



**Health  
Information  
and Quality  
Authority**

An tÚdarás Um Fhaisnéis  
agus Cáilíocht Sláinte

# Follow-up inspection on the implementation of national recommendations on Health Service Executive foster care services

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*Safer Better Care*

## About the Health Information and Quality Authority

The Health Information and Quality Authority is the independent Authority established to drive continuous improvement in Ireland's health and social care services.

The Authority's mandate extends across the quality and safety of the public, private (within its social care function) and voluntary sectors. Reporting directly to the Minister for Health, the Health Information and Quality Authority has statutory responsibility for:

**Setting Standards for Health and Social Services** — Developing person-centred standards, based on evidence and best international practice, for health and social care services in Ireland (except mental health services).

**Social Services Inspectorate** — Registration and inspection of residential homes for children, older people and people with disabilities. Inspecting children detention schools and foster care services.

**Monitoring Healthcare Quality** — Monitoring standards of quality and safety in our health services and investigating as necessary serious concerns about the health and welfare of service users.

**Health Technology Assessment** — Ensuring the best outcome for the service user by evaluating the clinical and economic effectiveness of drugs, equipment, diagnostic techniques and health promotion activities.

**Health Information** — Advising on the collection and sharing of information across the services, evaluating information and publishing information about the delivery and performance of Ireland's health and social care services.

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# 1. Executive Summary

In February 2011, the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) of the Health Information and Quality Authority (the Authority) carried out an announced follow-up inspection of the national foster care service provided by the Health Service Executive (HSE). This was in order to assess the HSE's implementation of a series of national recommendations contained within previous inspection reports published by the Authority in July 2010 (see report ID numbers: 586, 587 and 588, available on the Authority's website, [www.hiqa.ie](http://www.hiqa.ie)). There were 12 over-arching recommendations made to the HSE at a national level following inspections in 2009 and 2010 of the HSE foster care services in its Dublin North, Dublin North Central and Dublin North West Local Health Areas. These 12 recommendations contain 58 sub-recommendations.

## 1.1 Findings overview

This follow-up inspection, to assess the implementation by the HSE's National Office of the Director of Children and Family Services of the national recommendations, was carried out under section 69(2) of the Child Care Act, 1991. This inspection found that of these 12 recommendations, 1 was met, 2 were not met, and 9 were partly met. Those recommendations not met were in relation to the adequate assessment, vetting and approval of foster carers.

Those partly met were in relation to:

- safeguarding and child protection
- governance of foster care services
- child and family social work
- supervision and support
- foster care committee(s)
- children's rights
- provision of progress reports by the HSE on the implementation of recommendations made by the Authority.

Inspectors were concerned that more progress had not been made in relation to some of the national recommendations, in particular the:

- lack of implementation of *Children First: Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children*
- lack of development of national central registers of children in foster care and their foster carers
- lack of progress in assigning a social worker to every child in foster care and foster carers
- failure to assess the needs of all children with disabilities in foster care
- ongoing gaps in the development of care plans for all children in foster care.

Overall, inspectors found that the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services had made some progress in some key areas, particularly in terms of reviewing and amending the management and governance of the service. Other areas of progress identified were the:

- recruitment of a National Director of Children and Family Services
- national recruitment of 200 additional social workers
- commencement of a process of reviewing a number of policies and procedures
- monitoring of foster care services by HSE monitoring officers being strengthened in some HSE local health areas.

These developments since the last inspections had the potential to improve lines of accountability, governance and provision of the HSE foster care service both nationally and locally. Monitoring of the foster care services by HSE-appointed monitoring officers had also been strengthened in some HSE local health areas. However, one significant failure identified as part of this inspection was the lack of evidence provided to the Authority of monitoring officers' reports from the HSE. This was of serious concern to the Authority and subsequent to this inspection the Authority requested that copies of all HSE monitoring reports from the HSE local health areas be submitted to the Authority.

Unvalidated figures, provided to the Authority by the HSE as part of this follow-up inspection, indicate the difficulties being experienced by the HSE in relation to delivering a safe and effective foster care service. These figures are provided in Table 1. A significant feature was the lack of provision of key data by the HSE's Office of the National Director for Children and Family Services to the Authority. As a result, there were challenges for inspectors when measuring the implementation of many of the recommendations in the 32 individual local health areas of the HSE. Therefore, the implementation of these recommendations will be the focus of further inspections and reporting by the Authority.

**Table 1. HSE national performance activity figures as of December 2010<sup>±</sup>**

National figures on:	Number
Children in care	5,727
Children in foster care	3,447
Children placed with relative foster carers	1,674
Children placed with non-relative foster carers	1,773*
Children in foster care assigned a social worker	3,242
Children in foster care not assigned a social worker	205*
Children placed with relative foster carers who had an assigned social worker	1,513
Children placed with relative foster carers who did not have an assigned social worker	161*
Children placed with non-relative foster carers who had an assigned social worker	Figure not provided by the HSE
Children placed with non-relative foster carers who did not have an assigned social worker	Figure not provided by the HSE
Children in foster care with a written statutory care plan	2,896
Children in foster care who do not have a written statutory care plan	551*
Total number of approved foster carers in Ireland	Figure not provided by the HSE
Approved foster carers who had an assigned link social worker	2,588
Foster carers who did have an assigned link social worker	Figure not provided by the HSE
Number of foster carers who had yet to be approved but who had children placed with them.	Figure not provided by the HSE

<sup>±</sup> The figures shown above are based on performance activity reported monthly to the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services by the local health offices throughout the country. They were not validated by either the HSE or the Authority and, according to the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services, are mostly representative of 31 out of 32 of the HSE local health areas. Where a figure is accompanied by an asterisk (\*) it indicates that the number was derived by the Authority from data provided by the HSE.

The following findings are presented in accordance with key themes as highlighted in previous foster care inspection reports.

## 1.2 Provision of the social work service for children in foster care

The follow-up inspection found that not all children in foster care received a social work service that was in accordance with the regulations<sup>‡</sup> and the National Standards\*. Although there had been an increase in the number of children in foster care who had been assigned a social worker since 2009, this was not the case for all children. HSE figures showed that there were 3,447 children in foster care in Ireland in 2010. Of these, 3,242 had an assigned social worker and 205 did not. Not all children in foster care had a statutory care plan, contrary to the regulations and National Standards.

## 1.3 Provision of link social workers for the foster carers

HSE progress reports provided to the Authority as part of this follow-up inspection, and annual HSE adequacy reports, indicated that although many foster carers were assigned a link social worker, there continued to be those who were not. This was despite the recruitment of 200 additional social workers since the last inspection. The HSE did not provide data on the numbers of foster carers who did not have an assigned link social worker.

The inspection also found that a review of the existing assessment processes for foster carers (relative and non-relative) was yet to be completed by the HSE. Progress had been made in reviewing the role and function of foster care placement committees. However, in relation to matching the assessed needs of children in foster care with the capacity of foster carers to meet these needs, the HSE did not provide inspectors with evidence of matching having taken place where it had been outstanding.

## 1.4 Safeguarding and child protection

While a HSE Assistant National Director had been assigned the task of nationally implementing *Children First: Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (1999), this inspection found that the Children First Guidelines had not been implemented in all HSE areas at the time of the inspection. The HSE did not indicate which local health areas had not fully implemented the Children First guidelines. This was found to be unacceptable and not in the best interests of children.

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<sup>‡</sup> This term is used throughout the report to refer to the Child Care (Placement of Children in Foster Care) Regulations 1995, and the Child Care (Placement of Children with Relatives) Regulations 1995.

\* The *National Standards for Foster Care* are a set of 25 National Standards based on legislation, regulation, guidance, best practice and consultation. Their purpose is to serve as a basis for consistently promoting quality of care in foster care services nationally. They are referred to in the report as the National Standards or the Standards.

The HSE had not developed a centrally held, national register of children in foster care and their carers, and had not developed a national registration process for foster carers. The failure to establish these registers was of concern to the Authority.

The National Office of the HSE's Director of Children and Family Services did not provide the Authority with any evidence of how it was ensuring that the whereabouts of every child in foster care that had not been assigned a social worker was known to the HSE.

National guidelines on the reporting of significant events and serious incidents were not developed at the time of the inspection. A national audit of HSE child protection practices was at pilot stage in three local health areas. The HSE stated that it intended to address the shortfalls in child protection practices on foot of the findings of this national audit.

## **1.5 Governance and management**

Some improvement was found in the HSE's overall monitoring of its foster care service. However, the HSE acknowledged that deficiencies remained in its management structures.

The development of a National Child Care Information System was being revisited by the HSE for the purpose of collecting, storing and accessibility of information on children in care and their carers. It was confirmed to inspectors by the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services that information gathered at a local level was not dependable. In the interim, inspectors were not provided with evidence to show that an alternative system was in place to ensure that children were only placed with foster carers found by the HSE to be suitable to provide foster care – this was found by inspectors to be unacceptable.

The Authority had recommended the development of several policies. These related to the process of bringing a child into the care of the State, the transfer of the care of children across HSE areas, the changing of children's names while in foster care, a policy on the care of children with disabilities, and policy and practice guidelines for social workers on the promotion of children's rights. Inspectors found that none of these policies or guidelines had been developed at the time of the follow-up inspection. This inspection found that the national policy on the supervision of child and family services staff was approved, revised and implemented by the HSE in December 2010. However, a standardised set of policies and procedures for the assessment of the needs of children leaving care had not been developed at the time of the inspection.

## **1.6 Day-to-day experiences of foster children**

Although inspectors acknowledge that work on improving the day-to-day experiences of children in foster care was ongoing, further work was required by the HSE on ensuring that these children were aware of their care status and that adequate family access arrangements were in place.



The HSE had not developed a national policy to inform the process of bringing a child into the care of the State, or a policy on the changing of children's names. The HSE did not provide evidence about how children with a disability were being cared for at a local health area level.

The HSE had not developed best practice guidelines for social workers on the promotion and facilitation of the child's right to access information. No register of complaints in relation to children in care had been created, and the complaints process was not in a format accessible to children.

## **1.7 Conclusions**

This report finds that although there was evidence that efforts had been made by the HSE to implement the national recommendations made by the Authority in relation to the delivery of its foster care services, a considerable amount of work remains to be done in order to meet the National Standards and the regulations.

Further inspections by the Authority on the provision of foster care services by the HSE at local and regional level will provide more detailed evidence on the progress of the implementation of the national recommendations and the associated action plan provided by the HSE in response to the Authority's recommendations of July 2010. Therefore, this national overview report should be read in conjunction with individual inspection reports at regional and local level that are published on an ongoing basis by the Authority. These reports will provide a further insight into how the Authority's recommendations are being implemented by the HSE at a national and local level.

