



IASW

Irish Association of Social Workers
Cumann na hÉireann um Oibríthe Sóisialta

Mr. Bernard Gloster
Chief Executive
Tusla – Child & Family Agency
Brunel Building,
Heuston South Quarter,
Dublin 8

20 April 2020

Re. Implications of the Covid-19 Crisis

Dear Mr Gloster,

The IASW acknowledges the continued efforts of Tusla and your staff in delivering services to children at risk and children in care during these unprecedented times. We also acknowledge the imperative to find new ways of working in order to fulfil those important responsibilities during the present restrictions. At this time, we have some issues /concerns that your office might assist us with.

1. Our Children and Families Special Interest Group has asked that we consult you regarding supports available for vulnerable families. Recognising that family vulnerability is a multi-agency problem requiring responses from many quarters it would be of great assistance to know what is available across all Tusla areas with regard to PPFs, addiction services, public health nursing, children's mental health services, community and voluntary groups, etc. during the Covid-19 crisis period. This may require information from HSE and HSE funded services and I am contacting Paul Reid's office also in this regard.
2. The second query is regarding an expressed need for further practice guidance on access/family visiting arrangements for social workers assigned to cases of children in care. In normal circumstances, access is a fundamental element of the success of a placement in care, for both the child and their parents, as well as a legal right. The present restrictions have curtailed much social work activity to support and assessment from a distance and emergency response with direct contact only when necessary to protect both staff and families from possible contamination with Covid-19.

Social Workers are not clear as to how to achieve beneficial access in line with current guidance. The IASW requests that Tusla revisit this as the restrictions have already been extended once and may be again.

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We respectfully suggest that you now have a rich source of information and experience within your teams locally to identify specific problems, hear of innovative responses and successes, and develop solutions that will work in different localities.

3. Lastly, the IASW wishes to emphasise the ongoing need for professional supervision in all social work, which allows for the exploration of individual cases, the opportunity to reflect on professional actions and the identification of learning, as well as the necessary management of caseload, but crucially not restricted to caseload management.

The IASW are available to explore any of these issues further with you or your representative. We are actively using Zoom Pro for meeting and video conferencing.

Should you require any further information regarding these matters, please do not hesitate to contact me on 086 2932164.

Stay Safe & Well.

Yours sincerely,

Aine McGuirk,
Chair

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