

Saving Childhood Group Welcomes Children First: National Guidance

Dublin, 15 July 2011 – The Saving Childhood group has welcomed the publication of Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children by Minister Frances Fitzgerald, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. The group comprising Barnardos, CARI, Children’s Rights Alliance, Dublin Rape Crisis Centre(DRCC), Empowering People in Care (EPIC), ISPCC and One in Four said that the Minister’s commitment to enact legislation to enforce Children First: National Guidance marked a momentous step forward for Ireland’s child welfare and child protection system.

In a statement following the launch of Children First: National Guidance, Norah Gibbons of Barnardos said: “We have been calling for this for a long time. The revised Guidance provides a clear statement of intent with regard to child protection in Ireland. The Guidance Document sets out a clear, concise and strong national policy. The intention to develop legislation and a Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook cements the holistic approach being taken to ensure not just the consistent reporting of child protection concerns, but the consistent response of the Irish State and its agencies to such concerns.”

Mary Flaherty from CARI said: “The recent Cloyne, Murphy, Ryan and Roscommon reports all demonstrated the gaps in a system that allowed adults to shirk their responsibilities to protect children. The publication of Children First: National Guidance gives renewed vigor to the reform process within the child welfare and protection system. However, this is just the start of the process. There is much more to do. In addition to the enactment of Children First legislation, the long awaited National Vetting Bureau Bill must be progressed as a matter of urgency. It is also crucial that we do not forget the fundamental lack of children’s rights at the highest level of Irish law. The constitutional referendum on children’s rights must provide the backbone to reform of our child protection system by asserting the primacy of protecting children and promoting their rights in the Irish Constitution.”

Ellen O’Malley-Dunlop of DRCC said “HSE National Director Gordon Jeyes stressed the importance of accountability, consistency and transparency in our child welfare and protection system. The absence of these foundations has been proven time and again to have placed children at serious risk of harm in Ireland. We very much welcome the renewed commitment to these cornerstones of good policy and practice and look forward to working with Minister Fitzgerald and Mr. Jeyes to continue to move Ireland’s child welfare and protection system towards a better future.”

ENDS

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