

# Development of National Standards for Children’s Residential Centres by the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA)

## 1. Background Information:

Name the specific project or initiative on which you involved children/young people in decision-making:

Development of National Standards for Children’s Residential Centres by the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA)

Project details (name and email contact):

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Background to the project / initiative:

HIQA’s development of National Standards for Children’s Residential Centres, which can be found here and Your Guide to Children’s Residential Care, which can be found here, developed for children to support them to understand what the standards mean for them.

Why you consulted/engaged with CYP?

We wanted to get the views of children with experience of residential care to inform the development of the National Standards for Children’s Residential Centres and an accompanying child-focused guide to ensure that the final standards were informed by their views and expectations of the services they received.

On what aspect of the work of your organisation, (or the work of another organisation) or a local/national issue, were you looking for their views?

We wanted to capture their experience of experience of care and support while living in a children’s residential centre, what was good and not so good about it, what they felt good care and support should look like, and how it should be set out in the standards.

Setting in which you engage with children/YP (e.g. school, youth club, residential care, hospital ward etc.):

HIQA met with children and young people both in community settings and in children's residential care settings with the support of advocacy workers and staff.

We set up an Advisory Group to inform the development of the Standards. The Advisory Group was comprised of young people from Empowering People in Care (EPIC) Youth Board with experience of care, as well as staff, advocates and policy-makers. Members attended Advisory Group meetings in the HIQA offices.

Who were the children/young people (e.g. pupils, young people in care, young people involved in youth service etc)?

Children and young people with experience of a children's residential care.

Who facilitated the engagement with the children/young person? (Role of the person e.g. teacher, social worker, youth worker, external facilitator etc.)

Advocacy workers and staff in children's residential centres.

Who acted on their views? (Role of the decision makers)

HIQA's Standards Team, HIQA's Regulation Directorate, and service delivery bodies.

Were CYP involved in the design of the consultation (e.g. was a youth advisory group established or consulted to co-design the methodology/questions or to pilot the methodology?)

The team worked with advocacy workers and members of the EPIC Youth Board to develop the approach to the engagement with children and young people.

## 2. The Story of How You Gave Space, Voice, Audience and Influence to Children and Young People on the Particular Project or Initiative:

### SPACE

Tell the story of the space or setting in which you sought the views of children or young people, and include any relevant information on the questions below:

Questions:	Response (based on survey response):
<p>How were CYP made to feel safe to express their views?</p>	<p>In advance of the sessions, children were provided with child-friendly information on the topics the team wanted their views on. This information also provided assurance that any information that they shared was confidential and that they could choose to leave the session at any time. Together the child or young person and an advocacy worker or staff member in the child's residential centre worked through this information. They were encouraged to ask questions and the staff members brought these questions back to the team, where needed, ensuring the confidentiality of the child or young person was maintained. Children were engaged with creatively using activities and participative methods to draw out their views. This was done in a child-friendly community space by an advocacy worker or in their own residential centre by an advocacy worker, with HIQA Standards staff participating in the process. Participants were CYP the care of the State, living in children's residential centres.</p>
<p>How early in the process were they involved in the decision making?</p>	<p>Young people with experience of children's residential care were involved from the outset of the project and at key milestones over the course of the standards development process. Children and young people were involved in the standards development process at the scoping stages of the project – that is, before the standards were written – and the team sought to re-engage with them at the public consultation stage to gather their views when the standards were drafted. When developing the guide to accompany the standards, children and young people were involved at the outset of the project to give their views on what key aspects of the standards children needed to know about and how the guide should be designed.</p>
<p>How did you involve those directly affected by the topic e.g. how did you recruit/select participants?</p>	<p>At the beginning of the project, the team developed a stakeholder engagement plan, with a particular emphasis on how to engage children and young people with experience of children's residential care. The team brought this plan to the Advisory Group and through engagement with members of the Advisory Group, identified how to select participants, the best methods to engage with them. The Advisory Group members assisted the team to reach children and young people, as appropriate.</p>

How did you allow enough time to listen/hear the CYP's views? (please provide details)	The team, in consultation with the advocacy workers and staff in children's residential centres, built in time at different stages of the project for children and young people to engage in group activities, focus groups and one-to-one meetings to ensure that there was time and space for them to share their views.
How did you make the process inclusive and accessible?	The team worked with advocacy workers and staff in children's residential centres to ensure the engagement was inclusive and accessible for all.
How did continue to involve CYP throughout the decision-making process?	The Advisory Group informing the development of the standards at each stage of the process included young people from EPIC's Youth Board with experience of care, as well as staff, advocates and policy-makers. Children and young people were engaged with at the early stages of the standards development process to inform the initial development of the standards and also had an opportunity to give feedback on the standards once they were drafted.

