

National
Safeguarding
Committee
Strategic Plan
2017-2021

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National
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Committee



Promoting the rights of adults who may be vulnerable

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Foreword

In December 2014, the HSE published its Safeguarding Policy “Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse - National Policy and Procedures”. This Safeguarding Policy is the first HSE Safeguarding Policy to encompass both elder abuse and concerns of abuse relating to people availing of disability services. The Policy sets out a number of principles which help to promote the independence and rights of adults who may be vulnerable and also outlines the procedures to be followed if there are concerns of abuse and/or neglect of a vulnerable adult.

The Policy provides details on a number of structures to be developed in order to support the safeguarding agenda. One of these supporting structures is a National Safeguarding Committee. This Committee was formally established and held its first meeting in December 2015. It has detailed agreed Terms of Reference, but its overarching remit is to support the development of a societal and organisational culture which promotes the rights of persons who may be vulnerable and safeguards them from abuse.

In that context, while the HSE Policy encompasses both elder abuse and abuse of people in disability services, the National Safeguarding Committee recognises that any vulnerable adult can be subject to abuse. Vulnerability is not dictated by a person’s age or disability alone and circumstances, and the external environment can contribute to vulnerability. Vulnerability can be a transient or permanent state depending on many influences, including dependencies, family circumstances, and societal attitudes and behaviours.

The National Safeguarding Committee is a multi-agency and inter-sectoral body with an independent chair. It was established by the HSE in recognition of the fact that safeguarding vulnerable people from abuse is a matter that cannot be addressed by any one agency working in isolation, but rather by a number of agencies and individuals working collaboratively with a common goal. This strategy statement outlines the commitment of the National Safeguarding Committee to achieving its overall aim of promoting the rights and independence of vulnerable adults and thereby helping to safeguard them from abuse. The strategy will guide the work of the Committee for the next five years, and it will be reviewed regularly so that the National Safeguarding Committee can challenge itself and respond to changing circumstances.



Patricia T Rickard-Clarke
Chairperson

Terms of Reference

The National Safeguarding Committee will be independently chaired and will derive representation from a number of agencies. It will lead on encouraging an organisational and societal culture which promotes the rights of adults who may be vulnerable. Membership of the National Safeguarding Committee will be reviewed bi-annually by the Chair in conjunction with the HSE National Director Social Care and the Director of the Decision Support Service.

Specifically, the Committee will:

1. Promote zero tolerance for abuse of adults who are vulnerable.
2. Provide strategic guidance to the Government, HSE and other National Stakeholders, in relation to the promotion of the rights and independence of all vulnerable adults.
3. Promote the rights of adults who may be vulnerable through public awareness and through the activities of the National Safeguarding Committee.
4. Develop a national plan for promoting the welfare, and safeguarding from abuse, of adults (to include protection from abuse by persons and institutions).
5. Provide oversight, guidance and influence on legislation, policies and procedures, when required, in order to ensure that the promotion of safeguarding principles are enshrined in policies and procedures and that complaints and concerns are addressed appropriately.
6. Ensure that information gathering and analysis systems operate to inform effective management and learning in all organisations.
7. Commission research, public awareness campaigns and training aimed at promoting the rights of adults who may be vulnerable.
8. Report, on an agreed basis, to the HSE National Director Social Care in liaison with the Director of Decision Support Service (when established).
9. Contribute to the review of the ***Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse - National Policy and Procedures***.
10. Develop a five-year plan of activities by the National Safeguarding Committee to promote the welfare, empowerment and independence of adults who may be vulnerable, and report annually on its activities.

Strategic Plan Development Process

The National Safeguarding Committee was launched by the Minister of State Kathleen Lynch in December 2015. Following its initial meetings in early 2016, a facilitated workshop was held with members of the Committee to ascertain the key values, principles, aims and objectives for the group over the next 5 years.

It was decided that a subgroup of the Committee would meet to distil the thoughts of the wider Committee into a succinct strategy document.

In developing this plan, the subgroup aimed to align its vision, aims and objectives with the knowledge, skills and expertise available from within the membership of the Committee.

This was with a view to identifying and optimising resources outside of the Committee that could be used to achieve its goals.

The National Safeguarding Committee's strategy map (shown and discussed on the following pages) is an integral component of this corporate plan.

Strategic Plan Structure

Every section of the strategy map is an integral component of the Committee's strategic plan using the following key elements:

- **What the Committee will do**
- **How the Committee will do it**



What the Committee will do

The Committee has four main objectives over the next 5 years. These are:



Raising public awareness and understanding



Supporting and promoting the protection of people's rights



Informing and influencing Government policy



Building the Committee's capacity and capability

In achieving these aims, the Committee will engage in the following critical activities:



Communicating and engaging



Researching



Collaborating



Influencing

Objectives and Key Priorities



Objective 1

To raise public understanding of attitudes, behaviours, circumstances and systems that create vulnerability that may result in abuse and that may require a safeguarding response.

Key priorities 2017-2021

Over the next 5 years the Committee will:

- Raise public awareness and understanding of vulnerability which may result in abuse and how it should be addressed.
- Develop and promote accessible resources aimed at addressing safeguarding issues for the Committee's stakeholders.

