



**Health  
Information  
and Quality  
Authority**

An tÚdarás Um Fhaisnéis  
agus Cáilíocht Sláinte

Regulation of  
Health and Social  
Care Services

# Child Protection and Welfare Assessment- judgment Framework

Version 2.1: July 2025

## Contents

<b>Revision history</b> .....	3
<b>Introduction</b> .....	4
<b>Capacity and capability dimension</b> .....	9
<b>Quality and safety dimension</b> .....	21

## Revision history

Revision date	Summary of changes
August 2023	<p><b>Version 2</b></p> <p>Publication of revised Child Protection and Welfare Assessment-judgment Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• amendments to introduction including HIQA’s emphasis on a rights based approach to human rights-based approach</li><li>• amendments to introduction outlining updated information on HIQA’s authority’s monitoring approach to practice</li><li>• amendments to line of enquiry which reflect HIQA’s rights based approach</li><li>• various style and grammar amendments throughout</li></ul>
July 2025	<p><b>Version 2.1</b></p> <p>Updated to reflect new ministerial title on page 4 – no other changes to content.</p>

## Introduction

Section 8(1)(c) of the Health Act 2007 (as amended) confers on the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) the statutory responsibility for monitoring the quality and safety of child protection and welfare services. The Chief Inspector in HIQA is responsible for administering this function on behalf of HIQA. HIQA reports on its findings to the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality. This assessment-judgment framework relates to HIQA's inspection programme against the 2012 *National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children* for Tusla's children and family services.

HIQA promotes a human rights-based approach that upholds children's core human rights and principles of fairness, respect, equality, dignity and autonomy. Respecting diversity, promoting equality and treating children fairly and with dignity, as well as including them in decisions about their care, help to ensure safe and effective care.

HIQA uses a standardised monitoring and inspection approach that promotes consistency. We call this the 'Authority Monitoring Approach' (AMA). All inspectors adhere to this approach and to any associated procedures and protocols.

Applying AMA and using this assessment-judgment framework ensures that each provider is treated fairly and that the assessment of compliance is timely, consistent, proportionate and responsive to risk identified within the child protection and welfare services. It also provides transparency to providers and the public on how HIQA assesses and makes judgments of compliance and non-compliance.

This monitoring approach does not replace the professional judgment of inspectors. Instead, it gives inspectors a range of procedures, protocols and tools to assist them in carrying out their functions. This combined assessment-judgment framework is one of these tools.

HIQA has also produced a guidance to support this assessment-judgment framework and to promote a human rights-based approach and quality improvement in child protection and welfare services. Providers and staff in services are encouraged to use this guidance to support compliance and quality improvement. This guidance can be found by on our website at [www.hiqa.ie](http://www.hiqa.ie).

The application of AMA does not replace or take away from the providers' responsibility to ensure that they are providing a safe and effective service that complies with the *National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children* and all other relevant legislation.

This assessment-judgment framework should be used in conjunction with the following:

- Health Act 2007 (as amended)
- The Child Care Act, 1991
- The Child and Family Agency Act 2013
- Children First Act 2015
- Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017)
- HIQA's monitoring approach policy, procedures and guidance.

The purpose of the assessment-judgment framework is to support inspectors in gathering evidence when monitoring or assessing a child protection and welfare service and to make judgments on compliance. The framework sets out the lines of enquiry to be explored by inspectors in order to assess compliance with the national standards being monitored or assessed. It also outlines the compliance descriptors of:

<b>Compliant</b>	A judgment of compliant means the service is meeting or exceeding the standard and is delivering a high-quality service which is responsive to the needs of children.
<b>Compliant: Substantially compliant</b>	A judgment of substantially compliant means the service is mostly compliant with the standard but some additional action is required to be fully compliant. However, the service is one that protects children.
<b>Not compliant</b>	A judgment of not compliant means the service has not complied with a standard and that considerable action is required to come into compliance. Continued non-compliance or where the non-compliance poses a significant risk to the safety, health and welfare of children using the service will be risk-rated red (high risk) and the inspector will identify the date by which the provider must comply. Where the non-compliance does not pose a significant risk to the safety, health and welfare of children using the service, it is risk-rated orange (moderate risk) and the provider must take action within a reasonable time frame to come into compliance.

Once a judgment on compliance is made, inspectors will review the risk to children of the non-compliance. Inspectors will report on this risk as:

- green: there is no risk
- yellow: there is low risk associated with the non-compliance
- orange: there is moderate risk associated with the non-compliance
- red: there is high risk associated with the non-compliance.