## VOICE

Tell the story of how you gave CYP a voice in decision-making, and include any relevant information on the questions below:

Questions:	Response (based on survey response):
How did you inform them about the topics on which you wanted their views?	In advance of engagement sessions, children were provided with child-friendly information on the topics the team wanted their views on. Together they and an advocacy worker or staff member in the child's residential centre worked through this information. They were encouraged to ask questions and the staff members brought these questions back to the team, where needed. At the engagement sessions and focus groups, the advocacy workers facilitating the session gave a brief outline of the purpose of the session and everyone was encouraged to ask questions. Members of the HIQA team were also at the sessions and were introduced to the group.
How you informed them about level of influence they could have on decision-making?	The team set out at each stage of engagement with children and young people the level of influence their input would have on the standards and the guide, sharing with them how standards and guides are developed and presented. The team worked to ensure that the standards statements, the features, and the section on 'what the standards mean for me', as well as the guide, reflected their views, ensuring that there were opportunities for children and young people to feed back at key stages of the development on whether the team had achieved this aim.

How were CYP supported children to give their views and be heard? (What methods were used to get their views?)

Different methods were used to support the children and young people to engage. For one group there were physical activities for everyone to participate in, which also provided a chance for the group to get to know each other. At all sessions, lunch and refreshments were provided. At the discussion stages of each group, children were given post-it notes and encouraged to discuss and write their views on these or to ask the facilitator to write these up. These questions focused on what was working well in children's residential care, what could work better and what needed to change. There was space for one-to-one discussion to ensure everyone's views were heard, as well as group discussions to facilitate wider engagement and sharing of views.

How were CYP supported to raise things that matter to them?

At each stage of engagement children and young people were encouraged to share what was important in their life in a safe and appropriate way and were provided with opportunities to explore these through with the facilitators either in the group or in a one-to-one with the facilitator, if needed.

What topics/issues did they raise?

Children and young people raised a wide range of issues on their experience of living in residential care they wanted to see reflected in the standards and guide. These ranged from the importance of being supported to stay in contact with their family, as well as their friends and community, to having a good relationship with their key worker and staff in the centre who cared for them and helped them to make decisions about their life. They spoke about it being essential that they were told about what was going on as they often felt they had little control or certainty. Children and young people spoke about the need for the residential centre to be homely, to provide a sense of security, to be a place where their privacy was respected, and where they could develop and grow. It was important for young people who had left care to be able to go back to the centre to see staff as it was a secure base for them.

## AUDIENCE

Tell the story of how you made sure that there was an audience (decision-makers) for their views and include any relevant information on the questions below:

Questions:	Response (based on survey response):
How did you involve the decision-makers who are responsible for influencing change (other than yourself)? (please provide details)	The views and experience of children was written up by the team and key themes were identified to inform the standards. These themes and how they informed the draft standard statements, the features and the section on 'what this means for me' were presented to members of the Advisory Group who inform the development of the standards. These members represent the wide range of advocates, policy makers, regulators and service delivery bodies responsible for implementing and monitoring the standards and so it was essential that they recognise the important issues raised by children and young people and champion that these were addressed in the standards.
How did you (and/or other decision-makers) show your commitment to listening to, and acting on children and young people's views? (please provide details)	The views of children and young people are reflected in the standard statements, features and sections on 'what this means for me' set out in the National Standards for Children's Residential Centres which received Ministerial approval in 2018. These views are further expressed in the Guide to Children's Residential Care which supports children and young people to understand the key areas of the standards and what they mean in their life.
How did you develop a report or record of their views? (please provide details)	To accompany the standards and guide, the team published a Statement of Outcomes document that details the feedback at each stage of the process from all stakeholders, including children and young people, and how this feedback informed the development of the standards. This document is available <a href="#">here</a> .
How did you check back with the CYP that their views were accurately represented? (please provide details)	As part of the standards development process, the draft standards were made available for a six-week public consultation. In advance of the consultation, the team developed child-friendly material and circulated it to all children's residential centres in order to illicit the views of children and young people. The team also re-engaged with the advocacy workers who facilitated the engagement sessions and requested them to discuss the draft standards with children who participated in the sessions and provide them with an opportunity to share their feedback with the team.
How did you involve them communicating their views to the decision makers? (please provide details)	At each stage of the standards development process, the views of children and young people were brought back to the Advisory Group which was convened to inform the development of the standards. This group comprised representatives from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Tusla, non-statutory service providers, advocates, and representative bodies.

