

# THE LINK

## Draft National Standards

HIQA has confirmed to us that the Draft National Quality Standards for Residential and Foster care Services for Children and Young People (January 2010) will shortly be with the Minister for Children for consideration. It is anticipated that once ministerial consideration has been given to the draft then a date will be set for implementation. However, with the setting up of the new office of the Minister for Children and all that involves, it may well be some time before an implementation date will be set.

## An Ant's story

Every day a small ant arrives for work early and starts work immediately. She produces a lot and was happy.

The chief, a lion, was surprised to see that the ant was working without supervision. He thought if the ant can produce so much without supervision wouldn't she produce more if she had a supervisor. So, he recruited a cockroach who had extensive experience as supervisor and who was famous for writing excellent reports. Cockroach's first decision was to set up a clocking in attendance system. He also needed a secretary to help him write up reports so he recruited a spider who managed the archives and monitored all phone calls.

The lion was delighted with cockroach's reports and asked him to produce graphs to describe production rates and analysis trends so that he could use them as presentations at Board meetings. A new computer and printer had to be got for cockroach and a fly was recruited to manage the IT department.

The ant, who had once been so productive and relaxed hated this new plethora of paperwork and meetings which used up most of her time. The lion decided it was high time to nominate a person in charge of the department where the ant worked. The position was given to a cicada, whose first decision was to buy a carpet and an ergonomic chair for his office. The new person in charge, the cicada, also needed a computer and personal assistant, who was brought from his previous department to help him prepare a work and budget optimisation plan.

The department where the ant work was now a sad place where no one laughs anymore and everyone has become upset. It was decided that what was needed to improve staff morale and get people laughing again was a highly regarded and prestigious consultant who

was an expert in telling people what was wrong with them and how they should "embrace change."

It was at that time also the cicada convinced the boss, the lion, of the absolute necessity to start a climatic study of the environment. The lion became more aware of production being much less that before so he decided to recruit an owl who was another prestigious and renowned consultant to carry out an audit and suggest solutions. Owl spent three months in the department observing everything and drawing up the eagerly awaited report. The report, full of drawings and multi coloured graphs, was produced eventually and concluded "Department is overstaffed."

Guess who was fired first? The ant of course because she "showed lack of motivation and had a negative attitude."

*Note: this is just a story.*

"We will put the National Standards for Residential Services for People with Disabilities on a statutory footing and ensure that services are inspected by the Health Information and Quality Authority."

*Fine Gael / Labour agreed programme for government (March 2011)*

"We will fundamentally reform the delivery of child protection services by removing child welfare and protection from the HSE and creating a dedicated Child Welfare and Protection Agency, reforming the model of service delivery and improving accountability to the Dail."

*Fine Gael / Labour agreed programme for government (March 2011)*

"We are committed to implementing the recommendations of the Ryan Report including putting Children First Guidelines on a statutory footing and legislating for the use of soft information."

*Fine Gael / Labour agreed programme for government (March 2011)*

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

**This is a final reminder to those who received membership renewal forms in January.**

**If you have not renewed do so asap as new April listing will not include your name.**

**"We have been further shamed to see that we cannot even consign those horrors to the past. In this century, in this decade, children have slipped through the cracks of a failed system. My government will not simply receive reports, shake our heads and do nothing as our predecessors did. We will act."**

Frances Fitzgerald, Minister for Children on March 24th 2011

## Annual Conference

The Social Care Ireland conference was held in Athlone on March 9th and 10th with the theme **Bringing Back Innovation and Creativity to Social Care**. Despite initial apprehensions among those on the conference committee that delegate numbers might be down due to cuts in people's salaries, etc. there was an excellent attendance. Over 180 attended on the first day and over 150 on the second. This is testament to the level of interest on social care issues and to the attractive programme offered at the conference.

Gordon Jeyes, recently appointed HSE National Director of Children & Family Social Services, opened the conference and briefly outlined how he sees a professional and accountable service operating. David Williams then gave a brief outline of the origins, progress and future plans of Social Care Ireland.

The three keynote speakers, Geraldine Ring, Laura Steckley and Brian McClean covered three very different aspects of the social care scene. Interestingly, their three papers, though covering different specific topics, were quite complementary and addressed the conference theme in a practical, inspirational and challenging manner. The many and varied workshops were not short on creative and innovative ideas. Limerick IT Students' Exhibition also caught the eye.