Committee Actions

- 1.1 Develop a proposal for the conduct of a baseline assessment of people's awareness of adult safeguarding issues
- 1.2 Raise the Committee's profile, role, function and intersectoral membership through the launch of the Committee's strategy
- 1.3 Develop a proposal for a public awareness campaign for the Committee, outlining a range of options, associated costs and potential funding sources



Objective 2

To promote the protection and rights of people who may be vulnerable by encouraging organisations and services to recognise, prevent and deal with exploitation and abuse effectively.

Key priorities 2017-2021

In the next 5 years the Committee will:

- Influence and contribute to the development and revision of safeguarding policies within organisations and services to recognise, prevent and intervene in the abuse of people who may be vulnerable.
- Commission research that informs strategy, policy and practice in addressing abuse and exploitation.
- Promote the use of rights-based approaches in the provision of services to people who may be vulnerable.

Committee Actions

- 2.1 Actively contribute to the HSE's development of its revised National Safeguarding Policy and procedures

- 2.2 Develop a proposal to recommend the commissioning of a systematic review of the use of restraints

- 2.3 Develop a paper on current practices in the use of wardship within adult care services making recommendations to relevant stakeholders that promote and protect the rights of service users

- 2.4 Develop a research proposal on what constitutes a rights-based approach to service provision and its impact on safeguarding - making recommendation to service providers across relevant sectors

- 2.5 Contribute to the development of guidelines by financial institutions to safeguard against financial abuse



Objective 3

To inform and influence Government policy and legislation to safeguard the rights of people who may be vulnerable.

Key priorities 2017-2021

In the next 5 years the Committee will:

- Commission research to inform legislation aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of adults who may be vulnerable.
- Use the influence of the Committee to engage with the Oireachtas to seek relevant legislative reform.
- Use the influence of the Committee to ensure an interdepartmental approach to safeguarding adults who may be vulnerable.

Committee Actions

- 3.1 Organise a formal launch of the Committee's strategy

- 3.2 Initiate conversations with Government and Oireachtas Committees on the development of legislation to include adult safeguarding, advocacy, the use of chemical restraint and deprivation of liberty

- 3.3 Initiate a working group to review and advise on agency arrangements for vulnerable adults with a view to providing Committee advice on legislative/regulatory reform

- 3.4 Influence the development of nationally mandated standards for the protection of vulnerable adults by HIQA and the Mental Health Commission (MHC)



Objective 4

The Committee dedicates itself to optimise its collective capacity and available external resources to achieve its aims and objectives.

Key priorities 2017-2021

In the next 5 years the Committee will:

- Work collaboratively to optimise available skills and experience of all its members.
- Identify and engage with other individuals and organisations to promote the rights of adults who may be vulnerable.
- Identify and utilise financial and other resources aimed at the effective delivery of the Committee's aims and objectives.
- Develop and promote the Committee's identity and objectives through its membership, partner organisations and available media.

Committee Actions

- 4.1 Establish a working group structure based on membership skills, experience and expertise
- 4.2 Identify, access and manage financial resources and benefits in kind for the successful delivery of this strategy
- 4.3 Develop effective committee supports and systems for the successful delivery of this strategy and the delivery of an annual report
- 4.4 Contribute to the development of guidance and processes that promote effective collaboration between providers of support and advocacy services in order to safeguard and promote the rights of people who may be vulnerable
- 4.5 Develop an National Safeguarding Committee brand, an online presence and effective organisational support structures and systems

Glossary of Terms

Abuse

Abuse may be defined as “any act, or failure to act, which results in a breach of a vulnerable person’s human rights, civil liberties, physical and mental integrity, dignity or general wellbeing, whether intended or through negligence, including sexual relationships or financial transactions to which the person does not or cannot validly consent, or which are deliberately exploitative. Abuse may take a variety of forms.”

(Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA). The National Standards for Residential Services for Children and Adults with Disabilities. Dublin, 2013).

(Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse National Policy and Procedures. 2014)

Advocacy

A process of empowerment of individuals, or groups, which includes taking action to help people say what they want, secure their rights, represent their interests or obtain the services they need. Advocacy can be undertaken by individuals themselves, by their friends and relations, by peers and those who have had similar experiences, and/or by trained volunteers and professionals.

Culture

“Culture manifests what is important, valued and accepted in an organisation. It is not easily changed nor is it susceptible to change merely by a pronouncement, command or the declaration of a new vision. At its most basic it can be reduced to the observation of the way things are done around here”.

(Office of the Ombudsman, Complaints and Complaint Handling). (Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse National Policy and Procedures. 2014)

Human Rights

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour,

religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible.

(United Nations).

Protecting

Protecting is the action of keeping safe from harm or injury.

Oxford English Dictionary

Safeguarding

Safeguarding means protecting people’s health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect. It is fundamental to high-quality health and social care.

Quality Care Commission UK

<https://www.cqc.org.uk/content/safeguarding-people>

Risk

Risk is the exposure to the possibility of loss, injury, or other adverse or unwelcome circumstance; a chance or situation involving such a possibility.

(Oxford English Dictionary).

Vulnerability

“Vulnerability can be defined as the diminished capacity of an individual or group to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a natural or man-made hazard. The concept is relative and dynamic. Vulnerability is most often associated with poverty but it can also arise when people are isolated, insecure and defenceless in the face of risk, shock or stress. People differ in their exposure to risk as a result of their social group, gender, ethnic or other identity, age and other factors.”

(International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.)

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