## INFLUENCE

Tell the story of the influence of their views and include any relevant information on the questions below:

Questions:	Response (based on survey response):
<p>How did CYP know the level of influence they can have (including any limitations)?</p>	<p>Children and young were kept informed at each stage of the process of how their views were being used and who was involved in making decisions on the final standards and guide.</p>
<p>How were CYP's views acted on by the appropriate decision-makers (what happened to their views)?</p>	<p>Children and young people's views were incorporated into the draft standards and a draft guide which were sent back out to the children for review and input.</p> <p>The views of the children and young people were essential to ensuring that the standards and the guide focused on child-centred care and support and clearly set out to staff what this should look like. For example, children and young people emphasised the importance of seeing each child as an individual with individual needs, highlighting that it was the role of the children's residential centre – and all staff working in the centre - to provide support and care in a way that met these needs, including their needs to maintain connections to their family, friends and community. This was reflected in the standards under a number of themes including child-centred care and support, effective care and support, as well as health and wellbeing.</p> <p>We developed a Statement of Outcomes report, which highlights what children, as well as other stakeholders, said to HIQA, and how it informed the standards.</p>
<p>How did you give CYP feedback or updates on the development of the service, policy, plan or project on which they gave their views? (please provide details)</p>	<p>When the draft standards went out for public consultation the team developed child-friendly information so that children could share their views. The team also fed back to the advocacy workers and staff in children's residential centres who supported the children to be involved in groups and they engaged the children in a way that was meaningful to them at key stages of the process.</p>
<p>How were CYP given age-appropriate feedback explaining how their views were used and the reasons for decisions taken?</p>	<p>The team engaged with the advocacy workers and staff in children's residential centres who supported the children to be involved in focus groups and they were provided with information on how the children and young people's views were incorporated into the standards and they were encouraged to feed this back to the children and young people through relevant forums.</p> <p>Additionally, when the standards were published, they were accompanied by a Statement of Outcomes document which highlights what children, as well as other stakeholders, said to HIQA, and how it informed the standards.</p>

How did you explain the reasons for decisions taken? (please provide details)

The team set out at each stage of engagement with children and young people the level of influence their input would have on the standards and the guide, sharing with them how standards and guides are developed and presented, and noting that the standards are high-level statements that have to be general in nature and applicable to all children and the centres they live in.

How were they enabled to evaluate the process throughout?

The team also liaised with the advocacy workers and staff in children's residential centres who supported the children to be involved in groups and requested that they discuss with the children what worked well and what could be improved during the engagement process.

### 3. The Learning for Your Organisation or Project:

What has been the key learning for your organisation on the process (of consulting with CYP)?  
(What worked well? Anything you would change?)

The views of the children and young people throughout the standards development process helped to ensure that the standards authentically reflect what a child should expect when they are living in a children's residential centre and what a children's residential centre should be doing to achieve this.

The team have built on the learning and engagement from this project and have used it to inform the approach taken in the development of both the Draft National Standards for Children's Social Services and the Draft Overarching National Standards for the Care and Support of Children using Health and Social Care Services. This can be seen most clearly in how the new standards statements and features are written from a child's perspective and set out the outcomes they should expect. These are then followed by a statement setting out the arrangements that a service provider must have in place to achieve these outcomes. Once approved, these standards will be used to drive improvement in the quality, safety and consistency of all health, social care, and children's social services involved in the care and support of children and young people.

Additional changes to the process have been that a wider range of children and young people have been engaged with using different methods and approaches. One method used in the development of the Draft Overarching National Standards for the Care and Support of Children using Health and Social Care Services is the establishment in a Children's Reference Group comprised of young people, families, and advocates. This groups runs in parallel with the Advisory Group and also feeds into the Advisory Group to inform the development of the standards at each stage.

What was the key learning for your organisation on the outcomes from the consultation/engagement (of consulting with CYP) (i.e. the end result – how the CYP's views informed the plans for the policy, service, project etc)?  
(What worked well? Anything you would change?)

The end result of this engagement was a set of standards, informed by the lived experience of children and young people with care experience, that aim to improve the care and support provided to each child and that are focused on the best outcomes for them.

A key learning point for the team, and for HIQA, was the importance of engaging with people with experience of services early in the project development and re-engaging with them over the course of the project. This allows time to build up a relationship and to get deeper and more meaningful insights that can be authentically reflected in the standards, guides and tools to support implementation. It also provides opportunities for those sharing their views and experiences to understand the process more clearly and gain expertise in the area.

'Your Guide to Children's Residential Care' came '*highly commended*' in the 2019 NALA Plain English awards for best use of plain English by an organisation. This commendation reflected the level of engagement that children and young people had in the development of the guide, ensuring it was accessible and meaningful to them in their lives.

Finally, what were the benefits of involving children and young people in planning of policy, services or programmes?

The engagement of children and young people in the different aspects of the development of the National Standards for Children’s Residential Centres and the accompanying guide helped to ensure that the standards gave a shared voice to the expectations of all children living in residential centres and all those involved in their care. Their involvement helped to highlight the issues that exist in these services from a child’s perspective and offer ways to address these issues that are child-centred, safe and focus on the best outcomes for children.

**Links to Relevant Reports, Websites, and Documentation:**

- [HIQA website – National Standards for Children’s Residential Centres](#)
- [Background document to inform the development of the National Standards for Children’s Residential Centres](#)
- [National Standards for Children’s Residential Centres](#)
- [Your Guide to Children’s Residential Care](#)
- [Statement of Outcomes](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)