

HSE News Release

18th December 2015

Further safeguards for vulnerable adults implemented

Representatives from a range of voluntary and statutory agencies within and outside of the health sector meet today for the first time as part of a new group with a key role in safeguarding vulnerable adults in any HSE or HSE funded residential centre and to promote the rights of vulnerable adults in wider society.

The National Inter-Sectoral Safeguarding Committee, which will be formally launched today by Kathleen Lynch, TD, Minister for Primary Care, Social Care (Disabilities and Older People), will be independently chaired by Patricia Rickard-Clarke, former Law Reform Commissioner. The purpose of the group, which will include representatives from a range of agencies including; Inclusion Ireland, HIQA, Carers Association, HSE, An Garda Síochána, Department of Health, National Federation of Voluntary Bodies, Cheshire Ireland, Disability Federation of Ireland, Alzheimers Society, Age Action, Banking & Payment Federation, Law Society, Active Retirement Ireland, Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, COSC, SAGE and the Department of Social Protection, will be to:

- Provide strategic direction to the HSE in relation to safeguarding.
- Lead on promoting a societal and organisational culture that promotes the welfare of vulnerable adults.
- Provide oversight and guidance on policies and procedures required to ensure concerns are addressed appropriately.
- Propose the commissioning of research, public awareness campaigns and training aimed at promoting the welfare of vulnerable adults.

In advance of the launch, Mr. Pat Healy, National Director of the HSE's Social Care Division said, *"This is another important step in helping to safeguard vulnerable adults from abuse or neglect. I am delighted that Patricia Rickard Clarke has accepted my invitation to chair this Committee as she has an expertise and knowledge in the area of safeguarding vulnerable adults"*.

The new committee has been formed as one of a number of actions from the HSE's *Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse – National Policy and Procedures*, launched in December 2014. The HSE's policy outlined the process to be followed when there is a concern of abuse or neglect. The Policy contains a number of principles critical to safeguarding vulnerable adults from abuse. These include respect for human rights; a person-centred approach to care; facilitating advocacy; respect for confidentiality; empowerment of individuals; and collaboration with individuals, healthcare professionals and with other agencies.

Ms. Patricia Rickard-Clarke stated that, *"these principles will be underpinned by the imminent enactment of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act which will require anyone interacting with a vulnerable adult to fully respect the dignity of each person as an individual human being whose wishes and preferences, beliefs and values must be ascertained and respected."*

In order to support the implementation of the policy, a number of structures have been put in place. These include –

- Recruitment of additional Social Workers and the establishment of nine Safeguarding and Protections Teams, one in each Community Healthcare Organisation, led by a Principal Social Worker.
- The establishment of a National Safeguarding Office to support the National Inter-Sectoral Safeguarding Committee, to collect and collate data on abuse referrals, to provide training to staff and develop practice guidance.
- The creation of Safeguarding and Protection Committees in each Community Healthcare Organisation.



From left-right: Paddy Connolly, Inclusion Ireland; Inspector Paul O'Brien, An Garda Síochána; Pat Healy, National Director of the HSE's Social Care Division; Pat Carey, COSC; Mervyn Taylor, SAGE; Siobhan Nunn, HSE; Patricia Rickard-Clarke, Chair of National Inter-Sectoral Safeguarding Committee; Mark Blake-Knox, Not for Profit Organisation; Minister Kathleen Lynch TD; Brian O'Donnell, National Federation of Voluntary Bodies; Catherine Cox, Carers Association; Colette Kelliher, Alzheimers Association; Noel Brett Banking & Payment Federation, Marguerite Clancy, HSE; Marion Meaney, HSE; Paschal Moynihan, HSE; Michael Fitzgerald, HSE.

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