



IASW

Irish Association of Social Workers
Cumann na hÉireann um Oibríthe Sóisialta

Dr. Cathal Morgan
Head of Operations – Disability Services
Chair, Psychosocial National Project Steering Group
Community Operations,
Health Service Executive,
Block D, Parkgate Business Centre,
Parkgate St,
Dublin D08 YFF1

30 April 2020

Re. Social Work Representation on Psychosocial National Project Steering Group

Dear Mr. Morgan,

The IASW acknowledge the work of the management and staff of the HSE during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the significant challenges this brings.

The IASW were delighted to see that a note was circulated to Social Workers on 10th April heralding the development of a “Health Sector Psycho-Social Plan in Response to Covid-19”. The note to HSE staff advised that a formal work stream was being actioned to progress this. The IASW were heartened to see that there was an expectation that professionals from across the health and social care spectrum would be contributing to the work of the national project team, and Social Workers have offered our significant expertise in this area communicating directly to your office and through the National HSCP Office.

We are disappointed to find that a health and social care professional has been invited to join the Steering Group without reference to accepted procedures normally in place, selecting a Psychologist alone to sit on the Steering Group. We were not made aware of an opportunity for a social worker to express an interest, which would be normal procedure for appointing a representative at national level. We are supportive of the involvement of our psychology colleagues and understand the importance of their particular expertise to this forum. However, we are most concerned about the exclusion of Social Work expertise from the Steering Group, as Social Work is the profession whose core function is to address the psychosocial needs of the population. Therefore, this seems a most unusual way to proceed to create the best responses to the significant challenges ahead for our health service users across the whole population.

Despite our expertise and key national role in the delivery of psychosocial care, Social Work have not been invited to join in the national Steering Group, the advisory groups or any of the workstreams. We have not received any communication from the HSCP representative on the work or progress of the Steering Group.

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We remain deeply concerned that the needs of the vulnerable people we work with cannot therefore be reflected in the work of the Steering Group.

IASW respectfully requests that you ensure to include a Social Work representative in the core membership of the Steering Group. Social Work was not represented in the original 2014 guidance document "Psychosocial Responses in Major Emergencies". It is our view that this was an unfortunate oversight and believe it is now within your remit to rectify this especially at this critical time for our country and healthcare system.

IASW are available to discuss this with you in a manner appropriate to the restrictions of the current crisis. I am contactable on 086 293 2164.

We look forward to hearing from you in regard to this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Áine McGuirk

Chair (SW 004099)

c.c. Mrs. Anne O'Connor, Chief Operations Officer, HSE, Dr. Steeven's Hospital, Dublin 8

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