The assessment-judgment framework is organised into two sections, called dimensions, which are:

**1. Capacity and capability.**

**2. Quality and safety.**

These reflect the national standards. In each dimension are what we call 'themes', or aspects of care, such as 'Workforce'. See Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1. Themes in the *National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2012)***



Each theme has its own introductory text, and each standard has a standard statement and listed features to illustrate how to meet the requirements of a particular national standard. See an example in Figure 2.

**Figure 2. A 'standard statement' and extract of 'features' from the national standards**

National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children  
Health Information and Quality Authority

Standard 1.3  
**Children are communicated with effectively and are provided with information in an accessible format.**

Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 1.3.1 Children and families are communicated with effectively in a clear, honest and sensitive manner about the service provided and the implications of decisions made.
- 1.3.2 The service communicates effectively with other professionals and agencies to avoid repetition or confusion in information provided to both children and families.

The **Capacity and capability** dimension comprises the following four elements:

1. **Leadership, Governance and Management** — the arrangements put in place by a child protection and welfare service for accountability, decision-making, risk management as well as meeting its strategic, statutory and financial obligations.
2. **Workforce** — planning, recruiting, managing and organising staff with the necessary numbers, skills and competencies to respond to the needs of children and families that are referred to the service.
3. **Use of Resources** — using resources effectively and efficiently to deliver best achievable outcomes for children and families.
4. **Use of Information** — actively using information as a resource for planning, delivering, monitoring, managing and improving care.

The **Quality and safety** dimension comprises two elements:

1. **Child-centred Services** — children's rights are recognised, including their right to be listened to and to participate in decisions about their lives. Children and families are communicated with in an open, honest and effective manner. Children's safety and welfare is promoted, and supports are identified and provided early in their involvement with the service. The service is responsive to the changing needs of the child and their family.
2. **Safe and Effective Services** — how services protect children from the risk of harm and promote their welfare. Safe services also avoid, prevent and minimise harm and learn from things when they go wrong.

## Capacity and capability dimension

This section focuses on the provider’s overall delivery of the service and how the provider is assured that a quality, safe and effective service is provided to children and their families.

It includes how the service provider:

- is assured that there are effective governance structures and oversight arrangements in place for clear accountability, decision-making, risk management and performance assurance — this is underpinned by effective communication among staff and includes how responsibility and accountability for service provision is integrated at all levels of the service
- plans, manages and organises its workforce to ensure enough staff are available at the right time and with the right skills and expertise to meet the service’s needs
- ensures that the necessary resources are in place to meet the service’s needs.

For the purpose of inspections against this assessment-judgment framework, compliance will be monitored against the following themes and standards.

<b>Dimension: Capacity and capability</b>	
<b>Theme 3: Leadership, Governance and Management</b>	
Standard 3.1	The service performs its functions in accordance with relevant legislation, regulations, national policies and standards to protect children and promote their welfare.
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	Can staff demonstrate their knowledge of relevant legislation, policies, standards and guidelines and is this consistently implemented in practice?
	Does the provider take appropriate actions based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ recommendations made by regulatory bodies and</li> <li>▪ recommendations made following investigations into the service?</li> </ul>

	<p>Does the provider review new and existing legislation, regulations and national policy to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ determine how it will impact on the service provided to children and their families and</li> <li>▪ address any gaps in compliance?</li> </ul>
--	--

**Dimension: Capacity and capability**

**Theme 3: Leadership, Governance and Management**

Standard 3.2	Children receive a child protection and welfare service, which has effective leadership, governance, and management arrangements with clear lines of accountability.
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	Does the provider have clearly defined governance arrangements and structures in place that set out the lines of authority and accountability at national, regional and local levels?
	Do the governance arrangements clearly outline defined roles and responsibilities that stipulate individual accountability?
	Do leaders and managers at national, regional and local levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ demonstrate leadership and a commitment to continual improvement</li> <li>▪ understand the needs of children that they provide services to</li> <li>▪ direct appropriate resources to ensure the care and protection of children?</li> </ul>
	Does the service’s statement of purpose: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ detail the legislative basis and statutory functions of the service</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ include a description and objectives of the service, and describe the models of service delivery and aligned resources?</li> </ul>
	<p>Do the strategic and operational plans set out a clear direction for the delivery of a quality child protection and welfare service?</p> <p>Are these plans implemented at national, regional and local levels?</p>
	<p>Does the provider have auditing and monitoring arrangements in place at a local, regional and national level to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ evaluate strategic objectives</li> <li>▪ assess, evaluate and improve service provision</li> <li>▪ monitor all aspects of service provision to ensure consistency and equity?</li> </ul>
	<p>Are risk management frameworks in place to support the appropriate identification, assessment and management of risk?</p>
	<p>Are there effective arrangements in place to monitor adverse events, complaints and concerns to ensure they are appropriately addressed and monitored?</p>
	<p>Does the service publicly report on its effectiveness and safety at a national level, on a regular basis?</p>

