

## Communities supporting families and caring for children ...



The end of the school year marks another milestone in children's lives. Summer holidays should be, and usually are, a time of fun where many happy memories are made of carefree adventures and experiences. During these adventures and new experiences some of life's important lessons of resilience, and self reliance are learnt. Away from the structure of the school day children enjoy the opportunities to challenge themselves, to explore new horizons and to test boundaries.

The end of the school year can also be a time of great stress for families. Without the structure of a school day or the support of the 'school family' families can struggle to meet their own particular challenges. The financial demands of keeping children entertained, the pressure of peer groups unsupervised and often without a purpose to the day and families living in close proximity can place strong pressures on the most resilient families and can spell danger for the vulnerable.

There is an oft-quoted African saying, "It takes a village to raise a child." Less cited is the second half of the saying, "...and a community to keep the parents sane."

A community that supports parents and cares for children – that looks after families – is a stronger and better functioning community. It benefits both families and society when raising children is supported at a community level.

Across Ireland, there are some great examples of communities thinking differently to help support parents and children. These examples include new ways of sharing information, as well as partnerships that make children's services widely available.

I would like to take the opportunity of this newsletter to commend all of those groups, statutory and voluntary, who work tirelessly in communities, especially during the summer months to provide alternatives for families.

Throughout the year activities for young people and families help to bring communities together. During summer throughout the length and breadth of the country groups are organising visits to an extraordinary range of places and activities. Communities are displaying their talent through festivals and community events. Beaches, parks and community halls see friendships made and a host of new experiences tried from hip hop to computers, from robotics to performing arts.

As we continue to develop our Agency and the new Service Delivery Framework I look forward to working with schools, Family Resource Centres and health professionals to provide young people with the opportunities to make good decisions for their lives. I look forward to further empowering communities and supporting families by harnessing the energy and enthusiasm which we see in summer projects and other community initiatives.

We have a new minister who is committed to public health and to supporting communities. I look forward to working with Dr Reilly as we move to the next stage of Agency development – the consolidation of relationships and creative ways of working together.

**Gordon Jeyes**

**Chief Executive**

## Roma Special Inquiry

**In early July the Minister for Justice published the findings of her Special Inquiry, by Ombudsman for Children, into the exercise by members of the Garda Síochána of powers under section 12 of the Child Care Act in respect of a child in Athlone and a child in Tallaght, who were removed from the care of their families in October last year.**

Speaking in response to the publication of the Special Inquiry, Gordon Jeyes, Chief Executive of Tusla – Child and Family Agency, said: "The decision to remove a child from his or her family is always a difficult one which involves balancing the rights and freedoms of individuals against the statutory duty to protect and safeguard young people.

"An Garda Síochána play a key role in Child Protection in Ireland, not least when they use their judgment to act quickly to remove a child to safety. Section 12 of the Child Care Act, 1991 has, and will continue to be, a positive force for children in Ireland. The Child and Family Agency look forward to continuing to work in partnership with An Garda Síochána.

"Clearly aspects of the cases were unfortunate, not least the apparent lack of cultural sensitivity. Cultural awareness is a challenging area and in a rapidly changing Ireland, it is essential that our approach is routinely scrutinised.

"Learning from past experience is key and in this regard the Child and Family Agency is in the process of reviewing actions taken when a child is taken into care under Section 12. A protocol for Agency staff is being prepared to ensure a consistent response when a child is placed in the care of the Agency by An Garda Síochána. This will stress the importance of conducting an independent assessment and emphasise the need for timely and comprehensive network checks to be undertaken in such cases."

