

Minister for Health launches new standards to protect adults from harm

Wednesday, 4 December 2019: The Minister for Health Simon Harris TD has this morning launched new standards to improve safeguards for adults using health and social care services.

The standards were jointly developed by the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) and the Mental Health Commission (MHC), and approved by the Minister for Health. The standards aim to help health and social care services reduce the risk of harm; promote people's rights, health and wellbeing; and empower people to protect themselves.

National Standards for Adult Safeguarding were launched in Dublin at an event hosted by former RTE Religious and Social Affairs Correspondent Joe Little.

Launching the standards today, Minister for Health Simon Harris TD, said: "I wholeheartedly commend HIQA and the Mental Health Commission for initiating and developing these joint National Standards for Adult Safeguarding, and I welcome their intention to publish guidance to assist service providers in implementing them. These standards will provide a common language for health and social care services to refer to and set service users' expectations for adult safeguarding. I see them as a powerful tool to encourage service providers to adopt best practice — which will, in turn, drive safer health and social care services and improved quality of life for adults at risk who use those services."

Also speaking at the launch, HIQA CEO Phelim Quinn, said: "People who are receiving care should be treated with dignity and respect, and receive care and support in a safe environment that is actively working to protect against and prevent harm. All services across the sector should begin to implement these standards to safeguard all adults who may be at risk of harm.

"However, HIQA believes that a system-wide approach to addressing safeguarding requires policy and legislation to also be in place. We look forward to the development by the Department of Health of an overarching national adult safeguarding policy for the health sector and underpinning legislation, and the revision of the HSE's national operational adult safeguarding policy."

Mental Health Commission Chief Executive John Farrelly, said: "These new standards will strengthen the shield that protects and vindicates the rights of people who access mental health services in the state.

“As our mental health services continue to evolve, it is imperative that we ensure service users remain at the centre of reform, are appropriately safeguarded, and that no-one slips through the cracks.

“While legislation must clearly be introduced, the standards will help to create a building block for a new culture of care, vigilance and empowerment that should be embedded right across the health and social care system. It is important, therefore, that all mental health services apply these new standards in full.”

The National Standards for Adult Safeguarding and an information leaflet for people using services are available at https://www.mhcirl.ie/for_H_Prof/NSforMHS/safeguarding.html and www.hiqa.ie.