

National Review of
Compliance with *Children First:
National Guidelines for the
Protection and Welfare of Children*

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Scope of Review

- ❑ Context: Ferns and HSE
- ❑ Outcomes: Service delivery and outcomes for children
- ❑ Consultation:
 - 100 structured responses: 69 organisations, 28 individuals, 3 unknown.
 - 36 other submissions (organisation and individual)
- ❑ Partnership: remit of OMCYA to work in partnership with relevant government departments

Key Finding

- Difficulties and variations in relation to implementation related to
 - local variation and
 - infrastructural issue
- Not recommended that guidelines are fundamentally revised or replaced
 - Consistency of implementation
 - Development of standards

Review inquiry in relation to Dr. A & Review of Compliance

Sufficiently clear child protection guidelines and protocols were available to the public officials involved...had the correct procedures been followed, timely and clear outcomes in a child protection context could have been achieved.

Review inquiry in relation to Dr. A & Review of Compliance

Update of Children First, three issues:

1. Clarity about the responsibility of Government departments
2. Greater clarity about responsibilities in relation to reporting concerns about the potential threat posed to children by specific adults.

Review inquiry in relation to Dr. A & Review of Compliance

3. Mandatory Reporting / Children First as Statutory – not at this time.

Renewed focus on more effective child welfare and protection through:

**Improved
Implementation**



**Training and
Education**



**Good
Recruitment
Procedures**



Review: Key Principles

1. Participation by children and young people (in matters that affect them) e.g.

- Sharing of information with parents and children and participation
- Complaints procedures
- Child friendly facilities
- Child friendly documentation – including *Children First*

2. Information sharing

- Not happening as envisaged in *Children First*





Recommendation areas

1. Protection
2. Access
3. Standards
4. Integration
5. Implementation and monitoring

RECOMMENDATION 1.1 ON PROTECTION

That appropriate and effective child protection policies, procedures and training be put in place, implemented and regularly reviewed in all settings where services or activities are provided for children, and that direct and indirect funding from Government be made contingent on such child protection policies, structures and procedures being in place.

- ❑ Proportionate protection
- ❑ Adequately trained staff
- ❑ Wherever there are children
- ❑ Funding as leverage
- ❑ Vulnerable children

RECOMMENDATION 1.2 ON PROTECTION

That measures be taken to reduce the risk of child abusers re-offending.

- ❑ Garda vetting
- ❑ Sharing information, including soft information
- ❑ Safe recruitment
- ❑ Monitoring offenders
- ❑ Treatment of abusers, in particular young abusers


RECOMMENDATION 2.1 ON ACCESS

That persons seeking to raise a child welfare or protection issue in respect of a particular child or to make a referral to the HSE be facilitated to do so.

- ❑ Informal consultation
- ❑ Threshold
- ❑ Too many rather than too few report = preferable
- ❑ Feedback
- ❑ Out of hours service

RECOMMENDATION 3.1 ON STANDARDS

That the *Children First* guidelines be applied in a consistent manner across the HSE and that the HSE develops good practice guidelines, standards and protocols, underpinned by appropriate management and quality assurance, to enable this to happen.

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- ❑ Lack of consistency
 - ❑ Lack of standards
 - ❑ Qualitative vs Quantitative measures

**RECOMMENDATION 4.1
ON INTEGRATION**

That early intervention and family support services be strengthened as the most effective mechanism to address child welfare issues and that child welfare and protection services be developed in this context.


**RECOMMENDATION 4.2
ON INTEGRATION**

That child welfare and protection factors be taken fully into account in prioritising access to other health services, including therapeutic services.

- ❑ Change of focus: need or vulnerability NOT abuse
- ❑ Children's Services Committees
- ❑ The Agenda for Children's Services (OMCYA 2007)

**RECOMMENDATION 5.1
ON IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING**

That the HSE reviews and replaces, if necessary, the current local and regional child protection committee structure and puts in place an appropriate structure to facilitate effective child protection across the HSE.

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- ❑ Revisit local / regional structures
 - ❑ National lead by OMCYA and all government departments

Conclusions

- ❑ Acknowledge commitment and dedication of front-line staff
- ❑ Greater awareness and commitment to child protection – particularly following Ferns
- ❑ HSE improving access through information and standardised “business process” and publicity campaigns