can be made to the Co-Executive Director of Finance & Governance at [lynette@assc.ie](mailto:lynette@assc.ie)

### Budget

The maximum budget for work detailed in this tender is €15,000.00, including VAT. This would cover all costs, including time spent and any travel & substance payments required to deliver the project.

### Conflict of Interest

The application for the tender must disclose any conflict of interest, perceived or actual, relating to the contractor, A.S.S.C. or CUAN. If a conflict arises, this should be disclosed immediately to your point of contact, as detailed in subsection 10 above. Failure to do so may disqualify the contractor and/or nullify any body of work. This will be dependent on the conflict of interest arising.

### Termination

The right to terminate the contract will lie with A.S.S.C. and CUAN on appropriate consultation.