

Submission on

**Draft National Standards
For Children's Social Services**

Prepared for:
Health Information & Quality Authority (HIQA)

Prepared by:
Irish Primary Principals' Network

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1. SUBMISSION – ONLINE FORM

The submission was made in an online form available on www.hiqa.ie. The questions covered in the form and IPPN's responses are outlined below:

1.1. ABOUT YOU

1.1.1. Are you taking part in the consultation as:

- an individual
- **on behalf of an organisation:**

(For verification purposes, please provide the name of the organisation and a name and landline number for a contact person within the organisation)

- Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN)
- Geraldine D'Arcy, IPPN Advocacy & Representation Manager
- 021 4824070

1.1.2. Are you commenting as:

- a person who has used or is currently using children's social services
- a staff member or other person working in children's social services
- **other - a professional association supporting and representing primary school leaders**

IPPN is the officially-recognised professional body for the leaders of Irish primary schools. It is an independent, not-for-profit voluntary association with a local, regional and national presence. Recognised by the Minister for Education as an official Education Partner, IPPN works with the DES, the National Parents' Council, management bodies, unions, education agencies, academic institutions and children's charities towards the advancement of primary education. IPPN articulates the collective knowledge and professional experience of over 6,500 Principals and Deputy Principals. It is in this capacity that we make this submission.

1.2. COMMENTS TO INFORM THE DRAFT NATIONAL STANDARDS

1.2.1. What are the key areas that the draft national standards should address?

(Please indicate why they are important)

This submission provides the perspective of primary school leaders in relation to the draft National Standards for Children's Social Services. The context in which we make the submission is to protect children and promote their welfare. The purpose of services is to meet needs. In the case of services for children this could be reframed by saying that services are valuable only if their outcome improves the well-being of children.

The key 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.
8. Support families as a key to supporting children.

Possible Standards:

1. Services adopt a holistic approach to child development, recognise the diversity of needs of children and build on children's strengths and capabilities.

A holistic approach recognises the social, emotional and physical needs, as well as the intellectual needs, of children and young people and their parents and families.

Different levels of need require different strategies to meet them, including children with additional needs and complex needs.

All children have strengths and abilities. Children grow and develop from their strengths and abilities. When children and those around them, including staff in school age childcare services, appreciate and understand the child's strengths and abilities, then the child is better able to learn and develop.

2. The children who come to the attention of social services are some of the most vulnerable in our society. Their needs must be assessed properly and help and support when needed must be timely. The service must be well-governed and monitored providing consistently high quality services with minimal variation across the wider system. The best leaders and managers have created a culture of high aspirations for children in care. They provide strong oversight of practice and children's progress, while continually looking for ways to improve the care provided. Where there is good leadership and management, children do not wait for help and support, social workers have enough time to work with families, and the workforce have the necessary skills and qualities to do the job well.

3. The role of HIQA is to drive improvement in the provision of health and personal social services for the benefit of the health and welfare of the public especially children. HIQA, through its monitoring programmes, must provide assurances to the public that service providers are implementing and meeting National Standards and relevant regulations. Children's Services must continuously make quality and safety improvements that safeguard children to include Internet Safety and Anti-Bullying. All children have a right to be safe and to have access to appropriate services and support to enable their growth and development.

Services include a range of therapies, psychology, counselling services; social and family supports, and are readily available to children with minimal waiting.

4. Children's services are fully cognisant of the huge role parents play in their child's lives. Services working with children must focus on improving the well-being of parents and children by supporting all families through the normal challenges of family life.

Family Resource Centres are an important part of Social Services providing supports to families in all areas but are a vital service in disadvantaged areas. They provide supports such as education and training courses, Parenting Classes, Preschool and After School facilities and youth groups and clubs. From Early Years through Primary School these centres focus on interventions in health and social services through prevention, early intervention and treatment.

A holistic model of family support is available through FRCs to better protect children. The child protection system benefits from these support services. The well-being of children and their parents is highly inter-dependent with the result that achieving better outcomes for parents is also a way of

simultaneously achieving better outcomes for their children; and to a lesser degree is also influenced by the well-being of the community in which they live.

5. Commitment to the five outcomes and the achievement of these outcomes as per the National Policy Framework for Children.

In April 2014, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs published *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014–2020* (pdf). It is the first national policy framework for children and young people aged from birth to 24 years. It establishes a shared set of outcomes for children and young people towards which all sectors work.

These outcomes are to:

- Be active and healthy, with positive physical and mental wellbeing
- Achieve their full potential in all areas of learning and development
- Be safe and protected from harm
- Have economic security and opportunity
- Be connected, respected and contributing to their world
- It provides the framework for the development and implementation of policy and services for children and young people.

1.2.2. What are the key sources of evidence and information that we should review to inform the development of the draft national standards?

(Key sources could include the titles of national and international peer-reviewed literature, policy, legislation, standards, tool-kits, guidelines and guidance)

- Department of Children and Youth Affairs' publication *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014–2020*
- National Council for Special Education (NCSE) guidelines regarding supports for children with special educational needs

1.2.3. What key organisations or individuals, within this sector, should we engage with when developing the draft national standards?

(We may invite them to take part in future focus groups or to comment during the public consultation on the draft national standards)

- Department of Education & Skills and its sections:
 - the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
 - Special Educational Needs
 - Central Policy Unit
- Department of Children and Youth Affairs
- Department of Social Protection
- National Council for Special Education
- Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) – IPPN has representation at national and at county-level.

1.3. REGISTER TO HEAR ABOUT FUTURE ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

1.3.1. Would you like to hear about opportunities to engage with us on the development of these draft national standards?

(This may include an invitation to focus groups or to comment during public consultation on the draft national standards)

- **Yes**
- No

1.3.2. Would you like to hear about opportunities to engage with us on other future projects?

- **Yes**
- No

Provide contact details:

IPPN Advocacy & Representation Manager, Geraldine D'Arcy, by email to Geraldine.darcy@ippn.ie or by phone to 021 4824084.