<b>Dimension: Capacity and capability</b>	
<b>Theme 3: Leadership, Governance and Management</b>	
Standard 3.3	The service has a system to review and assess the effectiveness and safety of child protection and welfare service provision and delivery.
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	Is there an effective monitoring system in place that regularly reports on compliance of the service with national child protection and welfare standards, policy, legislation and regulations?
	Has the provider a system in place to monitor and evaluate all aspects of the service provided?  Does this system effectively identify and mitigate any potential risks to the safety, protection and welfare of children?
	Is the learning from the monitoring and evaluation of the quality and safety of services communicated to those providing the service and to the public?  Is this learning used to improve the provision and delivery of the service?

<b>Dimension: Capacity and capability</b>	
<b>Theme 3: Leadership, Governance and Management</b>	
Standard 3.4	Child protection and welfare services provided on behalf of statutory service providers are monitored for compliance with legislation, regulations, national child protection and welfare policy and standards.
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	Are formalised agreements in place for the provision of child protection and welfare services, which are sourced externally?

	Do the agreements include the scope of the service provided, the resources required and the monitoring and governance arrangements to ensure compliance with national policy and standards?
	Are external service providers monitored on a regular basis to assure the service they provide is compliant with legislation, regulations, standards and national policy?

<b>Dimension: Capacity and capability</b>	
<b>Theme 4: Use of Resources</b>	
Standard 4.1	Resources are effectively planned, deployed and managed to protect children and promote their welfare.
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	Does the provider regularly complete an analysis of needs and service demand in the area?  Is this needs analysis used to plan service and resource allocation?
	Does the provider have a comprehensive plan which takes account of available funding and resources available?
	Are resources effectively deployed to meet prioritised need?
	Does the provider ensure that regular meetings are held with all agencies that provide services to vulnerable children and families to support effective service delivery?
	Are decisions transparent in relation to planning, procuring and managing resources that receive public funding?

	Is the financial performance and cost-effectiveness of the service monitored and evaluated on an annual basis to improve service delivery?
--	--

<b>Dimension: Capacity and capability</b>	
<b>Theme 5: Workforce</b>	
Standard 5.1	Safe recruitment practices are in place to recruit staff with the required competencies to protect children and promote their welfare.
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	Does the provider have recruitment practices in place to ensure staff with the required competencies are recruited to the service?  Is recruitment informed by evidence-based human resource practices and in line with employment and equality legislation?
	Does the provider have contemporaneous, accurate and secure personnel files maintained for all staff?  Do staff personnel files include the information outlined in the <i>National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children</i> , including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ name, date of birth and evidence of identity</li> <li>▪ CV, including record of previous employment</li> <li>▪ references</li> <li>▪ satisfactory vetting from An Garda Síochána and or other police services</li> <li>▪ qualifications</li> <li>▪ training undertaken and completed</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ registration status with professional bodies where required?</li> </ul>
	<p>Does the provider have an appropriate orientation and induction programme in place that all staff receive on commencement of work in the child protection and welfare service?</p>
<p><b>Dimension: Capacity and capability</b> <b>Theme 5: Workforce</b></p>	
<p>Standard 5.2</p>	<p>Staff have the required skills and experience to manage and deliver effective services to children.</p>
<p><b>Lines of enquiry</b></p>	<p>Does the provider have sufficient staff with an appropriate skill-mix, qualifications, competencies and experience to ensure that all the activities of the service can be completed effectively?</p>
	<p>Does the provider have appropriate contingency plans in place in the event of a shortfall in staffing levels?</p>
	<p>Do staff demonstrate the necessary competencies to work with children using the service?</p>
	<p>Have staff registered and maintained their registration with the relevant professional statutory body in accordance with legislation?</p>
	<p>Does the provider promote continuity of staffing?</p>
	<p>Do managers have appropriate qualifications, skills, training, practice and management experience to manage the service, and meet the service's objectives?</p>