Arising from the gaps in some of the data provided by the HSE to the Authority, it was not possible for inspectors to make informed judgments on the implementation, at a local level, of a number of the national recommendations. Therefore, the implementation of these recommendations will be the focus of further inspections and reporting by the Authority of the HSE fostering service at both a local and national level.

## **1.8 Next steps**

Inspectors acknowledge that the proposed timeframes for the HSE to implement some of the national recommendations made by the Authority in relation to foster care services extended past the date of this inspection. In order to allow the Authority to continue to assess the implementation of some of the recommendations, the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services has proposed providing progress reports on a quarterly basis to the Authority. The Authority will therefore receive and review written progress reports. These reports, along with the findings of this and other foster care service inspection reports, will provide a benchmark against which the provision of foster care services at a local and regional level of the HSE will be measured by the Authority. It is also the intention of the Authority to continue to carry out, and report the findings of, inspections of foster care services provided by the HSE in its 32 local health areas.

## 2. Methodology

The focus of the methodology for this inspection, which was carried out in February 2011, was the implementation of the national recommendations contained in the HSE action plan of August 2010. This action plan was produced by the HSE in response to the recommendations of the inspections carried out in 2009 and 2010 of the HSE Fostering Service in Dublin North, Dublin North Central and Dublin North West. The reports of these inspections were published by the Authority in July 2010. In order to assess the implementation of the HSE's action plan, inspectors sought all supporting information from the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services, including an updated progress report and action plan. These were received from the HSE during the inspection fieldwork in February 2011. The documentation requested from the HSE reflected individual actions specified in the action plan. This was a complex exercise because recommendations with multiple components were addressed by multiple proposed actions that were not always actions to be taken at a national level.

Documents reviewed as part of this inspection:

- National Action Plan 586/587/588
- HSE Guidelines regarding 'Sleepovers' for Children and Young People in Foster Care
- National Audit of Supported Lodgings Services
- National Child and Family Services Staff Supervision Policy
- Performance Activity (2009-2010)
- HSE National Service Plan 2011
- HSE Case Transfer Policy between Local Health Offices Social Work Departments
- HSE Foster Care Committees Policies, Procedures and Guidelines (Draft document)
- Progress report on the National Child Care Information System Project (07.02.11)
- National Child Care Information System Status Report (Draft) 22 November 2010
- Induction of Social Workers: A Policy and Guidelines for Children and Families Social Services
- Draft Interim Standards for Child Protection (October 2010)
- Health Service Executive Action Plan To Implement The National Recommendations In The National Audit of Foster Care Services (2009) June 2010
- Inspiring Confidence in Children and Family Services: putting children first and meaning it (2009).

Inspectors also interviewed two senior HSE managers as part of the inspection process: the National Specialist, Alternative Care Services and the Head of Quality Assurance and External Relations.

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1 Overview of HSE children and families social services

At the time of the inspection, the National Director of Children and Family Services reported directly to the Chief Executive of the HSE. Reporting to the National Director of Children and Family Services were an office general manager, an assistant national director with responsibility for policy and strategy, a HSE nominated person who was responsible for change management, regional directors of operations and the assistant national director responsible for the implementation of *Children First: National Guidelines for Protection and Welfare of Children* (1999). The Assistant National Director for Policy and Strategy had line management responsibility for a national specialist in alternative care, a national specialist in family support, a national specialist in training and development, a national specialist in pre-school and early years and a national specialist for child protection. The post of national specialist for child protection was vacant at the time of the inspection, as was the assistant national director of policy and strategy post.

#### 3.2 Progress against the specific recommendations

The progress by the HSE against the specific national recommendations contained in the Authority's inspection reports of foster care services for Dublin North West, Dublin North Central and Dublin North local health areas are detailed below by recommendation number. Recommendations in this report are numbered as they appear in the HSE's action plan against them, and correspond with the sequence of recommendations as they appear in the Authority's reports of the HSE Fostering Care Service in HSE Dublin North West, Dublin North Central, and Dublin North. Table 2 shows the meaning of acronyms and generic words that appear in the HSE action plan. The recommendations in this report appear in tables, and are presented alongside the HSE's action plan from August 2010. The status of the recommendation at the time of the inspection is also shown in the tables. For clarity, the Authority's overview of the status of each recommendation immediately follows each table.

**Table 2. Key to text and terms used in HSE action plan**

Acronym or words used	Definition
ISA	Integrated Service Area
LHO	Local Health Office
National Office	HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services
NSP	National Service Plan
RDO	Regional Director of Operations

### 3.2.1 Follow-up findings on the provision of the social work service for children in foster care

#### Recommendation 1

Standard 5: The Child and Family Social Worker

Regulation: Part IV

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 1.1</b> Ensure that all children in foster care have an assigned social worker.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> All children in care will have an allocated social worker as set out in the HSE's National Service Plan for 2010.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> Regional Director of Operations</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> December 2010</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met. The action plan indicated that the HSE intended that every child in foster care nationally would have an assigned social worker by December 2010. Inspectors found that this was not the case. Recruitment figures provided by the HSE showed that 200 social workers were recruited by the HSE in 2010 and the national specialist for alternative care services stated that a further 60 would be recruited in 2011. Despite this, national statistics provided to the Authority by the HSE showed that in December 2010, although there had been an increase in the number of children assigned a social worker since 2009, not all children in foster care were assigned a social worker (see Table 1 on page 6). Unvalidated HSE figures showed that there were 3,447 children in foster care in Ireland in 2010. Of these, 3,242 had an assigned social worker and – although not stated by the HSE – these figures indicated that 205 children in foster care did not have an assigned social worker. These figures were not validated at the time of the follow-up inspection by either the Authority or the HSE.

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 1.2</b> Ensure that assigned social workers coordinate the care of children in accordance with the regulations and National Standards, paying particular attention to the assessment of the needs of individual children, quality care planning and case review and the visiting of children.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> All children in care will have an allocated social worker and a care plan that is developed and reviewed in accordance with the regulations and national standards.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> Regional Director of Operations</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> December 2010</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met. The actions proposed by the HSE show that it was envisaged by the HSE that every child in foster care would have an assigned social worker by December 2010. As indicated above, inspectors found that the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services did not ensure that all children in foster care nationally were assigned a social worker. Inspectors were not provided with evidence by the HSE that all children in foster care at the time of the inspection received a social work service that was in keeping with the regulations and the National Standards. For example, HSE figures showed that not all children in foster care had a written statutory care plan or were placed with carers who were adequately assessed and approved.

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 1.3</b> Ensure that all children aged 16 and over have an aftercare plan and are adequately supported in leaving foster care.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> Policies and Procedures for the Assessment of Need prior to leaving care will be finalised by November 2010.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> November 2010</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met. The actions planned by the HSE were that a standardised set of policies and procedures for the assessment of the needs of children leaving care would be developed and finalised by November 2010. Inspectors found that this had not been accomplished. The HSE Office of the

National Director of Children and Family Services had established a National Aftercare Working Group. One aim of this group was to develop this policy. However, it had not completed this task at the time of the inspection. It was envisaged by the HSE that this would not be completed until the end of September 2011. At the time of the inspection, inspectors were not provided with any evidence of how the needs of children leaving care were being met. In the absence of this data, inspectors were therefore not in a position to make an informed judgment on whether interim measures were adequate for these children and to ensure compliance with this recommendation. This will be examined further through future inspections of HSE foster care services at national and a local level.

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 1.4.1</b> Assess and manage the risk in the cases of children and families, including those awaiting a social work service.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> Standard business processes will be implemented throughout the HSE. These will include risk assessment frameworks which will support the management of allocated and unallocated cases. The HSE will develop a standard child protection audit tool which will be used to assess and benchmark current practice against requirements. A national audit of child protection will be undertaken and action plans will be developed to address any shortfalls in practice.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> Local and National Office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Not indicated</p>	<p><b>Recommendation partly met</b></p>

This recommendation was partly met. The HSE action plan indicated that the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services would implement standardised business processes that would include risk assessment frameworks to support the management of all child and family cases. At the time of the inspection, the full implementation of these standardised processes had not been achieved. It was one aim of the HSE's new National Alternative Care Coordination Group.

The National Foster Care Sub-group was a sub-group of the National Alternative Care Coordination group. One of its aims was to develop protocols and guidance that would establish criteria for the prioritisation and allocation of foster carer applications and assessments. The proposed timeframe for the completion of this work was the end of March 2011.

The HSE had developed a first draft of the child protection audit tool indicated in the action plan and this was provided to the Authority. The HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services envisaged the child protection audit tool being finalised by the end of June 2011.

Inspectors found that the national audit of child protection indicated in the action plan had commenced but was not completed at the time of the inspection. A pilot scheme for three local health areas had begun in Roscommon and was due to commence in two other HSE local health areas – Waterford and Dublin South East later in 2011. It was intended that the audit would gradually be rolled out nationally and would inform the development of action plans to address the shortfalls in practice identified as a consequence of the audit.

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 1.4.2</b> Supervise social workers and social work practices to a satisfactory standard.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> The standard supervision policy will be implemented in all social work departments and a national training programme in supervision will be delivered in 2010/11.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> December 2011</p>	<p><b>Recommendation partly met</b></p>

This recommendation was partly met. The updated action plan provided to the Authority by the HSE in February 2011 indicated that the HSE intended implementing a standard supervision policy accompanied by training for social workers by the end of March 2011. Inspectors found that the national policy on the supervision of child and family services staff, approved in April 2009, had been revised in April 2010 and was implemented in December 2010. Inspectors also found that a project team within the Education, Training, Research and Policy Unit of the HSE had been established to develop a training programme on supervision and that some training had commenced in January 2011. However, inspectors were not provided with evidence of how successful the implementation of this revised policy was and this will be explored further through future national and local HSE foster care services inspections by the Authority.

The HSE's action plan in response to recommendation 1.4.2 showed that the policy on supervising social workers had been revised and directions for its implementation sent to social work departments in 2010. Lines of accountability and monitoring systems were being revised, reformed and restructured at the time of the inspection (see also the HSE's action plan on recommendations 1.4.4 and 1.4.5). How these reforms are addressing such issues as ensuring that a link social worker carries out his/her statutory duties will be assessed during future inspections by the Authority of HSE foster care services at a national and local level.