Margaret Gilmore of Sligo IT received the Orchard Children's Services annual award and Pat McGarty, IASCE President, spoke eloquently of Margaret's many achievements and her distinctive contribution to social care education in Ireland.

This year we were delighted to have Nicola Carr of QUB carry on her by now traditional role of chairing the conference proceedings. This meant sessions were



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well linked and all went according to plan. Michelle and Kate of Hotel Solutions played a key role in ensuring that matters went smoothly.

Plans are in train for Conference 2012. Incidentally, 2012 will be the 40th anniversary of the foundation of the IASCW which began as the Association of Workers with Children in Care (AWCC) in 1972.

## Free Seminars

The fourth of the IASCW Free Seminars taking place country wide took place in association with Cork IT on February 2nd with an excellent attendance. Ginny Hanrahan, CEO of the Registration Council, CORU spoke on registration and Mark Smith of Edinburgh University followed with a talk on regulation. Both talks offered a thought provoking contrast and a number of other colleges indicated their interest in hosting a similar morning. Ginny Hanrahan, in response to a question from the floor, made it quite clear that registration as a "social care worker" will become obligatory for practice.

It is hoped to host another such free seminar in the Leinster area in early autumn. We have become increasingly aware that with training opportunities so few and far between most employers are allowing time for those who wish to attend these seminars which are relevant and interesting. Such a gesture by managers is an understandable and welcome development in times of cutbacks and embargoes.

## Twitter & Facebook

A regular comment reflecting the view of the IASCW has been appearing on twitter and facebook since March 1st. It is intended to acquaint members and others with what is going on at various levels in the general field of social care and initiate discussion.

## Agency Trouble

The IASCW has had a number of enquiries from members about the new recruitment agency which the HSE contracted for 2011 for provision of, inter alia, social care agency staffing. The only conclusion one can reach when different aspects of the implications are considered is that the HSE again has taken the cheapest, but not in our view the best option, in this case. We stress that the IASCW view is quite clearly one where a properly run and resourced service would rule out the use of agency workers except in cases of extreme necessity. The position that now pertains is one where agency workers, to their advantage and through no fault of their own, find themselves in some instances with full time regular work. Up to the time of the new contract the agency staff providers to the HSE, as we understand it, clearly saw the need to ensure that social care workers on their books were inducted, up-skilled and most importantly, supervised. At the time of writing we cannot be sure this is the case with the new agency. If so, the result has to be a dilution in the quality of service delivery and this is without mentioning the significant reduction in salary faced by agency workers with the new contractor. We have written to HSE HR section seeking clarification on a number of issues connected with this matter and we note that other professions, e.g. nurses, have also voiced their concerns on what they see as a retrograde step.

## Ministerial Appointments

Following the formation of the Fine Gael – Labour coalition the IASCW has written to the new Minister for Children wishing her well in the complex area she takes over.

As usual, where social care workers are concerned, different ministers have relevant responsibilities in broad areas where social care workers are involved. For example, Kathleen Lynch has responsibility as a Junior Minister for Disability, Equality and Mental Health while Roisin Shorthall has responsibility for Primary Care.

Perhaps, the most significant appointment has been Francis Fitzgerald, a former social worker, as Minister for Children with its own Department. This suggests absorbing the office of Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and taking away “Children” from what was the Department of Health and Children.

There was a lot of positive reaction to Frances Fitzgerald’s appointment. It is hoped that many of the issues so cogently opposed by Fine Gael in opposition will now be addressed as they suggested in opposition in many areas affecting children and young people.

The devolution of some of the areas assigned to Roisin Shorthall and Kathleen Lynch have yet to take place and indeed Francis Fitzgerald’s new Department needs primary legislation to be set up. In a written reply on March 22nd she outlined the course to be followed: *... the Taoiseach announced in Dail Eireann on 9th March 2011 his intention to establish a Department of Children and I was subsequently appointed the Minister for Children and assigned to the Department of Community, Equality and Gaelteacht Affairs as an interim measure I have been advised that primary legislation is required to establish the new Department of Children and the Department of Finance is liaising with the Office of the Attorney General in relation to this legislation. As no Minister of State will be assigned to the Department of Children, the issue of delegating powers to such a Minister will not arise. ... I have been advised that draft orders transferring Disability, Equality and Mental Health (Kathleen Lynch) functions... to other newly reconfigured Departments, are being prepared and that once these functions have been transferred, it will be a matter for the relevant Minister to delegate the functions, as appropriate to the respective Ministers of State.”*

