



**Health  
Information  
and Quality  
Authority**

An tÚdarás Um Fhaisnéis  
agus Cáilíocht Sláinte



**Consultation Document**  
**22 March 2012**

# Draft National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children

For Health Service Executive Children and Family Services

*Safer Better Care*



# About the Health Information and Quality Authority

The Health Information and Quality Authority is the independent Authority established to drive continuous improvement in Ireland's health and social care services.

The Authority's mandate extends across the quality and safety of the public, private (within its social care function) and voluntary sectors. Reporting directly to the Minister for Health, the Health Information and Quality Authority has statutory responsibility for:

## **Setting Standards for Health and Social Services:**

Developing person-centred standards, based on evidence and best international practice, for health and social care services in Ireland (except mental health services).

## **Social Services Inspectorate:**

Registration and inspection of residential homes for children, older people and people with disabilities. Inspecting children detention schools and foster care services.

## **Monitoring Healthcare Quality:**

Monitoring standards of quality and safety in our health services and investigating as necessary serious concerns about the health and welfare of service users.

## **Health Technology Assessment:**

Ensuring the best outcome for the service user by evaluating the clinical and economic effectiveness of drugs, equipment, diagnostic techniques and health promotion activities.

## **Health Information:**

Advising on the collection and sharing of information across the services, evaluating information and publishing information about the delivery and performance of Ireland's health and social care services.



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### The Standards:

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## 1. Introduction

All children have a right to be safe and to have access to appropriate services and support to enable their growth and development. Children who are not receiving adequate care and protection in their own homes and community are amongst the most vulnerable in society. It is vital, therefore, that these children have access to the appropriate services and supports they require.

Following the publication of the *Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse Report (2009)* the Government published the *Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, 2009: Implementation Plan* which commits to giving the highest priority to the care of children to ensure that they are safe and protected and that their welfare is promoted. The provision of effective and safe services for children not receiving adequate care and protection is fundamental to their wellbeing and healthy development. These children need an approach whereby all services working with them are child-centred and share a commitment to work in their best interests and achieve the best possible outcomes for them.

Under the Child Care Act, 1991, the Health Service Executive (HSE) has a statutory duty to promote the welfare of children not receiving adequate care and protection. Social workers play a key role in child protection and welfare by protecting children at risk and supporting families in need. The HSE statutory child protection function is delegated to the HSE Children and Family Services, which has, over time, developed and increased its range of services to meet its statutory obligations to protect children by providing preventative services to support families in adequately caring for their children. However, there will always be some children who will need to be protected from the immediate risk of serious harm.

The *Draft National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children* have been developed by the Health Information and Quality Authority (the Authority) to support continuous improvements in the care and protection of children in receipt of HSE child protection and welfare services. These outcome-based Standards provide a framework for the development of child-centred services in Ireland that protect children and promote their welfare. The Health Act 2007 establishes a statutory obligation for the setting of standards by the Authority.

The Standards are designed to follow a child's journey within the child protection system to ensure that his/her safety and welfare is being protected. Along that journey children will need to be supported through the provision of accessible information, access to services, screening of referrals, assessment to ensure that appropriate services are made available, and the taking of timely action to protect children at risk of harm. This is underpinned by child-focused planning and review and monitoring processes. It requires a systematic approach involving good leadership, interagency cooperation, skilled and experienced staff, and the effective management and deployment of resources – with the child always at the centre of everything that is done.

The setting of standards and the monitoring of compliance with them are important levers in driving improvements in the effectiveness and safety of health and social care services for children and families. Standards help to set public, service provider and professional expectations; create accountability; and support everyone involved in playing a part in securing continuous improvement.

*Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011)* (*Children First*) promotes the protection of children from abuse and neglect. This national guidance outlines what different statutory and non-statutory bodies, and the general public, should do if they are concerned about a child's safety and welfare. It also sets out specific protocols for the HSE and An Garda Síochána, the two bodies with statutory responsibility for child protection and welfare.

*Children First* also highlights how other HSE front-line staff should deal with suspected abuse or neglect of children and emphasises the importance of multidisciplinary, interagency working in the management of concerns about children's safety and welfare. The Government intends to enact legislation to put *Children First* on a statutory footing. *Children First* should be used in conjunction with the *National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children*.

The Authority does not have a remit to regulate individual health and social care practitioners – they are regulated through their relevant professional bodies. However, health and social care regulators have a common purpose to protect children and to drive improvements in the quality and safety of health and social care. Therefore, the regulatory activities, including standards, of the Authority have been designed to complement the activities of other health and social care regulators.



## 2. Legislative Framework

The legislative framework, which governs services for the protection and welfare of children, includes the Child Care Act, 1991 and the Health Act 2007.

### 2.1 Child Care Act, 1991

The Child Care Act, 1991 is underpinned by the basic tenet that the welfare of the child is of paramount importance. It places statutory duties on the HSE as a service provider, which includes identifying children at risk, providing childcare and family support services and promoting the welfare of children who are not receiving adequate care and protection. Section 3 of the Child Care Act, 1991 outlines the functions of the HSE:

- 3.—(1) It shall be a function of the Health Service Executive to promote the welfare of children in its area who are not receiving adequate care and protection.
- (2) In the performance of this function, the HSE shall—
  - (a) take such steps as it considers requisite to identify children who are not receiving adequate care and protection and co-ordinate information from all relevant sources relating to children in its area;
  - (b) having regard to the rights and duties of parents, whether under the Constitution or otherwise —
    - (i) regard the welfare of the child as the first and paramount consideration, and
    - (ii) in so far as is practicable, give due consideration, having regard to his age and understanding, to the wishes of the child; and
  - (c) have regard to the principle that it is generally in the best interests of a child to be brought up in his own family.
- (3) The HSE shall, in addition to any other function assigned to it under this Act or any other enactment, provide child care and family support services, and may provide and maintain premises and make such other provision as it considers necessary or desirable for such purposes, subject to any general directions given by the Minister under section 69.

## 2.2 Health Act 2007

The Health Act 2007 makes provision for the reform of the regulation of health and social care services in Ireland. The Act provides for the establishment of the Authority and the Office of the Chief Inspector of Social Services as part of the Authority.

Under section 8(1)(b) of the Health Act 2007 the Authority has the function:

- (b) to set standards on safety and quality in relation to —
  - (i) services provided by the Executive or a service provider in accordance with —
    - (I) the Health Acts 1947 to 2007, except for services under the Mental Health Acts 1945 to 2001 that, under the Health Act 2004, are provided by the Executive,
    - (II) the Child Care Acts 1991 and 2001,
    - (III) the Children Act 2001,
  - and
  - (ii) services provided by a nursing home as defined in section 2 of the Health (Nursing Homes) Act 1990.

Under section 8(1) (c) of the Health Act 2007, the Authority has the function to monitor compliance with standards and to advise the Minister for Health and the HSE accordingly.

## 3. Purpose of the Standards

The purpose of these Standards is to describe the attributes of the HSE Children and Family Services, in carrying out its functions to protect and promote the welfare of children who are not receiving adequate care and protection and to address concerns in relation to the quality and safety of care children are receiving. By setting out these attributes the service can identify its strengths and areas for improvement. The Standards also enable children, their families and carers to see what constitutes an effective and safe service. All the Standards focus on the best outcomes for children and inform them about what they can reasonably expect of services.

The implementation of these Standards will help the HSE Children and Family Services to continuously improve the services they provide to children and families.

