



An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Eacnamaíoch agus Shóisialta  
National Economic & Social Council

## PRESS RELEASE

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### ***Achieving Quality in Our Public Services***

#### **NESC publishes two reports on quality in public services in Ireland: Residential Care for Older People, and Policing**

Achieving quality in public services requires both a commitment to preventing harms and a search for continuous improvement. Over the last decade there has been a 'silent revolution' in establishing regulatory infrastructure in the human services in Ireland with, for example, the establishment of the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) and the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission. Two reports published by NESC today, one on 'Residential Care for Older People' and one on 'Policing and the Search for Continuous Improvement' demonstrate different but effective approaches which have been adopted to improve standards and quality in two of our public services.

#### **Residential Care for Older People**

In this report NESC argues that the HIQA standards, in place since 2009, have increased confidence in the quality of care in nursing homes. The standards apply to all nursing homes, public, private and voluntary.

*'Owners and managers have a greater responsibility under the new system than previously', explained Dr Anne-Marie McGauran, the author of the report. 'And another change which many people welcome is the strong focus on the nursing home resident, as their agreement is now required on the care they receive'.*

Nursing home managers must collect data to monitor the health of, and risks to, residents. This is a new and sometimes time-consuming requirement. There may also be a need to find resources to improve premises, for training and for staff. In this sense, implementing the standards can be challenging.

*'Nursing home managers would like more guidance and information from HIQA on how to meet the standards'* continued Dr McGauran. This information could be particularly helpful

advice for 'average' homes trying to improve their care. Sharing best practice on good management and care processes could also help to reduce costs, while improving quality.

The report recommends setting up a problem solving group of nursing homes, the Department of Health, and HIQA to address the challenge of providing sufficient quality care for older people in the current economic context.

## **Policing and the Search for Continuous Improvement**

The issue of progressing standards and quality within policing is often thought to involve rooting out individual miscreants through a strong regulator and making personnel more responsive to communities. This report questions these assumptions by examining the oversight and consultative mechanisms—the Ombudsman Commission, the Inspectorate, Professional Standards Unit, Joint Policing Committees and Local Policing Fora—that have been established since 2005.

*'Ireland has all the "parts" necessary for a well-functioning system of quality policing' said Dr Barry Vaughan, the author of the report. 'But these parts have yet to be connected in a way that would embed quality within policing. The work of the oversight organisations could complement each other more by examining systemic causes of complaints and serious harms; and Garda management could regularly compare local policing initiatives and encourage improvements in some in light of best practice. Constructing such a system would help to prevent abuses of authority as well as meeting the policing needs of communities'.*

Emphasising that an entity like the Garda Ombudsman Commission should have stronger powers can often lead to a neglect of the organisational factors that could prevent poor behaviour. And stressing that gardaí should be attentive to the needs of communities can overlook that resolving local issues often requires careful and considered responses, which can be assisted by corporate oversight.

## **Further NESC Reports on Quality and Standards in Human Services**

NESC is publishing a series of reports on quality and standards in human services. In January 2012 it published an overview of concepts and practices, which examined international and Irish evidence of approaches to regulation and standards-setting in human services, along with the promotion of good practice. Over the coming weeks NESC will publish further reports on quality and standards: in schools, with an accompanying report on PISA results; on home care for older people; on end-of-life care in hospitals; on disability services; and then a synthesis report which draws the findings of all the work together.

## **Note to Editors:**

The National Economic and Social Council (NESC) was established in 1973. Its function is to analyse and report to the Taoiseach on strategic issues relating to the efficient development of the economy, the achievement of social justice and the development of a strategic framework for the conduct of relations and the negotiation of agreements between the government and the social partners. The Council is chaired by the Secretary General of the Department of the Taoiseach. It comprises representatives of trade unions, employer bodies, farm organisations, community and voluntary organisations, environmental organisations, key Government departments and has eight independent experts.

## **Download Documents**

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