

Eist le fuaim na habhann



Eist le fuaim na habhann—There is an Irish saying which roughly translated advises that in order to catch fish it is important to listen to the river.

Over the last few months I have had the opportunity to meet with many members of staff and with our colleagues providing services in the Voluntary and Community sector. I have been pleased to hear at first hand the many successes you have had in improving services but also acutely aware of the many challenges which we have discussed. As we continue to progress our Corporate Plan I would like to thank those of you who have offered insights and made suggestions regarding the agency you wish to see as we move forward with Tusla. I would encourage all staff and our partner agencies to continue to reflect on the values which we wish to espouse and how these can be reflected in the delivery of services.

Since its establishment Tusla has made strong progress in the delivery of services which are accountable, consistent and transparent. Throughout the country there has been increasing focus and energy in interagency work and much effort has gone into the development of Meitheal.

As we move forward it is important that we build on the strong foundations already established and the unique strengths of those agencies who have come together to form Tusla.

A lot of work has been done since establishment on 1st January to promote a collective, cohesive response to the needs of children, parents and communities and to improve the experience of all those engaging with the Child and Family Agency.

We wish to deliver outcomes which are achievable through co-ordinated actions which are tangible and deliverable while never losing sight of the aspirational. We need to be realistic about what we can achieve within the resources made available to us while constantly striving towards not only what is good for children but what is the best we can offer.

At every level of the organisation and within partner organisations it is important that we continue to consult so that what emerges from this first challenging year of Tusla and from our Corporate plan is a set of actions and aspirations which represent our collective ambitions and which are worthy of Ireland's children and families.

Gordon Jeyes

Chief Executive

Aftercare Consultation

Young people who have had experience of living in care (i.e. residential care, foster care, hostel, high support & special care) require access to a wide variety of information to assist and support them with independent living.

A communications subgroup was recently established within Tusla to explore the broad ranging communications and information needs of this important group of young people. Developing a comprehensive web section within www.tusla.ie was identified as a key priority.

In order to progress this, over the summer months a series of six consultation sessions took place across the country. The purpose of the consultations was to talk to young care leavers and find out exactly what information they require, what challenges to information they face and how they would like this information presented (e.g. on web based, leaflets, video blogs and so forth).

A total of 55 young people participated in the consultations which took place in Dundalk, Sligo, Cork, Dublin, Limerick and Waterford. The exercise culminated in a comprehensive report which will now be used to inform the development of a new web section within www.tusla.ie and additional information tools.

The feedback from the process emphasised the diverse information needs of this important cohort of young people which stretches from basic information around what is aftercare and why do I need it to broader subject matter such as financial matters (e.g. my entitlements, how to budget, how to set up a bank account); education (e.g. how to access third level); housing (e.g. rent allowances etc...); health (in particular the separate needs of men's and women's sexual health) to lifestyle matters such as household budgeting, healthy eating and cookery skills.

Work will now commence on a new Tusla Aftercare web section which reflects the views and needs of care leavers. Other information tools including leaflets and multi media based communications options will also be explored.

A special thank you to Brenda Kneafsey, Co-ordinator Aftercare Advocacy and Support Service of EPIC for overseeing the consultation process. Special thanks also to William McNamara, Tusla for supporting the process. Finally, a very special thanks to all of the young people who participated.

Interagency Links

Wicklow Child Welfare Team Hosts Coffee Morning

Multi agency working has long been heralded as the cornerstone of effective social work yet time and time again Child Care Reviews cite a lack of interagency collaboration as a reason for failure to safeguard children's safety and wellbeing (Munro, 2011). The reports published this July on the deaths of four young people in care or known to social services yet again highlighted the need for more effective interagency collaboration.

The Wicklow Child Welfare team mulled over this and decided to take a proactive approach to enhancing multi agency cooperation by hosting a hugely successful coffee morning in the Bray Health Centre. And so it came to pass that on a bright sunny May morning the team welcomed 75 professionals representing 45 organisations from the North Wicklow Area.

The groups attending covered a broad range of services including addiction, housing, domestic violence, education, family resource centres, traveller advocacy groups and disability and children's services.

The team pulled out the fine china (literally) and the morning began with mingling over tea and home baked cakes. Introductions were flying as attendee's took full advantage of learning about as many services in the area as possible. There was a brief presentation on the function of the newly established Child Welfare Team and the principles underlying its approach. Attendees learned that the goals of

the Child Welfare Team are Prevention, Partnership and Family Support. "The Welfare Team promotes Early Intervention resulting in better outcomes for families" said Kevin Webster, the team's Principal Social Worker. "We aim to develop positive and cooperative relationships with families and professionals to achieve targeted interventions", he added.