## 4. Scope of the Standards

These Standards will apply to HSE Children and Family Services and relate to the HSE's statutory functions under section 3 of the Child Care Act, 1991 which include:

- protecting and promoting the welfare of children at risk in the community
- supporting and protecting children in the care of the State.

## 5. Principles Informing the Standards

The *Draft National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children* are based on key principles which guide services on how to protect children and promote their welfare. The principles are to:

1. Implement *Children First* in all services to protect children and promote their welfare.
2. Protect children from the risk of harm.
3. Listen to the needs of children and take account of their views.
4. Promote and improve children's wellbeing.
5. Focus on positive outcomes for children.
6. Provide effective governance arrangements with clear leadership, management and lines of accountability.
7. Deliver services to children based on evidence and good practice.

## 6. Themes in the Standards

The Authority has devised a framework for developing standards which was developed following a review of international and national evidence, engagement with international and national experts and applying the Authority's knowledge and experience of the Irish health and social care context. Based on this framework (see Figure 1) the themes described in these Standards are:

- **Child-centred care** – how services place children at the centre of what they do. This includes the concepts of supporting families, access, equity and protection of rights.
- **Safe and effective services** – how services deliver best achievable and safe outcomes for children and families, using best available evidence and information.

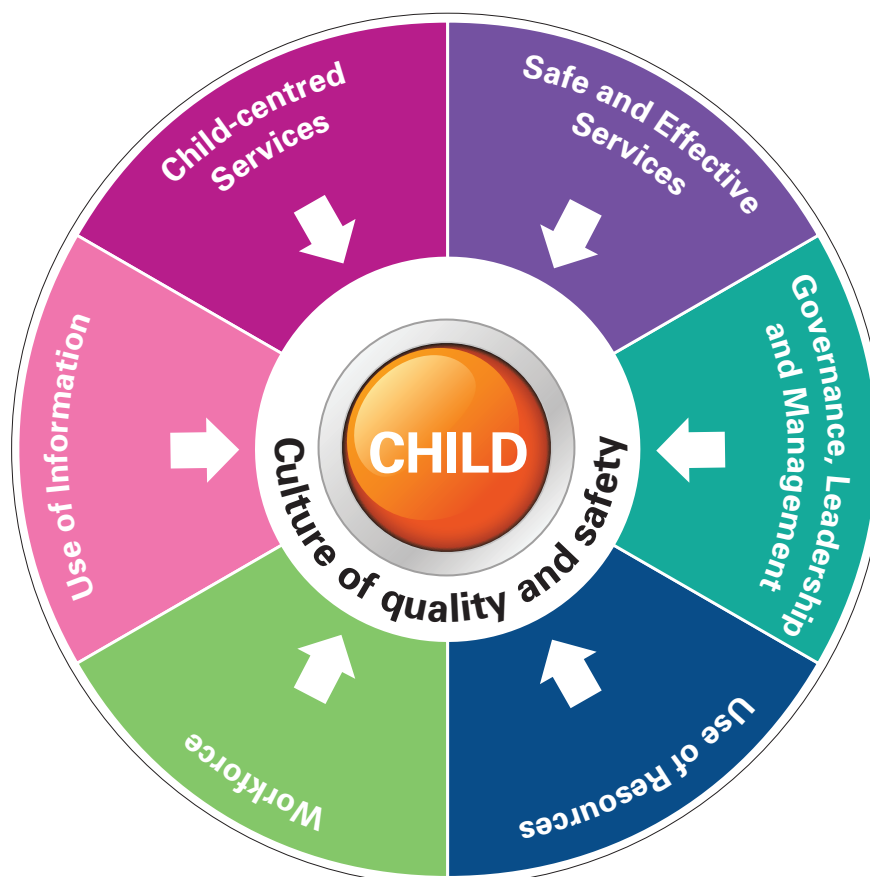
Delivering improvements within these quality dimensions depends on services having capability and capacity in four key areas:

- **Governance, leadership and management** – the arrangements put in place by a service for accountability, decision making, risk management as well as meeting their strategic, statutory and financial obligations.
- **Use of resources** – using resources effectively and efficiently to deliver best achievable outcomes for children and families for the money and resources used.
- **Workforce** – planning, recruiting, managing and organising staff with the necessary numbers, skills and competencies.
- **Use of information** – actively using information as a resource for planning, delivering, monitoring, managing and improving care.

The Standards are grouped into the six themes outlined above. The Standards are made up of standard statements and features. The Standard statement describes the high-level outcomes required to deliver quality services for the protection and welfare of children.

The features under each Standard give examples for the HSE Children and Family Services of what the service should consider in order to meet the Standard and achieve the required outcome. The list of features provided under each Standard statement heading is not an exhaustive list and the service may meet the requirements of the Standards in different ways.

Figure 1. The themes of the Standards



## 7. How the Draft Standards were developed

Under provisions made in section 8(1)(b) of the Health Act 2007 the Authority has statutory responsibility to develop standards for health and social care services. These Standards have been developed through a structured process aimed at reflecting best practice in social care regulation.

A review of international and national literature was undertaken and used to inform the drafting of the Standards. The Standards take account of published research, standards in other jurisdictions and in Ireland, expert opinion, Government policy and reports by national and international governmental and non-governmental organisations.

The Authority convened a Standards Advisory Group in June 2011 comprising of representatives from the HSE, Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Department of Education and Skills, Department of Justice, An Garda Síochána, representatives from other regulatory bodies, experts from the academic and legal fields, and representatives from non-statutory organisations providing services to children, and other key stakeholders. The function of the Standards Advisory Group is to advise on a set of draft standards for public consultation.

## 8. Monitoring of compliance with the Standards

Following the consultation process, the *Draft National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children* will be reviewed to take on board the feedback received. The final Standards will be presented to the Board of the Authority for their approval. Following this, the Standards will be submitted for approval to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

Once approved by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, these Standards will be used by the Authority to monitor the compliance of the HSE Children and Family Services, both nationally and within each local health area, with the Standards.

## 9. How the *National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children* will relate to other Children's Standards

The Authority currently inspects a number of children's services which are assessed against standards developed by the Department of Health and Children. These standards are:

- Residential standards – *National Standards for Children's Residential Centres* (2001)
- Special care units – *National Standards for Special Care Units* (2001)
- Foster care services – *National Standards for Foster Care* (2003).

The Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform developed standards for children detention schools: *Standards & Criteria for Children Detention Schools* (2008). Children detention schools are inspected by the Authority against these standards and under provisions made in section 185 of the Children Act, 2001.

The above standards assess the quality and safety of care provided to children in the individual care setting, for example, foster care, residential care, special care, and detention. The *Draft National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children* will assess the wider performance of the HSE Children and Family Services, as a service provider, in relation to its statutory functions to provide adequate care and protection to children, under section 3 of the Child Care Act, 1991 and its statutory duties under *Children First*.

## 10. Terminology used in the Standards

### Children

The term 'children' refers to individuals under the age of 18 years who have not been married (Child Care Act, 1991).

### Families

Throughout the Standards the term 'families' is used. The term 'family' includes:

- children's birth families
- guardians and foster carers.

### Service

The term 'service' refers to HSE Children and Family Services for the purpose of this document.

## 11. Consultation

This document presents for public consultation the proposed *Draft National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children* for a period of eight weeks. The Authority will consider and review all submissions received during the consultation process. Following this process the Authority will finalise the *National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children*.

A children's version of the Standards will also be produced when the *Draft National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children* are approved.

**The closing date for receipt of submissions is Thursday 17 May, 2012.**

### How to make a submission

A number of consultation questions have been prepared for your consideration when reviewing the Standards. These questions are grouped together in the consultation feedback form. They are not intended, in any way, to limit feedback and any other comments are welcome.

