

A message from Gordon Jeyes, Chief Executive, Tusla— Child and Family Agency,



Welcome to the year of the horse - a year that is seen as bringing success to those who are prepared to work hard at achieving a goal. It is also the first year of our new Agency. If January focused on the launch of Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, then February has been about focusing on the nuts and bolts of our core work. How well we work together in 2014 will determine our success.

The fundamentals of family support, education welfare, community development and child protection remain crucial. The success of Tusla will depend on the complementary synergy among these components in order that the sum of the parts is greater than the individual contributions.

The Child and Family Agency Business Plan for 2014 has now been prepared in accordance with Section 46 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 and approved by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. 16 priority areas have been identified with 59 individual output measures to be monitored throughout the year. Full details of the Business Plan are available on the website, www.tusla.ie

This Business Plan is a first step towards delivering on our statutory remit around improving wellbeing and outcomes for children. Later this year we will produce our first three year corporate plan which will bring further clarity, focus and accountability to our work and will inform budget deliberations for 2015 and beyond. In an effort to inform this important piece of work, the Agency recently published its initial statement of purpose entitled Ireland's Child and Family Agency, Towards a Shared Purpose. Copies of this document, along with a questionnaire are available on www.tusla.ie and staff and other interested parties are encouraged to give their views on the Purpose; Values; Vision and Key Purpose Statements as outlined in the document.

Elsewhere in this newsletter is an update on *Children First*. To complement the discussions regarding placing Children First on a statutory basis, a guidance note on Section 3 of the 1991 Child Care Act will be issued shortly. It is important that there is confidence, clarity and a shared understanding regarding specific roles as a consequence of any Section 3 allegation.

Continued overleaf

Launch marks a 'once in a lifetime opportunity'.



Pictured at the official launch of the Child and Family Agency were (left to right) An Taoiseach Enda Kenny T.D., Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Frances Fitzgerald T.D., Norah Gibbons, Chairperson, Child and Family Agency and Gordon Jeyes, Chief Executive, Child and Family Agency

The Child and Family Agency, Tusla, was officially welcomed into the world by An Taoiseach Enda Kenny and Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Frances Fitzgerald in Dublin Castle on 30 January in front of a packed audience of politicians, children's rights activists, academics, staff and media. The Taoiseach described the launch of the Agency as a once in a lifetime opportunity to reform child protection and welfare services.

During the event, Gordon Jeyes unveiled the Child and Family Agency's new website, www.tusla.ie, and introduced a video which set out the Agency's purpose, objectives and aspirations. The video can be viewed on the homepage of tusla.ie.

Guests received a copy of the Child and Family Agency's Statement of Purpose, which will inform the Agency's first three year plan, as well as a feedback form that will inform an ongoing consultation on the Agency's work (see page 2 of this newsletter).

During his speech, An Taoiseach Enda Kenny, T.D. took the opportunity to apologise to Ms Louise O'Keeffe for the abuse she suffered as a child at the hands of her school principal. The apology was a solemn reminder of the failures of the past, which the Agency has been tasked with preventing in the future.

A shared understanding, when there has been an allegation of extra familial abuse, underlies the fairness, efficiency and effectiveness of any investigation.

Social workers have a key role to play at all times ensuring that children are safe. In partnership with An Garda Síochána they have an investigative role, and their contribution is key to deciding whether or not a case is reported to the Director of Public Prosecutions with a view to prosecution. In parallel to these investigations, employers of people who work with children, also have specific duties under Section 3.

Clarity around everyone's role and responsibility is crucial to a successful child protection system. Collectively, it is everyone's responsibility, however, to

make sure children are safe - it is time to move on from a "refer on" culture which depends on someone else taking the necessary action to one where we each play our part. The guidance on Section 3 summaries the processes and ensures a fair and consistent approach and one that puts children first always.

Finally, our work programme for 2014 and our initial statement of purpose reflect our aspiration to become a service which puts children first and espouses values such as justice and courage. Only through the work, dedication and commitment of the staff of this Agency can this aspiration be realised.

Towards a Shared Purpose

The Agency published its initial statement of purpose entitled *Ireland's Child and Family Agency, Towards a Shared Purpose* on its official launch date of 30th January 2014. The aim of this document is to enable a wide ranging consultation / debate regarding the priorities and key objectives for the Agency in the preparation of its first three year plan, to be published in the summer of 2014.

Consultation

Copies of the purpose document, along with a consultation questionnaire, were distributed to staff and partners at the official launch. The questionnaire asks interested parties to consider the Purpose; Values; Vision and Key Purpose Statements as outlined in the document and decide whether the priorities identified reflect their views.