The coffee morning provided an excellent opportunity for all attendees to forge interagency links within the community in an informal setting. One participant said "it was good to get a further insight into the function via presentation and one-to-one chats, but it was also great to network with other service providers in the community and to make contacts that will be very useful and relevant to our everyday work." The need for such occasions was evident by the great turnout. Such was the success of the event that another coffee morning will be hosted in the south of Wicklow County in the autumn.



Parent Information



Information for parents regarding child protection conferences will be available shortly on the Tusla Hub. The leaflet has been designed to clearly explain the purpose of a child protection conference, why one might be needed and who is involved. The leaflet has been prepared in 10 separate languages.

A version of the leaflet for young people is currently in production and will also be available in a number of languages.

Congratulations to Junior Cert Students



Huge congratulations to all the young people who received their Junior Cert results this week, especially the students in Ballydowd, Coovagh House and Crannog Nua many of whom achieved excellent results in subjects such as English, Maths, Art, Home Economics, Woodwork and CSPE.

This is a remarkable achievement given the short time many of the students had to prepare, some as little as three months. The results are a testament to the excellent work of the staff and management in each of the schools, supported by the social care staff and management and clinical team.

Squashy Couch

Gordon Jeyes, Chief Executive, Tusla, recently visited Waterford to mark the official opening of the new Squashy Couch premises. Squashy Couch is an Adolescent Health Service and Youth Cafe in Waterford City, which provides youth friendly social and health services for young people aged 14-19 years.

Speaking at the event Gordon Jeyes, said: "As Chief Executive of Ireland's Child and Family Agency I believe strongly in the wisdom of young people who, when consulted with respect, are clear in their views of what is required from services. Squashy Couch is exactly the type of service which allows young people to engage with each other, with their community and with the services provided to support them – openly when sought, discretely when required.

"It provides access to information and services in a relaxed setting and involves young people directly in policy development - all of which engenders a unique sense of empowerment. Engagement with their peers and with a variety of services supports the development of that resilience which is critical to the health and wellbeing of our teenagers. Good health depends on good decisions - Squashy couch is an excellent decision."

The launch was celebrated with music performed by young, local musicians.

Squashy Couch provides free health and wellbeing services in a relaxed, informal setting for 14-19 year olds in the Waterford region. Initially the project opened as a drop-in youth café offering young people safe, age appropriate health information, but soon expanded to include a nursing/midwife service, G.P., counselling, dietician, and relaxation services.



Scenes from the launch of Squashy couch

The project is supported by a committee of 12 young people representing schools and youth services in the city.

Service Manager, Maire Morrissey, said: "We are very grateful to Waterford City Council, for valuing our service and as a result of their generosity the young people of Waterford have access to a wider range of social and health services in an environment that recognises the importance of their stake in our society."

The idea for Squashy Couch arose from a research study undertaken in 2001 which found that the South East of Ireland had the highest percentage of teenage pregnancies and that the rise in teenage pregnancy was due to a lack of sexual health information and access to age appropriate health services for young people. As a result, Squashy Couch was set up to provide access to holistic information and health services to young people with a view to influencing a reduction in the number of crisis pregnancies amongst teenagers in Waterford city.

This project is jointly funded by the Child and Family Agency and the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme

Tusla Director of Quality Assurance

Brian Lee has been appointed Director of Quality Assurance, Tusla - Child and Family Agency. Brian was previously Director of Operations with Health Care Informed, where he headed up a team that was responsible for implementing quality and risk management systems in health and social care services in Ireland, the Middle East and Australia.

He also previously held the role of National Programme Manager for the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Programme and Palliative Care Programme and was responsible for overseeing the development of measurable improvements in service provision and outcomes for service users.

In addition, Brian worked with HIQA where he led on the development of National Quality Standards, Quality Frameworks, National KPIs and inspections. Brian has also worked with other large multinational organisations such as United Drug and Resource Services Group.

Brian, who has a BSc in Biochemistry, an MBA from the Dublin Institute of Technology, and a Graduate Diploma in Risk Management and Quality from UCD, said: "I am delighted to join Tusla at this exciting time when there are so many opportunities to make a real difference in the lives of the young people who use our services. I am convinced that the implementation of user friendly quality assurance systems across the agency will enable and support us to deliver better and safer services and to move us to an organisation that is self evaluating, with a strong culture of continuous improvement, where we learn from things that go wrong and what we do well."



Alternative Care

New Staff Handbook Coming Soon...

Protecting children and young people and promoting their welfare underpins the work of Tusla - Child and Family Agency. Unfortunately, despite all our efforts, some parents cannot adequately care for and safeguard their children. When needs are not being met, then a decision is made, either with the agreement of the parent(s) or by direction of the Court, that these children are received into the care of Tusla.