There are three ways to tell us what you think:

- Your comments can be submitted by downloading and completing the consultation feedback form available from [www.hiqa.ie](http://www.hiqa.ie) and emailing your completed forms to [consultation@hiqa.ie](mailto:consultation@hiqa.ie).
- You can print off a copy of the feedback form from our website and post it to us at:  
Health Information and Quality Authority  
Draft National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children  
George's Court, George's Lane  
Smithfield, Dublin 7
- For further information or if you have any questions you can talk to the consultation team by calling (01) 8147633.

## How we will use your comments

Following the consultation, the Authority will analyse the submissions and make further amendments to the document. We will present the main amendments in a Statement of Outcomes document which we will make publicly available.

This is your opportunity to participate in the development of Standards. We wish to thank you in advance for taking the time to submit your comments.



## 12. Summary of the Draft National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children

Theme 1: Child-centred Services	
Standard 1:1	Children's rights and diversity are respected and promoted.
Standard 1:2	Children are listened to and their concerns and complaints are responded to openly and effectively.
Standard 1:3	Children are communicated with effectively and are provided with information in an accessible format.

Theme 2: Safe and Effective Services	
Standard 2:1	Children are protected and their welfare is promoted through the consistent implementation of <i>Children First</i> .
Standard 2:2	Timely and effective action is taken to protect children.
Standard 2:3	Children and families have timely access to child protection and welfare services.
Standard 2:4	All concerns in relation to children are screened and directed to the appropriate service.
Standard 2:5	All reports of concern in relation to a child's protection and welfare are assessed in line with <i>Children First</i> and best available evidence.
Standard 2:6	Children who are at risk of harm or neglect have written plans put in place to protect and promote their welfare.
Standard 2:7	Child protection and welfare interventions achieve the best outcomes for the child.
Standard 2:8	Children's protection plans and interventions are reviewed in line with requirements in <i>Children First</i> .
Standard 2:9	The service has a robust and secure information system to record and manage child protection and welfare concerns.
Standard 2:10	Interagency and interprofessional cooperation supports and promotes the protection and welfare of children.
Standard 2:11	Child protection and welfare case planning is managed and monitored to improve practice and outcomes for children.

Standard 2:12	Serious incidents are notified and reviewed in a timely manner and outcomes effectively inform practice at all levels.
Standard 2:13	The specific circumstances of children subjected to organisational and institutional abuse are identified and responded to.

### Theme 3: Governance, Leadership and Management

Standard 3:1	The service performs its functions in accordance with relevant legislation, national policies and standards to protect children and promote their welfare.
Standard 3:2	Children receive a child protection and welfare service, which has effective governance, leadership and management arrangements with clear lines of accountability.
Standard 3:3	The service has a system to review and assess the effectiveness and safety of child protection and welfare service provision and delivery.
Standard 3:4	Child protection and welfare services provided on behalf of statutory service providers are monitored for compliance with legislation, national child protection and welfare policy and standards.

### Theme 4: Use of Resources

Standard 4:1	Resources are effectively planned, deployed and managed to protect children and promote their welfare.
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### Theme 5: Workforce

Standard 5:1	Safe recruitment practices are in place to recruit staff with the required competencies to protect children and promote their welfare.
Standard 5:2	Staff have the required skills and experience to manage and deliver effective services to children.
Standard 5:3	All staff are supported and receive supervision in their work to protect children and promote their welfare.
Standard 5:4	Child protection and welfare training is provided to staff working in the service to improve outcomes for children.

### Theme 6: Use of Information

Standard 6:1	All relevant information is used to plan and deliver effective child protection and welfare services.
Standard 6:2	The service has a robust and secure record-keeping and file-management system to manage child protection and welfare concerns.



# The Standards

## Theme 1

# Child-centred Services

Children are individuals, members of a family and a community, with rights and responsibilities appropriate to their age and stage of development. Services working with children promote a child-centred approach through recognising children's rights, including their right to be listened to and to participate in decisions made about them, taking into account their age and maturity.

Child-centred services consider the 'whole child', in the context of their family, carers, school, friends and local community. As children and young people grow up, their needs change. Child-centred services are flexible and respond to children's individual needs, age and social circumstances and coordinate the service around the needs of children and families.

Children's services value diversity and are inclusive of all groups of children and families who may be in a minority as a result of their culture, gender, religion, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, or geographical location. Services promote equity and reduce inequalities through recognising these differences and facilitating access for each child and their family.

Clear, open and honest communication is central to encouraging children and families to seek advice and use services and is important in building trust and ensuring continuity of service provision. Child-centred services communicate appropriately with children and families according to age, development and communication and literacy needs.

## Standard 1.1

### **Children's rights and diversity are respected and promoted.**

Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 1.1.1 All rights of children under the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* are upheld, respected, valued and promoted.
- 1.1.2 Children are supported in understanding their rights to ensure that they can effectively exercise them.
- 1.1.3 Children are made aware of their right to be protected from abuse and kept safe and are taught how to keep safe.
- 1.1.4 Children are treated with dignity and respect, their equality is promoted and services respect their age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, religious beliefs, geographical location, membership of an ethnic group or Traveller community.
- 1.1.5 The privacy and confidentiality of children is respected and promoted, where appropriate.

## Standard 1.2

### **Children are listened to, and their concerns and complaints are responded to openly and effectively.**

Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 1.2.1 Children are listened to and their views are understood and taken seriously when decisions are made that directly affect their lives.
- 1.2.2 The service is cognisant of the difficulties some children may have in communicating a concern and take measures to address communication difficulties and facilitate children in reporting concerns and complaints.
- 1.2.3 Children are facilitated to communicate a concern and report child abuse and/or neglect and are listened to when they share these concerns.
- 1.2.4 Children are consulted with on a regular basis for feedback to identify areas for service improvement.
- 1.2.5 Children are kept fully informed of all developments during their involvement with the service.
- 1.2.6 Children are provided with access to external sources of advocacy and independent representation.
- 1.2.7 Children and families have access to a complaints procedure that is transparent, open and accessible. The service ensures an appropriate and timely response to all complaints and addresses the issues raised.

## Standard 1.3

### **Children are communicated with effectively and are provided with information in an accessible format.**

Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 1.3.1 Children and families are communicated with effectively in a clear, honest and sensitive manner about the service provided and the implications of decisions made.
- 1.3.2 The service communicates effectively with other professionals and agencies to avoid repetition in information provided to/by children and families.
- 1.3.3 The service communicates with children and families at regular intervals during their involvement with the service.
- 1.3.4 Information on child abuse and neglect is provided to children in an age-appropriate, accessible format through a variety of media in a number of locations - general practitioner (GP) clinics, community services, schools, youth centres etc. - which takes account of their communication and literacy needs.
- 1.3.5 The service engages in regular campaigns to raise awareness about child abuse and neglect, how to report concerns of abuse and neglect and how these reports will be dealt with.
- 1.3.6 Information is disseminated to the public on child protection and welfare services and how to report a concern and access services.

## Theme 2

# Safe and Effective Services

The safety and welfare of the child is paramount in all children's services. A safe and effective service endeavours to protect children from the risk of harm. The service values the safety and welfare of children and regularly monitors all aspects of the service to identify safe practice, minimise risk and learn from adverse events.

*Children First* provides a framework for the assessment and management of child protection and welfare concerns, assists in identifying children's needs, assessing and managing risk and putting plans in place to protect children and promote their welfare. It is recognised that risk cannot always be eradicated. However, safety should be an integral part of the culture in the HSE Children and Family Services and should be embedded in the daily work practices and processes of its staff.

