

Minister of State at the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
and at the Department of Health.

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12th January 2022

Dear Minister,

I write on behalf of the Irish Association of Social Workers (IASW) to support your efforts to secure the full publication of the 'Brandon' report. As you are aware, social work is the named lead profession in adult safeguarding in Ireland and the IASW has serious and significant concerns at the HSE's failure to publish the report in full.

The HSE has expressed concern that the full publication of the report may compromise both the scoping review into potential disciplinary action and the confidentiality of those who gave information to the NIRP.

The IASW is clear; neither issue should serve as a barrier to full publication. Similar reports are routinely published in full in other jurisdictions, including Northern Ireland, Scotland, England, and Wales, without any negative impact on concurrent disciplinary or criminal investigations, nor has their publication negated confidentiality clauses. Given that it is common and usual practice to publish in full elsewhere, The IASW are confident our own health service management team are capable of delivering the same openness and transparency in Ireland. The IASW wishes to draw your attention to the following implications of failing to publish the report:

- 1) ***Failure to fully publish breaches residents' most fundamental rights to know about the events within their own home:*** Residents and their loved ones have a right to full information about the care failings, abuse and neglect which occurs in the place they call 'home.' This is a basic human right – who among us would wish to live in a care setting where information about abuse, neglect and care failures is withheld?
- 2) ***Failure to fully publish means vital learning simply cannot take place and necessary change will not occur if the lessons remain buried in an unpublished report;*** Our members are conscious that the full report undoubtedly contains critically important and essential lessons for social workers and other professions, related to missed opportunities to intervene and safeguard residents. Social workers, care staff and other staff groups and their managers must be offered the opportunity to read the full report and reflect on its findings to learn, educate our peers and students, and in order to change and improve our practice.

- 3) Failure to publish reflects an unhealthy organisational culture which often speaks about transparency but fail to deliver that openness or transparency in practice at national and local level. HSE management must lead by example, model best practice and act with complete transparency in order to change any harmful and secretive culture present in frontline services.**

The IASW has repeatedly raised concerns about organisational culture in the HSE, HSE funded and private organisations when abuse or neglect arises. As referenced in the IASW position paper on safeguarding, social workers have reported that organisational culture is a significant barrier in our ability to adequately safeguard individuals, advocate for appropriate safeguarding reviews or ensure a quality service is offered, as agency culture prioritises the protection of the agency, rather than best safeguarding practice. Social workers have expressed concerns about the lack of understanding and minimisation of cases of abuse at the highest level of HSE and HSE funded management structures.

The IASW urges the HSE to show leadership in this matter now, through the full publication of the 'Brandon' report, sending out a clear message to all concerned, that our health service will no longer withhold or restrict information about its own failings and that the HSE will be completely transparent with the most important stakeholder – those who use HSE services.

Thank you for your valuable advocacy and indeed all your work on behalf of residents and families.

Sincerely,



Vivian Geiran
Chair