Alternative care is defined as care provided by people other than birth parents. In Ireland 92% of children and young people in care are placed in families, 30% of whom are with extended family.

Tusla has a huge responsibility towards these children. How we engage with them and who we charge to look after them, on our behalf, must reflect the highest standards and best practice.

Tusla is currently in the process of finalising a practice handbook designed to ensure that the views and voices of the children and young people we serve are central to our work. It aims to help practitioners to focus on the fundamentals of face-to-face relationship building and outlines a clear guide to basic and consistent practice. The intention is to provide clear guidance and sign posts that should be complemented with support through supervision, peer support and line management.

The challenge for Tusla staff who are dedicated to making the lives of the children in our care safe and healthy, is to work as a team, using sound professional judgement and skills in order to deliver an accountable, consistent, transparent service where the child's needs are pivotal. The new Alternative Care handbook will be an important step towards realising that goal.

Getting the best start : Marte Meo Approach October Conference

Marte Meo is a video-based interaction programme that provides concrete and practical information to parents, carers, teachers and professionals on supporting the social, emotional and communication development of children and adolescents in daily interaction moments. The thrust of the Programme is in prevention, early intervention and treatment.

Marte Meo is a strength-based programme – it looks at what a child can do and where they might need extra support in their personal development. The goal of the method is to give parents, carers and educators a different perspective to help understand the meaning behind children's behaviours. When adults can understand what the child's behaviours are telling them, they can work out what the child needs to learn, and what they can do to encourage and support the child's personal growth and development.

The method is developed by a Dutch woman, Maria Aarts, who has been working for over thirty years with parents and educators worldwide to support children's social and emotional development and their general well-being. Translated from Latin, Marte Meo means "On one's own strength" and, as the name suggests, it's about building on the good communication skills that parents and educators use already. Marte Meo uses interaction analysis to identify people's strengths.

Using video, the supportive interactions that occur naturally between a child and parent/educator in daily situations are identified and affirmed. In each good interaction moment, we can see the impact on the child and we come to understand the importance of our interactions for the child's sense of him/herself and for their ability to connect and manage in everyday situations. When we know what we do well, we can do more of it.

The method also helps to identify developmental gaps and children's additional needs and gives adults concrete steps to follow so that they activate development and build the child's ability to manage. The Marte Meo Method is used in homes, in childcare settings, in school, and any other settings where children learn through nurturing relationships.



Maria Aarts, Director,
Marte Meo International

This conference will have a specific focus on:

- (1) Identifying social and emotional developmental needs of children 0-6 years
- (2) Identifying supportive interaction that is required from carers, educators and staff in daily moments to support development, thus providing best outcomes for children and quality care.

Who Should Attend?

This conference is of interest to anyone working with families and young children, including Early Childhood Educators, Community and Social Workers, Early Childhood Development Workers and Mentors, Teachers, Tutors, Lecturers and those involved in policy making in the area of education and social care.

Details:

Presenter: Maria Aarts

Title: 'Getting the best start: Developing through daily supportive interactions'

Date: Friday 17th October 2014

Venue: Best Western Ashling Hotel, Parkgate Street, Dublin 8 (Adjacent to Heuston Station)

Time: 9.00am (registration) - 15.45pm

Fee: €40 (including lunch)

Enquiries: Camilla Daly:
cdaly@earlychildhoodireland.ie

The Marte Meo Centre, Workforce Development, TUSLA in Partnership with Early Childhood Ireland (ECI)

Places are limited

Other News



EPIC 'Let's Talk About Leaving Care' Conference

EPIC and Care Leavers Ireland will host 'Let's Talk about Leaving Care' Conference in Dublin Castle, Dame Street, Dublin 2 on Thursday, 2nd October 2014. This is a unique youth-led conference and will specifically focus on four key themes: after-care, education, participation and isolation. The conference is aimed at young people leaving care & those with care experience and for professionals working in the field. The purpose of this conference is for young people leaving care & care leavers (aged 16-25) to share their knowledge with practitioners and policymakers. The conference offers a real opportunity for young people with care experience to influence policy and practice. To book a place, register at www.eventbrite.com or please contact EPIC at (01) 872 7661.

EPIC's 'Halloween Happening' Event

EPIC will host the 'Halloween Happening' in the Black Box Theatre, Exchange Street Lower, Temple Bar, Dublin 8 on Friday, 31st October from 5.30pm-8.30pm. This event is for young people in care aged 12-17. The event will include: a disco, fancy dress, a thriller flashmob, singing and spooky games. There will be a prize for the Fancy Dress competition. All young people in Foster Care and Residential Care are welcome. To book a place, please contact EPIC at 01 872 7661.

Update

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