	Are staff engaged in continual professional development and are up to date with evidence-based best practice?
--	---

<b>Dimension: Capacity and capability</b>	
<b>Theme 5: Workforce</b>	
Standard 5.3	All staff are supported and receive supervision in their work to protect children and promote their welfare.
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	Does the service ensure that regular supervision and support are provided to staff by managers?  Are managers trained in providing supervision in line with Tusla's own policy?
	Does the provider support and manage staff to effectively exercise personal, professional and collective accountability?
	Does the provider ensure that written, signed records of each supervision, support and performance appraisal session are maintained and given to staff?  Do these records clearly outline discussion, decision-making and accountability?
	Does the provider have effective performance management systems in place?  Do these systems include an annual appraisal of each staff member's performance by their line manager?
	Does the provider ensure that it has arrangements in place to inform CORU, Ireland's multi-profession health regulator, where it has reasonable evidence to suggest that the performance or conduct of a staff member may not meet the requirements of the regulatory body?

	Does the provider have systems in place to protect the workforce from the risk of violence, bullying and harassment?
	Does the provider ensure that staff are facilitated to make a protected disclosure if they had concerns about the effectiveness and safety of the service?
	Does the provider ensure that training and development opportunities are provided to staff to equip them with the skills required to meet the needs of children who are reported to the service?
	Does the provider ensure that managers are provided with accredited management training?

**Dimension: Capacity and capability**

**Theme 5: Workforce**

Standard 5.4	Child protection and welfare training is provided to staff working in the service to improve outcomes for children.
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	Does the provider have a programme of continual development for staff?
	Does the provider undertake a regular training needs analysis to determine the training needs of staff?
	How does the provider support and or facilitate staff to attend training, development and educational programmes with a specific focus on child protection and welfare?
	Does the training programme equip staff with:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the skills and knowledge of the relevant child care legislation and regulations</li> <li>▪ national and local procedures and policies relevant to their roles and responsibilities</li> <li>▪ skills and knowledge to work with children who are especially vulnerable?</li> </ul>
	Does the training programme take into account feedback from children and families who have received the service?
	Does the training programme facilitate staff members to develop their skills to ensure the delivery of safe and effective services?
	Is the training programme facilitated on a multidisciplinary and interagency basis?

**Dimension: Capacity and capability**

**Theme 6: Use of Information**

Standard 6.1	All relevant information is used to plan and deliver effective child protection and welfare services.
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	Does the provider have effective information governance systems in place to ensure that the service: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ complies with legislation</li> <li>▪ uses information ethically</li> <li>▪ appropriately protects personal information in line with best available evidence?</li> </ul>
	Does the provider have a robust system for managing information to support the delivery of effective child protection and welfare services?

	Does the provider collate, manage and share standardised information at local, regional and national levels to support effective decision-making, in compliance with legislation?
	Does the provider ensure that children and families have access to personal information held by the service in compliance with legislation and in the best interests of the child?

<b>Dimension: Capacity and capability</b>	
<b>Theme 6: Use of Information</b>	
Standard 6.2	The service has a robust and secure information system to record and manage child protection and welfare concerns.
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	Does the provider have an information system that supports the management of child protection and welfare concerns?
	Is this system compliant with all information requirements as outlined in Children First, national standards and relevant legislation?
	Does the provider ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ all relevant and up-to-date information is accurately recorded on every child</li> <li>▪ records are held on a secure integrated information management system?</li> </ul>
	Does the provider have a designated person to manage all information in line with Children First?

<b>Dimension: Capacity and capability</b> <b>Theme 6: Use of Information</b>	
Standard 6.3	Secure record-keeping and file-management systems are in place to manage child protection and welfare concerns.
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	<p>How does the provider ensure that all records and files are handled sensitively?</p> <p>Does the provider have standardised procedures for the filing, archiving, transfer, secure storage and destruction of records?</p>
	<p>How does the provider ensure that each child's file is compliant with all information requirements as outlined in the national standards, relevant legislation and Children First?</p>
	<p>Does the provider store records securely and ensure they are protected from unauthorised access?</p>
	<p>Does the provider complete regular audits to evaluate record-keeping and file-management systems and practices?</p>

## Quality and safety dimension

The quality and safety dimension relates to standards that govern how services should interact with children and ensure their safety on a day-to-day basis. The standards include consideration of communication, safeguarding and responsiveness and look to ensure that children are safe and supported throughout their engagement with the service.