<b>HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010</b>	<b>HSE Action Plan August 2010</b>	<b>Status of recommendation at the time of inspection</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 1.4.3</b>                      Define a significant event, ensure that all significant events are notified to social workers in a prompt manner and that social workers respond to these notifications in accordance with HSE policy.</p>	<p><b>HSE action</b>                      Specific guidance on what constitutes significant events in foster care will be developed for implementation locally. Both adverse events and achievements will be included.                      Social Workers and foster carers will receive training in all aspects of the reporting and management of significant events.                      Standards will emerge from audit on Child Protection.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b>                      National and Local Office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met. Inspectors found that national guidelines on the reporting of significant events and serious incidents – outlining what constitutes a significant event and serious incident in foster care – were not developed at the time of the inspection. The National Alternative Care Coordination Group was developing these national guidelines at the time of the inspection and the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services envisaged this would be completed by the end of June 2011. Inspectors were not provided with any evidence of what was happening at a local level and therefore could not make any judgment on how adequate local guidance and/or systems were at the time of the inspection. This will be explored further through future national and local HSE foster care services inspections by the Authority.



HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 1.4.4<sup>¥</sup></b> Monitoring the current system.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> The internal monitoring systems comprise the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Team Leader supervises individual social workers and quality assures individual practices through the formal supervision process and by auditing case files.</li> <li>▪ The Principal Social Worker supervises individual Team Leaders and quality assures their practices through the formal supervision process and by auditing case files.</li> <li>▪ All complaints and allegations against carers and staff are monitored and analysed.</li> <li>▪ The Foster Care Committee provides quality assurance regarding the assessment, approval and continued approval of foster carers.</li> <li>▪ The local Senior Child Care Management Team reviews the system at its monthly team meetings.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Recommendation partly met</b></p>

<sup>¥</sup> This reflects the format of the HSE action plan returned to the Authority, and refers to Recommendation 1.4 of the July 2010 original full inspection report.

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Monitoring Officer monitors compliance with statutory regulations and standards.</li> <li>▪ The Regional Director of Operations monitors overall performance at monthly performance meetings with the Local Health Manager.</li> </ul> <p>The National Director monitors performance as part of the monthly review of the performance contract with the RDO.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> Team Leaders, Principal Social Workers, General Managers, Local Health Managers, Child Care Managers, Monitor, Regional Directors of Operations, National Director, Foster Care Committees.</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing</p>	

This recommendation was partly met. Inspectors found that there was some improvement in the monitoring of the current system and that more action was required in order to meet this standard. A National Director for Children and Family Services was appointed and in place at the time of the inspection. HSE regional directors of operations reported to the National Director in relation to issues concerning children and their families. The National Director controlled the budget for these services. Inspectors found that this had the potential to improve lines of accountability in the provision of foster care services. Performance indicators were developed and introduced by the HSE to monitor practice on an ongoing basis. The national specialist for alternative care services told inspectors that the HSE Office of the National Director for Children and Family Services acknowledged that the management structures were not fit for purpose and that was why restructuring and reform was taking place. The implementation of this recommendation will be

assessed further in future inspections of HSE foster care services at national and local level by the Authority.

<b>HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010</b>	<b>HSE Action Plan August 2010</b>	<b>Status of recommendation at the time of inspection</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 1.4.5<sup>±</sup></b> Risk assessment, allocation, case management.</p>	<p><b>HSE action</b> Notwithstanding the roles and responsibilities of individual staff and managers, the Local Senior Child Care Management Team has overall responsibility for the management of children and family services in their LHO.</p> <p>The current system now includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All referrals of concerns in respect of children in the community and children in care are assessed by a social worker. There are defined criteria used for the prioritisation and management of all cases.</li> <li>▪ All new referrals assessed as being 'high-risk' are allocated to a social worker and low and medium risk cases may be allocated or managed by the Duty Team.</li> <li>▪ The team leaders manage waiting lists and prioritise allocation of cases based on risk assessment.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

<sup>±</sup> This reflects the format of the HSE action plan returned to the Authority, and refers to Recommendation 1.4 of the July 2010 original full inspection report.

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Senior Child Care Management Team meets on a monthly basis to review the effectiveness of their local systems in the context of NSP 2010, the Fostering Regulations and Standards, Policies, Procedures, and Guidance, the National Audit of Foster Care and associated Action Plan, HIQA Reports and Action Plans.</li> </ul> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> LHM, GM, CCM, PSW</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing</p>	

This recommendation was not met. Inspectors found that at the level of the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services, more action was required to ensure that standardised business processes and robust systems were in place to measure and support practices at a local level. For example, it was found that the HSE's response to Recommendation 1.4.1 shows that the work of the National Alternative Care Coordination Group and the Foster Care Sub-Group on risk assessment frameworks and guidelines for practice were not completed.

The HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services told inspectors that local and regional implementation of the actions outlined in the HSE's response to this recommendation were agreed with the regional operational directors. Inspectors were not provided with any evidence to show how practice at local level had improved or that systems had been introduced at a national level to measure these improvements, and were therefore not in a position to form a judgment on local practices at the time of this inspection. This will be explored further during future inspections of HSE foster care services at a national and local level.

### 3.2.2 Follow-up findings on the provision of link social workers for the foster carers

#### Recommendation 2

Standard 15: Supervision and Support

Regulations: Part III and Part IV

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 2.1</b> Ensure that all foster carers have an assigned link social worker.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> All foster carers will have an assigned link social worker as set out in the HSE's National Service Plan for 2010.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> RDO General Manager, Principal Social Workers</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> December 2010</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met. The HSE envisaged all foster carers would be assigned a link social worker by December 2010. Unconfirmed figures provided to the Authority by the HSE indicated that there were 2,588 approved foster carers in December 2010 who had an assigned link social worker. However, despite the recruitment of 200 social workers in 2010, figures were not provided to the Authority on the total number of foster carers nationally, or how many of these had not been assigned a link social worker. Figures were also not provided on the number of foster carers who had yet to be approved but who had children placed with them.

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 2.2</b> Ensure that link social workers carry out their duties in accordance with the regulations and the National Standards, paying particular attention to the formal supervision of foster carers.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> All link social workers will provide formal supervision to foster carers and carry out their duties in accordance with the regulations and national standards.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> SWTL, Link SW</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> December 2010</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met. Inspectors found that not all foster carers had an assigned link social worker (see 2.1). The National Alternative Care Coordination Group was assigned the task of developing national guidelines and protocols associated with the role of the link social worker. This was to be carried out through the National Foster Care Sub-group and it had not begun at the time of the inspection. The HSE envisaged that this task would be completed by the end of March 2011.

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 2.3</b> Agree on and provide core training to all foster carers.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> Foundation for Fostering is the core national training programme for foster carers. This programme will be reviewed and amended as appropriate.</p> <p>A standard core national training programme for relative carers will be developed having regard to programmes being delivered in some LHOs or in development such as Fostering Relations in HSE DNE.</p> <p>Direction will be sent from National Office to RDO to re-emphasise the importance of ongoing local training. The core training module for Foster Carers will be reviewed and amended as appropriate.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Office, RDO</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> September 2010</p>	<p><b>Recommendation partly met</b></p>

This recommendation was partly met. Inspectors found that the HSE Office of the National Director for Children and Family Services, by way of the National Foster Care Sub-group, had identified core training for foster carers that included

Foundation for Fostering and Fostering Relations. However, although the action plan indicated that the HSE would review these programmes and amend them as necessary, this had not been accomplished at the time of the inspection. In order to ensure that foster carers take part in core training, the National Alternative Care Coordination Group had identified the contract with foster carers used in the HSE Dublin North East Region as one it intended recommending for use nationally. The HSE envisaged that this contract would be introduced nationally by the end of 2011. Inspectors found that the HSE Office of the National Director for Children and Family Services had written to regional directors of operations reiterating the importance of the provision of training to all foster carers.

<b>HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010</b>	<b>HSE Action Plan August 2010</b>	<b>Status of recommendation at the time of inspection</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 2.4</b> Revise contracts with foster carers to ensure foster carers' compliance with HSE policy generally and attendance at core training in particular.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> A standard contract, including a requirement to attend core training, will be drawn up in accordance with the Regulations and Standards for issue to all existing and new foster carers and relative carers. Foster Carers' contracts will be issued to all current and new carers and will be revised to include attendance at core training.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> Not indicated <b>Timescale:</b> October 2010</p>	<p><b>Recommendation partly met</b></p>

This recommendation was partly met. It was the intention of the HSE that contracts with foster carers would be revised by October 2010. Inspectors found that although the National Alternative Care Coordination Group had identified the contract in use in the Dublin North East Area as one it recommended for use nationally, this had not been implemented at the time of the inspection (see also 2.3). The HSE envisaged that new contracts for all foster carers would be agreed on by the National Alternative Care Coordination Group and circulated to all areas by the HSE Office of the National Director for Children and Family Services by the end of March 2011.

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 2.5</b> Ensure that assessments for the purpose of matching the needs of individual children with the capacity of foster carers to meet these needs are carried out in accordance with National Standards and HSE policy and recorded appropriately.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> Foster Carer Assessments will be reviewed to assess levels of capacity of foster carers to meet children's needs. The role and function of the Foster Care Placement Committees will also be reviewed. A standard tool for the assessment of the needs of the child will be developed. This assessment will be submitted to the Foster Care Committee for matching with the assessment of the foster care applicants. In this way, the capacity of the carers to meet the needs of the child will be determined. Matching will take place for all children currently placed with carers whose assessment and approval are outstanding.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> not indicated</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> December 2011</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met at the time of the inspection. The HSE actions in relation to the implementation of this recommendation included a review of existing foster carer assessments, a review of the role and function of the Foster Care Placements Committees, the development of a standard assessment tool in relation to the needs of a child and ensuring matching took place where it was outstanding. Inspectors found that the National Alternative Care Coordination Group had been assigned the task of reviewing the existing assessment of foster carers. This had not been achieved at the time of the inspection and it was envisaged by the HSE that this task would be completed by the end of September 2011.

The role and function of the Foster Care Placement Committees was also in the process of being reviewed and a draft document, that included a draft protocol for



matching, had been circulated throughout the HSE for comment at the time of the inspection. The HSE did not provide inspectors with any evidence of matching taking place where it was outstanding.

