

**An Assurance Review on
The Quality of Completed Initial
Assessment work in the Carlow
Kilkenny and South Tipperary Area**

**National Practice Assurance and Service
Monitoring Team
February 2019**



**An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency**

Key Report Information

Report type	An assurance review on the quality of completed initial assessment work in the Carlow Kilkenny and South Tipperary Area.
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Audit dates	27 th and 28 th February 2019.
Date of report	4 th March 2019.
Tusla Area	Carlow Kilkenny South Tipperary.
Year	2018.

1. Final report copied to

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1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of Report

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) carried out an Inspection of the Carlow/Kilkenny/South Tipperary Area, Child Protection and Welfare Services, over five days in October and November 2017. Major non-compliance was identified under the following National Standard for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2012:

Standard 2.5: *‘Under Standard 2.5 you are required to ensure that: All reports of child protection concerns are assessed in line with Children First (2011) and best available evidence’.*

The provider is failing to meet the National Standards in the following respect:

- *The area did not have sufficient capacity to undertake initial assessments throughout the 12 months prior to inspection.*
- *The quality of some initial assessments was poor and assessments were not always completed in a timely manner.*
- *Oversight of initial assessments to ensure they were of consistently good quality was poor.*

The area submitted an improvement plan in response to the HIQA inspection findings. This included a commitment to undertake a review of the quality of completed initial assessment work. This assurance review was carried out in accordance with actions; 2.5.2 (g) and 2.5.3 (b), outlined in the Area’s improvement plan tracker.

As stated the review was carried out to give an assurance on the quality of completed initial assessment work in accordance with:

- Children First, 2017 the National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children and the Children First Act 2015.
- The Revised Tusla Standard Business Processes, January 2018.
- The Tusla National Child Protection and Welfare Strategy, 2017.

The scope of the review was limited to initial assessment work completed in Quarter 3 and Quarter 4 of 2018; a random sample of 20% (n=46) of completed initial assessment records was chosen for audit.

1.2 Methodology

A bespoke audit tool (devised by the national quality assurance officer) was used to audit the random sample of completed initial assessment work. Records were reviewed through the National Child Care Information System (NCCIS).

The review team comprised the National Quality Assurance Officer; the area Principal Social Worker (Child Protection and Welfare), and area Principal Social Worker (Quality Assurance Lead).

2.0 Key Findings

The key findings are summarised as follows:

- A completed intake record and initial assessment form was available for each of the records reviewed.
- From the sample reviewed of the initial assessment work there was evidence that the work did not commence in a timely manner following completion of the intake record form (Table 1.0).

Table 1.0

Length of time from completion of Intake Record to commencing Initial Assessment				
1 – 4 weeks	1-3 months	3-6 months	6-12 months	12 months +
33%	31%	15%	17%	4%

- There was evidence from the work reviewed that some cases awaiting initial assessment were reviewed at a recent area signs of safety post intake prioritisation workshop.

Initial Assessment work:

- The child Details Section 2 was completed on 98% of initial assessments reviewed.
- The Parents/ Carers were met with for 96% of the initial assessments completed. In 2 of 46 cases it was documented that there were attempts to meet the parent, however the parent(s) refused to engage.
- There was evidence that children were met as part of the process (table 2.0).

Table 2.0

Was the child met with as part of the Initial Assessment		
Yes	N/A (Unborn)	No
87%	4%	9%

- The child’s view was documented in 88% of sample and there was evidence of the 3 Houses tool being used on 76% of applicable Initial Assessments.*
- There was good evidence of the use of ‘Internal Mapping’ in sections 10.1, 10.2 and 10.3 of the completed initial assessment work.

This was not assessed where the Initial Assessment was completed for a child 0-4 years.

Table 3.0 – Section 10.1 ‘What are we Worried about?’

Is past harm recorded?	
Yes	No
91%	9%
Has a Danger Statement been completed?	
Yes	No
97%	3%

Table 4.0 – Section 10.2 ‘What’s working well?’

Have strengths been identified?	
Yes	No
100	/
Has existing safety been identified?	
Yes	No
94%	6%

Table 5.0 – Section 10.3 ‘What needs to happen next?’

Is the safety goal complete?	
Yes	No
89%	11%
Is the safety scaling complete?	
Yes	No
100% (30% number only)	/

- The use of safety scaling was evident from the completed initial assessment work, however the rationale for the scaling number was not always provided. For 30% of the sample reviewed the number only, was recorded.
- Next steps (section 10.3.3) were clearly documented in 97% of the completed initial assessment work
- The rationale for action upon completion of initial assessment work was evidenced in 80% of the sample.
- The initial assessment work was completed within 40 working days (*from time of commencing assessment*) for 54% of the sample.

