

Statement: Inclusion Ireland calls for safeguarding legislation after recent reports of abuse allegations in Donegal.

Date 19 October 2021 Inclusion Ireland would like to reiterate the call of Minister of State with responsibility for Disability, Anne Rabbitte T.D. around the urgent need for safeguarding legislation to be brought through the houses of Oireachtas, passed and enacted without delay considering the recent information around abuse allegations that came to light in Donegal.

The required legislation is currently in the form of the National Safeguarding Bill which was proposed in 2017 and was at 3rd stage in Seanad Eireann in March 2021. The proposed legislation will include the establishment of a National Safeguarding Authority which will act as an independent statutory body to educate about safeguarding people from abuse and investigate any concerns. This safeguarding legislation will make it obligatory for staff in all settings to report any issues around abuse.

The recent revelations of abuse are understandably very worrying for our members, and we want to reassure any family members or indeed people with intellectual disabilities that they can contact inclusion Ireland for support. We can offer advice around how a person (or a family member) can reassure themselves about safeguarding policy implementation in their service. There must be open and transparent processes in all services and people must feel empowered and comfortable in speaking up if they feel they need to.

We have three clear messages:

1. People must feel safe and secure no matter what kind of service or support they receive. Individuals and/or family members must feel empowered and supported to speak up at all times.
2. Abuse of any kind is completely unacceptable and services must shine a light on abuse in a transparent and timely manner and take swift action when it does occur.
3. We need Adult Safeguarding legislation without delay including the establishment of the National Safeguarding Authority.

CEO of Inclusion Ireland Derval McDonagh says. "I have written to the Minister with responsibility for Disability, Minister Rabbitte and the Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly to urge concerted and quick action on adult safeguarding legislation if we are to ensure that situations like this do not ever happen again. We are also requesting reassurance for individuals and their families across the country that the HSE and funded providers are redoubling their efforts to ensure that every person who is

supported by services is safe and protected by robust processes and procedures. We are hearing from family members that they can be fearful of speaking up when they feel there may be a problem. Individuals themselves and their family members should feel empowered and supported to speak up at all times and a culture of openness, transparency and accountability needs to be in services across the country”.

Ends