

Child and Youth Participation Strategy 2019-2023



TUISLA
An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency



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Design: www.penhouse.ie

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Foreword

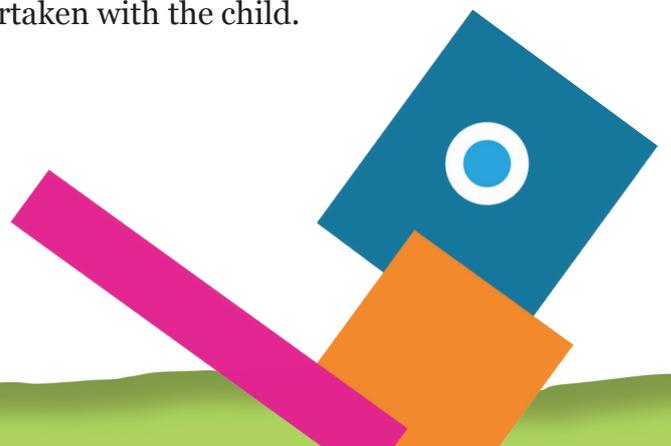
In Tusla – Child and Family Agency, there has always been a commitment to the value of children, young people and parents participating in decisions that affect their lives. Participation is part of our everyday interactions and I would like to acknowledge the commitment of staff around the country to child and youth participation.

The term ‘participation’ refers to the involvement of children and young people in decision-making on issues that affect their lives, as part of a process of enacting their rights as citizens, at both the individual and collective levels. Participation must be embedded in the very core of all our work. Practitioners must assume the perspective that, through intervention, participation needs to embrace children and young people’s rights. True participation is attained through engagement in dialogue, in an interactive, on-going and inclusive process. True dialogue and change require space, voice, audience and influence (Lundy Model).

The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre (2018) found strong evidence of children and young people’s participation being embedded across our organisation. Tusla acknowledges the need to further develop and mainstream these participation processes and structures. Every contact with a child or a young person – at reception, at a meeting, at a home visit – presents an opportunity for participatory practice in terms of service design, at both an individual and collective level. In effect, inclusive participatory dialogue needs to occur throughout the organisation at every level of engagement, and not just during individual case management.

To ensure that we further embed inclusive participatory practices as part of our organisational culture, emphasis needs to be placed on participation being a process. It should not be time-bound or situational. The right of the child to participate is not limited to particular circumstances where conditions are right.

As part of Tusla’s Child Protection and Welfare Strategy, and adoption of a new national approach to practice called Signs of Safety, the integration of a strengths base alongside an exploration of danger and harm takes place. Practitioners using this approach apply tools and processes which actively involve children in the assessment process, helping them to understand why professionals are intervening in their lives and in the safety planning undertaken with the child.



The participation of children and young people at both the individual and collective level requires more time and energy to create safe emotional spaces for children to fully form and express their views. This extra time and energy should not be viewed as a barrier to participation but rather an investment in improved services, better decision-making and enhanced skills of the children and young people who engage in our services.

In Tusla, we have committed to a programme of work that includes training and quality assurance to further embed participatory practice in the organisation. It requires from individual practitioners a commitment to personal development, reflective practice, openness to learning and growth, and dialogue with colleagues and clients. I am committed to creating a truly participatory organisation that is well led, safe and effective. This strategy aims to support, nurture and celebrate the overall commitment to participation seen across the agency.

Pat Smyth

Interim CEO Tusla – Child and Family Agency



Executive Summary

The participation of children and young people is fundamental to a child-centered, rights-based approach¹ to working with children and young people. Tusla is committed to involving children and young people in decision-making. The Child and Youth Participation Strategy is our first participation strategy, spanning the period 2019-2023. It sets out how Tusla plans to support, nurture and celebrate a culture of participatory practice in both Tusla and Tusla-funded services.

