



The Tusla Children and Young Persons Advisory Group Mayo present the following report.

**‘How Young People are Heard and Helped’**

An investigation into young people in Co. Mayo’s knowledge of Tusla and its services and how they would prefer to receive information on these services.

By

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**Aim:** To investigate young people in Mayo's knowledge of Tusla and its services and to see how young people would prefer to receive information on these services

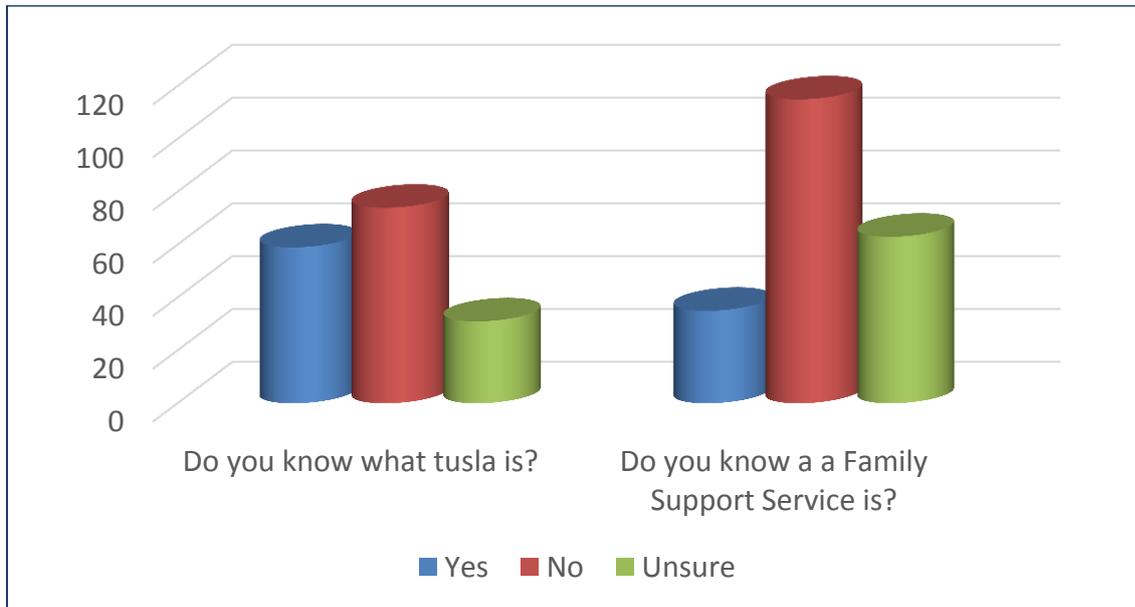
**Introduction:** Our group the Tusla – Children and Young People Advisory Committee Mayo started in October 2016. At the beginning of our meetings we spent some time discussing what Tusla did. We realised that a lot of young people were unsure of what Tusla did. We were also asked to review a number of national brochures aimed at young people. During these reviews we often had discussions about whether or not young people would read brochures. The feeling among our group was that young people would rather get information online. A sub group of CYPAC Mayo decided to carry out some research to investigate these two areas.

**Method:** As we wanted to reach young people of secondary school age all across county Mayo we decided interviews would not be practical. We decided to use questionnaires. Questionnaires would be anonymous and therefore young people could be honest. We used a mixture of open and closed questions. Comhairle na nOg members who attend 24 out of 27 schools in Mayo were assisting us in our distribution of the questionnaires.

In our research we surveyed a total of 248 young people from across Co. Mayo. 103 females and 145 males responded to the questionnaire. The young people were aged between 12-18 years. [72 -12-14 year olds, 152 – 15-17 year olds and 23 18+ year olds] Both genders and all age grouping received the same questionnaire.