## Family Support: Fatima Groups United Family Resource Centre

**Fatima Groups United is one of Tusla's dynamic Family Resource Centres (FRCs) offering a wide range of activities which strengthen positive informal social networks through community based programmes and services. The main focus of these services is on early intervention to promote and protect the health, well-being and rights of all children, young people and their families.**

The Fatima FRC operates in the F2 Centre and has a purpose built day-care centre/crèche. The project provides a wide range of services including the operation of a full-time children's day-care centre for up to 85 children, Community Employment (CE), arts and culture, health, education/employment, counselling and family support are some of its key activities. The CE project plays a vital role in the operation of the F2 centre and the maintenance of the external environments.

Community Development has been a core principle in the FRC work and the project team are very much engaged in local issues including food poverty, housing and the drug/gang culture. Activities and initiatives undertaken by the centre include the following: -

### Intercultural Public Art Initiative

The *Heart of Community Project* – is an arts based initiative, in association with Canals Communities Partnership and Regional Youth Service, aimed at helping to integrate and learn about the Muslim community in Rialto and exploring ways in which cultural / religious diversity can be advanced.

During a week long process, the community of Rialto, including the local Muslim community, worked with two international mural artists and considered the many challenges and opportunities around creating a respectful multicultural society.

Over three days, mural artists Mohammed Ali and Martin Travers, who have collaborated in various public arts projects throughout the world, engaged with the community to create an unique mural in Fatima on the F2 football pitch.

The project involved extensive consultation with the local community to agree the design of the mural and to hear their vision for future project work from September 2014 onwards.



Fatima 2 football pitch mural project.

The Fatima FRC provided project management expertise to the initiative and was central to the consultation process between local residents, the local Youth Project and Homework clubs.

A large scale public art installation is planned in the Autumn which will reflect on various themes and views around promoting a peaceful, multicultural community.

### Political Awareness Initiative

In winter 2010, Fatima Groups United established a series of civic awareness initiatives to promote greater civic involvement of local people from Fatima and Rialto.

An educational and awareness strategy took place which included workshops around how



Ireland is governed. Discussions focused on local issues, cuts to services and what local people want from a new government.

As part of the initiative it was agreed that it would be important to hold discussions between local residents, interest groups and politicians. The first *Café Night* - between local residents and Dublin South Central Candidates was organised during the 2010 national elections.

The F2 Centre has held café nights on various referendums including; the Abolition of the Seanad & Court of Appeal Bill, Childrens Referendum and also the Local & European Elections 2014.

### Joe Donoghue, Projects Manager, F2 Family Resource Centre

*Family Resource Centres are an integral part of the Child and Family Agency's Local Area Pathways model whose core principals are Prevention, Partnership and Family Support'*

*The Fatima Groups United Family Resource Centre (FRC) is funded by Tusla and was established in 2001 to be a driving force behind community regeneration.*

## National Review Panel

On 16<sup>th</sup> July, Tusla, Child and Family Agency published reports from the National Review Panel on the deaths of four\* young people. The National Review Panel is an independent body, under the chairmanship of Dr. Helen Buckley, which reviews cases where children in care, in aftercare or known to child protection services die or experience serious incidents.

Commenting on the Report findings, Paul Harrison, Director of Policy and Strategy, Tusla - Child and Family Agency, said: "I extend my deepest sympathies to all those affected by the losses of the young people as detailed in these reports.

"The death of each child or young person is a tragedy. In one particular case, (Luke report), the findings reflect the considerable shortcomings in supporting and protecting a vulnerable young person who was in desperate need of support throughout his life. A range of challenges affected this young man. It was a complex case which required the provision of disability, mental health, and social work services. Focused well-planned, multi-disciplinary action was required and did not take place. Whilst acknowledging the considerable service pressures on social work staff at the time, the statutory intervention provided to a young person at high risk was insufficient and poorly coordinated. The necessary state support did not happen and we must acknowledge this and apologise.

"However, the reports also acknowledge the high level of interagency cooperation and the considerable efforts made by Social Work teams to support families in challenging circumstances. In particular, the review into 'John's' case recognises the prompt, diligent and respectful actions of the local Social Work team in a very difficult case in which there was a dispute between a child's parents and his medical team.