<b>Dimension: Quality and safety</b>	
<b>Theme 1: Child-centred Services</b>	
Standard 1.1	Children’s rights and diversity are respected and promoted.
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	Does the provider promote, value and uphold children’s rights as outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including their right to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ dignity and respect</li> <li>▪ privacy and confidentiality</li> <li>▪ equality</li> <li>▪ services that respect their age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, religious beliefs, geographical location, membership of an ethnic group or Traveller community.</li> </ul>
	How do staff make children aware of their right to be protected from abuse, and teach them how to keep safe?
	Does the provider make children and families aware of their rights?  How does the provider support them to understand and exercise their rights?

<b>Dimension: Quality and safety</b>	
<b>Theme 1: Child-centred Services</b>	
Standard 1.2	Children are listened to and their concerns and complaints are responded to openly and effectively.
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	Does the provider listen to children and families and ensure that their views are understood and taken seriously?
	How does the provider facilitate children and families to communicate a concern and report abuse?
	Does the provider use measures such as a translator or signer to address communication difficulties with children and families?  How does the provider ensure that they communicate effectively with children and their families?
	Does the provider keep children fully informed of developments during their involvement with the service, where appropriate?
	Does the provider provide children with access to external sources of advocacy and independent representation?
	Does the provider have an open, accessible complaints procedure?
	Does the provider manage complaints in a timely manner?  Does the provider share the outcome of complaints with children and families as appropriate?
	Does the provider regularly look for feedback from children and families to identify areas for service improvement?

<b>Dimension: Quality and safety</b>	
<b>Theme 1: Child-centred Services</b>	
Standard 1.3	Children are communicated with effectively and are provided with information in an accessible format.
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	Does the provider communicate with children and families in a clear and sensitive manner about the service provided and the implications of decisions made, as appropriate to their age and understanding?
	Does the provider communicate with children and families at regular intervals throughout their involvement with the service?
	Does the provider communicate effectively with other professionals and agencies involved with the children and their family, including An Garda Síochána if required?
	Does the provider provide children with information about child abuse and neglect in an age-appropriate manner which takes account of their communication and literacy abilities?
	Does the provider engage in regular campaigns to raise awareness about child abuse and neglect, how to report concerns and how these reports will be dealt with?
	Does the provider provide information to the public on child protection and welfare services and how to report a concern and access services?

<b>Dimension: Quality and safety</b>	
<b>Theme 2: Safe and Effective Services</b>	
Standard 2.1	Children are protected and their welfare is promoted through the consistent implementation of <i>Children First</i> .
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	Is Children First consistently implemented by all staff?
	Does the service have policies, procedures and guidelines which reflect the requirements of Children First and ensure that priority is given to keeping children safe?

<b>Dimension: Quality and safety</b>	
<b>Theme 2: Safe and Effective Services</b>	
Standard 2.2	All concerns in relation to children are screened and directed to the appropriate service.
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	Does the provider screen all reports of concerns appropriately in line with policies and procedures to establish if they are appropriate referrals?
	Does the provider carry out preliminary enquiry, and as part of that process, are other professionals contacted to see if they have concerns about the child who is the subject of the referral?
	Are there thresholds defined to guide social workers on the risk-assessment of abuse and or neglect and what actions to take following the risk assessment?
	Is immediate action taken, where appropriate, to ensure children are not exposed to continued risk of harm or neglect, and are proportionate actions taken to keep them safe?

	Does the provider formally notify An Garda Síochána of suspected physical and sexual abuse and wilful neglect in a timely manner in line with Children First (2017)?
	Does the provider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ document all relevant information regarding a child and</li> <li>▪ clearly record the rationale for decisions made in relation to a child?</li> </ul>
	Does the provider give appropriate feedback to the person who made the referral?

**Dimension: Quality and safety**

**Theme 2: Safe and Effective Services**

Standard 2.3	Timely and effective action is taken to protect children.
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	Does the provider ensure all staff are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ alert to the signs that children may need help and protection</li> <li>▪ take necessary action to minimise the risk of harm to children</li> <li>▪ refer children to other professionals and services, where appropriate?</li> </ul>
	Does the provider have adequate procedures in place to ensure that staff know how to deal with concerns and what action has to be taken?