Stakeholder consultation

Tusla engaged and consulted with a wide range of stakeholders, in order to better understand the challenges and requirements involved in further embedding participatory practices. A consultation process involving over 300 Tusla staff, funded agencies and young people nationally occurred. A number of key themes emerged and these have helped to shape the development of this Strategy.

Experience

Stakeholders and young people made it clear that they would like more opportunities to participate.

Ethos

Stakeholders and young people would like Tusla to further embrace a culture of participation.

Engagement

Stakeholders and young people welcomed the opportunity to engage with Tusla and would like this process to be continued.

Effectiveness

Stakeholders and young people expressed the need for the provision of information about participation.

¹ A rights-based approach is the application of human rights standards in practice. The right to participation is one of the underpinning principles of a rights-based approach. It also recognises the interdependence of all human rights, meaning that the realisation of one right may depend on the realisation of others. Therefore, this strategy is part of a wider approach to the realisation of children's rights.

Tusla's VISION
for Child and Youth
Participation

**Tusla is a
champion of
child and youth
participation**

**Design and
deliver supportive
structures to ensure
the participation of
children and young
people**

Tusla's MISSION
for Child and Youth
Participation

Tusla's AIM
for Child and Youth
Participation

**Every time a
decision is taken that
directly affects a child or
young person, individually
or collectively, their
views are taken into
consideration**

Tusla has identified five Key Strategic Objectives to further embed participation throughout the organisation. These objectives are underpinned by a series of activities in order to track progress.

The 5 Key Strategic Objectives for Participation

1. Structure: How we work

Tusla will continue to support and promote systems to further embed participatory practice across Tusla and Tusla-funded agencies.

2. Culture: How we think

Tusla will further develop an organisational culture of participatory practice, as well as systems to support this.

3. Connections: How we work together

Tusla will achieve shared goals, standards and competencies in participatory practice.

4. Processes: What can help us

Tusla will continue to develop new processes to support participatory practice.

5. Scale: Who has to do this

Tusla will continue to support all staff and staff in funded agencies in participatory practice.



1. Introduction

As an organisation, we believe that children, young people and communities should be actively involved in the decisions that affect their lives (*Tusla Corporate Plan, 2018-2020*). This commitment is enshrined in Article 42A of the Irish Constitution, Article 12 of the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)* and, since the *Child Care Act 1991*, in Irish national law. Tusla's founding legislation, the *Child and Family Agency Act 2013*, requires that Tusla, in performing its functions² and in planning and reviewing the provision of services, ensure that the views of the individual child and those of children collectively are ascertained and given due weight, having regard to the age and maturity of the child.

The focus of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making 2015-2020* is to ensure that children and young people have a voice in their individual and collective everyday lives.

The DCYA strategy explicitly endorses the Lundy Model of Participation (2007), which is grounded in Article 12 of the *UNCRC*. It further outlines a commitment on the part of the Government and Tusla to adhere to 12 practice principles, drawn from the Council of Europe's 2012 *Recommendation on the Participation of Children and Young People under the age of 18* (Council of Europe, 2012).³ These principles include, for example, that children must be provided with all relevant information and adequate support when expressing their views. Tusla has adopted the Lundy Model of Participation as a core practice model for Tusla staff and funded partners.

“This participation strategy outlines Tusla’s plan, what we are going to do to achieve our corporate goal of placing the child at the centre to ensure positive outcomes for children.”

(Tusla Corporate Plan, 2018-2020)

“They have made changes which shows they are listening to us”

Young person on participation in Tusla

² Section 9 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 provides that Tusla will ascertain the views of the individual child in the performance of its functions under the Child Care Act 1991, the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the Adoption Act 2010 or section 8 (1)(c) or 8 (3) of the Child and Family Agency Act.

³ These principles are also informed by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment on Article 12.

