

23rd July 2015

IAEM welcomes recent positive signs of development in our health services

IAEM warmly welcomes the Minister of Health, Dr. Leo Varadkar TD's recent announcement of the establishment of the Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) on a permanent basis. The service, which is based in Athlone, is a collaboration between the HSE and Department of Defence and involves HSE Paramedics and Air Corps crew responding to a variety of life-threatening emergencies. The success of the trial project in saving lives has resulted in the decision to fund it as a core component of the country's response to emergencies.

The recent announcement by Tusla of the authority's intention to ensure Social Worker availability on a 24/7/365 basis is also welcome, if long overdue. Although there is no commitment in Tusla's published response to HIQA's review of child protection services in North Dublin, a verbal commitment has been given to commence the roll-out in Autumn 2015. Recent reports confirm significant challenges to implementation of this initiative and the issues highlighted need to be urgently addressed. Urgent child protection issues commonly present in the country's Emergency Departments (EDs) so the availability of this Social Work resource (which IAEM formally called for in a [position paper in March 2009](#)) will assist in improving services for children at risk. It will enable nurses and doctors working in our EDs to access child protection resources and respond to the needs of these vulnerable children. These services must be readily available however to every ED seeing children and not just confined to the three Dublin Paediatric EDs or provided on some other geographically limited basis.

In the context of the cut backs of recent years these signs of progress are very welcome. The Association hopes that they are fully realised and herald a brighter and safer future for our fellow citizens in need of emergency health care.

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