	Does the provider ensure that prompt action is taken to protect children without any undue delays?
	Does the provider have access to specialist legal advice, if required at the earliest opportunity when there are concerns?
	Does the provider instigate care and supervision proceedings to protect children from further harm and neglect, when necessary?
	Does the provider take urgent action where children are in need of urgent care and protection?
	Does the provider ensure that staff are aware of the impact of long-term harm and neglect?
	Does the provider hold the best interest and experiences of the child as the paramount consideration when providing child protection and welfare interventions?

**Dimension: Quality and safety**

**Theme 2: Safe and Effective Services**

Standard 2.4	Children and families have timely access to child protection and welfare services that support the family and protect the child.
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	Does the provider ensure that children and families have timely access to protection and welfare services?
	Is the service planned and delivered using models of service provision?

	How does the provider take into account best available evidence, policy, Children First and the needs of the families?
	Does the provider ensure all children and families are not discriminated against when accessing services?
	Does the provider promote and support early intervention for child protection and welfare concerns?
	Does the provider use specific interventions such as family welfare conferences and family support to promote strengths within a family and prevent harm to children?
	Does the provider ensure that information is provided to families about services available to them in their communities?
	Does the provider ensure that special consideration is given to vulnerable groups of children as outlined in Children First?
	Does the provider ensure that staff determine a child's welfare needs through assessment?  Does the provider ensure that this assessment is completed within the required time frames and appropriate plans put in place?
	Does the provider ensure that children, families, social workers and professionals are involved in developing support plans?  Does the provider ensure that these plans are agreed and regularly reviewed with the children and their families?
	Does the provider ensure that children and families previously known to the service, receive an appropriate

	response, when further reports of child welfare concerns are received?
	Does the provider ensure that the assessments are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ factual and objective</li> <li>▪ sets out potential risk</li> <li>▪ identifies strengths and supports</li> <li>▪ describe the needs of the child?</li> </ul>
	Are cases escalated and referred to child protection services where children remain at risk despite child welfare and family supports being in place?
	Does the provider ensure the closure of cases is appropriate and families and professionals involved are informed?

**Dimension: Quality and safety**

**Theme 2: Safe and Effective Services**

Standard 2.5	All reports of child protection concerns are assessed in line with Children First and best available evidence.
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	Does the provider ensure good quality initial assessments are carried out with the child, by a qualified and experienced social worker within the required time frames?
	Does the provider ensure that initial assessments include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ consultation with children and observation of the child in the home</li> <li>▪ consultation with parents or guardians</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ consultation with the child’s support networks</li> <li>▪ where appropriate, good consultation with other agencies and professionals to ensure that all information is shared and considered as part of the initial assessment?</li> </ul>
	<p>Does the provider ensure initial assessment reports are factual and objective and clearly describe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the needs of the child and any risk of harm to the child</li> <li>▪ personal and family strengths</li> <li>▪ support networks that can be accessed to mitigate risks and meet unmet need</li> <li>▪ existing protective factors?</li> </ul>
	<p>Does the provider ensure there is an appropriate response when further concerns are received about children previously known to the service?</p>
	<p>Does the provider ensure An Garda Síochána is notified, when necessary of child protection concerns?</p> <p>Does the provider have arrangements in place for ongoing liaison with the Gardaí?</p>
	<p>Does the provider ensure that initial assessments are followed by a more comprehensive ongoing assessment of risks and needs where required?</p> <p>Are other services involved in this assessment as appropriate?</p>
	<p>Does the provider ensure strategy meetings are held between professionals to facilitate the sharing and evaluation of information in a timely manner?</p>

	<p>Are these strategy meetings used effectively to prepare a plan of action for the protection of the child or children where necessary?</p>
	<p>Does the provider ensure that the social workers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ coordinate all interagency involvement</li><li>▪ ensure updates are given regularly and relevant information is shared?</li></ul>
	<p>Does the provider ensure that decisions are in the best interests of the child?</p> <p>Are these decisions recorded in writing?</p>
	<p>Does the provider ensure that the assessment is an ongoing process?</p>
	<p>Are each child's needs and the risk of harm assessed over time to reflect changes in circumstances?</p>
	<p>Does the provider ensure that legislation is used effectively if there is a risk of significant harm that threatens the safety of children?</p>
	<p>Does the provider ensure that the approach to the assessment is child-centred, factual and comprehensive and shared with professionals involved?</p>
	<p>Does the provider ensure that assessment reports include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ a comprehensive analysis of the child's needs</li><li>▪ clear actions that are needed to address the identified needs and or significant risk of harm?</li></ul>

