



IASW

Irish Association of Social Workers
Cumann na hÉireann um Oibríthe Sóisialta

Deputy Patrick Costello
The Green Party

2nd April 2020

Re. Implications of COVID-19 on the Social Work Profession

Hi Patrick,

Thanks for the contact yesterday. I was at the end of a very busy day as you will have gathered and for you too.

The key issues are as we discussed providing the equipment for our members to carry out their functions. Social Work in the following regards is a regulated area of work that is based on particular training and agreed expertise. And social work requires support to continue work in the community as well as in medical and hospital settings.

1) Recognising the regulatory and statutory responsibilities of social workers these include:

Investigating child protection and welfare referrals

Support to carers of children in care (residential and fostering)

Support to children at risk and in care with high level emotional and behavioural needs

Support to families with children with a physical, sensory and/or intellectual disability (usually provided by Section 38 and 39 agencies)

2) Support to other categories of vulnerable persons:

Elderly people at risk in the community

Adults that are vulnerable as a result of a physical, sensory and/or intellectual disability

Families caring for adults with a disability who can no longer receive day or respite care facilities and other support programmes.

3) Providing readily available, appropriate and sufficient PPE for any social worker who has to visit in the community.

In all these areas Social Workers are trained and practiced in assessing vulnerability and risk of abuse, in bringing available resources in the community to assist, and in monitoring the situation over time.

This crisis heightens those risks as people are confined to their homes and immediate family. The IASW asks the Government and the HSE to maintain social work services in all sectors. This essential work can be done by the practitioner home, by phone, without increasing risks to each other.

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You could say that you have heard in some Section 38 or 39 services Social Workers are on lists to be redeployed, and not working. While they are happy to go where needed, it is to the detriment of our vulnerable populations to pull social work services in this manner at this time. We ask that the Government clarifies with HSE that essential services including Social Work continue during this crisis to provide support and assessment remotely to the living situation of our vulnerable populations.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Stay Safe!

Kind Regards,

Aine McGuirk
Chair

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