Safe services also need to be effective, both in the decisions taken by social workers and the interventions provided to protect children and promote their welfare. An effective service ensures that children and families have timely access to interventions and responds and adapts to their changing needs in a managed way.

Social workers must be supported in making appropriate evidence-based assessments and decisions to provide interventions that will be more likely to protect children not receiving adequate care and protection. Social work teams must continuously monitor and evaluate the case-management process and standards of service provision. Learning is disseminated to improve the management of child protection and welfare concerns and service delivery.

A responsive and effective child protection and welfare service consults with children and their families throughout the assessment and management processes, and all decisions regarding children are made in consultation with them and their families, where possible. Interagency and interdisciplinary cooperation ensures a comprehensive response to all concerns about children, avoids gaps in service response and provides mutual support for professionals in complex cases.

Safe and effective services are open, transparent and accountable. Learning from good practice is shared internally with staff and the service reports publicly on its response to and management of child protection and welfare concerns and serious incidents.



## Standard 2.1

### **Children are protected and their welfare is promoted through the consistent implementation of *Children First*.**

Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

2.1.1 *Children First* is implemented by all staff, in line with their roles and responsibilities.

2.1.2 The service has policies, procedures and guidelines which:

- clearly reflect the requirements of *Children First*
- ensure that priority is given to keeping children safe
- are disseminated and implemented consistently by all staff working with children.

## Standard 2.2

### **Timely and effective action is taken to protect children.**

Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 2.2.1 All staff who come into contact with children:
  - recognise and are alert to the signs that children may need help or protection
  - take necessary action to minimise the risk of harm to children
  - refer children to other professionals and services, where appropriate.
- 2.2.2 Procedures are in place to ensure staff know how to deal with children's concerns and demonstrate what action has been taken.
- 2.2.3 Decisions regarding children are based on best available information. There is no delay taking immediate action simply for the purpose of gathering more information.
- 2.2.4 The service has access to specialist legal advice at an early stage when there are concerns about children.
- 2.2.5 Care and supervision proceedings are instigated to protect children from further harm and neglect, when necessary.
- 2.2.6 The service takes immediate action in line with legislative requirements and national guidance, where children are in need of urgent care and protection.
- 2.2.7 The service is aware of the impact of long-term harm and neglect on children's wellbeing and takes active steps to promote their safety and welfare.
- 2.2.8 The service focuses on the experiences of the child when providing child protection and welfare interventions.

## Standard 2.3

### **Children and families have timely access to child protection and welfare services.**

Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 2.3.1 Children and families have timely access to services, based on identification of need, assessment of risk and decision making is clear and transparent.
- 2.3.2 The service is planned and delivered using models of service provision and takes into account best available evidence, national policy, *Children First*, the needs of children and families and available resources.
- 2.3.3 Children and families are not discriminated against according to age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, family status, race, religious belief, membership of an ethnic group or Traveller community or geographical location when accessing services.
- 2.3.4 The service promotes and supports early intervention for child protection and welfare concerns, to identify and support families when there are early indications of concerns about the care of children.
- 2.3.5 Information is provided on how to access the different types of support services including access to services in the community, which is readily available to all children and families in accessible formats and at different locations (for example, schools, crèches, community care centres, and youth clubs).
- 2.3.6 Special consideration is given to vulnerable groups of children and peer abuse as outlined in *Children First*.

## Standard 2.4

### **All concerns in relation to children are screened and directed to the appropriate service.**

Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 2.4.1 All reports of child protection and welfare concerns are screened for their appropriateness for the HSE Children and Family Services.
- 2.4.2 Preliminary enquiries are carried out by a social worker to clarify the nature of the concern and all relevant information is documented.
- 2.4.3 Defined thresholds of significant harm or neglect guide social workers on the risk of abuse/neglect and the appropriate course of action.
- 2.4.4 Immediate action is taken, where appropriate, to ensure no child is exposed to continued risk of harm or neglect.
- 2.4.5 Where there is a suspected allegation of abuse and/or neglect, the service shares the information with An Garda Síochána in order to protect the child or other children from significant harm.
- 2.4.6 The child is referred to the appropriate service based on preliminary enquiries and the level of risk to his/her safety and welfare.
- 2.4.7 A social worker uses all relevant information including the age and vulnerability of the child, defined thresholds of significant harm or neglect and his/her professional judgment to decide on the most appropriate course of action, in the best interests of the child.
- 2.4.8 All relevant information regarding the child is documented, including all decisions made.
- 2.4.9 Appropriate feedback is provided to the person who made the referral.

## Standard 2.5

### **All reports of concern in relation to a child's protection and welfare are assessed in line with *Children First* and best available evidence.**

Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 2.5.1 An initial assessment is carried out and focuses on the protection and welfare of the child to reach a preliminary conclusion about the risk of harm in order to plan and provide an appropriate response.
- 2.5.2 A qualified and experienced social worker carries out the initial assessment.
- 2.5.3 The initial assessment is completed within the required timeframes.
- 2.5.4 The initial assessment includes:
  - the child's developmental needs
  - considers the age and vulnerability of the child
  - the family's capacity to respond appropriately to the child's needs
  - wider family and environmental factors.
- 2.5.5 The service responds appropriately when further reports of child protection and welfare concerns are received about children previously known to the service.
- 2.5.6 A social worker sees the child without his/her family present and observes and communicates with the child in a manner appropriate to his/her age and understanding.
- 2.5.7 Relevant people are involved (for example, the child, his/her family, An Garda Síochána, health and social care personnel) in the initial assessment to ensure all relevant information is available and that all of the child's needs are properly considered.
- 2.5.8 An Garda Síochána are notified, when necessary of child protection concerns and there is ongoing liaison between the HSE Children and Family Services and An Garda Síochána.
- 2.5.9 When an initial assessment concludes that a child has unmet needs requiring social work intervention, but the child is not at risk of serious harm or neglect, a child welfare plan/family support plan is agreed with the child and his/her family and is reviewed at regular intervals.
- 2.5.10 The initial assessment is followed with a more comprehensive assessment of risk and need involving other agencies, where necessary.

- 2.5.11 A strategy meeting is convened at any stage of the process, to facilitate the sharing and evaluation of information between professionals and to prepare a plan of action for the protection of the child. All decisions and actions taken at the strategy meeting inform the progression of the case and are documented.
- 2.5.12 The social worker coordinates all interprofessional and interagency involvement, maintains frequent contact with all personnel involved and ensures that updates are given regularly and relevant information is shared.
- 2.5.13 Relevant people involved make decisions, on any further actions to be implemented, in the best interests of the child. Any need for further enquiry is planned and coordinated.
- 2.5.14 All decisions are made in the best interests of the child and recorded clearly.
- 2.5.15 Informed decisions are made based on all available information and include the views of the child and family.
- 2.5.16 It is recognised that the assessment is an ongoing process and each child's needs and the risk of harm are assessed as circumstances change over time.
- 2.5.17 Where the risk of significant harm and/or neglect threatens the safety of children or where there is a possibility of parents or carers removing children without notice, the service uses legislation effectively to protect children.
- 2.5.18 An agreed approach to assessment is shared by the service and professionals involved in child protection cases, which is child-centred and ensures that all aspects of risk and need are covered.
- 2.5.19 The assessment report is factual and objective, sets out the ongoing risk of harm to the child, identifies personal and family strengths and support networks, and clearly describes the needs of the child.