2. Context for Child and Youth Participation Strategy 2019–2023

2.1 Who is this Strategy For?

Tusla’s Child and Youth Participation Strategy is relevant to all Tusla staff, as well as the organisations and practitioners funded by Tusla to provide services to children, young people and their families. It is also relevant to other partners, both statutory and non-statutory, who are not directly funded by Tusla but have a central role in assisting the organisation to achieve positive outcomes for children, young people and their families. Most importantly, this strategy is relevant to children and young people who are engaged in Tusla services and their parents/carers. It demonstrates to them our commitment to include their views and opinions. Additionally, this strategy will coincide with increased collective participation generated through the Children and Young People’s Services Committees (CYPSC).

2.2 Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020 (DCYA), sets out the Government’s agenda and priorities in relation to children and young people under the age of 25 and provides the overarching framework for developing and implementing policy and services.

Adopting an outcomes approach, *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* sets six transformational goals for achieving five national outcomes. Fundamental to all five outcome areas is that children and young people have a voice in decisions that affect their lives.

2.3 National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making, (2015–2020)

Tusla’s Child and Youth Participation Strategy should be read in conjunction with the DCYA *National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making* (2015-2020). The Strategy goal is to ensure that children and young people have a voice in their individual and collective everyday lives. It highlights a number of key fundamentals:

- Recognition that children and young people have a right to participate in decisions that affect their lives
- Ensuring the protection and welfare of children and young people in accordance with *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017)*
- Improving and establishing mechanisms to ensure the participation of seldom-heard and vulnerable children and young people in decision-making
- Mainstreaming the participation of children and young people in the development of policy, legislation and research

2.4 Methodology

The Child and Youth Participation Strategy was devised from Tusla's *Towards the Development of a Participation Strategy (2015)*. It is informed by the DCYA *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making (2015-2020)*. In addition, a systematic review of the literature by Kennan, Brady and Forkan (2016) was conducted to inform the development of this Strategy. It explores the effectiveness of structures and procedures intended to support children's participation in child welfare, child protection and alternative care services. It highlights evidence of 'what works' in supporting children and young people's participation.

This strategy was also informed by the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre (2018) finding of strong evidence of children and young people's participation being embedded across the organisation.

No-one wants to read a load of pages

Young person on creating a youth-accessible strategy

3. Stakeholder Consultation

Tusla engaged and consulted with a wide range of young people and stakeholders in order to better understand the challenges and requirements involved in further embedding participatory practices. A consultation process was carried out with Tusla staff, funded agencies and young people nationally.

3.1 Consultation Method

The format of each consultation was similar. It included a presentation of varying detail and interaction, small-group work, questions and a group discussion. Tusla staff members across the four Tusla regions were consulted, in addition to a number of Tusla-funded agencies and partners. Eight groups of children and young people across all of our services and of varying age were also engaged. In total over 300 people were involved in the consultation process. The key themes that emerged helped to shape the development of our Child and Youth Participation Strategy.

4. Participation

4.1 Our Understanding of Participation

For the purpose of this document, the term ‘participation’ refers to the involvement of children and young people in decision-making on issues that affect their lives. Their right to have their views heard in the decision-making process is enshrined in Article 12(1) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989), which was ratified by Ireland in 1992. It provides that:

“State Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.”

Lundy Model of Participation

DCYA has adopted the Lundy Model of Participation (Lundy 2007), which is grounded in Article 12 (UNCRC), as its preferred model of practice. Tusla has also adopted this model to underpin its approach and training in participatory practice (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

Figure 1: Lundy Model of Participation

This model provides a way of conceptualising Article 12 of the UNCRC which is intended to focus educational decision-makers on the distinct, albeit interrelated, elements of the provision. The four elements have a rational chronological order:

- **SPACE:** Children must be given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their view
- **VOICE:** Children must be facilitated to express their view
- **AUDIENCE:** The view must be listened to.
- **INFLUENCE:** The view must be acted upon, as appropriate.

Under Article 12, children and young people do not have the definitive say in the decision-making process, but their views should be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. As expressed by Lansdown (2010), adults retain responsibility for the outcome, while being informed and influenced by the views of the child or young person. However, the decision-maker must inform the child or young person on the outcome of the process and explain how their views were taken into consideration (*UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009*).