2.1 Safeguarding

The review team examined and discussed the sample and were satisfied that appropriate safeguarding measures were taken for 80% of the sample. Where the review team concluded that more information or a review of the case was required:

- There was insufficient evidence of safety planning for cases awaiting allocation.
- The rationale to support a decision not to request a Child Protection Conference wasn't always clearly documented.

2.2 Areas of Good Practice

In general the review provided an assurance that the completed initial assessment work sampled was of a good standard. The completed work sampled was comprehensive; there was evidence of engagement with families, children and other

professionals. The majority of initial assessments provided detailed recording of the child’s view.

There was also evidence of good progress in implementing the National Child Protection and Welfare Strategy - Signs of Safety framework.

In comparing the findings of the *September 2018 Quantitative Baseline Audit of the Implementation of Signs of Safety Practice Tools*, this review found that the CKST area continues to improve compliance with the model (Table 6.o).

The area of most improvement has been the increase in the use of scaling numbers for completed initial assessments. This was present on 100% of files compared to 63% of files reviewed for the Signs of Safety Audit. There continues to be room for improvement in documenting the rationale for the scaling number as this was missing from 30% of Initial Assessments.

Table 6.o

Comparison – Audits on Completed Initial Assessments				
Audit	Danger Statement	Safety Goal	3 Houses Tool	Safety Scaling
SOS Audit Sept 2018	85.2%	87%	74.1%	63%
CKST Audit February 2019	97%	89%	76%	100%

The review found evidence on a number of files of audits by Social Work Team Leaders, and all Initial Assessments were signed off by Team leaders.

2.3 Areas for Improvement

The review found that improvement is required with regard to safety planning for cases awaiting allocation for Initial Assessment.

Improvement is required with regard to the completion of Initial Assessments in line with Standardised Business Process timeframes.

Improvement is required with regard to the completion, sign off and oversight of completed initial assessment outcomes and risk status, to ensure that there is a documented rationale that supports the recommended actions.

3. Conclusions

As previously stated the review provided an assurance that the completed initial assessment work sampled was of a good standard. The work sampled was comprehensive there was evidence of engagement with families, children and other professionals.

There was also evidence of good progress in implementing the National Child Protection and Welfare Strategy - Signs of Safety framework. The area has commenced workshops to support the implementation of the national approach to practice. Further workshops are planned for 2019.

The review identified the need for improvement with regard to the timely commencement of initial assessment work. The review also identified the need for improvement in the recording of rationale for actions/decisions.

4. Recommendations

(As per Section 2.3)

1. Improvement is required with regard to safety planning for cases awaiting allocation for Initial Assessment.
2. Improvement is required with regard to the completion of Initial Assessments in line with Standardised Business Process timeframes.
3. Improvement is required with regard to the completion, sign off and oversight of completed initial assessment outcomes and risk status, to ensure that there is a documented rationale that supports the recommended actions.

Emma King

National Quality Assurance and Monitoring Team
04th March 2019

Appendix 1: Action Plan

The Area Manager is required to complete an action plan setting out how the Area intends to address the required actions identified in this report. The action plan will be included in the final service review report.

Action:	Issues requiring action:	Response (to include person responsible and timescale):
1.	Improvement is required with regard to safety planning for cases awaiting allocation for Initial Assessment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs of Safety Initial Assessment workshop 4th April 2019 with a focus on safety planning – immediate, interim and long term safety planning. • Staffing reviewed. Business cases to be submitted for recruitment of 4 SCW's across the area to review safety goals on waitlisted cases, supervised by Snr Practitioner.
2.	Improvement is required with regard to the completion of Initial Assessments in line with Standardised Business Process timeframes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adherence to timeframes for completion of Initial Assessments will continue to be monitored by PSW through 6 monthly audits. • Discussed at Signs of Safety Workshop 4th April 2019: 'Too much detail at IA stage currently causing delays to the IA. - Clarified tasks to be completed at IA stage - with the view to improving timelines. Clarified how far into SOS process the IA should go.' • Staffing reviewed. Business cases to be submitted for recruitment of 4 SCW's across the area to undertake welfare IA's, supervised by SWTL.
3.	Improvement is required with regard to the completion, sign off and oversight of completed initial assessment outcomes and risk status, to ensure that there is a documented rationale that supports the recommended actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing monitoring by PSW through bi annual audits.