## Standard 2.6

### **Children who are at risk of harm or neglect have written plans in place to protect and promote their welfare.**

Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 2.6.1 A child protection conference is convened to formulate a child protection plan, where a child is identified as being at significant risk of harm and/or neglect.
- 2.6.2 An appropriately trained person chairs the child protection conference who is not directly involved in the assessment and management of the child protection case.
- 2.6.3 The child's family attends the child protection conference, unless it is identified that their attendance would have a negative impact on the child's progress or where there is a criminal investigation. The child is involved depending on his/her age and level of understanding.
- 2.6.4 The child protection plan is based on findings from the assessment. Judgments are based on all the available evidence obtained through existing records, initial and ongoing assessments and any other relevant specialist assessments
- 2.6.5 The contents of the child protection plan are consistent with the information set out in *Children First*.
- 2.6.6 The child protection plan is explained to and agreed with the child in a manner which is in accordance with his/her age and understanding. The child receives a written copy of the plan.
- 2.6.7 The child protection plan is explained to and agreed with the family, who receive a written copy of the plan and are clear about the planned outcomes for the child.
- 2.6.8 The child protection plan considers the child's long-term and immediate needs. Decisions are clearly recorded in the child protection plan which identifies roles, responsibilities, monitoring and review arrangements.
- 2.6.9 The child protection plan forms part of the child's statutory care plan, where a child is in the care of the HSE.
- 2.6.10 The person with lead responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the plan is clearly identified.
- 2.6.11 Where it is determined that it is a welfare concern, a child welfare/family support plan is developed with the social worker, child and his/her family and any professionals involved.
- 2.6.12 Plans are reviewed in line with legislative requirements and best practice.
- 2.6.13 All children for whom there are unresolved child protection issues including neglect are placed on the Child Protection Notification System (CPNS).
- 2.6.14 The CPNS is managed in accordance with *Children First*.

## Standard 2.7

### **Child protection and welfare interventions achieve the best outcomes for the child.**

Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 2.7.1 Decisions are based on evidence of what is likely to work best to bring about best outcomes for the child.
- 2.7.2 Agreed actions are carried out and help or support is provided to the child or the family that has been identified in the child protection plan/child welfare plan/family support plan for as long as it is needed.
- 2.7.3 Alternative actions are considered in the child protection plan/child welfare plan/family support plan which may help the child if original decisions in the plan do not continue to meet the child's needs.
- 2.7.4 Where the level of risk to the child changes or there is lack of progress, the arrangements made are reviewed and appropriate actions are taken to help the child, amending and updating the child protection plan/child welfare plan/family support plan where necessary.
- 2.7.5 Services and professionals work together to protect each child and meet his/her needs taking account of all available assessment information.
- 2.7.6 Support networks are made available to children and families.



## Standard 2.8

### **Children's protection plans and interventions are reviewed in line with requirements in *Children First*.**

Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 2.8.1 A child protection review is convened to review progress in the case, in line with requirements in *Children First*.
- 2.8.2 An appropriately trained person chairs the review who is not directly involved in the assessment and management of the case.
- 2.8.3 Carefully considered decisions are made about children, which puts their safety and needs first.
- 2.8.4 Services are provided to the child until such time as there are no longer concerns regarding his/her safety and welfare.
- 2.8.5 The closure of individual cases is clear, appropriately planned and agreed with the social work team leader. The child, his/her family and all professionals involved are informed that the case is closed.
- 2.8.6 Child welfare/family support plans are reviewed and it is recognised that if the welfare needs are not being met in a timely manner that the case may need to be referred for a child protection case conference.

## Standard 2.9

### **The service has a robust and secure information system to record and manage child protection and welfare concerns.**

Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 2.9.1 Information supports the management of child protection and welfare concerns and is:
- factual, accurate, and legible
  - maintained and filed in chronological order
  - dated and signed after each entry
  - regularly updated
  - accessible at all times during periods of leave
  - compliant with all information requirements as outlined in *Children First*, national standards and relevant legislation.
- 2.9.2 All relevant and up-to-date information is recorded on an integrated management system, on every child about whom there is an ongoing child protection/welfare concern. A designated person manages all information in accordance with *Children First*.

## Standard 2.10

### **Interagency and interprofessional cooperation supports and promotes the protection and welfare of children.**

Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 2.10.1 There are consistent protocols and procedures for the referral, assessment, case management and review of child protection and welfare concerns for interagency and interprofessional working within and between services.
- 2.10.2 When children and families are in receipt of services provided by more than one agency, they are aware of the roles and functions of each agency.
- 2.10.3 There are clearly defined and agreed duties and responsibilities for agencies and professionals involved with children and families to ensure the implementation of all agreed actions and plans.
- 2.10.4 The service supports and promotes positive and cooperative relationships with other agencies and contributes to effective case management and better outcomes for children and families.
- 2.10.5 Professionals share information appropriately to support the assessment, planning and interventions to protect children.
- 2.10.6 Regular contact is made by the HSE Children and Family Services with other agencies to monitor the progress of child protection plans, child welfare plans and family support plans.
- 2.10.7 Child protection and welfare training is provided on a multidisciplinary and an interagency basis to facilitate key learning and strengthen working relationships.

## Standard 2.11

### **Child protection and welfare case planning is managed and monitored to improve practice and outcomes for children.**

Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 2.11.1 There is an operational structure and system which supports social workers to spend the majority of their time undertaking work that directly benefits children and families and which values continuity of social worker with children and families.
- 2.11.2 There are defined, manageable caseloads for all social workers, which are reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure best outcomes are achieved for children and families.
- 2.11.3 Each child who is identified as being at risk of significant harm or neglect is allocated a social worker.
- 2.11.4 The service has structures in place to support cooperation and good working relationships between members of the social work team and professionals and support workers in other disciplines.
- 2.11.5 Social workers in the children and family services team are facilitated to work in partnership with each other to build, strengthen and promote service improvement in the best interests of children and families.
- 2.11.6 There are arrangements for the social work team to hold meetings at regular specified intervals to discuss overall progress in case planning and management and provide social workers with opportunities to:
  - have frequent case consultations to explore and reflect on their direct work and plans for children and families, which is separate from ongoing case supervision arrangements
  - reflect on service effectiveness and case decision making, separate from arrangements for individual support, supervision and performance management.
- 2.11.7 Line managers work directly with social workers and engage with children and families in both family and multidisciplinary contexts to support and facilitate best practice.
- 2.11.8 There are procedures in place for the identification and management of complex cases.
- 2.11.9 There are procedures for cover during periods of leave to ensure continuity in service provision to children and families.
- 2.11.10 The HSE monitors and reviews the case management process and standards of service provision and disseminates all learning from reviews to improve the management of child protection and welfare concerns and service delivery.

## Standard 2.12

### **Serious incidents are notified and reviewed in a timely manner and outcomes effectively inform practice at all levels.**

Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 2.12.1 All serious incidents which impact on children's safety and welfare are notified in line with HSE policy and procedures.
- 2.12.2 There are clear local and national lines of responsibility for the notification of serious incidents in line with national legislation, policy and standards.
- 2.12.3 Serious incidents are notified to the Health Information and Quality Authority in the required format and within the specified timeframe.
- 2.12.4 There is a robust system for the review of serious incidents.
- 2.12.5 There are systems to monitor the progress of individual serious incident reviews to ensure the review:
  - is carried out in line with defined terms of reference
  - addresses relevant issues
  - is completed within established timeframes.
- 2.12.6 The service ensures the prompt and effective dissemination of the recommendations and learning from serious incident reviews to front-line and management staff within appropriate timescales.
- 2.12.7 The learning from the monitoring and evaluation of all serious incidents and serious incident reviews is communicated both internally in the service and externally to the public. The lessons learned are used to inform the development of best practice and improve service provision.