Our New National Model of Practice

This is Signs of Safety and is being incorporated into everyday social work practice in Tusla over five years from 2017-2022. This model deepens child protection practice in respect for families, parents and children, listening to their views and a questioning approach using tools such as words and pictures. There are agreed timescales where families work to come up with their own network of supports to build safety in their own families and have an agreed plan to do this. It is essential to listen to the voice of children and adults and allow them to tell their own story and share this story as a family in this way becoming their own audience for the most important issues in their lives.

Figure 2: Checklist for the Lundy Model of Participation



4.2 Our Reasons for Including Children and Young People in Decision-making

Participation of children and young people is a legal right, and this is aligned with national policies and standards. Organisations and services that have adopted participatory practices have highlighted multiple benefits associated with this approach, including:

Improved Services

Consulting with children and young people and developing effective partnerships enables services to be improved and responsive in meeting challenging needs that children and young people can help define.

Improved Decision-making

Participation leads to more accurate, relevant and transparent decisions, which are better informed and more likely to be implemented and supported.

Promoting Children's Protection

Promoting children in any child protection and welfare process supports better safety and planning. According to the Signs of Safety approach, plans that have been co-created with the parents and involved the participation of the child are more committed to and ownership of the plan is deepened. UNCRC Article 19 on children's right to be protected from harm highlights the connection between protection, prevention and participation.

Enhancing Children and Young People's Skills

Participation helps in developing skills useful for debate, communication, negotiation, prioritisation, leadership and decision-making.



Changing Attitudes

Children and young people who are engaged in organisations that have embedded participatory practices can influence and inform their peers to enhance their knowledge on their rights to be heard and to participate. Practitioners who are engaged with organisations that embed participatory practices experience a shift in attitudes and children and young people are viewed as ‘resources’ when decisions are made that affect their lives.

Personal Development

In addition to developing new skills and experiences, and extending links outside of their own communities, children and young people who successfully exercise their right to be heard can experience improvements in their personal circumstances. This may include developing a new skill or extending social links outside of their own immediate network.

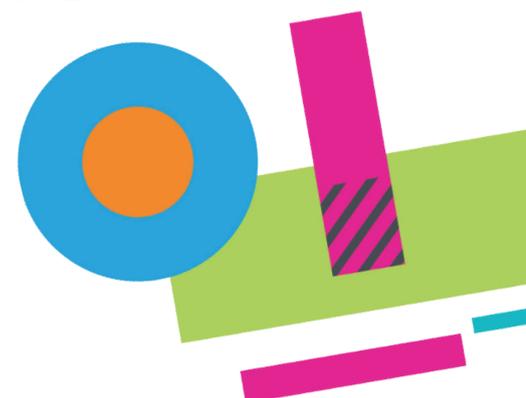
A Better-Informed Society

Policies and programmes that include a child and youth perspective are better informed. As UNICEF (2017) states, “Children are experts in their own lives and experiences”. Long-term participation practices will be passed to future generations, leading to a society that is better informed about children and young people.

