

17th June 2010

IAEM reiterates call for provision of out-of-hours Social Services

The recent well-publicised national concerns about deficiencies in Department of Health & Children's provision of child protection arrangements have prompted the Irish Association for Emergency Medicine to reiterate its call, made on 11th March 2009, for immediate provision of 24 hour Social Work services.

Whilst Social Work provision throughout the 24 hours will provide major benefits to all 'at risk' groups other than just dealing with specific child protection issues, its current absence outside of office hours creates a gaping hole in the provision of child protection services for 128/168 hours weekly. This unacceptable 128 hour deficit often results in vulnerable children spending a whole night or a weekend in the totally unsuitable environment of an overcrowded Emergency Department until a social worker is available in office hours.

This absence of 24 hour Social Work provision has been unacceptable for many years and is directly implicated in the recent lengthening media-catalogue of disastrous outcomes amongst vulnerable children. IAEM therefore calls on the Department of Health & Children to immediately mandate implementation of a national 24 hour Social Work service available to all Emergency Departments.

Reference:

IAEM Position Paper on access to out-of-hours Social Work Services. 11th March 2009. Available at

http://www.emergencymedicine.ie/images/stories/iaem/publications/2009/iaem_position_paper_on_access_to_out-of-hours_social_services_110309.pdf

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