## Standard 2.13

### **The specific circumstances of children subjected to organisational and institutional abuse are identified and responded to.**

Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 2.13.1 The assessment of individual concerns and/or reports of abuse in an institutional or community setting consider the possibility of abuse of other children and this is recorded as part of the assessment.
- 2.13.2 The use of historical information regarding any previous incidents of reported abuse is gathered to identify any possible patterns of abuse.
- 2.13.3 There are clear procedures in place for the management and investigation of allegations of organised abuse in line with *Children First*, with due regard to the sensitivities and legalities involved.
- 2.13.4. Professionals work closely together where there are multiple reports of abuse of children in an institutional or community setting to ensure that all children who might be involved are protected.
- 2.13.5. There is close liaison between the HSE and An Garda Síochána where there are concerns about organised abuse of children by an adult or adults.
- 2.13.6. Reports of the abuse of children by an older child or children are managed in accordance with *Children First* with due regard to the sensitivities and legalities involved.

## Theme 3

# Governance, Leadership and Management

Effective governance in services for children and families is guided by provisions made in Irish and European legislation, *Children First* and national policy documents. It is accomplished by directing and managing activities using good business practices, objectivity, accountability and integrity.

In an effective governance structure, overall accountability for the delivery of services is clearly defined and there are clear lines of accountability at individual, team and service levels so that all individuals working in the service are aware of their responsibilities and to whom they are accountable.

The statement of purpose for the service promotes transparency and responsiveness by accurately describing its aims and objectives, the services provided, including how and where they are provided. Good governance systems support safe and effective service delivery with minimal variation in provision across the system through the ongoing audit and monitoring of its performance.

Effective leadership and management ensures that the service fulfils its statement of purpose and achieves its objectives. The deployment of necessary resources through informed decisions and actions facilitates the delivery of effective and safe services to children and families.

A well-governed service has robust systems in place for the notification and review of serious incidents. The learning from the review of serious incidents is disseminated to front-line and management staff within appropriate timescales to inform the development of best practice and service improvements.

The effectiveness of services sourced externally is monitored through formalised agreements. The safety of services is assured by monitoring compliance with legislation and acting on national policy, standards and recommendations from relevant statutory bodies.

## Standard 3.1

**The service performs its functions in accordance with relevant legislation, national policies and standards to protect children and promote their welfare.**

Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 3.1.1 Staff demonstrate a knowledge of legislation, policies and standards for the protection and welfare of children, appropriate to their role and responsibility and this is reflected in all aspects of their practice.
- 3.1.2 The appropriate action is taken on recommendations made by regulatory bodies.
- 3.1.3 The appropriate action is taken on recommendations made following an investigation into the service.
- 3.1.4 New and existing legislation and national policy are reviewed to determine what is relevant to the service, how it impacts on practice and to address any gaps in compliance.



## Standard 3.2

### **Children receive a child protection and welfare service, which has effective governance, leadership, and management arrangements with clear lines of accountability.**

#### Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 3.2.1 The service has clearly defined governance arrangements and structures that set out lines of authority and accountability, stipulate individual accountability and specify roles and responsibilities.
- 3.2.2 Management at all levels demonstrate leadership and a commitment to continuous improvements to child protection and welfare services. Leaders demonstrate that they understand the needs of children they provide services to and direct resources to services for the care and protection of children.
- 3.2.3 The service has a statement of purpose for the service which details:
  - the service's basis in legislation, and statutory functions
  - description of the service provided for children and families and how the service will protect children and promote their welfare
  - objectives of the service including how resources are aligned to deliver these objectives
  - models of service delivery and aligned resources necessary to protect children and promote their welfare.
- 3.2.4 There are strategic and operational plans for the service which set clear direction for delivering a quality child protection and welfare service and are implemented at national, regional and local levels.
- 3.2.5 Service objectives and plans take account of:
  - the welfare and protection needs of children who are not receiving adequate care and protection
  - the complex needs of children and families
  - national strategies, policies and standards
  - consultation with stakeholders
  - best available evidence
  - legislation
  - resources available
  - information relevant to the provision of safe services.

- 3.2.6 The service is monitored and evaluated against strategic objectives annually and action is taken to bring about improvements.
- 3.2.7 The service is audited on a regular basis to assess, evaluate and improve the provision of child protection and welfare services to children in a systematic way in order to achieve better outcomes for children.
- 3.2.8 There is participation in national audit to monitor all aspects of child protection and welfare service provision and to ensure consistency and equity in the quality of services across all local health areas.
- 3.2.9 There is an established risk management framework and supporting structures for the identification, assessment and management of risk.
- 3.2.10 Effective arrangements are in place to monitor adverse events, complaints and concerns to ensure that they are appropriately addressed and monitored, the necessary actions are taken, trends are detected and learning takes place.
- 3.2.11 The service publicly reports on the effectiveness and safety of the service, on a regular basis.

### Standard 3.3

## **The service has a system to review and assess the effectiveness and safety of child protection and welfare service provision and delivery.**

Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 3.3.1 There is a robust monitoring system that reports regularly on the compliance of the service with national child protection and welfare standards, policy and legislation.
- 3.3.2 All aspects of service provision are monitored and evaluated on a regular basis, to identify and mitigate potential risks to the safety, protection and welfare of children.
- 3.3.3 The learning from the monitoring and evaluation of the quality and safety of services is communicated to those providing the service and to the public. The lessons learned are used to improve service provision and delivery.

## Standard 3.4

### **Child protection and welfare services provided on behalf of statutory service providers are monitored for compliance with legislation, national child protection and welfare policy and standards.**

Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 3.4.1 Formalised agreements are in place for the provision of child protection and welfare services for children and families, which are sourced externally.
- 3.4.2 Formalised agreements include the scope of service provided, resources required to deliver the service, monitoring and governance arrangements, including compliance with national policy, *Children First* and relevant standards.
- 3.4.3 External service providers are monitored on a regular basis to assure the service provided to children and families is compliant with legislation, the Standards and national policy.

## Theme 4

# Use of Resources

The effective management and use of available financial and human resources is fundamental to delivering child protection and welfare services that meet the needs of children and families.

A well-run service uses resources effectively and seeks opportunities to provide an improved service to achieve better outcomes for children and families. Resource decisions take account of the needs of children and families and the levels of demand on the service. Individuals making decisions on the use of resources must be accountable for the decisions made and ensure these decisions are well informed.

## Standard 4.1

### **Resources are effectively planned, deployed and managed to protect children and promote their welfare.**

Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 4.1.1 The service demonstrates an understanding of the levels of need and demand to provide services to inform the planning and allocation of resources and services.
- 4.1.2 There are clear plans that take account of the funding and resources available to provide a quality service for children and families.
- 4.1.3 Resources are effectively deployed to meet prioritised needs.
- 4.1.4 The service convenes regular meetings with all the agencies that provide services to vulnerable children and families to support the delivery of safe and effective services, which protect children and promote their welfare.
- 4.1.5 The service demonstrates transparent and effective decision-making when planning, procuring and managing the use of resources in services that receive public funding.
- 4.1.6 The financial performance and cost effectiveness of the service is monitored and evaluated on an annual basis to improve service delivery.

## Theme 5

# Workforce

Each staff member has a key role to play in delivering an effective and safe service to children and families. The HSE Children and Family Services organises and manages its workforce to ensure that staff have the required skills, experience and competencies to protect children and promote their welfare and to provide an effective service to children and families.

