

Your Guide to the National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children

For Health Service Executive Children and Family Services
July 2012



Safer Better Care

What is the Health Information and Quality Authority?

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) is an independent organisation. It has the legal power and responsibility for improving the quality, safety and value of health and social care in Ireland (excluding mental health services).

HIQA is also responsible for:

- setting standards
- monitoring and inspecting services
- providing guidance on health information
- carrying out health technology assessments.



Introduction

All children have a right to be safe and to be protected. Children who are not receiving the right care and protection in their own homes and in the community are some of the most in need in our society.

It is important that these children can get the services and help they need.

This short guide outlines the national standards to be followed by the services with the responsibility to protect these children, in order to keep children safe and free from harm or abuse.

The full document, called the **National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children**, goes through all the standards in detail and gives you more information about what to expect from a service.

You can find this document:

- on our website, www.hiqa.ie, or
- by contacting us on (01) 814 7400
- or by emailing us at children@hiqa.ie.



The Health Service Executive (HSE) has the legal duty to promote the safety and welfare of children in Ireland.

These standards were developed to make sure there is constant improvement in the care and protection of the children within the child protection system.

What does child protection mean?

Child protection means protecting children who have been identified as suffering or who are likely to suffer from harm because of abuse or neglect.

There are four types of abuse: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time.

Children have a right to be safe and to have access to a safe service to support their growth and development.



What is the background to these Standards?

HIQA has the legal responsibility to develop standards. A working group was set up in June 2011 to help develop these standards. Some members of the group included:

- members of An Garda Síochána
- people from Government departments
- professionals such as doctors and nurses
- people who work with and advocate for children
- people responsible for regulating healthcare professionals such as doctors and nurses
- people from the Health Information and Quality Authority

The standards have been approved by the Board of HIQA and by both the Minister for Health and the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

Where do these Standards apply?

These standards apply to the HSE Children and Family Services and to any future agency that will have the legal duty to promote the safety and welfare of children in Ireland.

These standards aim to follow a child's journey within the HSE child protection system to ensure that the child's safety and welfare is protected.



Why do we need Standards?

We need these standards to describe what the HSE Children and Family Services should do to make sure it protects and looks after the welfare of children who are not getting proper care and protection.

The standards will help us see if the quality and safety of care that the children in the child protection system are getting needs to be improved. They can also help the people providing the services find out how they can improve them.

The standards will help children, their family and carers to see what a safe child protection service should look like.

How were the Standards developed?

The group set up to develop the standards looked at international and national research, standards in place in other countries and other standards already in use in Ireland. They asked others for their opinions and looked at Government policy as well as reports by other Government and non-government organisations.



What are the principles supporting the Standards?

The standards are based on seven key principles which help to protect children and promote their welfare. They are:

- **Implement Children First in all services to protect children and promote their welfare.**

This means that the service uses guidelines called Children First which outline how staff should protect children from abuse and neglect.

- **Protect children from the risk of harm.**

This means that children should be safe from harm no matter where they live.

- **Listen to the needs of children and take account of their views.**

Children should be listened to and their views should be heard and responded to.

- **Promote and improve children's wellbeing.**

Children should be safe and well.



■ **Focus on positive outcomes for children.**

This means that children should be able to enjoy a good quality of life, free from harm or neglect.

■ **Provide effective governance arrangements with clear leadership, management and lines of accountability.**

This means that children should expect the services they get are well organised and managed and they know who is in charge of it.

■ **Deliver services to children based on evidence and good practice.**

This means that children should expect the service to provide good quality services to them that are based on examples and evidence of what works best.