"The primary responsibility for the care of a child lies with the family. Sometimes families need help to carry out that responsibility and it is the duty of the State to respond. The key learning from these reports is that good individual supports are not enough, without a coordinated, multi-agency approach.

\*Out of respect for the express wishes of the family, the Child and Family Agency is not publishing the fifth report. For further details see [www.tusla.ie](http://www.tusla.ie)

## Early Years Children First Training

**The Early Years Children First Training Programme was launched by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs National Early Years Children First Committee on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June at the Gresham Hotel in Dublin.**

In his keynote address, Jim Breslin, Secretary General of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs highlighted the important role this initiative will play in the implementation of Children First in the Early Years Sector. The role that Early Years workers have in the lives of children and their families means that they are uniquely placed to recognise when there are concerns about the safety, welfare or well-being of children. Early Years workers and services have a responsibility for safeguarding the children in their care through policies, procedures and practice.

The Children First Training Programme has been developed and delivered by the National Early Years Children First Committee in partnership with Tusla—Child and Family Agency. Tusla Children First Information and Advice Officers act as advisors and Training Tutors to the Committee.

The programme is the result of a strong multi-agency partnership and collaboration of the agencies on the National Early Years Children First Committee. The committee is chaired by Kathryn O' Riordan, Cork City Childcare Committee Coordinator and hosted by Dublin City Childcare Committee on behalf



*Boyd Dodds, Tusla, National Manager Children First pictured with Child Care Committee staff who have successfully completed Children First training*

of the Department of Children and Youth. Member agencies on the committee are: Forbairt Naíonraí Teoranta; Barnardos; Dublin City Childcare Committee; Fingal County Childcare Committee; Louth County Childcare Committee; Early Childhood Ireland; Child and Family Agency - Early Years Inspection Services; Child and Family Agency – Children First; Childminding Ireland; Cork Education and Training Board and Comhar Naíonraí na Gaeltachta.

To date, 55 staff from the 31 Childcare Committees have successfully completed the Train-the-Trainers programmes and have become registered trainers for the Early Years Sector. These trainers will deliver a minimum of four training days per annum to Early Years Workers in their areas.

## New Children First Web Section

**A new Children First section is now available on [tusla.ie](http://tusla.ie) Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011) provides the national guidance for the protection and welfare of children in Ireland. It is the roadmap to help parents, professionals, organisations and the general public to identify and report child abuse and welfare concerns.**

Tusla is dedicated to the protection and welfare of children and has a lead role in ensuring the successful, effective implementation of Children First.

The new website section describes the various kinds of abuse, outlines roles and responsibilities and explains how to report a concern.



The Children First web section will be kept up to date and amended in accordance with any legislative change following enactment of the Children First Bill, 2014.

## Performance Framework and Corporate Plan

**In accordance with legislative requirement, Tusla—Child and Family Agency, is now engaged in developing its first three year corporate plan which will bring further clarity, focus and accountability to the Agency's work and will inform budget deliberations for 2015 and beyond.**

To this end, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs recently issued the Agency with a Performance Framework which provides policy guidance, direction and prioritisation parameters for the preparation of the Corporate Plan. The Performance Framework is available for viewing on [www.tusla.ie](http://www.tusla.ie)

Preliminary work around the development of the Corporate Plan commenced in January 2014 with the publication of the Agency's initial statement of purpose entitled 'Ireland's Child and Family Agency, Towards a Shared Purpose'. This document enabled a wide ranging consultation regarding the priorities and key objectives for the Agency. The output of this process will be used to inform the development of the Corporate Plan.

To progress the development of the Corporate Plan further, the Board has decided to engage additional external expertise to guide us on the development process and also to review the current organisational design to ensure that appropriate structures are in place to deliver on key objectives. Tenders in relation to this work have now been published on [etenders.ie](http://etenders.ie) and it is intended that the Corporate Plan will be completed in the Autumn of this year.