Staff of the Child and Family Agency are encouraged to participate in this process and copies of the purpose statement and questionnaire can be downloaded in the news section www.tusla.ie (see press release dated 30 January 2014)

Aftercare Legislation

On 25 February, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Ms Frances Fitzgerald, T.D. published the General Scheme and Heads of the Aftercare Bill 2014, which will place a statutory duty on the Child and Family Agency to prepare an aftercare plan for young people leaving care. The Heads of Bill have been referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children.

Minister Fitzgerald stated: "This Bill will deliver on my long-standing commitment to strengthen the legislative provisions governing aftercare."

"It is crucial that an aftercare plan is prepared to identify the supports that young people need leaving care as they transition to adulthood. I believe that the Heads of Bill approved by Government will strengthen existing practice and improve the outcomes for young people, especially those who are more vulnerable. A consistent implementation of aftercare planning should assist in improving the effectiveness of existing services for these young people leaving care."

The Bill will amend the Child Care Act 1991 by placing an obligation on the Child and Family Agency to prepare an aftercare plan for each eligible child and eligible young person. While the Heads acknowledge that the aftercare process engaged in by the Agency inevitably involves planning, it seeks to remedy the absence of a specific reference to a "plan" in the Child Care Act 1991.

For further reading see the Heads of Bill at <http://www.dca.gov.ie/documents/HeadsAftercarBill2014.pdf>



Business Plan 2014

The Child and Family Agency recently submitted its Business Plan 2014, in accordance with Section 46 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013.

The Business plan sets out the following 16 priority areas and identifies outputs with associated timelines for each area in 2014.

Priority 1: Accountability

Priority 2: Quality Assurance

Priority 3: Partnership

Priority 4: Workforce Development

Priority 5: Family Support

Priority 6: Early Childhood Care and Education

Priority 7: Service Delivery Framework

Priority 8: Emergency Out of Hours Service

Priority 9: Child Care Information System

Priority 10: Children First

Priority 11: Alternative Care

Priority 12: Adoption Services

Priority 13: Educational Welfare

Priority 14: Domestic, Sexual and Gender based Violence Services

Priority 15: Psychology Services

Priority 16: Community Sector

The Child and Family Agency Business Plan 2014 will shortly be available on www.tusla.ie

The Child and Family Agency Tusla Update newsletter will feature articles on these work areas over the coming editions.



Early Years Services

Early Years Inspection Services are now part of the Child and Family Agency. Significant legislative change is contained within the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013 as applicable to the Early Years Services. Part VII of the Child Care Act 1991, which prescribes the powers of supervision and inspection of Early Years Services has been amended. This legislative change introduces a pre-approval registration model with the emphasis on quality assurance. It comprehensively reforms the enforcement options available to the Agency.

Under the new statute, existing notified providers are deemed to be registered with a requirement to reapply for registration within three years. New services will be required to be registered before they can commence service provision.

Inspections will be based on a newly developed set of national standards. These standards will focus on the experiences and outcomes for children attending Early Years Services. They are intended to strengthen the management, governance and supervision of services. They will provide a comprehensive framework for the regulation and quality assurance of all Early Years Services.

Early childhood care and education is one of the 16 priorities listed in the Child and Family Agency's 2014 business plan.

The business plan states that in 2014, the focus in the Early Years Inspection Service will be on quality assurance, workforce development and outcomes for children. The Early Years Inspection Service will operate on a national rather than on a local or regional basis. This is

to ensure that resources are deployed to maximum effect and that a consistent service is provided.

A number of areas of action have been prioritised:

Strengthening the national Early Years Inspection system;

Applying new protocols and standards to underpin regulatory compliance and enforcement;

Introducing a registration system;

The new registration system, rather than a notification one, will be introduced in response to an amendment to Part 7 of the Child Care Act 1991;

Standards-based inspections will commence in 2014;

An Information and Communications Technology (ICT) system will be developed to support the inspection and registration processes and facilitate payment of registration fees online;

The inspection function will be strengthened by the appointment of a number of additional inspectors; and,

Inspection reports will be published on-line in a timely manner.

Children First

Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (DCYA 2011) is the cornerstone document for the safeguarding of children in Ireland and is a priority area outlined in the Child and Family Agency's 2014 business plan. The Government is currently in the process of finalising legislation to place Children First on a statutory footing. This legislation, which is imminent, will have implications for all staff members working directly with children and their parents. It is clear however, from the communications given by Minister for Children and Youth Affairs Francis Fitzgerald that the Government is committed to creating a safer environment for children by introducing a range of legal safeguards which will include mandatory reporting.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs under the sponsorship of Minister Fitzgerald has formed an Inter Government Departmental Children First Implementation Group (CFIDG) that is leading on the implementation of and monitoring of Children First. It is intended that the CFIDG will be placed on a statutory footing in