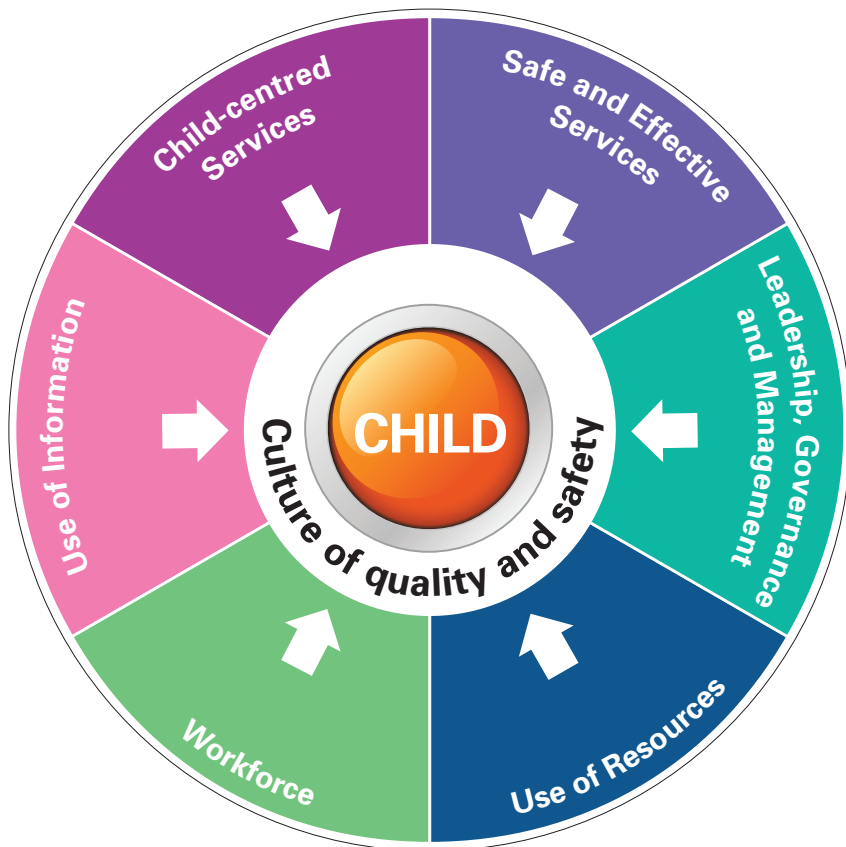
What do these Standards mean for children?

Services must meet the standards across the six areas or themes:

Theme	Description of theme
Child-centred care	This is how services place children at the centre of what they do. This includes supporting families, access, fairness 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.
Leadership, governance and management	The arrangements put in place by a service for accountability, decision making and risk management as well as meeting their legal and financial obligations.
Use of resources	Using the resources it has in the most effective way to deliver the best possible results for children and families for the money and other 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 themes of the Standards



Over the next two pages, we outline what the standards will mean for a child who is receiving care from the HSE Children and Family Services.

Child-centred care

- Your rights should be respected.
- You should be listened to and your concerns or complaints should be responded to.
- You should be communicated with in a way that you understand.

Safe and effective services

- You should be protected from harm or neglect.
- The service should have a plan in place to act if you are at risk of harm or neglect.
- The service should use evidence and sound judgment when it makes a decision.
- Services should all work together to protect you.

Leadership, governance and management

- ‘Governance’ means the way a service is organised and run. The service should be run in a way that makes sure you are protected in line with the law.



Use of resources

- 'Use of resources' means the way that the service uses its money and staff. The service should be run well to ensure you are protected.
- The people who are responsible for making decisions must be able to stand over their decisions to ensure that you are kept safe.

Workforce

- The staff should have the right qualifications, training and experience to protect you.
- The staff are supported and supervised by management or supervisors to make sure you are safe and protected.
- Staff should keep records of supervision.
- Staff know how to let the right agency know if they notice that the behaviour of a professional is not correct.

Use of information

- The service should use all relevant information to plan and deliver a safe service for you.
- Your records are kept safely and securely and are up to date, correct and readable.



Who will check that the Standards are being followed correctly?

HIQA will continuously check the HSE Child and Family Services to ensure that they are closely following the standards to keep children safe and protected.

Where can I get further information?

You can download the full version of these standards for free from our website, www.hiqa.ie.

You can get in touch with us:

- by emailing us at children@hiqa.ie
- by contacting us on (01) 814 7400 or
- by writing to: Health Information and Quality Authority
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