

Children's coalition: Irish government response to report is 'too slow'

DUBLIN - The Irish government's response to recommendations to protect the safety of children have been "insubstantial, inadequate and too slow," said a coalition of eight children's charities.

After the May 2009 publication of the Ryan Report, which exposed decades of neglect and abuse of thousands of children in religious-run institutions, the government looked at 20 of the report's recommendations and converted them into 99 actions that would be completed within a specific time.

One year later, the majority of these actions have not been implemented, said the "Saving Childhood Ryan" campaign.

The charities said May 20 that children remain at risk because the government failed to recruit the 270 new social workers within a year as it had promised.

The same day, in the Irish parliament, the deputy prime minister said that the Health Service Executive would have 50 new social workers recruited by June and more would to be recruited in due course.

The lack of child care facilities in Ireland was highlighted early in May when the body of Daniel McAnaspie, a 17-year-old who was in the care of the state, was found stabbed in a ditch in County Meath.

He had been in the care of the health service since 2003, after the death of his mother and father, but went missing the night of Feb. 23. His surviving family said that the Health Service Executive accommodation provided to McAnaspie was totally unsuitable, as he was forced to share the facility with disturbed, sometimes violent, teenagers who had frequently been in trouble with the law.

The children's coalition called for a referendum to amend the constitution to give

greater rights to children. At present, the Irish Constitution includes several family rights, which, in certain circumstances, can prevent social workers from investigating suspicions of child abuse or from taking children into protective care.