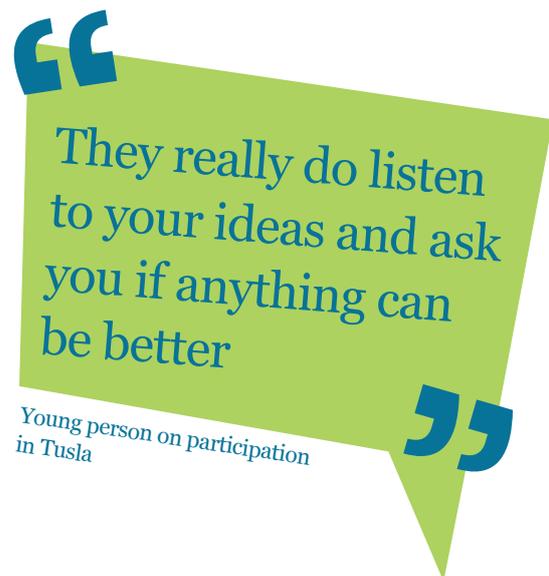
4.3 Our Principles for Participation

The following principles provide guidance to management and staff of Tusla, and to organisations delivering services for or on behalf of Tusla, in the implementation of a participation strategy for children and young people. These principles are the agreed ‘Principles for Participation’ set out in the Council of Europe’s Recommendation CM/Rec (2012) of the Committee of Ministers.

- There is no age limit on the right of the child or young person to express her or his views freely. All children and young people, including those of pre-school age, school age and those who have left full-time education, have a right to be heard in all matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.



- The right of children and young people to participate applies without discrimination on any grounds such as race, ethnicity, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, disability, birth, sexual orientation or other status.
- Consideration needs to be given to the notion of the evolving capacities of children and young people. As children and young people acquire more capacities, adults should encourage them to enjoy, to an increasing degree, their right to influence matters affecting them.
- Particular efforts should be made to enable participation of children and young people with fewer opportunities, including those who are vulnerable or affected by discrimination, including multiple discrimination.
- Parents and carers have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and the development of the child and, as such, play a fundamental role in affirming and nurturing the child's right to participate, from birth onwards.
- In order to be able to participate meaningfully and genuinely, children and young people should be provided with all relevant information and offered adequate support for self-advocacy appropriate to their age and circumstances.
- If participation is to be effective, meaningful and sustainable, it needs to be understood as a process and not a one-off event and requires ongoing commitment in terms of time and resources.
- Children and young people who exercise their right to freely express their views must be protected from harm, including intimidation, reprisals, victimisation and violation of their right to privacy.
- Children and young people should always be fully informed of the scope of their participation, including the limitations on their involvement, the expected and actual outcomes of their participation and how their views were ultimately considered.
- In line with the General Comment on Article 12 of the UNCRC, all processes in which children and young people are heard should be transparent and informative, voluntary, respectful, relevant to children's lives, in child-friendly environments, inclusive (non-discriminatory), supported by training, safe and sensitive to risk, and accountable. Member States should integrate these requirements into all legislative and other measures for the implementation of this recommendation.



