

CHILDREN IN CARE - ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

1513. Dr E. Constable to the Minister for Community Development

With reference to the answer to Question on Notice No. 1435 –

- (1) What criteria were included in the definition of abuse in care allegations prior to 2003-2004?
- (2) What criteria have been included in the definition of abuse in care allegations since 2003-2004?
- (3) Why were changes made to the criteria?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

- (1) The criteria for classification as "abuse in care" were that the person who allegedly caused the harm to a child was either a departmental employee or a foster carer.
- (2) The first instruction that clearly defined an allegation of abuse in care as any alleged maltreatment of a child, irrespective of who may have caused the harm, was first introduced in 2002.

The criteria that was in effect expanded to include allegations of harm including those by the child's parents, other relatives of the child and other children in placement as well as alleged abuse by foster carers and departmental employees.

In 2003 a review of existing notifications of abuse in care established that most still related to abuse by foster carers or departmental employees.

A revised instruction was introduced in 2004 that gave greater emphasis to the expanded criteria. This was implemented along with training to staff at all District offices.

- (3) The strengthening of the criteria occurred to ensure that the Department fully complied to its legal responsibility to children in care. The changes supported the quality assurance role of the newly created Duty of Care Unit, the implementation of the Register and was accompanied by a new Director General Instruction and extensive training to field staff clarifying and reinforcing the need to notify all allegations of abuse in care.