

Tracey Cooper
Chief Inspector of HIQA and Acting Chief Inspector for Social Care
Health, Information & Quality Authority
George's Court,
George's Lane,
Dublin 7.

24th July, 2012

Re: National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children for HSE Children and Families Services

Dear Ms Cooper,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Irish Association of Social Workers (IASW), the professional body representing social workers in Ireland. I also represented the IASW on the National Standards Advisory Group. The National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children for the HSE Children and Families Services are due to be launched on Wednesday 25th August 2012. The IASW welcomes the stated purpose of these Standards, which is to ensure the Welfare of Children and Families and it is the understanding of the IASW that the monitoring process will assess the adequacy of these services.

Under the Child Care act 1991, the HSE has a statutory duty to promote the welfare of children who are not receiving adequate care and protection as well as providing early intervention services and protection for children in the care of the state. The HSE has delegated the day to day responsibility for this part of the Child Care Act 1991 to the social work services in the Children and Families Services of the HSE, so in effect, the services that are due to be monitored are the social work services in the Children and Family Services in the HSE mainly.

Social workers working in this area of social work carry a heavy responsibility on behalf of the HSE and are dealing with very complex and multi-faceted issues, involving, for example, parents; children; professionals; various statutory, voluntary and community agencies; the legal profession and courts etc. This area of work requires very highly skilled and well-qualified professionals in order to be able to deal with the varied groups; an ability to assess very difficult family circumstances, to understand the context of the issues that arise, the developmental needs of children as well as ability to network and communicate effectively with all the interested parties etc. These skills are a key part of professional social work training and the area of work is a very demanding social work specialism that requires very good supervisors and line-management and agency support.

The IASW, as the professional body for social workers in Ireland, would like to be reassured that the inspectors that will be assessing the service that is being provided by the social work profession are qualified social work professionals. As has been outlined above, the social work task is very complex and to ensure that the monitoring process is credible it is imperative that the person that monitors the service is a qualified social worker with the relevant knowledge base. This would be the norm in other

in relation to the Inspection of most other professionals, i.e. teachers are inspected by teachers and nurses are inspected by nurses etc.

During the advisory group process and again after the draft standards were released, I inquired whether the inspectors would be qualified social workers with the relevant experience to be able to monitor this very complex area of work, but to date it has not been possible for HIQA to reassure us that this will be the case.

I would welcome your reassurance that this will indeed be the case and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

Ineke Durville
President IASW

CC: Niall Byrne & Deirdre Mulholland