

Review undertaken in respect of a serious incident to a young person who was in receipt of after care services from the HSE:

Executive Summary

April 2011

Introduction

This desktop review is concerned with a serious incident which was experienced by eighteen year old L, who had been in the care of the HSE from the time he was a small child up to his 18th birthday. L was involved in a serious accident which left him with significant disabilities. The review covered the period of L's foster care in a summary form and focused in more depth on the past two years. The terms of reference were

- To examine events up to L's accident and determine whether an act or a failure to act on behalf of the HSE Children and Families Services was a contributing factor to the incident
- In that regard to determine whether compliance with relevant procedures, standards and regulations pertaining to L's placement was satisfactory
- To provide an objective report to the HSE including an executive summary, conclusions and recommendations.

Method

The review was conducted as a desktop exercise and examined the HSE records on the case. No interviews were held with staff. It was conducted by the Chair of the National Review Panel, Helen Buckley. The records consisted of 4 social work file containing correspondence, case notes, Child Care Review documentation, Child Care Plans and legal documents including court reports. The chair consulted with the social work team leader by telephone in order to clarify some information. Extracts from the report were sent to relevant staff who were invited to respond with factual corrections. No responses were received.

Findings

The review found that L's placement was stable and well supported by the former [x] health board and latterly the HSE Children and Family Services. He always had an allocated social worker and there were no gaps in service. He had frequent and regular contact with his social workers who ensured that he remained in constant touch with his birth family. When issues arose with regard to his placement or his education, his social workers responded quickly. His views and wishes were

heard, and he was treated in a child-centred and respectful manner by his social workers. He had nineteen statutory child care reviews in his sixteen year placement, all of which involved representations from relevant staff and family. The needs which were identified at these reviews were addressed. The records demonstrate that L's last social worker had a good relationship with him and took particular care to help him make post Leaving Cert plans in order to ensure a level of security. Under his after care plan, L remained with his foster carers and continued to receive social work services. The review found no link between the quality of service to L and the serious incident that he experienced.

Both Children First and the Child Care Regulations were largely complied with in this case, with some exceptions as follows:

- The records indicate that the National Supervision Policy was not in place in the area
- A leaving care review was not held as scheduled
- Case notes and records of Child Care Reviews were not up to standard, though there was a significant improvement in recent years.

Key Learning Points

The key learning points from this review arise from the several examples of good practice that had, and will continue to have, implications for L's welfare. They comprise the following:

- Child Care reviews were held regularly over the period of L's placement and ensured oversight of his needs as he grew up
- For most of his placement and until such time as he chose to terminate it, L had frequent contact with his siblings and parents. This has given him a clear sense of identity and ensured that he has current relationships with his birth family when he chooses to avail of them.
- The regular and frequent social work contact over the years has provided both L and his family with support to ensure a stable placement that has given him a secure base and a family setting for the foreseeable future.

Signed: *Helen Buckley*

Helen Buckley, Chairperson, National Review Panel

Date: *14-10-11*