

Strict Embargo, 4pm Tuesday 20 December 2016

Five-year safeguarding strategy announced to protect vulnerable adults

Tuesday, 20 December 2016: The National Safeguarding Committee has today launched a Strategic Plan 2017-2021 to guide its work to safeguard vulnerable adults over the next five years. The Committee is a multi-agency and inter-sectoral body independently chaired by Patricia Rickard-Clarke, a solicitor and former Commissioner of the Law Reform Commission.

Patricia Rickard-Clarke said: "A key task for the Committee will be to raise public awareness about safeguarding, part of which will involve publishing a nationwide public opinion survey to gauge public awareness and attitudes. We are also planning a public awareness campaign to make people think, talk, and most importantly, act on safeguarding issues.

"Any vulnerable adult can be subject to abuse. Recent cases of historical practices and institutional abuse in Ireland have led to significant public concern about safeguarding our most vulnerable citizens. Safeguarding needs action from a number of agencies and individuals working together to promote an organisational and societal change which protects the rights of adults who may be vulnerable.

"Key issues that we are interested in establishing through our public opinion poll include how well Irish society protects vulnerable adults. We believe safeguarding vulnerable people from abuse is a matter that cannot be addressed by any one agency working in isolation, but rather by a number of agencies and individuals working collaboratively with a common goal."

The National Safeguarding Committee was established by Minister of State Kathleen Lynch in December 2015 following a commitment in the Health Service Executive's (HSE) *Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse – National Policy and*

Procedures to support the safeguarding agenda. The Committee has since been formally established with detailed agreed Terms of Reference.

Patricia Rickard-Clarke continued: "This five-year strategy cements our commitment to working together to promote the rights and independence of vulnerable adults in order to safeguard them from abuse. The strategy will guide the work of the Committee as we collectively work to influence the Government in the development of progressive, human-rights-based legislation and policies aimed at protecting people who may be at risk of abuse or exploitation, and to increase public understanding of safeguarding vulnerable adults."

The Strategic Plan 2017-2021 was launched today by The Hon. Ms. Justice Mary Laffoy, Justice of the Supreme Court of Ireland, in the Law Society of Ireland in Dublin. Ms Justice Laffoy commended the Committee's objective of influencing the development of adult safeguarding legislation, practice and policy and supports this objective.

Ends.

Further Information:

Marty Whelan, Head of Communications and Stakeholder Engagement, HIQA, 01 814 7480 / 086 2447 623, mwhelan@hiqa.ie

Notes to Editor:

- The National Safeguarding Committee includes representatives from a range of agencies, including Inclusion Ireland, the Health Information and Quality Authority, the Carers Association, the Health Service Executive, An Garda Síochána, the Department of Health, the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies, Cheshire Ireland, the Disability Federation of Ireland, the Alzheimer Society of Ireland, Age Action, the Banking & Payments Federation, the Law Society, Active Retirement Ireland, the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, Cosc, Sage and the Department of Social Protection.
- Membership of the Committee will be reviewed bi-annually.