Safe recruitment practices ensure that staff have the required competencies to undertake duties associated with their roles and responsibilities. All staff receive support and supervision to enable them to perform their job to the best of their ability. The performance of staff is appraised at regular specified intervals.

Staff are registered with their professional body, where relevant (for example, social workers are registered with the Health and Social Care Professionals Council) to assure the public that they are competent to deliver safe services to children and families.

Providing a child protection and welfare service can be complex and demanding for the staff involved. The service should protect its workforce from the risk of work-related stress, bullying and harassment, and should listen and respond to their views.

As aspects of service provision change and develop over time, the service supports staff to continuously update and maintain their knowledge and skills whether they are directly/indirectly employed by the service. The training needs of the workforce are monitored on an ongoing basis and identified training needs are addressed to ensure the delivery of effective and safe child protection and welfare services.

It is important that all staff working with children and families receive specific training in child protection and welfare to ensure that they are well equipped with the knowledge and skills to recognise the signs of abuse and/or neglect and what action is required to protect children from significant harm.

## Standard 5.1

### **Staff have the required skills and experience to manage and deliver effective services to children.**

Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 5.1.1 Staff with the required competencies are recruited in line with employment and equality legislation, and is informed by evidence-based human resource practices.
- 5.1.2 A contemporaneous, accurate and secure personnel file is kept for all staff and includes the:
  - full name
  - date of birth
  - curriculum vitae
  - references
  - satisfactory Garda Síochána and police vetting
  - qualifications
  - record of previous employment, including details of any gaps in employment
  - training undertaken and completed
  - relevant registration status with professional bodies in respect of professional staff employed.
- 5.1.3 Orientation and induction training is provided to all staff on commencing work in child protection and welfare services.



## Standard 5.2

### **Staff have the required skills and experience to manage and deliver effective services to children.**

#### Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 5.2.1 There are sufficient staff with the required skills, experience and competencies to meet the needs of children.
- 5.2.2 There is an appropriate skill-mix of staff to meet the needs of children not receiving adequate care and protection.
- 5.2.3 Services have contingency plans in place in the event of a shortfall in staffing levels.
- 5.2.4 Services ensure continuity of staffing so that children's attachments are not disrupted.
- 5.2.5 Staff:
  - have the necessary competencies to provide services to children
  - are registered with the relevant professional statutory body in compliance with legislation
  - engage in continuing professional development and keep up to date with evidence-based practice in their area of practice.
- 5.2.6 Managers are competent, hold appropriate qualifications and have sufficient practice and management experience to manage the service and meet its stated purpose, aims and objectives.

## Standard 5.3

### **All staff are supported and receive supervision in their work to protect children and promote their welfare.**

#### Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 5.3.1 Supervision and support is provided to staff so they are clear regarding accountability and reporting lines, and the appropriate child protection and welfare procedures to be followed.
- 5.3.2 All staff are supported and managed to effectively exercise their personal, professional and collective accountability for the provision of effective and safe services to children.
- 5.3.3 There are procedures to protect the workforce by minimising the risk of violence, bullying and harassment by other members of the workforce or people using the services.
- 5.3.4 Staff are provided with access to support and advice. Staff are provided with regular supervision and support by appropriately qualified and experienced staff.
- 5.3.5 There is an annual formal appraisal of each individual staff member's performance by his/her line manager.
- 5.3.6 Written records are kept of each supervision, support and performance appraisal given to staff. The record is signed by the supervisor and individual at the end of each supervision, support and performance appraisal session and is available for inspection.
- 5.3.7 There are procedures to inform the relevant professional body, where they have reasonable evidence to suggest that the performance or conduct of a health or social care professional may be below the requirements of the professional body.
- 5.3.8 Staff are facilitated to make protected disclosures about the effectiveness and safety of the service in line with legislative requirements, where appropriate.
- 5.3.9 Training and development opportunities are provided to staff to equip them with skills required to meet the needs of children.
- 5.3.10 Accredited management training is provided to all new managers who are managing staff.
- 5.3.11 Supervision theory and practice is provided to managers who supervise staff.

## Standard 5.4

### **Child protection and welfare training is provided to staff to improve outcomes for children.**

Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 5.4.1 A child protection and welfare training needs analysis is periodically undertaken with all staff and the relevant training is provided as part of a continuous professional development programme.
- 5.4.2 A training, educational and development programme with a specific focus on child protection and welfare is provided to staff. It has clear objectives, is reviewed annually and is tailored to:
- equip staff with skills and knowledge of the relevant child care legislation, regulations, national and local policies, *Children First*, procedures and protocols appropriate to their role
  - equip staff with skills and knowledge to deal with those children who are especially vulnerable and those who need special consideration (Part IV, *Children First*)
  - take into account and use where appropriate, the experiences of children and families
  - facilitate specific staff members to develop skills to ensure the delivery of safe and effective child protection and welfare services
  - be delivered on a multidisciplinary and interagency basis to facilitate key learning and strengthen working relationships.

## Theme 6

# Use of Information

Quality information and effective information systems are central to planning, delivering, managing and improving the quality of child protection and welfare services.

Quality information is central to effective decision making as abuse and neglect rarely present with a definitive picture. It is the totality of information that gives the clearest picture of the situation so all information should be recorded accurately and stored securely by the service. Services also respect the right of children and families to access their personal information and facilitate access where appropriate.

Children's services share information with other agencies in the best interests of the child. Sharing of information is governed by protocols and managed in a sensitive, lawful and appropriate manner.

## Standard 6.1

### **All relevant information is used to plan and deliver effective child protection and welfare services.**

Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 6.1.1 Information governance arrangements are in place to ensure that the service complies with legislation, uses information ethically and uses best available evidence to protect personal information and to support the provision of child protection and welfare services.
- 6.1.2 There is a robust system for managing information to support the delivery of effective child protection and welfare services.
- 6.1.3 Information is collated, managed and shared to support effective decision-making, in compliance with legislation.
- 6.1.4 Children and families have access to personal information held by the service in compliance with legislation and in the best interests of the child.

## Standard 6.2

**The service has a robust and secure record-keeping and file-management system to manage child protection and welfare concerns.**

Features to meet the requirements of this Standard include:

- 6.2.1 All records and files are handled sensitively with standardised procedures for the filing, archiving, transfer, secure storage and destruction of records.
- 6.2.2 The information system is secured and protected from unauthorised access.
- 6.2.3 Access to the information system is only provided to persons with a bona fide reason for requiring the information.
- 6.2.4 Regular audits evaluate the record-keeping and file-management system and practices.

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## Glossary of terms

This glossary details key terms and a description of their meaning within the context of this document.

**Accountability:** being answerable to another person or organisation for decisions, behaviour and any consequences.

**Agencies:** an agency is the term used to cover agencies of central government other than statutory and non-statutory organisations.

**Advocacy:** the practice of an individual acting independently of the service provider, on behalf of, and in the interests of children and families, who may feel unable to represent themselves.

**Assessment:** the purposeful gathering and structured analysis of available information to inform evidence-based decision making. Although assessment is an ongoing process, key junctures in the child protection and welfare process require the recording of formal assessments.

**Audit:** the assessment of performance against any standards and criteria in a health or social care service.

**Case management:** case management is the coordination of services for children and families by allocating a social worker to be responsible for the assessment of need and implementation of the child protection plan. The underlying tasks of case management include: initial and ongoing assessment, planning, implementation and regular review.

**Child:** a person under the age of 18 years who has not been married (Child Care Act, 1991).

**Child abuse:** child abuse can be categorised into four different types:

neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time. For detailed guidance and signs and symptoms on each type of abuse, please refer to *Children First*.

