

Ger Brophy
Chief Social Worker
Tusla - Child & Family Agency
The Brunel Building,
Heuston South Quarter,
Saint John's Road West,
Dublin 8
D08 X01f

25 March 2020

Re. PPE For Social Workers on 'Home Visits'

Dear Ger,

The IASW acknowledges the very important work that Tusla, their Social Workers and Social Care workers are carrying out during this difficult time.

My immediate concern is regarding persons carrying out Home Visits.

I acknowledge that Tusla has issued guidelines regarding home visiting, but I am concerned that workers have yet to be given access to equipment that will protect them when visiting families in crisis. By equipment, I refer to, hand sanitiser, wipes, latex gloves and masks. This equipment is not easily available to the general community and it is not reasonable therefore that workers can be expected to have their own PPE.

Persons in crisis will find it very difficult to maintain rules of social distancing, and many of the young children respond to a visiting social worker by seeking close physical interaction. If children have to be removed to care there will be very close contact (hand holding, carrying, etc.) placing the workers at definite risk. Added to this risk, persons in emotionally charged situations may use coughing or spitting as a weapon against the Social Worker who is 'threatening their family'. I have had both happen to me in the past, thankfully not often.

Aside from the very real risks to the worker of serious illness or death, each quarantined or sick worker diminishes this essential workforce, lowering the response Tusla can make to the most vulnerable. For the protection of our members and all workers in this context, the IASW requests that Tusla source supplies as soon as possible to be given to workers embarking on home visits.

Should you wish to discuss this matter any further, please do not hesitate to contact me on 086 2932164.

Yours sincerely,



Áine McGuirk

Chair

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