

Are social care managers ready
for professional registration and
what will the implications be on
their role?

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WHAT WE WILL COVER THIS AFTERNOON

- An overview of a research study regarding residential care managers understanding of CORU registration and how prepared they are for the implications of it.
- Literature in relation to the history of social care and the evolution of the regulation of the social care sector.
- The methodology employed in this research study.
- A comparative context specific to UK and global registration models.
- The findings.
- Key themes
- Conclusion

PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION OF SOCIAL CARE WORKERS

Social Care Ireland stated over six years ago that

‘the stage is not yet fully set and registration remains some years away. As such, there are opportunities for proactive engagement and thus, much for social care workers to consider’ (2017).

It seems that we are now about to enter this stage and we need to consider if we are fully prepared.



INTRODUCTION

This research paper provides an overview of residential care managers understanding and preparedness for professional registration.

It is timely as it focuses on the responsibilities that residential care managers will inherit due to the introduction of registration on the target date of the 30 November 2023.

ROAD MAP TO REGISTRATION (CORU, 2019)

- 1970/80's - Repeated attempts to establish a register of care workers following the Tuairim Report (1966) and Kennedy Report (1970).
- 1995 - IACW called for a professional licencing system in the aftermath of the Madonna House Enquiry.
- 2005- Health and Social Care Professions Act and Social Care Worker title designated.
- 2007 - CORU established and begins incrementally implementing regulation to designated professions.
- 2015 - Social Care Workers Registration Board appointed by Minister.
- 2023 – Due to open register on the 30 November 2023.

REPORTS – DID WE LISTEN?

Findings such as inadequate management practice, poor manager and staff qualification levels, weak recruitment processes, and fragile support and accountability systems were highlighted in these investigations.

These reports made specific recommendations about the need to improve and strengthen the regulation of practice throughout the sector. Concepts such as the importance of **effective communication, management and leadership skills** were all cited as failings in past reports, concepts that are of enormous importance to the successful implementation of professional registration.

The findings of the investigations in the 1990's in Ireland were also replicated in U.K. investigations such as the Pindown Inquiry (Levy and Kahan, 1991); the Warner Report (1992); the Utting Report (1997) and the Laming (2003) Victoria Climbié Inquiry. Once again reports highlighted the serious maltreatment of children that were also linked to themes such as poor management, staffing practices and a lack of regulation.

A COMPARATIVE CONTEXT SPECIFIC TO UK AND GLOBAL REGISTRATION MODELS.

- CORU deal directly with the individual registrant to evidence compliance and not through social care managers (CORU; 2019).
- The registration of social care workers in Wales differs from the Irish model in that they register both social care workers and social care managers making a clear distinction between the two roles (Social Care Wales; 2019). The Welsh registration requirements set out clear expectations specifically for social care managers.
- In Canada, the college of Ontario for Social Workers and Social Service Workers is the regulatory body for the social care profession. This college system is most like the Irish approach in that managers are not separately registered; however, they do provide clear guidance for managers in relation to their roles and responsibilities.

METHODOLOGY

Data was collected from six participants: four social care managers working in non-statutory children's residential care centres in the Republic of Ireland and two representatives from CORU.

The technique of data collection for the research was individual semi-structured interviews. The findings and discussion incorporated the perceptions of the research participants which were analysed thematically.

The research study specifically examined one aspect of CORU's principles to support registration, namely CORU 'Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics' (2019) and its potential impact on their practice. Clear definitions are presented of what is meant by CORU and of social care work.

FINDINGS

- The findings are presented under three broad themes: understanding professional registration, implications and impact of registration on managers; and planning for registration. These themes are broken down into sub-themes providing further insight about professional registration from the perspective of CORU (Irish Social Care Registration Board) representatives and social care workers.
- Clear recommendations emerged from the study including a prioritisation of good communication processes, the importance of further research and the implementation of training and management procedures that incorporate the complexities involved in professional registration.

This study advocated the view that residential care managers should receive support and guidance from their organisations to promote compliance with professional registration.

It concluded that the clearer and more prepared residential care managers are about the requirements for professional registration, the better they could support the staff that they lead towards full compliance with the registration requirements.

THEME 1: UNDERSTANDING PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION

The research findings portrayed CORU as very clear of their role and responsibilities as regulators which, in the main, concurs with this study's findings in relation to the residential care manager's view of CORU as a regulator.

We're a regulator, we're not a professional body. It's not our role to support registrants through the fitness to practice process. Our role is to run the fitness to practice as impartially and in accordance with our legislation (CORU).

I understand that the registration of the units is quite separate from the registration of people as a social care worker...I think I probably would have more information about what I need to do to register the centre...Rather than what I have to do in relation to registering myself and everyone else (RCM 3).

I presume, I'm responsible for my own registration but I can't be responsible for the registration of 12 or 13 staff in the unit. I don't know you see (RCM 2).

THEME 2: IMPLICATIONS AND IMPACT OF REGISTRATION

- *we do very complex work and I think it should be reflected in like a standardised profession and register to that effect (RCM 3).*
- *I think the impact on a positive level would be that you would hope that the ongoing professional development will create less maybe stagnant staff teams, that will keep professionalism going (RCM 2).*
- *everyone particularly managers are so busy and so much is happening on a day to day (RCM 3).*
- The residential care managers voiced concerns about the sector being already highly regulated by both HIQA and TUSLA and questioned if more regulation through CORU was necessary.
- *They're also going to have to look at what the workload entails because I just don't, I really don't need anything else put down on top of my working week (RCM 2).*

THEME 3: PLANNING FOR PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION

I mean a lot of the information that I have got about registration is through Social Care Ireland, but not from CORU directly...like a workshop or some kind of informative session that actually lets people know, myself as a manager... what this entails...if we are clear then the social care workers that work under us will be clearer as well, clear as we are (RCM 2).

So when this comes into place, there will definitely need to be systems those systems I don't know, how those systems are going to work... (RCM 3).

a really positive culture, supervision is absolutely key (RCM 3).

there would be a change of different systems that we'd need to put in place, possibly a different...an added element in supervision and training for the staff team. But I do think overall it's very much...there is a lot of ambiguity around it, so there is a lot that we need to find out, there is a lot more that we need to make ourselves more informed of (RCM 3).

KEY LEARNING POINTS

- It would be beneficial if CORU's strategic plan for the introduction of professional registration was communicated directly to residential care managers.
- In addition to providers, CORU could provide information and carry out training workshops specifically for residential care managers in relation to the purpose, process and implications of professional registration for them.
- Further research is required in relation to professional registration to assess the effectiveness and impact of registration on practice.
- In preparation for registration, organisations policies such as recruitment, induction, supervision and training policies need to be reviewed to reflect professional registration and its requirements under the code of professional conduct and ethics (2019).
- The roll out and oversight of registration requirements requires strong leadership. Residential care organisations should consider supporting residential care managers to complete a mandatory management and leadership training module to develop their leadership skills.

FINAL WORD!

The study concludes that a unilateral approach to the introduction of professional registration will be most effective to support positive change through residential care managers; their employers and CORU. Ultimately, professional registration is coming, and the social care sector needs to embrace Williams advise when she stated, '*If change is coming; commit to leading it, don't be led*' (2019).

QUESTIONS