### Recommendation 3

Standard 14(a): The Foster Carers (non-relative)

Regulations: Part III s.5 (2)(a)(b)(c)(d)

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 3.1</b> Approve and implement an appropriate model of assessment for non-relative foster carers, and provide clear guidance on the content and structure of assessment reports provided to the Foster Care Committee(s) by link social workers.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> Models of Assessment will be reviewed with a view to National Standardisation. Social Worker training programme will include report writing and record keeping (content and structure of assessment reports).</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> December 2011</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met. The HSE action plan stated that models of assessment for non-relative foster carers would be reviewed, and a standardised approach would be taken by the HSE. Inspectors found that this review had not taken place, and it was the intention of the National Alternative Care Coordination Group to conduct this review and to develop and provide guidance for all foster carers by the end of June 2011. Guidance on the structure and content of assessment reports to the Foster Care Committees was not developed at the time of the inspection, and this was also a task that the National Alternative Care Coordination Group intended concluding by June 2011.

<b>HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010</b>	<b>HSE Action Plan August 2010</b>	<b>Status of recommendation at the time of inspection</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 3.2</b> Satisfy itself that all non-relative foster carers are assessed and approved in accordance with the National Standards and the regulations and within the statutory timescales.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> Each of the four HSE regions have an action plan in place to ensure all foster carers are assessed and approved in accordance with the national standards and regulations. The recruitment of additional social workers in 2010 will assist in meeting this requirement.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> RDO</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Not indicated</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met. It was envisaged by the HSE that the recruitment of additional social workers would assist in ensuring that all foster carers are assessed and approved. Inspectors found that this was not the case. The four HSE regions had individual plans to ensure that all non-relative foster carers were assessed. A national audit of unapproved foster carers had been undertaken by the HSE in 2010 and had found serious deficits in relation to the numbers of assessed foster carers. As a result, each HSE region had committed itself to ensuring all foster carers were assessed and approved. However, national figures provided to the Authority indicated that a total of 324 foster carers nationally were not fully assessed by the HSE. In response to concerns raised by the Authority, the HSE proposed a timeframe of December 2011 for the implementation of this recommendation.

<b>HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010</b>	<b>HSE Action Plan August 2010</b>	<b>Status of recommendation at the time of inspection</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 3.3</b> As a matter of priority, ensure that any deficiencies in the vetting of existing non-relative foster carers are identified and addressed in an effective way.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> Each of the four HSE regions have an action plan in place to ensure all deficiencies in the vetting of existing non-relative foster carers are identified and addressed effectively.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> RDO</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> December 2010</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met. Inspectors found that the implementation of this recommendation had not been achieved at the time of the inspection (see also 3.2). At the time of inspection, unvalidated HSE figures indicated that 324 carers (this figure includes relative and non-relative foster carers) were not fully assessed by the HSE. The HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services had issued notifications to the regional directors of operations on the importance of ensuring all foster carers were appropriately vetted. This issue will be further explored in future national and local inspections by the Authority of the foster care services provided by the HSE.

**Recommendation 4**

Standard 14(b): The Foster Carers (relative)

Regulations: Part III s.5 (1)(a)(b)(c)(d)

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 4.1</b> Approve and implement an appropriate model of assessment for relative foster carers, and provide clear guidance on the content and structure of assessment reports provided to the Foster Care Committee(s) by link social workers.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> Models of Assessment will be reviewed with a view to National Standardisation. Social Worker training programme will include report writing and record keeping (content and structure of assessment reports).</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Not indicated</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met. The HSE action plan stated that models of assessment for relative foster carers would be reviewed, and a standardised approach would be taken by the HSE. Inspectors found that this review had not taken place, but it was the intention of the National Alternative Care Coordination Group to conduct this review and to develop and provide guidance for all foster carers by the end of June 2011. Guidance on the structure and content of assessment reports to the Foster Care Committees was not developed at the time of the inspection, and this was also a task the National Alternative Care Coordination Group intended undertaking by June 2011. (See Also 3.1.)

<b>HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010</b>	<b>HSE Action Plan August 2010</b>	<b>Status of recommendation at the time of inspection</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 4.2</b> Ensure that all relative foster carers are assessed and approved in accordance with the National Standards and the regulations and within the statutory timescales.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> Each of the four HSE regions have an action plan in place to ensure all foster carers are assessed and approved in accordance with the national standards and regulations. The recruitment of additional social workers in 2010 will assist in meeting this requirement.</p> <p><b>Persons Responsible:</b> RDO</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> December 2011</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met. As with recommendation 3.2, it was envisaged by the HSE that the recruitment of additional social workers would assist in ensuring that all foster carers are assessed and approved. Inspectors found that this was not the case. The four HSE regions had individual plans to ensure that all non-relative foster carers were assessed. A national HSE audit of unapproved foster carers had taken place in 2010, and each HSE region had committed itself to ensuring all foster carers were assessed and approved. However, unvalidated national figures provided to the Authority indicated that a total of 324 foster carers nationally were not fully assessed by the HSE. The HSE proposed December 2011 as the timeframe for the implementation of this recommendation.

<b>HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010</b>	<b>HSE Action Plan August 2010</b>	<b>Status of recommendation at the time of inspection</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 4.3</b> As a matter of priority, ensure that any deficiencies in the vetting of existing relative foster carers are identified and addressed in an effective way.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> Each of the four HSE regions have an action plan in place to ensure all deficiencies in the vetting of existing relative foster carers are identified and addressed effectively.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> RDO</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> December 2011</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met. As with recommendation 3.3, inspectors found that the implementation of this recommendation had not been achieved at the time of the inspection (see also 3.2). At the time of inspection, unvalidated HSE figures indicated that 324 carers (this figure includes relative and non-relative foster carers) were not fully assessed by the HSE. The HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services had issued notifications to the regional directors of operations on the importance of ensuring all foster carers were appropriately vetted. This issue will be further explored in future national and local inspections by the Authority of the foster care services provided by the HSE.

### 3.2.3 Follow-up findings on safeguarding and child protection

#### Recommendation 5

Standard 10: Safeguarding and Child Protection

Regulations: Part II

Child Care Act, 1991: Part II

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 5.1</b> Ensure that any and all protective measures taken by the HSE Dublin North West Local Health Area in relation to <i>all children</i> in its care and <i>all additional children known</i> to the Area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ are adequate</li> <li>▪ keep children safe and protected</li> <li>▪ have addressed all concerns notified to the area.</li> </ul>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> A Child Protection Audit will be undertaken as part of the implementation of Children First. The recruitment of 200 social workers in 2010, implementation of a standardised assessment framework, social worker training programme and record keeping will also help to meet the requirements under this recommendation. Dublin North is also piloting a Different Response Model. All children in care will have a care plan which is up to date and is the subject of review in accordance with the Regulations and Standards. Standard risk assessment frameworks will support the management of allocated and unallocated cases.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation partly met</b></p>

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
	<p>The RDO in Dublin North East has an action plan to address safeguarding and child protection issues in the relevant LHO areas.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Beginning 2010</p>	

This recommendation was mostly not met. Inspectors found that in order to implement this recommendation, the HSE had intended to conduct an audit of child protection processes nationally, review and implement standardised frameworks for assessing need and risk, recruit extra social workers and provide training to social workers including how to adequately record practice. The HSE was also piloting the Different Response Model in the Dublin North East Region. This was a new approach to assessing and screening notifications to social work offices before they are determined 'cases' requiring a child protection or welfare response. The HSE also intended introducing approaches to managing risk in children's cases effectively, where they could not be allocated a social worker.

Inspectors found that the child protection audit had commenced on a pilot basis in one area (Roscommon) and was due to begin in two other areas: Waterford and Dublin South East (see also 1.4.1). 200 extra social workers had been recruited and the development and implementation of relevant training programmes was found to be ongoing. Despite the extra social workers recruited, inspectors found that some children and foster carers continued to be without assigned social workers. The development of standardised frameworks for the assessment of need and risk were also ongoing, and although the piloting of the Different Response Model in the Dublin North East Region was under way, there was no indication from the HSE if this was an approach it considered rolling out nationally, or when this would be decided.

Although Dublin North East Region stated that it had an action plan to address safeguarding and child protection issues relevant to local health areas, this information was not made available to the Authority as part of this inspection.

The implementation of this recommendation will be further assessed during future inspections by the Authority of the provision of foster care services by the HSE at a national and local level.

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 5.2</b> Develop, implement and monitor safe, effective and robust systems that ensure that foster carers found to be unsuitable to care for children do not have children placed with them, and that all relevant parties are notified of their unsuitability.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> The HSE will explore the possibility of the establishment of a national database/register of assessed, approved, registered and de-registered foster carers as part of the National Child Care Information System (NCCIS) currently being developed.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> November 2010</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met. Inspectors found that the HSE, by way of the National Alternative Care Coordination Group was to explore the possibility of establishing a national system for recording crucial information on children and foster carers. No time frame for the completion of this task or the introduction of such systems was provided to inspectors. The HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services did not provide any evidence to inspectors that while the establishment of this system was being explored, an alternative and adequate system was in place to ensure foster carers found to be unsuitable did not have children placed with them. This was found by inspectors to be unacceptable.

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 5.3</b> Develop and maintain a national central register of all allegations made by children against foster carers.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> The HSE will explore the possibility of the establishment of a national database/register of allegations made against foster carers as part of the National Child Care Information System (NCCIS) currently being developed.</p> <p><b>Persons Responsible:</b> National office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> November 2010</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met. The action plan submitted by the HSE stated that the possibility of introducing a new system of collecting and analysing key information on children and their carers was being explored. At the time of the inspection, this HSE review was ongoing by the HSE's National Alternative Care Coordination Group. It is critically important this recommendation be progressed as a matter of urgency.

<b>HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010</b>	<b>HSE Action Plan August 2010</b>	<b>Status of recommendation at the time of inspection</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 5.4</b> Ensure that foster carers and children's individual case files contain records of notifications of alleged abuse by foster carers to the Garda Síochána, outcomes of any criminal investigations conducted by the Garda Síochána, and any other protective measures taken by the HSE to ensure the protection of individual children.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> A national policy for dealing with allegations of abuse and a policy for record keeping will be developed.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> February 2011</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met. The implementation of this recommendation was ongoing at the time of the inspection. Inspectors found that the National Alternative Care Coordination Group, by way of the National Foster Care Sub-group, was assigned the task of developing a national policy for recording and managing allegations related to children in care, and that the date by which the HSE envisaged that this task would be completed was February 2011. During the course of this inspection, the HSE did not provide the Authority with any evidence of how the case files and records in question were being maintained at a local level, and therefore inspectors could not make a judgment on how adequate this practice was. This was not an acceptable position. The implementation of this recommendation is a matter that needs to be progressed by the HSE and it will be further assessed during future inspections of foster care services by the Authority at national and local level.



HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 5.5</b> Implement <i>Children First: National Guidelines on the Protection and Welfare of Children</i> and the National Standards in all regions (including those issued by Ministers and produced by the Authority subsequent to this inspection).</p>	<p><b>HSE action</b> Plans for the implementation of Children First are underway. The HSE is awaiting the publication of the new Children First Guidelines.</p> <p><b>Person responsible:</b> National Office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met. An Assistant National Director was assigned the task of implementing Children First nationally by the National Director, commencing in February 2011. However, the Children First Guidelines were not implemented in all HSE Areas at the time of the inspection. Inspectors found that the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services was awaiting the publication of the revised edition of Children First. Inspectors were told by the national specialist for alternative care services that the full implementation of these revised guidelines would be carried out under the Croke Park agreement and that no challenges to its introduction was anticipated by the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services. The HSE did not indicate which local health areas had not fully implemented the Children First guidelines. Given the importance of such guidelines to safeguard and protect children, and the absence of other alternative guidance being implemented nationally by the HSE, the lack of implementation of this recommendation was unacceptable and not in the best interests of children.

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 5.6<sup>+</sup></b> Introduce a model of risk assessment that takes into account the potential for peer abuse in each new admission to a foster home.</p>	<p><b>HSE action</b> Foster Carer Assessments will include a risk assessment to assess the capacity of foster carers to meet children's needs. The role and functions of the Foster Care Placement Committees will also be reviewed to include</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

<sup>+</sup> This reflects the format of the HSE action plan returned to the Authority, and does not refer to Recommendation 5.6 of the original full inspection reports.

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
	<p>ensuring that risk assessments for each placement of a young person within a foster home, is undertaken.</p> <p><b>Person responsible:</b> National Office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Not Indicated</p>	

This recommendation was not met. At the time of the inspection the functions of the Foster Care Committees were under review and revised procedures, policies and guidelines were in draft form and had been circulated to relevant people for comment. This review included the role of the Committees in the assessment of risks to children when admitted to a new foster care placement, including the potential for peer abuse. The development of the risk assessment model was ongoing and, subsequent to the receipt of the HSE Action Plan, the HSE informed the Authority that it was envisaged that this recommendation would not be fully implemented until December 2011. The Authority continues to monitor the implementation of this programme.

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 5.7<sup>±</sup></b> Ensure that in any respite or childminding arrangements social workers know exactly who is looking after a child in care and ensure that appropriate steps are taken to assess his/her suitability.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> The HSE has a policy for sleepovers and respite care. The HSE will ensure that all social workers are aware of, and implementing this policy and that it is communicated to all foster carers.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Office, RDO</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> September 2010</p>	<p><b>Recommendation partly met</b></p>

<sup>±</sup> This reflects the format of the HSE action plan returned to the Authority, and refers to Recommendation 5.6 of the original full inspection reports.

This recommendation was partly met. The action plan stated that the HSE would ensure that social workers were aware of and fully implemented the national policy on sleepovers and respite care. At the time of the inspection, this policy was in place and was provided to the Authority. A national directive was due to be issued by the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services to all HSE Areas ensuring compliance with national policy. Inspectors were not provided with evidence that this directive was sent. Therefore, the implementation of this recommendation will be further assessed in future inspections carried out by the Authority on the delivery of foster care services by the HSE at local level.

### 3.2.4 Follow-up findings on governance and management

#### Recommendation 6

Standard 19: Management and Monitoring of Foster Care Services

Regulations: Part IV s.12, 13, 17 and Part VI

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 6.1</b> Ensure that foster care services are managed in accordance with legislation, the regulations and National Standards and are child centred in every aspect of their delivery.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> The internal monitoring systems comprise the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Team Leader supervises individual social workers and quality assures individual practices through the formal supervision process and by auditing case files.</li> <li>▪ The Principal Social Worker supervises individual Team Leaders and quality assures their practices through the formal supervision process and by auditing case files.</li> <li>▪ All complaints and</li> </ul>	<p><b>Recommendation partly met</b></p>

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
	<p>allegations against carers and staff are monitored and analysed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Foster Care Committee provides quality assurance regarding the assessment, approval and continued approval of foster carers.</li> <li>▪ The local Senior Child Care Management Team reviews the system at its monthly team meetings.</li> <li>▪ The Monitoring Officer monitors compliance with statutory regulations and standards.</li> <li>▪ The Regional Director of Operations monitors overall performance at monthly performance meetings with the Local Health Manager.</li> </ul> <p>The National Director monitors performance as part of the monthly review of the performance contract with the RDO.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the roles and responsibilities of individual staff and managers, the Local Senior Child Care Management</p>	

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
	<p>Team has overall responsibility for the management of children and family services in their LHO.</p> <p>The Senior Child Care Management Team in each LHO area meets on a monthly basis to review the effectiveness of their local systems in the context of NSP 2010, the Fostering Regulations and Standards, Policies, Procedures, and Guidance, the National Audit of Foster Care and associated Action Plan, HIQA Reports and Action Plans.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> None indicated</p>	

This recommendation was not met in full. Inspectors found that a National Director for Child and Family Services was appointed and a restructuring of the management systems within the HSE were underway. The HSE had undertaken an audit of foster care services nationally and had also commissioned a report based on a review of the delivery and management of children and family services. The findings and recommendations of these reports were under review by the newly appointed National Director and the HSE envisaged that he would report on the implementation of these recommendations by the end of March 2011. The implementation of this recommendation will be assessed on an ongoing basis by the Authority through future inspections of foster care services provided by the HSE, and also through quarterly progress reports that will be provided to the Authority by the HSE National Office (see also recommendation 12).

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 6.2</b> Review the governance of all social work departments in order to satisfy itself that they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ are fit for purpose</li> <li>▪ have high quality leadership</li> <li>▪ have suitably qualified staff</li> <li>▪ have a senior managerial structure to which they are accountable and which provides clear support to them in the execution of their duties.</li> </ul>	<p><b>HSE actions</b></p> <p>The HSE has accepted the findings of a report from PA Consulting on the need to restructure the child welfare and protection service at both national and local level.</p> <p>Implementation of the new structures will be tested in 4 areas commencing September 2010 with full implementation scheduled for completion by December 2011.</p> <p>Pending the implementation of the recommendations in the PA Consulting Report, the social work departments will be reviewed to ensure that services are delivered in accordance with the Regulations and Standards up to the limits allowable within available resources. Ongoing risk assessments, prioritisation and reviews of unallocated cases will be an integral part of the management of service.</p> <p>Management and monitoring will take place as set out at 1.4.4 and 1.4.5 above.</p> <p>Training, support and supervision will be provided to all staff including team leaders and principal social workers.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation partly met</b></p>

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
	<p>Overall governance and support will be provided by the local Child Care Management Team and by line managers.</p> <p><b>Persons Responsible:</b> National Office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> December 2011</p>	

This recommendation was partly met. As with the HSE action plan in relation to recommendation 6.1, inspectors found that a National Director for Child and Family Services was appointed and a restructuring of the management and governance systems within the HSE was underway. The HSE had undertaken an audit of foster care services nationally and had also commissioned a report based on a review of the delivery and management of children and family services. This included the structure of social work departments and a review of their effectiveness. The findings and recommendations of these reports were under review by the newly appointed National Director and the HSE envisaged that he would report on the implementation of these recommendations by the end of March 2011.

Although it was acknowledged by the Authority that the implementation of some of the recommendations made in the previous inspection reports was ongoing, the following findings indicated that social work departments were not fulfilling their statutory duty to some children in foster care. In summary, these were that:

- not all children in foster care had an assigned social worker
- not all foster carers had an assigned link social worker
- not all foster carers were assessed/approved
- not all children in foster care had a statutory care plan
- guidance on risk management was not developed by the National Office
- the functions of the Foster Care Committee were not fully reviewed and determined
- no monitoring reports had been produced by HSE monitoring officers since the last inspection
- Children First Guidelines was not implemented nationally.

The implementation of this recommendation will be assessed on an ongoing basis by the Authority through future inspections of foster care services provided by the HSE, and also through quarterly progress reports that will be provided to the Authority by

the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services (see also recommendation 12).

<b>HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010</b>	<b>HSE Action Plan August 2010</b>	<b>Status of recommendation at the time of inspection</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 6.3</b> Establish a <i>national</i> register of all foster carers and introduce appropriate systems that ensure it is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ accurately maintained</li> <li>▪ dependable</li> <li>▪ up to date</li> <li>▪ contains names of any carer(s) found to be unsuitable to care for children.</li> </ul>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> The HSE will explore the possibility of the establishment of a national database/register of assessed, approved, registered and de-registered foster carers as part of the National Child Care Information System (NCCIS) currently being developed.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> November 2011</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met. At the time of the inspection, the HSE had not developed a centrally held, national register of foster carers or a national registration process. Information on foster carers was held at local level. It was confirmed to inspectors by the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services that this information was not dependable. The development of a National Child Care Information System was being revisited by the HSE for the purpose of collecting, storing and accessibility of information on children in care and their carers. This work was ongoing. The implementation of this recommendation will be assessed further through future inspections by the Authority of the delivery of HSE foster care services at a national and a local level.



HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 6.4</b> Ensure that all foster carers are approved on the basis of a thorough registration process in the case of first time applicants and that registration status is verified for all other applicants.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> Each of the four HSE regions have an action plan in place to ensure all foster carers are assessed and approved in accordance with the national standards and regulations. The recruitment of additional social workers in 2010 will assist in meeting this requirement.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> RDO</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met. Inspectors found that the HSE had not developed a registration process for foster carers. The development of a registration process was being explored by the National Alternative Care Coordination Group. No indication of a timeframe for the completion of this task by the National Alternative Care Coordination Group was provided to inspectors.

The HSE action plan indicated that all four HSE regions would develop an action plan to ensure all foster carers were assessed and approved. These plans were not provided to the Authority by the HSE. Therefore inspectors could not form a judgment on their suitability or efficacy at the time of the inspection. Unvalidated national figures provided to the Authority indicated that in December 2010, 324 foster carers were not fully assessed or approved to foster children.

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 6.5</b> Ensure that no child is placed with a carer who is not registered.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> A National Direction will be sent out to each RDO requesting verification that no child is placed with a carer who is not registered.</p> <p>The HSE will explore the</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
	<p>possibility of the establishment of a national database/register of assessed, approved, registered and de-registered foster carers as part of the National Child Care Information System (NCCIS) currently being developed.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Office and RDO</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> September/November 2010</p>	

This recommendation was not met. At the time of the inspection, the HSE had not developed a national register of foster carers or a national registration process. Documentation provided to the Authority showed that the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services had requested confirmation from the four regional directors of operations in February 2011 that a register of carers was held locally. The response by the four HSE Regional Directors of Operations to this request was not provided to the Authority.