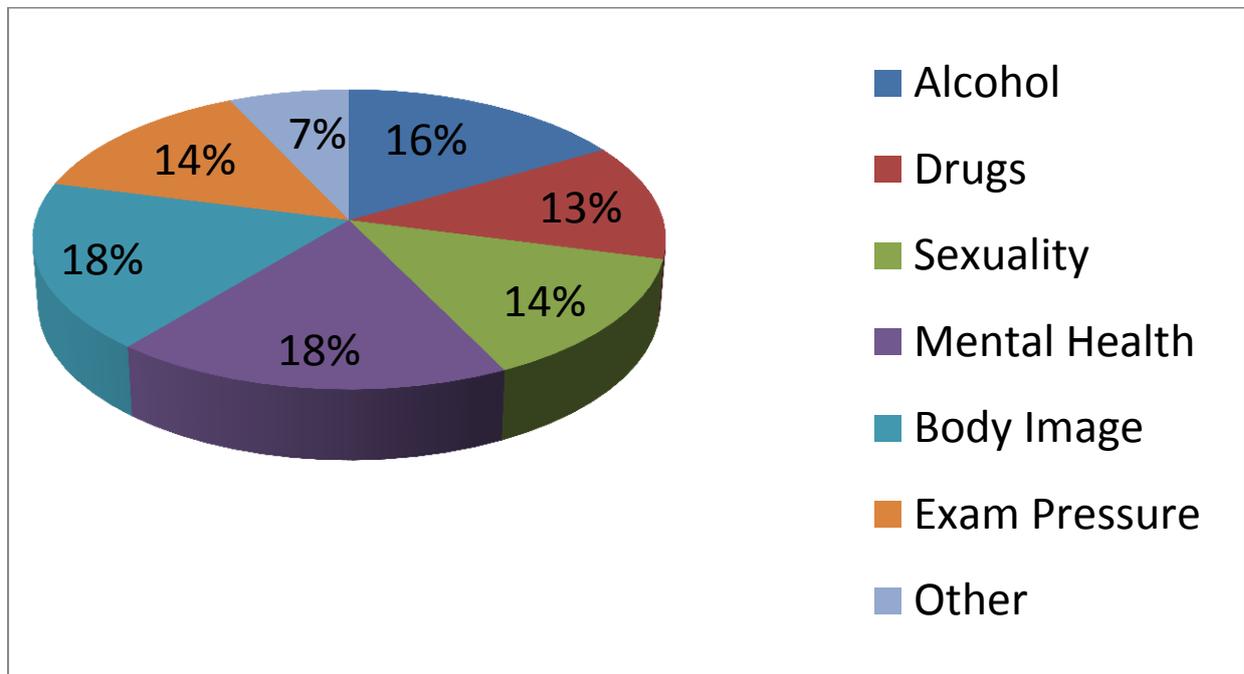
### **Analysis of Questionnaires**

We asked young people if they knew what Tusla was. 36% of young people knew what Tusla was, 64% did not know or were unsure. We also asked the young people if they knew what family support was. 16% of respondents knew what a Family Support Service was, 74% did not or were unsure. 69% of the respondents could give an accurate description of a Family Support Service e.g. *“a service that can intervene in issues that are difficult...they can provide support...”* *“A service that supports families that have problems...”* There was some confusion among young people about the family support service with some thinking it was 'child support payments' or help for the 'homeless'.



We then asked young people what problems do teenagers face daily, we gave them options including alcohol, drugs, sexuality, mental health, body image and exam pressure. There was also an option to write their own ideas. Mental Health and Body Image were the two highest identified problems for teenagers. Problems the participants added in included Relationships, Social Pressure and Balancing school and extra-curricular activities. There seemed to be a lot of things that young people felt were problems faced by teenagers. Twenty five additional things were named by the respondents

## What Problems do Teenagers Face Daily?

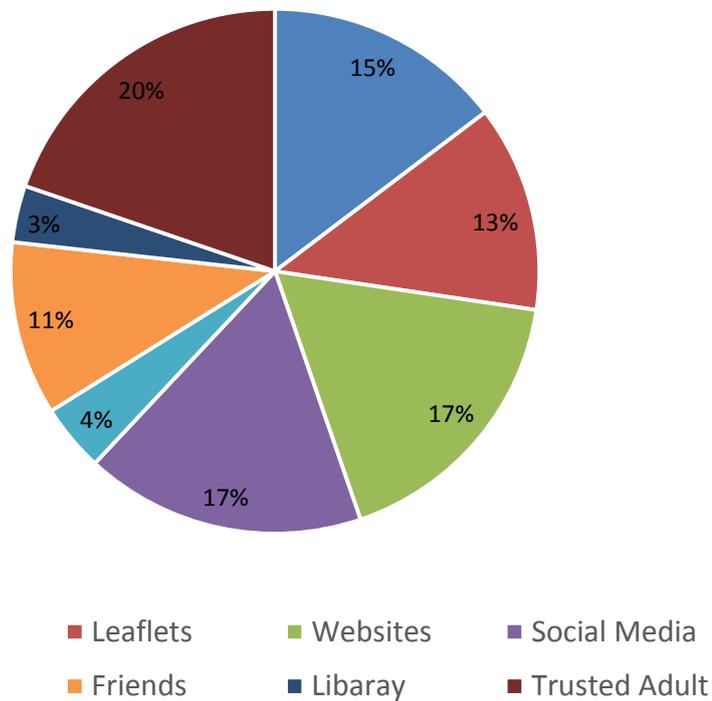


We then moved onto some questions regarding where young people would access support, how to find information on support services and how they would like to receive information.