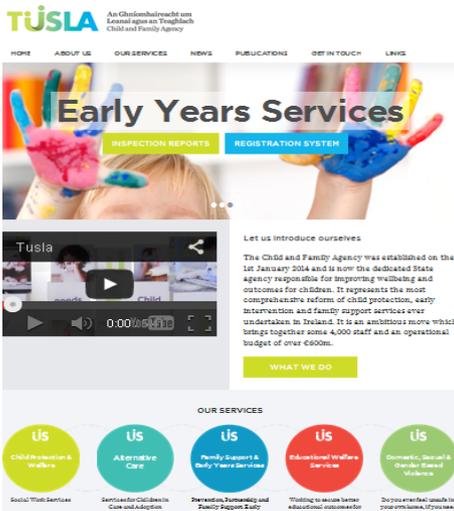
the Children First Bill. Those Government Departments with services that will fall under the Children First legislation are members of the CFIDG. The Child and Family Agency is working with CFIDG members to support their implementation plans for Children First and to assist them in their preparation for the Children First legislation.

An example of this work is evident in the Early Years sector where the Child and Family Agency is working in partnership with the National Children First Early Years Committee and has developed a one day basic Child Protection and Welfare Training Programme for all staff in Early Years Services. This development is part of the national initiative whereby government departments and service sectors are taking leadership and responsibility for implementing Children First within their departments and sectors. Early Years Services seeking child protection training for staff should now be directed to their local City/County Childcare Committee for further information.

The implementation plans of the government departments can be found DCYA website.

Communications

TUSLA.ie



Tusla.ie, the new Child and Family Agency website, was launched 30th January 2014.

The site is designed to be welcoming, easy to navigate and informative. Specifically the site provides comprehensive information for the following service strands:

- ◆ Child Protection and Welfare
- ◆ Alternative Care
- ◆ Family Support
- ◆ Early Years Services
- ◆ Psychology (under development)
- ◆ Educational Welfare Services
- ◆ Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence

The site also contains contact information for services and service managers as well as Child and Family Agency publications and links to partners and other providers working in the area of Child and Family services.

We intend to develop the site further over the coming weeks and months to ensure it provides all necessary information whilst remaining true to our original objectives.

Tusla.ie is an integral part of the Child and Family Agency's communications and we would welcome your observations and comments in relation to the website and its content. If you have a query or would like to provide any feedback in relation to our website please contact derek.mulcahy@tusla.ie

TUSLA HUB

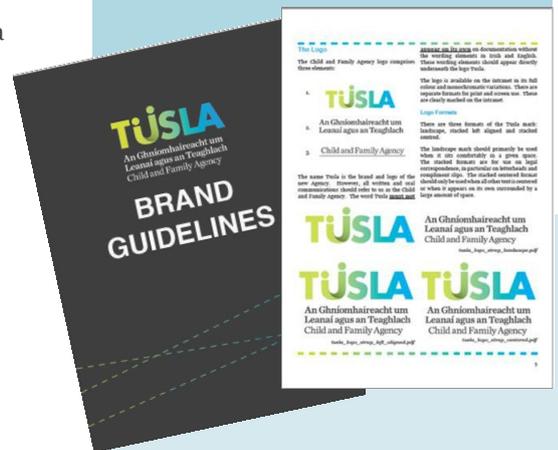
A Tusla intranet Hub is currently under development, which will be accessible to all Child and Family Agency staff who have access to the HSE Intranet

The Hub is an interim measure, and has been designed to be user friendly and provide staff with relevant, up to date information. A news feed will be available to keep staff up to date on developments within the Child and Family Agency. All new policy and procedure documentation will be uploaded on to the site and information in respect of the following areas will be available on the Hub:

- ◆ News
- ◆ Child Welfare and Protection
- ◆ Foster Care
- ◆ Residential Care
- ◆ Special Care & High Support
- ◆ Aftercare
- ◆ Family Support

Former National Educational Welfare Service (NEWB) staff can who are not yet on the HSE network can continue to use the NEWB intranet. Any relevant information that relates to the staff of the former Family Support Agency will be emailed to them directly.

Brand Guidelines



In order to ensure a consistent approach to the use of the Child and Family Agency, Tusla brand and logo, a brand guidelines booklet has been produced to assist staff. A number of easy to use templates for internal reports, PowerPoint presentations, agendas and minutes will accompany this guidance booklet

Copies of brand guidelines will shortly be circulated to managers and the guidelines and associated documents and logos will also be made available to staff of the Child and Family Agency through the intranet hub.

We would welcome your feedback on the guidelines as well as any suggestions for other documents that might require standardised templates.

Please contact Sharon Waters with any thoughts and suggestions or Elaine.omahoney@tusla.ie