

# National Minimum Standards – Integrated Social Services for Vulnerable Families & Children

## General Introduction

### 1. Structure and Approach

1.1. The national minimum standards for Services to Vulnerable Families and Children are issued by XXXXXXXX and form the basis for judgements on whether a service is operating effectively. Together with the regulations for the operation of such services these standards will enable XXXXXXXX to monitor compliance and ensure that services can adequately meet the needs of communities. The national minimum standards will also support the development of a consistent national approach in which variations in quality are limited.

1.2. The standards are 'minimum standards' rather than 'best possible practice'. Many services will more than meet the national minimum standards and will aspire to exceed them.

1.3. Minimum standards do not mean standardisation of provision. The standards are designed to be applicable to the wide variety of different types of services for vulnerable families and children and to enable rather than prevent individual services to develop their own particular ethos and approach to support vulnerable families and children with different needs.

1.4. The national minimum standards for Services for Vulnerable Families and Children focus on the impact on the family and child of the services being provided.

1.5. The standards are grouped under a series of key topics

- Statement of purpose
- Assessment, care planning and review
- Confidentiality
- Quality of Service Delivery
- Staffing

- Management and Administration
- Record Keeping
- Complaints and Protection

1.6. Each standard is preceded by a statement of the result for the service users to be achieved by the service provider. The standards are numbered and the full set of numbered paragraphs must be met in order to achieve compliance with the standard.

1.7. The standards are a tool for judging the quality of life experienced by the service user but they are also designed to be measurable.

1.8. The standards should be used to secure the welfare of individual families and children and to safeguard their rights as defined in international conventions<sup>1</sup> and Ukrainian legislation.

## 2. Purpose of Services for Vulnerable Families and Children

2.1. The aim of Services for Vulnerable Families is to prevent children being separated from their parents and families. The Services support families in both the short and long term to care for their own children or where that is not possible to identify substitute family care.

2.2. Children at risk of separation may have parents who are still alive but who are unable or unwilling to care for them. Their families are often living in harsh social or economic conditions with limited social support; they become desperate and often have little choice but to relinquish their children to residential institutional care. The Services for Vulnerable Families and Children have been developed to provide a social safety net.

2.3. The Services are provided by trained Social Workers who can assess the needs of families and children in crisis and plan intervention to support the family through the crisis. The Social Worker will ensure that the family receive the necessary support to look after their children safely at home.

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<sup>1</sup> UNCRC Preamble “*Recognizing* that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.”

#### 2.4. Services for Vulnerable Families and Children

- Offer support and guidance to prevent family breakdown
- Work to reintegrate children back into their birth or extended family
- Develop alternative solutions for children who cannot live with their own families
- Protect children and empower them to claim their rights
- Support young people leaving residential institutional care
- Intervene where children are considered to be in danger

#### 2.5. Services for Vulnerable Families and Children will include

- Family Support
- Early Prevention
- Reintegration
- Children in Conflict with the Law
- Adoption and Foster Care

#### Standards

### **1. Statement of purpose. People who use services and the general public and the public have access to the information they need to make an informed choice about the family support services that are available.**

- 1.1. There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the service and of what facilities and services they provide.
- 1.2. The aims and objectives of the service are reviewed annually and endorsed by the rayon/city administration council (?).
- 1.3. The aims and objectives of the service clearly define the eligibility criteria for accessing the service.
- 1.4. Each service user receives the set of information upon the point of entry to the service.

### **2. Assessment<sup>2</sup> care planning and review. People who use services benefit from service provision that is individually tailored to their specific needs.**

- 2.1. Each child or family who is referred to a social care organisation is entitled to an immediate initial written assessment.

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<sup>2</sup> Please see Appendix 1: Guidance on Assessment

2.2. If the outcome of the initial assessment is that the child or family require a service a written care plan will be developed which outlines how their assessed needs will be met.

2.3. The personalized plan should include a clear description of:

- What support will be provided,
- How the support will be delivered,
- Timeframe for service delivery,
- What outcomes of the support are expected,
- Name and function of an individual designated by service provider to make sure that the plan is carried out,
- Obligations of the user and the provider to follow the plan, and
- Conditions for termination of the service
- How the plan will be monitored

2.4. Each care plan is monitored by a named social worker who ensures that the plan is implemented on a day to day basis. The named social worker offers individual guidance and support to the child and family and agrees regular times to be available to offer advice.

2.5. Each care plan is reviewed at intervals of not less than six months and updated as necessary.

2.6. The views of the child or family being assessed should be included and they should be kept at the centre of the assessment to ensure their needs are met.

2.7. The results of all reviews of care plans are recorded on the child or families file and the people responsible for pursuing the action needed to meet the needs are clearly identified.

2.8. Written copies of the reviews are made available to the child or family and they are supported to understand them and store them safely.

### **3. Confidentiality. The right to confidentiality and privacy is respected.**

3.1. Information about children and families is generally held under legal and ethical obligations of confidentiality.

3.2. Children and families should be made aware that the information they provide may be recorded and may be shared with other team members or professionals in order to provide them with care.

- 3.3. However information provided in confidence should not be used or disclosed in a form which might identify a person without his or her written consent. In the case of a child, the consent must be obtained from an appropriate adult, the primary carer or guardian of the child.
  - 3.4. In order to maintain confidentiality it is important to record information accurately and consistently and only keep such information as is necessary and relevant to provide a needs-led support service.
  - 3.5. If service provision includes individual consultations an appropriate place to hold private conversations must be made available.
  - 3.6. All Staff employed in the provision of Integrated Social Services for Vulnerable Families and Children, including managers, social workers and administrative support staff etc. are obliged to keep information private. This means not gossiping, and taking care when discussing cases in public places.
  - 3.7. Confidential information about children or families should only be disclosed to a third party where not to do so could result in harm to the individual or other individuals or groups.
- 4. Quality of Service Delivery. People who use the service feel confident that it can respond appropriately in quantity and quality adequate to meet their individual needs.**
- 4.1. The environments in which services are provided are suitable for the purpose and type of services and are adequate for the specific needs of the user.
  - 4.2. The rooms used for the purpose of service delivery are for the sole use of the service during it's hours of operation.
  - 4.3. People can access the services in a place and at particular times which meet their needs and possibilities.
  - 4.4. Services are inclusive and accessible. This means that no-one is denied a service because of their gender, religion, national or ethnic origin, language, cultural background or disability (including HIV status).
  - 4.5. Where people have special needs the service makes adequate provision to ensure that person or family can be included. This may mean locating a sign language interpreter for people with hearing problems to support consultation and counselling sessions or arranging meetings in a place which is accessible to people with mobility problems.

**5. Staffing. People who use services benefit from appropriately qualified, competent and skilled staff.**

- 5.1. People directly involved in delivering services are medically, physically, and emotionally able to do the required work and are at least 18 years of age.
- 5.2. Job Descriptions and Person Specification detailing role and responsibilities and required skills, education, competence and experience are available for all staff.
- 5.3. The service recruitment policy complies with the Labour Code and includes a criminal records check.
- 5.4. There are enough staff members to correspond to the numbers of people using the service in order to adequately meet their needs.
- 5.5. Staff are required to be involved in professional development activities. The minimum number of training hours/days per year is X
- 5.6. Staff receive regular supervision which encourages them to think about the quality of their practice. They receive a formal appraisal at least once per year. Records of the supervision and appraisal are maintained on the Personnel File and copies are provided to the individual staff member.
- 5.7.