

Children in Hospital Ireland

Submission to Department of Health and Children

For Inclusion in Department's

Statement of Strategy 2008 – 2010



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Introduction

Children in Hospital Ireland (CHI) welcomes the opportunity to submit suggestions to the Department of Health and Children for inclusion in the Department's new Strategy Statement for the period 2008 – 2010.

Children in Hospital Ireland has a long history of submitting to the Department on policy issues relating to the provision of health services for children and young people. The organisation also contributed to the development of the National Health Strategy, the National Children's Strategy and a number of other recent health care provision-related strategies.

The organisation also regularly participates in a wide range of consultative processes relating to the provision of health services and services for children.

The Child:

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which Ireland has ratified, defines children as persons up to the age of eighteen years. Most recent Irish legislation treats children similarly. The development, provision and delivery of health services must be tailored to serve children from birth to eighteen years.

Context:

For many years the development of health and hospital services for children has taken place mainly in response to needs at a local level with little reference to an overall strategic plan for the delivery of an integrated health service for this significant section of the population.

In 2006 the proposal to develop a new National Paediatric Hospital to deliver world-class tertiary services for the whole country and secondary services to the greater Dublin area was a major development.

This most welcome major development – a hospital that is a tertiary and secondary centre for sick children – must take place in the context of delivering an integrated hospital and community based health service for children throughout the country.

Provision of Health Services:

- 1 Children in Hospital Ireland suggests that the **national review of paediatric services** as recommended in the National Health Strategy launched in November 2001 become a high priority for the Strategy Statement 2008 – 2010. That this review takes place is also included in the National Development Plan – Towards 2016. Children in Hospital Ireland further suggests that in line with the strategic aim of consultation with users of services, the review process engages directly with children who use, and may use, the services. In addition CHI suggest the process looks at the provision of hospital services for children in their totality and also engages with the advocacy and illness and condition support organisations that represent the children for whom the services are designed.

- 2 The development of **protocols and standards in relation to the care of children in hospital** is recommended in the National Health Strategy. Recently Children in Hospital Ireland welcomed the establishment of the Health Information and Quality Authority and suggests that the Department's Statement of Strategy includes the recommendation that this action – the development of protocols and guidelines – be taken without delay. CHI recommends that its Charter for Children in Hospital (the European Association for Children in Hospital Charter – the EACH Charter) launched by then Minister for Children Brian Lenihan in 2002, and the CHI Guidelines for the Care of Children with Special Needs in Hospital, launched by then Minister for Health Micheal Martin in 2000, provide the basis for the proposed protocols and guidelines.
- 3 With developments in technology, medicine, surgery and the delivery of services more children who previously may have died are now surviving into adulthood. As **teenagers and young people** the needs of this group are different from those of younger children and of adults. CHI suggests that the Strategy Statement addresses delivery of services which are specifically and tailored to meet the needs of this cohort of patients – the thirteen to eighteen year olds - both in the hospital setting and in the community.
- 4 Two recent government policies stressed the need for children and teenagers to have **access to play**. The first of these policies, Ready Steady Play – a National Play Policy (2004) addresses the needs of children up to the age of 12. The second, Teenspace – a National Recreation Policy for Young People (2007) addresses the needs of those up to the age of eighteen. Both policies recommend that play must be available for sick children in hospital and other health care settings. They recommend that the therapeutic benefits accruing from play be maximised by the provision of qualified Hospital Play Specialists. Children in Hospital Ireland suggests that the recommendations from both of these policy documents become part of the Department's Strategy Statement 2008 – 2010.
- 5 The delivery of health care to children and young people is mediated through their carers – primarily their parents. In the hospital setting parents participate in the delivery of care and in providing comfort and support before, during and after the delivery of treatment. Parents are not visitors, their presence is essential for the well being and speedy recovery of the their sick child. **Parents and Carers require support** in order to allow them continue to be there for their child. Children in Hospital Ireland suggests that the recommendations of the CHI report – Sick Children, Money Worries (2005) – be included in the Strategy Statement 2008 – 2010

Conclusion

Health services, particularly hospital services, for children and young people, need to be delivered differently from services for the adult population in order that the special needs of children and young people are provided in the best way possible. Such specialised delivery demands being addressed in a strategic manner. Children in Hospital Ireland welcomes that the Department of Health and Children is taking this step to seek submissions and engage with those with an interest in how services are

delivered. The organisation has over many years developed a level of experience and expertise in this area. Children in Hospital Ireland is delighted to put this experience and expertise is at the disposal of the Department.

Children in Hospital Ireland wishes the Department well in the drawing up of its Strategic Statement for 2008 – 2010.



*Mary O'Connor, Chief Executive, Children in Hospital Ireland,
September 2007*

References

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The Charter for Children in Hospital – The EACH Charter (2002)
- Guidelines for the Care of Children with Special Needs in Hospital (2000)
- Sick Children, Money Worries (Children in Hospital Ireland 2004)
- The National Children's Strategy: Our Children – Their Lives (2000)
- Health Strategy: Quality and Fairness, a Health System for You (2001)
- Ready Steady Play – A National Play Policy (2004)
- Teenspace – A National Recreation Policy (2007)
- Children's Health First. Mc Kinsey (2006)
- High Level Framework Brief for New National Paediatric Hospital – Stakeholder Engagement Workshop June 2007

