

A Christmas Message



As we draw to the end of our start up year I welcome this opportunity to thank every member of staff, and those who worked with us on behalf of children and families, for your contribution to the establishment of Tusla.

For all of us it has been a demanding year during which the pressures from increasing requests and decreasing resources has been relentless. Despite these many challenges Tusla exists, survived and will thrive thanks to your professionalism, commitment and diligence. The journey has begun and the map set out in our Corporate Plan, describes a route from survival to sustainability to success. This would not have been achieved without the personal and professional dedication of many people who believe in the right of children and families to an agency dedicated to their needs.

It is no secret that since my arrival I have confessed to evidence based impatience. There has certainly been plenty of impatience!! Indeed I am in no doubt that frustrations about capacity issues and resource constraints are faced by us all. However, building on your collective wisdom there is a plan, there is structure and 2015 is about beginning the process of moving forward building on the progress of 2014 which saw a period of consolidation and retrenchment. At this time of year we focus on children.

Not just our own but those across the world. The rights and responsibilities of children vary enormously around the globe. Especially at this time of year our thoughts are with the 15 million children worldwide caught up in warzones. 2014 was certainly not a global year of the child.

In Ireland childhood is celebrated until 18. This is as it should be. Many in Ireland have a world class childhood. Tusla's mission is to ensure that a childhood of support and opportunity is available to all, that Ireland is a country that puts all children first and does not give up on any.

I look forward to robust discussions, further service improvement and key partnership working in 2015. This is a time of year for repose, reflection and renewal. Reinvigorated we shall return and continue this great work in which we are engaged.

May I take this opportunity of wishing you, your family and your community a peaceful Christmas.

I hope that whatever your faith or belief that you find this holiday a period of rest and renewal.

Gordon Jeyes,
Chief Executive

TACTIC

On the 18th December, Dr James Reilly TD, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and Ms Norah Gibbons, Chairperson, Tusla – Child and Family Agency launched a suite of resources for young people in care.



These resources were written by TACTIC (Teenagers and Children Talking in Care), a consultative group of children and young people who are themselves in care. The children and young people decided to develop a suite of materials for children and young people when they are first going into care, aimed at providing reassurance and at highlighting how they can have their voices heard in their own care situations.

Members of TACTIC were in attendance to present their experience of creating the resources. These resources will be given by Tusla to every child and young person going into care.

At the launch Tusla also launched its new Alternative Care manual for practitioners which was developed in consultation with TACTIC.



Pre-school Inspection Research Published

In October, Tusla Inspectorate published two research reports on pre-school inspections. The findings demonstrated that the level of compliance with pre-school regulations is high, with most providers in compliance with most regulations. Nonetheless, there are areas where service providers can make improvements. A report on the process of inspections found that Tusla inspections are comprehensive, wide-ranging and forensic.



Brian Lee, Director of Quality Assurance, says: "Those operating Early Years Services are, in effect, offering a service to parents. Like all good businesses they must have systems in place to ensure that they are providing a good quality service especially as these relate to the wellbeing of children. It should be part of their everyday work to check that children in their care are receiving proper care, that staff are appropriately qualified and vetted, that food is nutritious and that premises are safe and secure.

"Tusla will make sure that those offering Early Years services live up to those standards through inspections; by giving parents the information they need to be vigilant about their children's care; and by investigating complaints.

"If we find any shortcomings in how a business is run, we will require it to take remedial action within a set period of time. Where necessary, we will impose sanctions for serious failures."

The reports were commissioned by Chief Executive, Gordon Jeyes, to give an understanding of how well the industry has been running and what improvements need to

be made. The research was based on 3,007 inspection reports carried out over a 17 month period, from January 2012 to May 2013. A deeper analysis was conducted on a random sample of 500 reports.

The research on quality in pre-school services indicates that compliance with the regulations is at 74%. Compliance with regulation on Management and Staffing, which includes staff: child ratio, vetting and designated person in charge, presents the greatest challenge to businesses.

The second report on the process of inspections finds that the reports offer a rich learning resource on best practice for both inspectors and service providers. However, it highlights inconsistency in report-writing.

Tusla has already adopted the recommendations in the report around the development of the new registration system and in standardising and improving the process of inspection.

New on the TUSLA HUB

The Tusla Hub is a resource for staff to keep up to date with developments within the Child and Family Agency as well as a one stop shop for policies and procedures, legislation, forms, brand templates and more. The Hub is updated on an ongoing basis to ensure the most up to date information is always available.

The following new items are now available on the Hub:

Legal Services

A new legal services section is now available through the home page of the Hub where staff can access information in relation to the Requests for Legal Advice Protocol and Service Contract templates.

Quality and Risk

Guidance for the Child and Family Agency on the Operation of The National Review Panel is now available. This guidance replaces HIQA Guidance for the HSE for the Review of Serious Incidents including Deaths of Children in Care.

Human Resources

The various forms required for submission to the National Control Group are now available through the Human Resources section.

<http://hsenet.hse.ie/Intranet/childfamilyagency/>

Online Payslips Now Available....

The Child and Family Agency has introduced a new service which allows you to access your payslips online at your convenience. The service is already widely available to employees in the public and private sectors and has been very positively received since it was first introduced. The online payslip service is currently available to all former HSE staff and will be available to former NEWB and FSA staff in the new year. To sign up go to www.tusla.ie/staff/online-payslips/



Foster Carer Recruitment campaign

On Tuesday, 11 November Dublin North City Foster Carer recruitment campaign was launched in Ballymun Civic Centre at an event which brought together current foster carers, care leavers, local representatives, and church and community leaders to promote the work of foster carers. The packed audience were asked to spread the message that foster carers are a diverse group of people who come from all walks of life.

Officially launching the campaign, Minister Aodhan Ó Ríordáin gave a touching speech on the capacity of each child for magnificence and praising foster carers for providing vulnerable children with a safe home environment in which to realise their full potential.

Stressing the need for more foster carers, particularly in the North Dublin City region, Gordon Jeyes, said: “Tusla places a great emphasis on minimising the distress which a child being taken into care naturally feels when leaving home. In the majority of cases, the best place for a child in care is in a foster placement in their own community, where they can maintain relationships with friends, schools, sports clubs and extended family.

“Due to a shortage of foster carers in the North Dublin area, we sometimes have to place children around the country where they do not have the support of their own friends and school as they adjust to living in a foster family.”



“We want to make people aware that anyone can apply to be assessed as a foster carer regardless of nationality, race, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, disability status or whether someone is already a parent. The only criteria for applying are that you are willing and able to care for a vulnerable child.”

However, the most powerful message came from Suzanne, who grew up in foster care. Now in her 20s and a social care worker, Suzanne eloquently described her own history of neglect, caring for a sibling from a young age, and finding a home with her foster parents. She admitted that life with her foster family was not always plain sailing, especially during her teenage years, but she knows that she has a safe and secure family, complete with the nagging that only loving parents can provide.

