

Sláintecare and the Programme for Government

Tuesday, 5th May 2020

Dear Sir/Madam,

In response to the recent publication of the FF/FG Framework Document we welcome the commitment to expedite the implementation of Sláintecare and the reiteration of the commitment to universal healthcare services. Ireland's response to COVID-19 has shown the pressing need to deliver a single tier health system and our capacity to create – albeit temporarily for now – a universal health service.

The prioritisation of children's health and women's health in the framework document is also a welcome focus and the commitment to ensure that all future consultant contracts in the public system will be for public services helps to build confidence in the way forward.

We hope that a new programme for government will add to the stated values of 'community and solidarity' the essential value of equality, so all people can access the right care, at the right time and in the right place without reference to ability to pay. The COVID pandemic has further exposed and exacerbated existing health inequalities in our society, including those disproportionately impacting on minority ethnic groups, including Travellers and Roma, on people who are homeless and people living in overcrowded and unsuitable Direct Provision accommodation. We need to build a health system that can confront inequities and that healthcare system must value all key workers, including home care workers, hospital cleaners and health care assistants, with job security and a fair income.

We are concerned at the absence of older people, and their health and care needs and services in the framework document. The COVID-19-related nursing home crises and the gaps in home care provision show the urgent need to progress commitments to de-congregate settings for older people and people with disabilities through enhanced care resources in the community.

Universal healthcare requires the identification of quality-of-life measures for both individuals and society. We suggest that a dedicated 'Well-being' section be developed to bring together the health commitments and elements in other sections of the document on housing, climate action and youth, which are all linked and contribute to our well-being. These elements all require a response that ensures equality of access and equality of outcome for all.

We ask all the political parties and independents engaged in discussions to ensure that there is no going back to the old unequal health care delivery system, for ourselves, our parents, our health care colleagues and our children. This is a once in a generation opportunity to do the right thing. We ask all those involved in forming the next government to engage and let us plan to have the health and care system we deserve.

Signed by:

1. National Women's Council of Ireland
2. 221+ CervicalCheck Patient Support Group
3. Age Action
4. Age & Opportunity
5. AkiDwA
6. Amach LGBT Galway
7. Barnardos
8. Care Alliance Ireland
9. Children's Rights Alliance
10. Community Work Ireland
11. Congress - Irish Congress of Trade Unions
12. Disability Federation of Ireland
13. Fórsa
14. Immigrant Council of Ireland
15. Irish Association of Social Workers
16. Irish Heart Foundation
17. Irish Hospice Foundation
18. Irish Motor Neurone Disease Association (IMNDA)
19. Migrant Rights Centre Ireland
20. MS Ireland
21. National Traveller Women's Forum
22. Northside Home Care Services
23. Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre
24. Sage Advocacy
25. Samaritans Ireland
26. SIPTU
27. Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SVP)
28. The Alzheimer Society of Ireland
29. Threshold Training Network
30. Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI)

Correspondence to: Orla O'Connor, Director, National Women's Council of Ireland orlaoc@nwci.ie