The development of a National Child Care Information System (NCCIS) was being revisited by the HSE at the time of the inspection, and should it be introduced, it may have the capacity to hold all of the relevant information required in relation to foster carers and children, and be accessible to all social work offices. This work was ongoing.

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 6.6</b> The HSE establish a <i>national</i> register of children in care and introduce appropriate systems that ensure it is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ accurately maintained</li> <li>▪ dependable</li> <li>▪ up to date.</li> </ul>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> The NCCIS system will be able to contain this register.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> December 2011</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met. At the time of the inspection, it was found that the HSE had not established a national register of children in foster care. The development of the National Child Care Information System was being reviewed by the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services and the HSE envisaged that this system would have the capacity to accurately maintain dependable up-to-date information on children in foster care nationally. This project was ongoing.

Although inspectors found that information on children in foster care was not held centrally by the HSE, the national specialist for alternative care services told inspectors that this information was held locally and figures were reported on a monthly basis to the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services. However, the National Director stated that the dependability and integrity of this information was found to be an ongoing concern for the HSE National Office. This was also a finding of the previous inspections of Dublin North Central and Dublin North West.

The failure to establish such a national register is a matter of ongoing concern for the Authority.

<b>HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010</b>	<b>HSE Action Plan August 2010</b>	<b>Status of recommendation at the time of inspection</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 6.7</b>                      Review and amend as necessary the systems for collecting, recording, filing, day-to-day storage of and archiving of information on children and families so that all records are accountable, coherent, complete, secure, up to date, reflective of practice, maintained in accordance with legislation and accessible to those with a right to access them.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b>                      National Standardised Policies will be developed for social workers which will include a policy for report writing and record keeping, filing and storage. The HSE has established a working group to progress the development of a national archive for the records of all children in care.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b>                      National Office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> December 2011</p>	<p><b>Recommendation partly met</b></p>

This recommendation was partly met. In order to implement this recommendation, the HSE stated in its action plan that it would develop national standardised policies for social workers which would include a policy on report writing and the keeping, storage and filing of records. A working group was established to carry out this piece

of work. At the time of the inspection this national policy was not developed. An induction training programme for new social workers was developed and provided to the Authority.

Protocols for the recording and storage of information were due to be developed by the National Alternative Care Coordination Group by December 2011.

Inspectors could not assess how successfully all relevant information was archived by the HSE in local offices and this will be further assessed in future inspections by the Authority of foster care services provided by the HSE at local level.

<b>HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010</b>	<b>HSE Action Plan August 2010</b>	<b>Status of recommendation at the time of inspection</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 6.8</b>                      Introduce governance and management systems to quality assure the information systems implemented, and all information held by the HSE in relation to children and families.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b>                      The NCCIS will have system support to ensure data integrity. The HSE will also ensure that all relevant staff are trained and clear about their role and function in this area.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b>                      National Office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> September 2010</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met. The HSE had not developed or introduced new national information systems at the time of the inspection. It was found that the HSE had not therefore developed systems to govern and quality assure new information systems. The HSE envisaged that the National Child Care Information System, if implemented, would ensure all information gathered was dependable. However, inspectors found that this system was not implemented at the time of the inspection.

The HSE informed the Authority that the implementation of the recommendations emanating from the PA Consulting Group Report was under review by the National Director at the time of the inspection. The HSE said this was a report commissioned by it based on a review of the delivery and management of child and family services. It was envisaged by the HSE that its implementation would assist the HSE nationally to address this recommendation made by the Authority. It said full implementation of this recommendation was expected to be completed by December 2011. This will be assessed by the Authority further at a future date.

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 6.9</b> Ensure and demonstrate the effective monitoring of foster care services by the HSE appointed Monitoring Officer, and take any actions necessary to address any shortcomings.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> The Monitoring function will be strengthened to ensure that fostering services are monitored in a timely manner. Monitoring is undertaken in the context of the Regulations and Standards and in accordance with a formal programme and work plan. This work plan also facilitates monitoring in circumstances of an emergency situation arising. A monitoring report is produced which requires local management to prepare and implement an action plan to address the monitor's recommendations. The local management team monitor implementation of the action plan as does the Monitoring Officer. Also, the RDO monitors progress at the monthly performance meeting with the LHM. Copies of the monitor's reports and action plans are submitted to HIQA.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> RDO [December 2010]</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> RDO Ongoing</p>	<p><b>Recommendation partly met</b></p>

This recommendation was partly met. The HSE had established and filled additional monitoring officer posts, including one regional managerial function in the HSE Dublin North East Local Health Area. Vacant posts in the HSE Dublin Mid-Leinster Region were filled, and vacancies in other regions, such as HSE West, were not filled.

The Authority was not provided with evidence by the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services of any reports produced by HSE monitoring officers on the HSE's foster care services since the 2009/2010 inspection. Subsequent to this inspection, the Authority requested that copies of all HSE monitoring reports from the HSE local health areas are submitted to the Authority.

<b>HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010</b>	<b>HSE Action Plan August 2010</b>	<b>Status of recommendation at the time of inspection</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 6.10</b> Review the HSE policy on supported lodgings and undertake an audit nationally to ensure the safety and welfare of all children in supported lodgings.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> An audit of Supported Lodgings was completed in May 2010 and action plans will be prepared to implement the recommendations.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Office, RDO</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> October 2010</p>	<p><b>Recommendation partly met</b></p>

This recommendation was partly met. The HSE had conducted an audit of supported lodgings which found deficits in the service provided. A copy of this was provided to the Authority. The National Alternative Care Coordination Group was due to develop an action plan to implement the recommendations emanating from this audit due to the deficits identified. This was not due for completion until the end of September 2011. The Authority has requested an update in relation to the implementation of this action plan. The implementation of this recommendation will be further assessed through future inspections by the Authority of HSE foster care services nationally and locally.

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 6.11</b> Review and implement the HSE's national policy on the transfer of children's cases across HSE areas.</p>	<p><b>HSE action</b> The national policy on the transfer of children's cases across HSE areas will be reviewed.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> December 2010</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met. Inspectors found that the policy on the transfer of children's cases across HSE areas was not reviewed and therefore an agreed, revised policy had not been implemented by the HSE at the time of the inspection. The HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services was confident that this policy would be revised and implemented by the end of June 2011. The implementation of this recommendation will be assessed further in future inspections by the Authority of foster care services delivered by the HSE at national and local level.

### Recommendation 7

Standard 23: Foster Care Committee

Regulations: Part III s.5(3)(4)

Child Care Act, 1991: Part II (s.8)

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 7</b> Review the functions of the Foster Care Committee(s) to ensure that it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ maintains an up-to-date panel of all foster carers</li> <li>▪ contribute to foster care service planning</li> <li>▪ functions effectively and efficiently</li> <li>▪ is child-centred</li> <li>▪ has defined duties in respect of allegations made against foster carers.</li> </ul>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> Under the National Child Care Project, a Foster Care Sub-group has been established to develop a protocol and guidance for a single, standard approach to Foster Care Committees. The guidance will address the formal delegation, establishment, membership and insurance issues, purpose and function, duties and responsibilities, and a set of standard</p>	<p><b>Recommendation partly met</b></p>

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
	<p>operating procedures covering all aspects of the work of the Committee. The sub-group will consider and recommend the optimal geographic area to be serviced by a committee e.g. Regional, ISA, LHO, or other. Also, performance monitoring, quality assurance and audit in respect of work of the FCC will be addressed. Committees in the four regions will be benchmarked against the new standard and changed accordingly.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> November 2010</p>	

This recommendation was partly met. The National Foster Care Sub-group was assigned the task of reviewing the functions of the Foster Care Committee(s), and this had begun prior to this inspection. A draft document entitled *HSE Foster Care Committees: Policies, Procedures and Guidelines* was circulated for comment throughout the HSE as part of the review process. Inspectors were provided with a copy of this document. The document was found to set out policy and procedures for the operation of foster care committees nationally and policies, guidelines and information for social workers and others whose duty it is to prepare and submit documentation to these committees. The HSE envisaged that this review would be completed by June 2011, with a further review to take place in 2014. The implementation of this recommendation will be further assessed in future inspections of HSE foster care services by the Authority.



### 3.2.5 Follow-up findings on day-to-day experiences of foster children in the sample group

#### Recommendation 8

Standard 2: Family and Friends

Regulations: Part IV s.16 (2)(9)

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 8.1</b> Ensure that all children are aware of their care status and family background. Where this is not the case, the HSE must satisfy itself that decision-making is transparent and based on a robust risk assessment, is lawful and is recorded on the child's case file.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> All social workers are responsible for informing children of their care status and family background. This is done based on risk assessment and is carried out in an age appropriate and transparent way with each child. All decisions and records of social worker contact will be kept in the child's case file. The recruitment of 200 extra social workers in 2010 will support practice in this regard. The social work training programme (standardised report writing and record keeping and supervision training) will also assist in meeting this recommendation.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> RDO</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing</p>	<p><b>Recommendation partly met</b></p>

This recommendation was partly met. The HSE action plan intended that all children would be assigned a social worker following the recruitment of 200 new social workers in 2010. HSE figures provided to the Authority showed that despite the recruitment of these extra social workers, not all children in foster care had an assigned social worker. The implementation of this recommendation was dependent on good governance, line management at various levels of social work practice and clear guidance. This was not adequately addressed in the HSE response. How this recommendation is to be implemented by the HSE requires further consideration by

the HSE nationally and progress will be assessed by the Authority in future HSE foster care service inspections.

<b>HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010</b>	<b>HSE Action Plan August 2010</b>	<b>Status of recommendation at the time of inspection</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 8.2</b> Satisfy itself that any risk assessment model used by the social work department is robust enough to ensure that the decision to take any child into care is based on their need for care and protection.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> A policy outlining the necessary steps to inform the decision to bring a child into care will be developed. This will entail assessing the risk within various escalations including inputting family supports, strategy meetings, interagency referral, case conferences, supervision order. A decision to take a child into care will be based on need for care and protection and will be taken by senior managers. A Child Protection Audit will be undertaken as part of the implementation of Children First. The HSE is piloting a Different Response Model in North Dublin which focuses child protection toward family support. The HSE is also reviewing/considering other options/models in relation to relative care.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> March 2011</p>	<p><b>Recommendation partly met</b></p>

This recommendation was partly met. The HSE proposed several actions in order to assist it to implement this recommendation. The first was to develop national policy that would inform the process of bringing a child into the care of the State, including a robust risk assessment process. This policy was not developed at the time of the inspection. The National Alternative Care Coordination Group was assigned the task

of developing this policy and the HSE envisaged that this would be completed by the end of December 2011.