<b>Dimension: Quality and safety</b> <b>Theme 2: Safe and Effective Services</b>	
Standard 2.6	Children who are at risk of harm or neglect have child protection plans in place to protect and promote their welfare.
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	Does the provider ensure that requests for and convening of conferences is timely to ensure prompt action is taken so that children are protected from harm?
	Does the provider ensure that an independent and professional person chairs the child protection conference?
	Does the provider ensure that children and their families attend and participate in the child protection conference, unless identified that their attendance would have a negative impact?
	Does the provider ensure there is an accurate child protection plan?  Are decisions and judgments in this plan based on available evidence from assessments and existing records, and are the contents are in line with Children First?
	Does the provider ensure the child protection plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ is of good quality</li> <li>▪ identifies the person with lead responsibility for implementing the plan</li> <li>▪ considers the child’s long-term and immediate needs</li> <li>▪ clearly records decisions which include roles, responsibilities, monitoring and review arrangements.</li> </ul>

	<p>Does the provider ensure child protection plans are explained to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ children in line with their age and understanding</li><li>▪ families and or carers.</li></ul>
	<p>Does the provider ensure that parents and or carers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ are provided with a written copy of the child protection plan</li><li>▪ are clear about the planned outcomes for the child?</li></ul>
	<p>Does the provider ensure child protection plans are reviewed in line with Children First?</p>
	<p>Does the provider ensure the Child Protection Notification System (CPNS) is updated and managed in line with Children First?</p>
	<p>Does the provider ensure that where children are in care, the child protection plan informed their statutory care plan?</p>
	<p>Does the provider ensure that children's names are placed on the CPNS where there are unresolved child protection issues, including neglect?</p>

<b>Dimension: Quality and safety</b> <b>Theme 2: Safe and Effective Services</b>	
Standard 2.7	Children’s protection plans and interventions are reviewed in line with requirements in Children First.
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	Does the provider ensure that review child protection conferences are held at regular intervals to review progress in the case in line with the requirements of Children First?
	Does the provider ensure that an independent and professional person chairs the review child protection conference?
	Does the provider ensure that clear, informed decisions are made during the review case conference, which put children’s needs and safety first?
	Does the provider ensure that a child protection conference service is provided to children until such time as the case is closed to the child protection conference service?
	Does the provider ensure the closure of cases is appropriately planned and agreed with the social work team leader, and that families and professionals involved are informed?

<b>Dimension: Quality and safety</b> <b>Theme 2: Safe and Effective Services</b>	
Standard 2.8	Child protection and welfare interventions achieve the best outcomes for the child.
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	Does the provider ensure decisions are based on evidence of what is likely to bring about best outcomes for children?
	Does the provider ensure that agreed actions are carried out?
	Does the provider ensure the required support to the child and their family is provided as indicated in the assessment and agreed plan?
	Where the level of risk to the child changes, or there is a lack of progress, has the service ensured: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the arrangements made have been reviewed</li> <li>▪ appropriate actions have been taken to help the child</li> <li>▪ the plan has been updated to reflect these decisions where appropriate?</li> </ul>
	Does the provider ensure alternative actions are considered in the plan if the original actions do not continue to support the child's needs?
	Does the provider ensure staff and professionals work together with children and families to promote each child and meet their needs, taking into account of all available assessment information?
	Has the provider ensured that support networks are available to children and families?

<b>Dimension: Quality and safety</b> <b>Theme 2: Safe and Effective Services</b>	
Standard 2.9	Interagency and inter-professional cooperation supports and promotes the protection and welfare of children.
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	<p>Has the provider ensured that policies and procedures are in place to support information sharing for child protection work for interagency and inter-professional working within and between services including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the referral</li> <li>▪ assessment</li> <li>▪ case management</li> <li>▪ review of child protection and welfare concerns.</li> </ul>
	Has the provider ensured that children and families are aware of the roles and functions of each agency where services are provided by more than one service?
	Has the provider clearly defined and agreed the responsibilities for professionals involved to ensure implementation of all agreed actions and plans?
	Does the provider ensure that cooperative relationships with other agencies are promoted to improve outcomes for children?
	Does the provider ensure that professionals share appropriate information to support the assessment and planning of interventions for children?
	Has the provider put interagency training initiatives in place to promote a shared understanding of agencies and professionals' responsibilities under the Children First Act 2015?

