



IASW

Irish Association of Social Workers
Cumann na hÉireann um Oibríthe Sóisialta

Action on After Care Amendments IASW with FOCUS Ireland – 24, November 2015

Allocation of Aftercare Worker

1. The Bill is amended to insert after section 6 the following:

6a. The Principle Act is amended by the insertion of the following section after section 45A (inserted by *section 6*):

45B. without prejudice to any other section of the act, where an assessment of need has been completed as per section 45(A) and the need for an aftercare plan is identified the Child and Family Agency shall assign an authorised person to support the development and implementation of the aftercare plan.

Re-designation of sections 45(B) 45(C) and 45(D) on insertion of section 1

1. Following the insertion of section 1 the Bill shall be amended
 - (a) In section 7 of by the designation of '45(B)' as '45(C)'
 - (b) In section 8 by the designation of '45(C)' as '45(D)'
 - (c) In section 9 by the designation of '45(D)' as '45(E)'

Amendment of Section 2 of the Principle Act

2. Section 2 of the Bill is amended to insert after Section 1(D) — (1E) where a person, does not have the required 12 months history of care to be designated an 'eligible child' or eligible adult', an assigned officer of the Child and Family Agency, who identifies a need which they deem exceptional, may designate that person to be an 'eligible child' or 'eligible adult' as appropriate. Without prejudice to any provision in this Act that person shall then have the same entitlement as a person so designated.

Feedback from IASW to Senator Jillian Van Turnhout – 3rd November, 2015

Our thanks to you and Senator van Turnhout for this opportunity. The lack of proper provision of services to young people leaving care has been an area of concern for social workers working in Tusla for some time now.

Our initial comment is that while we are disappointed that we are not getting the whole-scale revision of the now outdated Child Care Act 1991 (as promised by the Minister), but we are pleased that the eligibility to an Aftercare Plan is being extended and we consider this to be positive step towards a more robust aftercare service to care leavers in Ireland, as well as the young people currently in care. Although we note that this is about eligibility to an Aftercare Plan and not necessarily to the services that are required to meet the needs identified!

With regard to the actual Bill itself, under section 45D (review of Aftercare plan) we would suggest that in addition to the three criteria already listed, that a review of a young person's aftercare plan should be held at regular intervals (e.g. every 6 months). This will help ensure that services are continuing to remain engaged with the young person (and vice-versa).

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Under the same section, we are disappointed about the inclusion of the paragraph stating that: "Aftercare plans may be updated following a review. Any such updating shall have due regard to the resources available to the Agency to implement the updated plan."

This would appear to be a "get-out-of-jail-free" clause for DCYA/Tusla. An aftercare plan for a child/young person should be based on the needs assessments conducted and should seek to address the identified needs and risks and should not be designed within the parameters of the services that are available. A proper aftercare plan should address all the needs that the young person has and not just the needs that we have the resources to meet! We would suggest instead that this paragraph require that services record all the identified needs, (as highlighted in the assessments/careplan) especially those that it does not have the capacity to meet currently and that an audit be conducted on an annual basis within each area regarding the collated identified unmet needs. This would help with regard to service development in each area.

The other issues that we would like to bring to the Senator's attention is regarding service provision (as it currently stands) and the extra pressure that this Bill will place on the existing services. The Senator may be aware that while some areas have dedicated Aftercare Teams, many do not. In these circumstances, social workers and other staff may be pulled from other duties to fulfil the requirements of this Bill. This is only robbing Peter to pay Paul, and social workers are concerned that this could lead to the an ever diminishing return in the outcomes for young people, as social workers and other Tusla staff are focused on completing the Aftercare Plan without having the time and resources to actually execute it!

We would be very interested in knowing what the proposed commencement timeline will be on the new Act and how the DCYA has committed to put in the extra resources required to ensure that the Act can be fully implemented without putting additional pressure on existing services, as well as the additional resources required to ensure that all the identified needs of the young people are met. A plan without the sufficient resources will be little more than a wish-list and young people leaving care need and deserve so much more.

We hope this is helpful and as always, feel free to contact us for further information.

Best wishes,
Dónal O'Malley

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