The second action proposed by the HSE was to conduct a national audit of child protection processes in the HSE as part of implementing Children First. This audit had commenced in one area (Roscommon) and was due to start on a pilot basis in two other HSE areas after the date of the inspection.

The third action proposed by the HSE was to examine the progress of a pilot scheme in Dublin North that was exploring the introduction of a Different Response Model. This was a model that provided alternative and more effective ways of dealing with child protection and child welfare concerns by the HSE. Progress reports due to be delivered to the HSE during the inspection fieldwork were not provided to the Authority.

The last action in the HSE action plan to be taken was the review and or consideration of options and models of relative care. No further information on the other options and models for alternative care was provided to the Authority. This is not acceptable.

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 8.3</b> As a matter of priority, review access arrangements for all children in foster care.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> A National Directive will be sent to all RDOs to ensure that access arrangements for all current cases not assigned to a social worker are prioritised for review and attended to.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Not indicated</p>	<p><b>Recommendation partly met</b></p>

This recommendation was partly met. Inspectors found that the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services had issued a directive to regional directors of operations in respect of this recommendation. The implementation of this recommendation at local level could not be assessed during this inspection as no further information was provided to inspectors by the HSE National Office of the Director of Children and Family Services. The implementation of this recommendation will be assessed on an ongoing basis through future inspections by the Authority of HSE foster care services at local and regional levels.

## Recommendation 9

Standard 1: Positive Sense of Identity

Regulations: Part III (s.8)

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 9.1</b> Develop practice standards for all social work departments that are child-centred, respectful and responsive to need.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> Standardised Policies and Procedures for Social Work Departments will be developed including a code of practice for social workers. The Social Work Training Programme will also focus on supervision training and ensure that social work practice is reviewed as part of the supervision process.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> December 2011</p>	<p><b>Recommendation partly met</b></p>

This recommendation was partly met. The HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services had not developed standardised national policies including a code of practice for social workers at the time of the inspection. The HSE had established a project team to develop a national training programme on supervision for social workers that it was confident would assist in the implementation of this recommendation.

Through interviews and an updated progress report provided by the HSE, inspectors found that the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services had also referred the implementation of this recommendation to a national project team, stating that would ensure implementation was achieved as part of the National Service Plan. This was ongoing at the time of inspection and was due for completion by the end of September 2011.

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 9.2</b> Develop a policy that prevents the changing of children's names whilst they are in foster care without the authority of a court.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> This will be considered taking the best interests of children in care into account and how best such a policy could be implemented.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> November 2010</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met. Inspectors found that the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services had not developed a policy on the changing of children's names whilst they are in foster care. The National Alternative Care Coordination Group was assigned this task and it was envisaged by the HSE that this would be completed by the end of September 2011. The implementation of this recommendation will be assessed further through future inspections by the Authority of foster care services provided by the HSE nationally and locally.

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 9.3</b> Ensure that each child's case record has a copy of the child's birth certificate and that all records refer to the child by the name on the birth certificate.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> National Standardised Policies will be developed for social workers which will include a policy for report writing and record keeping. Each Social Work Department will conduct an audit to ensure that all children have a birth certificate on their file. Missing certificates will be obtained and records will be kept accordingly.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Office/RDO</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> December 2010</p>	<p><b>Recommendation partly met</b></p>

This recommendation was partly met. Inspectors found that the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services was developing national standardised policies on and systems for social work practices that included record keeping and report writing. This was due for completion by the end of March 2011. No information on the findings of audits of children's case files, which the HSE National Office stated were being carried out by social work offices locally in respect of this recommendation, was provided to the Authority.

The implementation of this recommendation will be assessed further through future inspections by the Authority of the provision of HSE foster care services at local level.

<b>HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010</b>	<b>HSE Action Plan August 2010</b>	<b>Status of recommendation at the time of inspection</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 9.4</b> Develop a non-discriminatory policy on the care of children with disabilities that makes clear to social workers their role and responsibilities to them.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> A standard, national policy on the care of children with disabilities will be developed with support from the National Disabilities Office. In the interim LHO teams will work with their Disability Service Managers to better support the rights, and meet the needs of, children with disabilities who are in care, and their carers.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Office/RDO</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met. Inspectors found that the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services had not developed a national policy on the care of children with disabilities. This was due to be carried out by the National Alternative Care Coordination Group by the end of September 2011. It was not possible for inspectors to make an informed judgment on how children with disabilities were being cared for in every local health area at the time of the inspection. This will be explored on an ongoing basis through future inspections of the provision of HSE foster care services at local level.

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 9.5</b> Develop policies and clear practice guidelines for social workers on the promotion and facilitation of the child in care's right to access information about services and about his/her own life history.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> The National Standardised Policies will address this recommendation.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met. The HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services had not developed policies and practice guidelines for social workers on the promotion and facilitation of the child's right to access information. This was a task assigned to the National Alternative Care Coordination Group and the HSE envisaged that this would be completed by the end of 2011. Inspectors could not assess how well the rights of each child in foster care, in every HSE area, to access information was being facilitated and promoted. This will be assessed on an ongoing basis through future inspections by the Authority on the provision of HSE foster care services at local level.

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 9.6</b> Ensure that social workers are always aware of who is looking after the child in foster care and ensure that the appropriate checks are undertaken.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> The HSE has a policy for sleepovers and respite care. The HSE will ensure that all social workers are aware of, and implementing this policy and that it is communicated to all foster carers. The recruitment of 200 extra social workers in 2010 will also help to address this issue with regular visits by the social worker to the foster home. The Foster Carers core training will emphasise the need for foster carers to notify the social worker when they are not the primary carer.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation partly met</b></p>

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
	<p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Office, RDO</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing</p>	

This recommendation was not fully met. Inspectors found that the national policy for sleepovers and respite care had been re-issued to regional directors of operations with a view to ensuring they were implemented locally. Extra social workers had been recruited in 2010 however, inspectors found that not all children in foster care were assigned a social worker at the time of the inspection. The National Office of the HSE did not provide the Authority with any evidence of how it was ensuring that the whereabouts of every child in foster care that was not assigned a social worker was known to the HSE. This was an area of real concern for inspectors. The National Alternative Care Co-ordination Group had been assigned the task of addressing the requirement for the comprehensive supervision of all children in foster care. This task was ongoing.

It was not possible for inspectors to judge how well this policy was being implemented locally, nor was it possible for inspectors to judge how effective local systems for ensuring social work departments knew the whereabouts of every child in foster care in their area. This will be assessed on an ongoing basis through future inspections of HSE foster care services by the Authority.

### Recommendation 10

Standard 3: Children's Rights

Regulations: Part II s.4(ii) and Part IV s.18(5)(d)(i) and s.16(1)(2)(e)

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 10.1</b> Ensure that there is a robust complaints process in place which children and foster carers have confidence in.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> Complaints are managed in accordance with the HSE's Complaints Management Policy 'Your Service, Your Say'.</p> <p>Carers and Social Workers will receive further training in this regard. A child-friendly guide on the whole complaints process is being</p>	<p><b>Recommendation partly met</b></p>



HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
	<p>developed and children in care will be made fully aware of what to do should they wish to make a complaint.</p> <p>The management of all complaints will be tracked and monitored and the local Foster Care Committee and the Monitor will be notified. Complaints will form part of the foster carer review process. All complaints will be handled within the timeframes in the policy.</p> <p>Consumer Affairs will be requested to develop a child friendly approach within the overall health service complaints policy and procedures which is mindful of the needs of children in care.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Office, Director of Consumer Affairs</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> September 2010</p>	

This recommendation was partly met. Inspectors found that the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services was in the process of developing a register of complaints in relation to children in care at the time of the inspection. This was a task assigned to the National Alternative Care Coordination Group, in conjunction with the exploration of developing a National Child Care Information System, and the review of the function and role of the Foster Care Committee(s). The HSE envisaged that this task would be completed by September 2011.

Information on the HSE's complaints process was not in a format accessible to children and this was also being addressed by the National Alternative Care Co-ordination Group.

Inspectors were not in a position to make an informed judgment on how much progress had been made at local level in relation to this recommendation. This will be assessed further through future inspection of HSE foster care services by the Authority.

<b>HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010</b>	<b>HSE Action Plan August 2010</b>	<b>Status of recommendation at the time of inspection</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 10.2</b> Ensure that the needs of all children with disabilities are assessed and addressed immediately, paying particular attention to providing a supportive framework for foster carers that enables them to care and provide for these children in an effective manner.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> As part of the National Standardised Policies a policy for dealing with children with disabilities will be developed with support from the National Disabilities Office.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> December 2011</p>	<p><b>Recommendation not met</b></p>

This recommendation was not met. Inspectors found that the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services had not developed a national policy on the care of children with disabilities within which they intended to address the assessment of needs of these children. Although inspectors found that this was due to be carried out by the National Alternative Care Coordination Group by the end of September 2011, full implementation of this recommendation was not due until December 2011. There was no indication from the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services on how this issue was being addressed in the interim. This was of serious concern to inspectors. (See also 9.4.)

It was not possible for inspectors to make an informed judgment on how the needs of children with disabilities were being addressed and assessed in every local health area at the time of the inspection. This will be explored on an ongoing basis through future inspections of the provision of HSE foster care services at local level.

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 10.3</b> Ensure that children have access to their case files and this access is encouraged and facilitated as appropriate.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> All social workers are responsible for informing children of their rights to access their case files and to encourage and facilitate them in so doing. The recruitment of 200 extra social workers in 2010 will support practice in this regard. The social work training programme (standardised report writing and record keeping and supervision training) and the provision of National standardised Policies, will strengthen practice and improve compliance with the Regulations and Standards.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> RDO</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing</p>	<p><b>Recommendation partly met</b></p>

This recommendation was partly met. The HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services had not developed policies and practice guidelines for social workers on the promotion and facilitation of the child's right to access information. This was a task assigned to the National Alternative Care Coordination Group and the HSE envisaged that this would be completed by the end of 2011. Inspectors could not assess how well the rights of each child in foster care in every HSE area to access information was being facilitated and promoted. This will be assessed on an ongoing basis through future inspections by the Authority on the provision of foster care services at HSE local level (see also 9.5.).