**Child protection:** the process of protecting individual children identified as either suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect.

**Child protection conference:** a child protection conference (CPC) is an interagency and interprofessional meeting, convened by the designated person in the HSE. The purpose of a child protection conference is to facilitate the sharing and evaluation of information between professionals and parents/carers, to consider the evidence as to whether a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm, to decide whether a child should have a formal child protection plan and if so to formulate such a plan.

**Child Protection Plan:** A Child Protection Plan is an interagency plan that sets out what changes need to happen to make sure that the child or young person is safe and that their needs are met. Agreed at the Child Protection Conference, the aim of the plan is to reduce or remove the identified risks so that a decision can be made to cease the Child Protection Plan. It will also list the support and help to be given to the family by the different agencies and what the family is expected to do to make the changes happen.

**Child Protection Notification System:** the Child Protection Notification System (CPNS) is a HSE Children and Family Services' record of every child about whom there are unresolved child

protection issues, resulting in the child being the subject of a Child Protection Plan. The decision to place a child on the CPNS is made at a child protection conference.

**Code of conduct:** describes the values, principles and expected behaviours of individuals and teams working within a service.

**Competency:** the qualifications, knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviours and expertise sufficient to be able to perform a particular task and activity.

**Complaint:** an expression of dissatisfaction with any aspect of service provision.

**Concern:** an issue raised by a child, his/her family or service provider because it affects him or her. There are specific concerns which a child, his/her family or a service provider may raise. These are as follows:

1. Child protection concern: the term 'child protection concern' is used when there are reasonable grounds for believing that a child may have been, is being or is at risk of being physically, sexually or emotionally abused or neglected.
2. Child welfare concern: a problem experienced directly by a child, or by the family of a child, that is seen to impact negatively on the child's health, development and welfare, and that warrants assessment and support, but may or may not require a child protection response.

**Confidentiality:** the right of individuals to keep information about them from being disclosed.

**Contract of care:** a formalised agreement which sets out the terms to govern care and the services to be provided.

**Culture:** the shared attitudes, beliefs and values that define a group or groups of people and shape and influence perceptions and behaviours.

**Designated liaison person:** every organisation, both public and private, that is providing services for children or that is in regular direct contact with children should identify a designated liaison person to act as a liaison with outside agencies and a resource person to any staff member or volunteer who has child protection concerns.

**Designated officer:** specific grades within the HSE and all members of An Garda Síochána designated under the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 are authorised as designated officers to receive reports of alleged child abuse.

**Designated person:** every HSE health area has a designated person within the HSE with responsibility for coordinating child protection services. These personnel are responsible for:

- receiving all notifications of child abuse
- taking decisions relating to the holding of child protection conferences
- promoting interagency cooperation on child protection and welfare
- promoting interprofessional and interprogramme cooperation on child protection and welfare
- overseeing staff training programmes
- negotiating service agreements with non-statutory service providers.

**Effective:** a measure of the extent to which a specific intervention, procedure, treatment, or service, when delivered, does what it is intended to do for a specified population.

**Evidence:** data and information used to make decisions. Evidence can be derived from research, experiential learning, indicator data and evaluations.

**Family Support:** activities for families that are developmental (e.g. parenting for the first time), compensatory (e.g. helping a child cope with a disability) and/or protective (e.g. ensuring safety of a young person).

**Formalised agreement:** a formalised agreement can be a service level agreement or a contract of care.

**Governance:** the function of determining the organisation's direction, setting objectives and developing policy to guide the organisation in achieving its objectives and stated purpose. Effective governance arrangements recognise the interdependencies between corporate and clinical governance and integrate them to deliver high quality and safe services to children and families.

**Harm:** harm can be defined as the ill-treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child. For further details, please see Chapter 2 of *Children First: National Guidance (2011)*. Whether it is significant is determined by the child's health and development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a child of a similar age. The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that his or her wellbeing and/or development is severely affected.

**HSE Children and Family Services:** the HSE Children and Families Services provide services and support to children, parents and families.

**Information governance:** the arrangements that service providers have in place to manage information to support their immediate and future regulatory, legal, risk, environmental and operational requirements.

**Inspection:** 'Inspections may seek the experiences of people who use services and carers. Their experiences, triangulated with other evidence and information from a range of sources are a key part of inspections and inform inspection judgements. Inspection is a tool of monitoring.' (Care Quality Commission.)

**Integrated care:** health and social care services working together, both internally and externally, to ensure children and families receive continuous and coordinated care.

**Legislation:** written and approved laws. Legislation can be subdivided into primary legislation (statutes, acts and bills) and secondary legislation (regulations and rules).

**Model of service:** sets out the way a service is delivered and can be applied to a single service unit, to an organisation or a national service.

**Monitoring:** systematic process of gathering, analysis of information and tracking change over time for the purpose of improving the quality and safety of health and social care. Under section 8 (1) (c) of the Health Act 2007, one of the functions of the Authority is to monitor compliance with standards).

**Multidisciplinary:** an approach to the planning and delivery of care to children and families by a team of health and social care professionals who work together to provide integrated care.

**Protection:** process of protecting individual children identified as either suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect.

**Record:** a record includes any memorandum, book, plan, map, drawing, diagram, pictorial or graphic work or other document, any photograph, film or recording (whether of sound or images or both), any form in which data are held, any other form (including machine-readable

form) or thing in which information is held or stored manually, mechanically or electronically and anything that is a part or a copy, in any form, of any of the foregoing or is a combination of two or more of the foregoing.

**Risk:** the likelihood of an adverse event or outcome.

**Risk management:** the systematic identification, evaluation and management of risk. It is a continuous process with the aim of reducing risk to an organisation and individuals.

**Screening:** the evaluation of a referral made for a child and or family to assess which service the referral should be forwarded to.

**Serious incident:** a death or a potentially life-threatening injury or serious and permanent impairment of health, wellbeing or development. Defining a serious incident in child protection and welfare is extremely complex. The nature and number of serious incidents reported will inform any future revisions of this definition.\*

**Service:** the term in this document refers to the HSE Children and Family Services.

**Service level agreement:** is part of a service agreement or contract where the level of service is formally defined.

**Significant harm:** see definition for harm.

**Skill mix:** the combination of competencies including skills needed in the workforce to accomplish the specific tasks or perform the given functions required for high quality and safe care.

**Social worker:** the social worker assigned by the HSE to carry out its statutory responsibilities for the safety and welfare of a child.

**Staff:** the people who work in, for or with the service provider. This includes individuals that are employed, self-employed, temporary, volunteers, contracted or anyone who is responsible or accountable to the organisation when providing a service to children and families.

**Standard:** a statement which describes the high-level outcome required to contribute to quality and safety.

**Statement of purpose:** describes the aims and objectives of the service including how resources are allocated to deliver these objectives. It also describes in detail the range, availability and scope of services provided by the overall service.

**Support network:** Friends, family, relevant agencies and others who provide support to children and families when they face difficulties coping and managing with their personal circumstances and day-to-day routines.

**Vetting:** the process of investigating an individual thoroughly in order to ensure that they are suitable for a job. This process also includes checking references provided by the individual.

**Welfare:** welfare encompasses all aspects of a child's wellbeing to include: physical, social, emotional, religious, moral and intellectual welfare.

**Workforce:** all people working in a service.

\* Health Information and Quality Authority. Guidance for the Health Service Executive for the Review of Serious Incidents including Deaths of Children in Care, Cork; Health Information Quality Authority, 2010.









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