



Opening statement by HIQA's Chief Inspector of Social Services

Joint Committee on
Disability Matters

8 November 2023

Opening statement

Good evening Chair and members. Thank you for the invitation to meet with the Joint Committee on Disability Matters to discuss the topic of rights-based care for children with disabilities, and to consider the integration of primary care, disability and mental health services and rights-based care.

I am joined by my colleague:

- Finbarr Colfer, Deputy Chief Inspector with responsibility for services for people with disabilities.

As HIQA's Chief Inspector, I am responsible for the regulation of designated centres which provide residential services for people with a disability.

In inspecting and reporting on the standard of services, we also place a strong importance on meeting with people using services, including children and adults with a disability. Hearing from people who use services and understanding their lived experiences are essential in determining how their rights are respected and ensuring that they are supported to live a fulfilling life. Our inspectors spend significant time meeting with residents on inspection, and use the information they give to inform our inspection findings. In our experience, this engagement supports quality improvement in designated centres.

In addition to this, we receive, analyse and risk-assess information from a range of sources to inform our responsive approach to regulation. This enables myself, as the Chief Inspector, to respond proactively to regulatory risk and prioritise our regulatory activities.

It is important that all children, including children with a disability, receive appropriate, safe and good quality care. HIQA, alongside our colleagues in the Mental Health Commission, has developed Overarching Standards for the Care and Support of Children Using Health and Social Care Services. Together with the current regulatory framework, these standards, when approved, will support providers to ensure that children in receipt of services can continue to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Last month, we published an overview report of the inspection and regulation of designated centres for people with disabilities in 2022. Designated centres can be registered as centres for adults, for children or for adults and children, also known as mixed centres. Mixed children and adults centres are mostly respite centres where there are separate respite breaks for children and for adults and they are not accommodated together. They can also be where children are transitioning to adulthood, and the provider is facilitating them, both children and adults to continue

living together. At the end of 2022, there were 1,342 centres for adults with a disability, with 8,405 registered places. There were 36 mixed centres for both adults and children, with 215 registered places. There were also 100 centres for children only, with 410 residential places. This is an increase from 2019 when there were 80 children centres and 347 registered places.

In 2022, HIQA carried out 1,329 inspections of designated centres for people with disabilities. Our inspections found that the majority of centres provided a good standard of care and support to people with disabilities. However, the report also outlined concerns about poor findings in relation to governance and management in a number of settings. Our findings consistently demonstrate that good governance and oversight arrangements in centres results in better standards and outcomes for residents – promoting their rights.

Another key learning for us during 2022 was that while we have seen an improvement in compliance levels in congregated settings, which is to be welcomed, non-compliance in these settings continues to be higher than in community-based settings in key areas that impact on the rights of people with disabilities. This means that residents living in community settings have better access to quality care and support, and experience a better life as part of their communities.

As an organisation, we continue to enhance our human rights-based approach to regulation. In 2022, all of our inspectorate staff received human rights training.

This year, we are focusing on promoting improvements for residents by focusing on their rights. We have initiated a new programme of thematic inspections of restrictive practices, which are the intentional restriction of a person's voluntary movement or behaviour. The inspection programme focuses on assessing physical and environmental restraints as well as other forms of restrictive practices to ensure people with disabilities are supported to live a life of their choice.

Our inspectors are also actively identifying centres where human rights training has been provided, speaking with residents and staff to identify examples of good practice that have been introduced as a result of the training. Our inspection reports in 2023 will reflect those observations, and we intend to share the overall learning from this initiative with the wider sector through our overview report for 2023.

Conclusion

Finally, I would like to assure the committee of HIQA's continued commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of people with disabilities to live in a safe environment. HIQA is focused on how we can use our legislative powers to support a human rights-based approach to service provision. We want to support providers to move beyond compliance, to use the regulations and national standards to pursue

ongoing quality improvement in centres for people with disabilities.

Thank you for your time and attention this evening. We look forward to answering any questions that you may have.



Health Information and Quality Authority

An tÚdarás Um Fhaisnéis
agus Cáilíocht Sláinte

For further information please contact:

Health Information and Quality Authority

George's Court

George's Lane

Smithfield

Dublin 7

D07 E98Y

+353 (0)1 8147400

info@hiqa.ie

www.hiqa.ie

© Health Information and Quality Authority 2023