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 10.4</b> Ensure that all children in care are made aware of their rights, and that all foster carers and social workers are clearly aware of their duty to promote, protect and facilitate them.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> All social workers are responsible for informing children of their rights. Social Workers will ensure that all children are made aware of their rights. The responsibilities of foster carers and social workers to inform children of their rights and of their duties to promote, protect and facilitate them in every way will be addressed through social work training programmes, ongoing supervision, at core training for carers, and by their link workers.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> RDO</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing</p>	<p><b>Recommendation partly met</b></p>

This recommendation was partly met. Inspectors found that the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services had begun to develop training programmes for social workers and to review training being provided to foster carers, coupled with the development of new contracts with foster carers that would ensure they attended the training provided by the HSE. The HSE was also in the process of making information about the rights of children in foster care accessible to children and this work was ongoing at national level.

It was not possible for inspectors to make an informed judgment on how well social work departments were implementing this recommendation at a local level, and this will be assessed on an ongoing basis through future inspections by the Authority on the provision of HSE foster care services.

HIQA national and local recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 10.5</b> Ensure that complaints made by children in foster care are centrally recorded and that the complaints system is regularly monitored.</p>	<p><b>HSE actions</b> The HSE will explore the possibility of the establishment of a national database/register of complaints made by children in foster carer as part of the National Child Care Information System (NCCIS) currently being developed. Locally, a process of centrally recording complaints made by children in foster care will be developed. Complaints will be analysed and monitored by the Child Care Manager and the overall system will be monitored by the local Senior Child Care Management Team.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Office/RDO <b>Timescale:</b> December 2010</p>	<p><b>Recommendation partly met</b></p>

This recommendation was partly met. Inspectors found that the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services was in the process of developing a national register of complaints in relation to children in care at the time of the inspection. This was a task assigned to the National Alternative Care Coordination Group, in conjunction with the exploration of developing a National Child Care Information System, and the review of the function and role of the Foster Care Committee(s). The HSE envisaged that this task would be completed by March 2011. The date provided was not consistent with the date (September 2010) provided in respect of complaints in a similar recommendation (see recommendation 10.1).

Inspectors were not in a position to make a judgment on how much progress had been made at local level in relation to the implementation of this recommendation. This will be assessed further through future inspection of HSE foster care services by the Authority.

### 3.2.6 Follow-up findings on conclusion of previous inspection reports

#### Recommendation 11

HIQA national recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 11</b> The Board of the HSE should nominate a national director with direct accountability and authority for the provision, by or on behalf of the HSE, of safe and high quality services for children.</p>	<p><b>HSE action</b> The HSE is actively considering the optimal structures for the management and delivery of children and family social services at national, regional and local levels.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Director</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> December 2010</p>	<p><b>Recommendation met</b></p>

This recommendation was met. The HSE appointed a National Director who took up the post in January 2011.

#### Recommendation 12

HIQA national recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
<p><b>Recommendation 12</b> Progress made against the implementation of the recommendations contained in this report, and the findings of associated reviews requested by the Authority, should be reported to the Board of the HSE, the Authority, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, and published.</p>	<p><b>HSE action</b> The Board of the HSE and the Risk Committee of the Board of the HSE receive briefings and progress reports on the implementation of recommendations from HIQA. Progress will be reported to HIQA at intervals to be agreed. Progress will be reported to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs at the regular scheduled monthly meetings already underway. The HSE is committed to</p>	<p><b>Recommendation partly met.</b></p>

HIQA national recommendation, July 2010	HSE Action Plan August 2010	Status of recommendation at the time of inspection
	<p>publishing progress reports and are currently reviewing the communications process.</p> <p><b>Persons responsible:</b> National Office</p> <p><b>Timescale:</b> Ongoing</p>	

The implementation of this recommendation was partly met. Inspectors found that the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services intended to provide reports to the Authority on progress made against the implementation of these recommendations and recommendations of other reviews and reports on a monthly basis. At the time of this inspection, progress reports as outlined in the action plan had yet to be received from the HSE. The HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services confirmed to inspectors that at the time of inspection that it was also reporting progress made to the Board of the HSE, the Risk Committee of the HSE and the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

## 4. Conclusions

This follow-up inspection report found that while there was evidence that efforts had been made by the HSE to implement the national recommendations made by the Authority in relation to the delivery of its foster care services, a significant amount of work remains to be done in order to meet the National Standards and the regulations.

Overall, inspectors found that the HSE Office of the National Director of Children and Family Services had made some progress in some key areas, particularly in terms of reviewing and amending the management and governance of the service. This had the potential to improve lines of accountability within the service. Other areas of progress identified included:

- the recruitment of a National Director of Children and Family Services
- the recruitment of 200 extra social workers nationally
- the start of a review process in relation to policies and procedures
- the strengthening of HSE monitoring of foster care services in some areas.

However, the inspection process highlighted continuing deficiencies in the HSE foster care service that may compromise the safety of some children and effectiveness of service delivery. Therefore, considerable improvement is required in the implementation of many of the recommendations of this report, including:

- the implementation of *Children First: Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children*
- the development of national registers of children in foster care and their foster carers
- assigning every child and foster carer a social worker
- assessing and vetting of all foster carers
- assessing the needs of children with disabilities in foster care
- developing a care plan for all children in foster care.

## 5. National Standards

The Authority has submitted new *National Quality Standards for Care Services for Young People and Children* to the Minister for Health and Children for mandating and when implemented, will continue to drive improvement in the care and protection of children in foster care.



## 6. Next steps

This report finds that although efforts had been made by the HSE to implement the recommendations made by the Authority in relation to the delivery of its foster care services, there remains a considerable amount of work to be done. It is the intention of the Authority to continue to assess the implementation of these recommendations by the HSE through several different means, and these are:

- to report to the Minister for Children on the findings of all inspections
- to continue to carry out and publish inspections of foster care services provided by the HSE in its 32 local health areas
- to review progress at a national level on an ongoing basis through quarterly written reports from the HSE to the Authority, that include an updated national foster care action plan.

## 7. References

- Child Care Act, 1991. Dublin: The Stationery Office; 1991
- Children Act, 2001. Dublin: The Stationery Office; 2001
- Child Care (Placement of Children in Foster Care) Regulations 1995 SI No. 260 of 1995. Dublin: The Stationery Office; 1995
- Child Care (Placement of Children with Relatives) Regulations 1995 SI No. 261 of 1995. Dublin: The Stationery Office; 1995
- Data Protection Act, 1988. Dublin: The Stationery Office; 1988
- Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003. Dublin: The Stationery Office; 2003
- Department of Health and Children. *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children*. Dublin: The Stationery Office; 1999
- Department of Health and Children. *National Standards for Foster Care*. Dublin: The Stationery Office; 2003
- Freedom of Information Act 1997. Dublin: The Stationery Office; 1997
- Freedom of Information (Amendment) Act 2003. Dublin: The Stationery Office; 2003
- Health Act 2004. Dublin: The Stationery Office; 2004
- Health Act 2007. Dublin: The Stationery Office; 2007
- Health Service Executive. *Review of Adequacy of Services for Children and Families*. Dublin: Health Service Executive; 2008

## 8. Glossary of terms

**Care orders:** under the Child Care Act, 1991 there are a number of procedures, which the Health Service Executive (HSE) can use when dealing with children who are at risk or who are in need of care. The HSE may apply to the courts for a number of different orders, which give the courts a range of powers including decisions about the kind of care, and the access to the children for parents and other relatives. The HSE must apply for a care order if a child needs care and protection which he / she is unlikely to receive without an order. The district court judge may make an interim care order while the decision on a care order is pending. This means that the child is placed in the care of the HSE for eight days. It may be extended if the HSE and the parents agree. Generally the parents/guardians must be given notice of an interim care order application. A care order may be made when the court is satisfied that:

- the child has been or is being assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused or that the child's health, development or welfare has been or is likely to be impaired or neglected
- the child needs care and protection which he/she is unlikely to receive without a care order.

When a care order is made the child remains in the care of the HSE for the length of time specified by the order or until the age of 18 when he / she is no longer a child. The HSE has the rights and duties of a parent during this time.

**Emergency approval:** under the child care regulations foster carers are approved for placements by a foster care committee. However, emergency placements are sometimes made prior to this approval when there are limited options for the care of the child.

**Foster care:** where possible the HSE places children with foster parents. The Child Care (Placement of Children in Foster Care) Regulations 1995 require that a care plan for the child be drawn up which sets out, among other things, the support to be provided to the child and the foster parents and the arrangements for access to the child in foster care by parents or relatives. If there is a shortage of foster parents, and / or it is assessed as meeting a child's needs, children may be placed in residential care instead.

**Link social worker:** the social worker assigned by the HSE to be primarily responsible for the supervision and support of foster carers.

**Placing children with relatives:** the Child Care (Placement of Children with Relatives) Regulations 1995 make provision for relatives to receive an allowance for caring for a child placed with them by the HSE. The child care regulations set out the arrangements for the placement and are broadly similar to the foster care regulations.

**Preparation for leaving care and adult life:** these centres prepare young people for leaving care. The young people in these centres are generally 16 or over. Leaving care and aftercare centres that accommodate young people under 18 require registration as children's residential centres.

**Residential Care:** residential care can be in a home run by the HSE, a children's residential centre registered under the Child Care Act, 1991, a school or other suitable place of residence. The Child Care (Placement of Children in Residential Care) Regulations 1995 state the requirements for the placing of children in residential care and the National Standards for residential centres, which are registered with the HSE. The centres are subject to inspection by the Health Information and Quality Authority.

**Supported lodgings:** according to HSE policy, supported lodgings is the provision of support and accommodation to children in care aged 15 and over who require less supportive environments than younger or more vulnerable children. Providers of supported lodgings are vetted in accordance with HSE policy but are not assessed to the same criteria as foster carers.

**Voluntary care:** if a child is in need of care and protection and is unlikely to receive it at home, then the HSE must take them into care. In other cases, where parents are unable to adequately care for their children, for reasons such as serious illness or other difficulties, they may agree to their children being taken into the care of the HSE. This is known as voluntary care. In such cases, the wishes of the parents as to how care is provided to the children must be considered. The HSE is under obligation to maintain the children for as long as their welfare requires it.

**Ward of court:** when a child is made a ward of court all matters affecting the ward's up-bringing become the responsibility of the court. The court determines matters such as the child's residence, education, maintenance, holidays, etc.. A third party can seek custody of a child against a parent, or seek to obtain protection for a child against the actions of a parent, by bringing wardship proceedings.

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For further information please contact:

Health Information and Quality Authority  
Dublin Regional Office  
George's Court  
George's Lane  
Smithfield  
Dublin 7

Phone: +353 (0) 1 814 7400  
URL: [www.hiqa.ie](http://www.hiqa.ie)

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