

Brief for the scoping consultation to inform the development of Draft National Standards for Children’s Social Services

Background

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) is the statutory body established under the Health Act 2007 to drive high-quality and safe care for people using health and social care services in Ireland. One of HIQA’s functions is to set standards for health and social care services, including children’s social services.

HIQA recognises the importance of increasing the quality and safety of care for all children, especially children who are in need of support and protection. As such, HIQA is developing Draft National Standards for Children’s Social Services that cover all welfare and protection services for children.

Existing National Standards apply to individual service settings such as child protection and welfare services, foster care, special care units and children’s residential centres.^(1,2,3,4) Once approved by the Minister for Health, in consultation with the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, the new National Standards for Children’s Social Services will replace these individual standards for children’s services in order to support children throughout their interaction with the services that may be required to assist them. This approach to the standards will ensure that the interests of the child are put first above individual service requirements. The standards also aim to ensure that, no matter how children come into contact with children’s services, there is a consistent response and children do not experience any gaps in their care and support. The standards will assist all staff and service providers to understand the role they play in supporting a child and how this supports better outcomes for children. To achieve this consistency, the standards aim to reflect the importance of interagency cooperation at all levels of service provision.

Purpose of the scoping consultation

We are holding this scoping consultation to give people an opportunity to identify the key areas that these draft national standards should address, to describe how these new standards can be put in to practice and to provide examples of good practice. We are also interested in your views on the evidence and information that should be considered when developing the draft national standards and key stakeholders who should be consulted. We will carefully assess all feedback received and use it, along with other available evidence, to develop the draft national standards.

Principles informing the Draft National Standards for Children's Social Services

A wide range of legislation, regulations, standards, policies and guidance informs the provision of children's social services in Ireland.^(5,6,7,8,9,10) Throughout these documents, a number of key principles have emerged to date. These include:

- **Prevention:** services identify potential issues at the earliest possible stage and prevent them from becoming child welfare and protection concerns
- **Involvement:** services have in place mechanisms to listen to and involve children and families in planning for their care and support
- **Integrated services:** services work together to support and protect children to achieve the best possible outcomes.

These principles will be reviewed and expanded on based on further evidence and stakeholder engagement, including through this scoping consultation.

The new overarching Draft National Standards for Children's Social Services will provide an opportunity to draw together these important principles in order to underpin one set of standards that apply to the breadth of children's social services and that focus on the needs of the child above all else.

Further information

If you have any questions or queries, please contact us by phoning: (01) 814 7400 or emailing us on standards@hiqa.ie

References

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2. Department of Health and Children. *National standards for foster care*. Dublin: Stationery Office. 2003.
3. Health Information and Quality Authority. *National Standards for Special Care Units*. Dublin: Health Information and Quality Authority; 2014.
4. Health Information and Quality Authority. *National Standards for Children's Residential Centres*. Dublin: Health Information and Quality Authority; 2018.
5. Child Care Act, (1991).
6. Child Care (Placement of Children in Residential Care) Regulations, 1995.
7. Child Care (Placement of Children in Foster Care) Regulations, 1995.
8. Children First, (2015).
9. Department of Children and Youth Affairs. *Children first: National guidelines for the protection and welfare of children*. Dublin: The Stationery office; 2017.
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