Staff involvement and input is critical in this regard and consultation will be key to the Corporate Plan development.

## Speak Up Café: Report Launch

**Ms. Jan O'Sullivan, T.D., Minister of State for Housing & Planning launched "Report on Speak Up Café: Service User Consultations" a new report on feedback from individuals who have been affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence, on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2014 in Limerick. The feedback was gathered through the 'Speak Up Café' initiative which invited individuals who have been affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence to come and tell organisations as to how their services can be improved. The initiative was part of a wide range of projects undertaken by the Mid West Regional Advisory Committee on Violence Against Women (MWRAC) and local agencies to combat issues relating to domestic abuse and sexual violence.**

In November and December 2013, the MWRAC devised an innovative model of service user engagement for the Mid West region and held a series of 'Speak Up Café' events in Limerick, Clare and North Tipperary. This initiative invited feedback on services through consultations and open dialogue with service users and as such were acknowledged as experts in offering valuable advice on how services can be improved.

Ms. Mary O'Sullivan, who compiled the report stated at the event "that it is essential to listen to what the public and service users say, particularly those voices that are seldom heard, if organisations genuinely wish to improve services; this approach follows national policy which promotes service user consultations to make services more relevant, more effective and of a higher quality."

The Report documents how over 120 people attended the events in Limerick, Ennis and

Ennagh where they met with representatives from organisations in the statutory, community and voluntary sectors. This was an unprecedented initiative in the context of domestic abuse and sexual violence in Ireland where individuals were given the opportunity to meet with agencies in an informal and public setting and could speak about their experiences, both good and bad, of the services they used. The conversations that followed provided valuable suggestions on how services can improve and what aspects of services already worked well.



*From right to left Miriam Duffy, Rape Crisis Mid West; Mary O Sullivan, report author, Jan O Sullivan Minister of State for Housing; Tim Hanly, Principal Social Worker, Joan Mullen, Project Manager, Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence and Greg Heylin, Director COSC*

Tim Hanly, Principal Social Worker on behalf of Tusla - Child and Family Agency noted that the Agency was very happy to fund and support such innovative projects. He acknowledged the event as an example of the strong and long established good working relationships in the Mid West and stated that "no one agency has the solutions to complex problems but by working together we can achieve much more".

## School Attendance Award

Leaving Certificate student, Martin O' Gara, of Ballyhaunis Community College (pictured right) has been awarded with a certificate from Tusla—Child and Family Agency to mark 14 years unbroken school attendance between primary and second level school.

Speaking at the presentation to Martin, Senior Educational Welfare Officer, Tusla, Denise Collins said: "Research has shown again and again that regular school attendance lays the foundation to good relationships and a successful life at work. So children who attend school regularly are more likely to stay in school and so are more likely to be emotionally, financially and socially secure in later life.



## Payroll & Email

### Payroll Project

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the Child and Family Agency HR/ Payroll Project is underway and involves transferring staff salaries currently paid through Family Support Agency (FSA) and Education and Welfare Services (EWS) payroll systems, across onto the single Tusla SAP Payroll System.**

Staff salaries will move onto the Tusla Payroll system and there will be no change to existing Grades/ Salaries and terms and conditions.

The first step in this process will be to replace FSA and EWS staff employer numbers with new Tusla employer numbers. This will take effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2014. However, staff will continue to be paid through the existing EWS and FSS payroll systems and bank accounts, until the date of full migration which, has yet to be finalised

The date of final payroll migration will be communicated to staff in due course.

### @Tusla.ie

The Child and Family Agency email changeover commenced at the end of February 2014. At this stage the majority of staff have changed over and are now using @tusla e-mail addresses. It is of utmost importance that all staff working in the Agency are using the correct @tusla e-mail address.

Staff who have not yet changed over should contact [emailbranding@tusla.ie](mailto:emailbranding@tusla.ie) as soon as possible to arrange changeover.