This seems quite convoluted but the fact there will be no Minister of State at the new Department of Children is interesting. In essence it means that Francis Fitzgerald, will not have, as many other Ministers do, a junior Minister. In a ministry with responsibility for children that is so wide and complex (1.4 million children) it would seem the new Minister could do with some junior ministerial help. That perhaps is being churlish when we have finally got a full Department of Children and is maybe an issue for another time.

## CURAM: Next Edition

The Summer – Autumn edition of CURAM will be published in **mid September 2011**. Hopefully by then, the new government’s intentions relating to social care issues will have become more evident.

As always, news, views, comments and articles for publication can be sent to [iascw@hotmail.com](mailto:iascw@hotmail.com) or [nh99@eircom.net](mailto:nh99@eircom.net).

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## Social Care Ireland Official Launch

At the Athlone conference, David Williams, Acting Chair of SCI, gave an overview of progress to date on Social Care Ireland. He noted that things were on stream to ensure that SCI would be formally launched in June. In effect, this means that since the announcement of the formation of SCI in Athlone at conference 2010, it has taken about fifteen months to get IASCW, RMA and IASCE amalgamated with all that involves. The launch will be held in Dublin on a day to be decided in the week of June 20th.

## SRCCWA

Plans are in train to launch the Scottish Residential Child Care Workers Association following a number of meetings in recent months.

The idea for the Association emerged, initially, from students studying on the MSc in advanced Residential Child Care at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow. The idea is to ensure that a strong voice on behalf of residential child care is heard in a policy context where the views of direct practitioners are rarely sought

It is envisaged that the new Association will contribute to debate and influence policy on the challenges that face the sector in Scotland. While the new body aims to be most relevant to direct practitioners, many managers and academics are already involved.

One of the big decisions to be taken was whether the new Association should try and go it alone or join forces with existing organisations. To this end a decision has been made to enter into negotiations with the Social Care Association (SCA), an organization with strong roots in residential child care. In this respect what is happening in Scotland mirrors developments in England where a similar body representing the interests of residential child care and social education practitioners has joined forces with the SCA.

The new Association acknowledges that times are difficult across the sector and that getting practitioners to part with the fees that will be required to establish the Association will not be easy. There is a need to establish credibility with practitioners by tuning into the issues that concern them and bringing these issues to a wider audience.

Developments in Scotland are not that different really from what has happened here and we wish our colleagues there every success. We hope there will be

ongoing contact between SRCCWA, the IASCW and by extension Social Care Ireland.

## Disabilities: National Advocacy Service

Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton, recently launched a national advocacy service for people with disabilities. The agency will operate by having trained independent advocates available to disabled people for advice and support across a range of services. The Minister stated “It is particularly important that an independent person is available to them where they are totally dependent on a single service provider. Essentially, the service will level the playing field and provide a voice for the more vulnerable of people with disabilities.” The Citizen’s Information Board (1890-777121 Mon/Fri 9 to 9) will operate the service. Regionally, contact can be made at 086-0218778 (Dublin); 086-4102083 (North East); 086-0409978 (South East); 086-0223984 (South West); 086-0201095 (West/North West).

## IASCW Executive

At the IASCW AGM Stephen Griffin of WIT was elected as student representative on to the National Executive. We welcome Stephen and bid goodbye to Karen Heavey who was student rep. for the past number of years. Thanks Karen for your contribution and we look forward to your continued involvement.

## Carlow College M.A.

**CLARIFICATION:** The Masters in Therapeutic Child Care Course at Carlow College (St. Patrick’s) is now taking final applications for the fourth running of the course in October 2011. Application forms can be downloaded from the Carlow College website or from [www.therapeuticchildcare.ie](http://www.therapeuticchildcare.ie) where further information is available. Please post the completed form to Damien McLellan, MATCC Course Leader, College St., Carlow. For informal enquiries, Damien can be contacted at 087-2836923.

## Good luck

Good luck to all students doing exams in the coming weeks and also to those seeking employment.