

19th January 2021
Ref: HEA-MD-00080-2020
Ms. Danielle McGoldrick
Office Manager
The National Social Work Organisation of Ireland CLG

Dear Ms McGoldrick,

On behalf of the Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly, T.D. I wish to thank you for your correspondence regarding the COVID-19 Nursing Home Expert Report. I apologise for the delay in replying. I am sure you will appreciate the sheer volume of correspondence we are processing at this time.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge and note the important work being carried out by all health and social care professionals, including social workers, in these unprecedented times.

As you are aware, the COVID-19 Nursing Homes Expert Panel Report was published on the 19th August.

The Expert Panel's Report is a significant report with a substantial package of recommendations across 15 thematic areas. It has made 86 recommendations in total with associated timelines for implementation over the short, medium and long term. Minister Donnelly has established an oversight structure to ensure the implementation of the important recommendations contained in this Report. This encompassed the establishment of both an Implementation Oversight Team and a Reference Group. There is a key focus on the implementation of recommendations that require immediate action to ensure ongoing preparedness as we move into the winter months.

In line with existing governance frameworks between the Department and its agencies, the Implementation Oversight Team is chaired by the Assistant Secretary, Social Care Division, Department of Health with membership from across the Department, the HSE, HIQA and the NTPF. There is also a public interest representative on the group, along with the Chair of the Reference Group.

The appointment of a public interest representative, along with the inclusion of two advocacy bodies in the Reference Group, underline the Department's commitment to ensure that the voice of residents is heard and included in the implementation process.

In addition to this, the Department of Health is currently finalising the development of a national policy on adult safeguarding in the health sector. This national, sectoral policy will apply to all public, voluntary, and private healthcare and social care settings and agencies, will address inter-agency cooperation arrangements involving the health sector and is expected to build on existing structures (including social work led specialist safeguarding services).

The IASW has, to date, been a welcome participant in the Department's stakeholder consultation processes on the development of this policy. A public consultation exercise on the draft policy, planned for 2021, will be a further opportunity for the Association to submit its views for consideration. Department officials look forward to engaging with your organisation to progress both the national policy on safeguarding and also the implementation of the Nursing Home Expert Panel's recommendations.

Yours sincerely,

Miriam Rooney

Private Secretary to the Minister for Health