	Does the provider ensure there is a regular and timely review of the progress of interventions and information from professionals involved with the family?
--	---

<b>Dimension: Quality and safety</b>	
<b>Theme 2: Safe and Effective Services</b>	
Standard 2.10	Child protection and welfare case planning is managed and monitored to improve practice and outcomes for children.
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	Has the provider ensured that there are effective structures and systems in place to enable social workers to undertake direct work with children and families when required?
	Does the provider ensure that children who are identified as being at risk of significant harm or neglect are allocated a social worker?
	Does the provider ensure that there are effective caseload management systems in place to ensure caseloads are manageable for all social workers?
	Does the provider ensure there are adequate arrangements in place to cover periods of leave which ensure continuity of service provision to children and families?
	Has the provider put structures in place to ensure effective collaborative working between social workers, and professionals and support workers in other disciplines?
	Does the provider ensure effective team work within the service promotes service improvement in the best interest of children and families?

	<p>Does the provider ensure that arrangements are in place for regular case planning meetings to be held, so that social workers can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ reflect on direct work and plans for children and families</li> <li>▪ consider the effectiveness of services delivered and case decisions.</li> </ul>
	<p>Does the provider ensure that social workers are supported by their manager to facilitate best practice?</p>
	<p>Does the provider ensure that procedures are in place for the management of complex cases?</p>
	<p>Does the provider ensure there are mechanisms in place to for the review and monitoring of overall service provision?</p> <p>Does the provider ensure learning from this monitoring is shared to improve service delivery?</p>

**Dimension: Quality and safety**

**Theme 2: Safe and Effective Services**

Standard 2.11	<p>Serious incidents are notified and reviewed in a timely manner and all recommendations and actions are implemented to ensure that outcomes effectively inform practice at all levels.</p>
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	<p>Does the provider ensure that clear local and national lines of responsibility are in place for notification of serious incidents in line with national legislation, policy and standards?</p>
	<p>Does the provider ensure that serious incidents which impact on the safety and welfare of children are notified in</p>

	line with policy and procedures, including notification to HIQA within a specified time frame?
	Does the provider ensure that robust systems are in place for the review of serious incidents?
	Has the provider a system to monitor the progress of individual serious incident reviews to ensure they are carried out in line with the requirements?
	Does the provider ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ action plans are in place and</li> <li>▪ actions are implemented in line with the time frames outlined in the review?</li> </ul>
	Does the provider ensure that the learning and recommendations from serious incident reviews is shared and implemented with and by management and staff within appropriate timescales?
	Has the provider put appropriate systems in place for reporting on serious incidents and reviews, including lessons learned both internally in the service and externally with the public?
	Does the service ensure the lessons learned are used to inform the development of best practice and improve service provision?

<b>Dimension: Quality and safety</b> <b>Theme 2: Safe and Effective Services</b>	
Standard 2.12	The specific circumstances and needs of children subjected to organisational and/or institutional abuse and children who are deemed to be especially vulnerable are identified and responded to.
<b>Lines of enquiry</b>	<p>Does the provider ensure that public information sharing initiatives are in place to raise awareness about the safety and protection of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ children subjected to organisational and or institutional abuse and</li> <li>▪ especially vulnerable children, such as separated children seeking asylum and children subject to sexual exploitation?</li> </ul>
	<p>Does the provider ensure that the assessment of individual concerns and or reports of abuse in an organisational or institutional setting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ consider the possibility of abuse of other children, and</li> <li>▪ how has that been recorded in the assessment?</li> </ul>
	Does the provider ensure historical information is gathered regarding any previous incidents of reported abuse to identify any possible patterns of abuse?
	Does the provider ensure there are clear procedures in place for the management and investigation of allegations of abuse in line with Children First?

	<p>Does the provider ensure that professionals work together where there are multiple reports of abuse of children in an institutional or organisational setting to ensure the children who might be involved are protected?</p>
	<p>Does the provider ensure close liaison with An Garda Síochána where there are concerns about the organised abuse of children?</p>
	<p>Does the provider ensure that reports of abuse of children by an older child or children are managed in line with Children First?</p>
	<p>Does the provider ensure there are clear procedures in place which are known to all staff for managing retrospective disclosures of abuse?</p>



**Published by the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA).**

Issued by the Chief Inspector  
Health Information and Quality Authority  
George's Court  
George's Lane  
Smithfield  
Dublin 7  
D07 E98Y

+353 (0)1 814 7400  
info@hiqa.ie  
www.hiqa.ie

© Health Information and Quality Authority 2025