We investigated the difference between boys and girls answers. While the top three problems are the same for both genders the order is different. For boys Exam Pressure was the top issue [154 respondents] Mental Health was the second [101 respondents] and Body Image was the third [100 respondents]

For girls the top three problems identified had very similar numbers. Body Image was number one [89 respondents] Exam Pressure was second [88 respondents] and Mental Health was third [86 respondents]

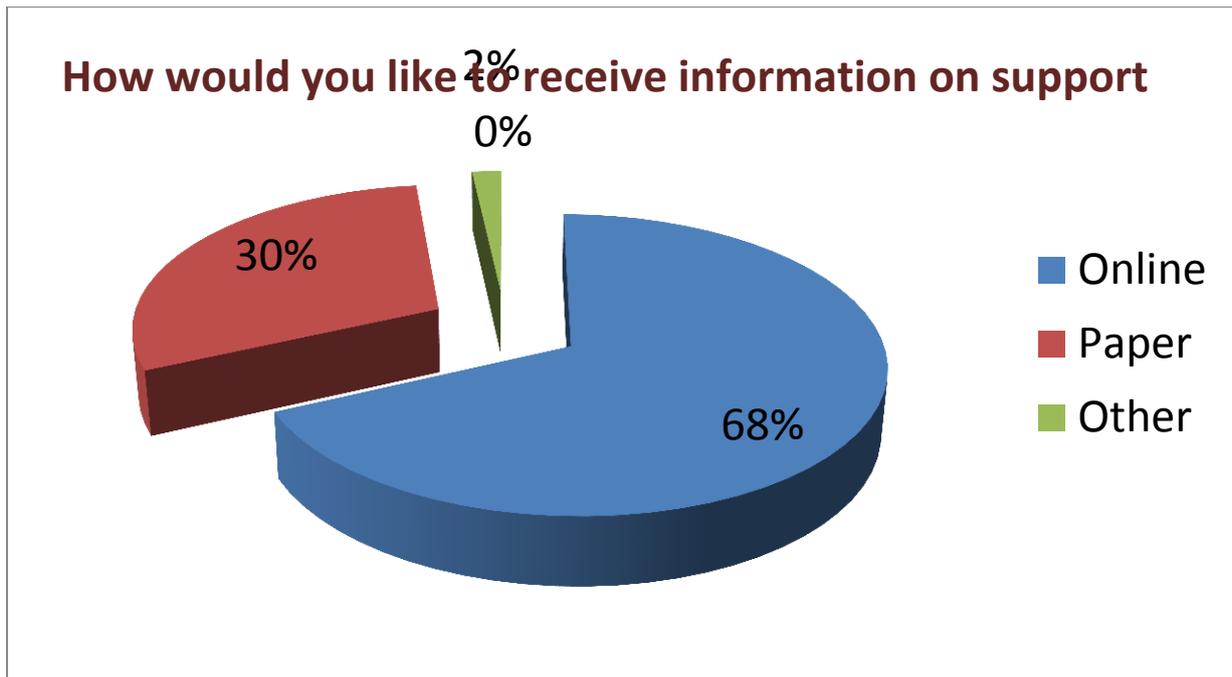
## How Young People Access Information



The most popular place for young people to access information was from a trusted adult, a parent or a teacher being the preferred people. Social media and websites were the next place most young people would seek information.

We found that boys were more likely to go to an adult than girls.

Our final question was asking whether young people would prefer information online in a paper format.



Male and female respondents had almost identical rates of preference for information online [male 70%; female 69%] While most young people would like the information online, some suggested having both options would be preferable.

*“Both – It would emphasise the importance and extent of the issue”*

*“On paper because it would seem more reliable but you could get more information online and it might be easier to contact the services”*

The arguments for both online and paper were very interesting.

Online: *“Online would be probably be more effective as I wouldn’t lose it then”*

*“I would prefer to get information on the internet as it is completely confidential. Also you spend as much time browsing the websites as you like”*

*“Online as it is more convenient and quicker to access”*

*“Online as if the information is online it can be updated quickly and easily, if there is new, relevant information and would solve the problem for people unable to get the information”*

*“I’d prefer to get information online as I feel it would be more confidential”*

Paper; *“I would like to get on paper, because sometimes something might go wrong online and I might end up not being able to receive the information”*

*“I would like to receive the information on a piece of paper as that way you don’t have to go looking online for it”*

*“I would rather it on paper as some people may not have access to the internet”*

## **Conclusions**

In undertaking our research we were aware that as young people we would face some challenges. However following our training day with the UNESCO Child and Family Research Team we felt up to these challenges. We feel if there is information being aimed at young people they should be consulted and it should be presented in a way that they will engage most with i.e. online

According to our research young people want to receive information on support services online primarily and possibly in leaflets/posters. Young people will speak to a trusted adult in many cases so it is important that parents and teacher, who were the most trusted adults according to our research, have a good level of knowledge about Tusla services.

## **Recommendations**

- Information aimed at teenagers should be put online and on social media as well as or instead of on leaflets
- An advertising campaign around what Tusla do. This should be positive and informative.
- Further promote knowledge surrounding who Tusla are and the work they do among children and young people.
- Increase the promotion of services young people can access directly, helplines etc.