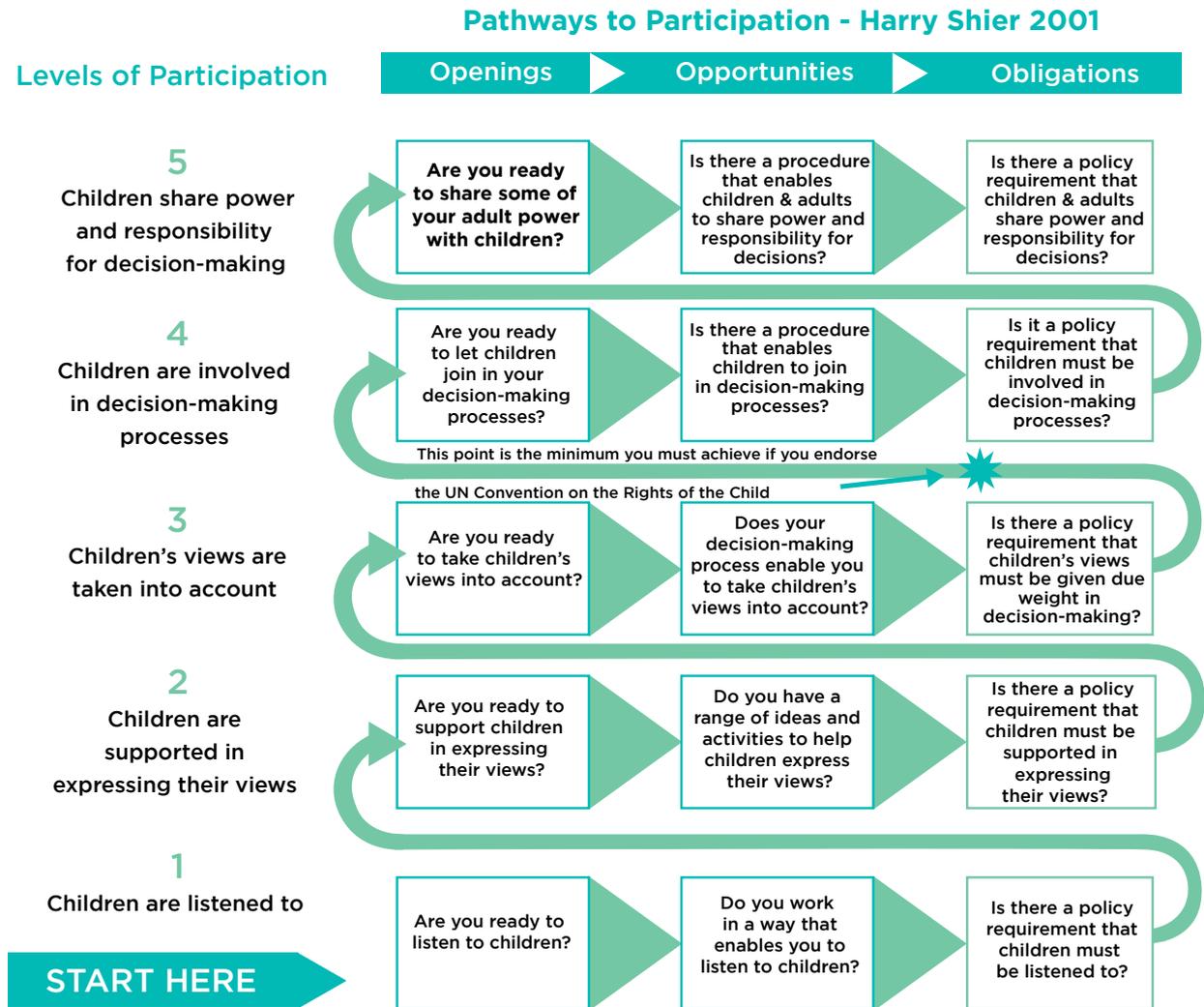
4.4 Our Reasons for a Participation Strategy

Tusla has expressed a commitment to further embed the voice of children and young people. Section nine of the *Child and Family Agency Act 2013* requires that Tusla give consideration to the views of children in planning and reviewing the provision of services and in the performance of its functions under the *Child Care Act 1991*, the *Education (Welfare) Act 2000* and the *Adoption Act 2010*.

To comply with national and international law, policy and standards, children and young people’s participation cannot be an isolated activity or simply a matter of good practice at the discretion of the individual worker. It requires more than a robust provision in policy. It is also about managing a process of change across an organisation to ensure that national policy and standards are applied. For there to be meaningful and sustainable participation, this organisational change needs to occur at national, regional, local and individual levels to support and make participation ‘*the way we work around here*’.

The term ‘participation’ has evolved to encompass decision-making power beyond the scope of UNCRC Article 12. Shier’s (2001) Pathways to Participation model (see Figure 3) highlights five levels of participation. It is our aim that, in implementing this strategy, we will move towards higher levels of participatory practice as outlined in Shier’s model.

Figure 3: Shier's Pathways to Participation



5. Strategic Objectives

5.1 Structure

Tusla will continue to support and promote systems to embed participatory practice across Tusla and Tusla-funded agencies

Activities

1. Develop, publish and disseminate the Tusla Child and Youth Participation Toolkit and promote the Department of Children and Youth Affairs ‘*A Practical Guide to Including Seldom-heard Children and Young People in Decision-making*’ to all Tusla staff and partners
2. Develop processes and forums to include the voices of children and young people across Tusla services
3. Collate and disseminate good practice on Child and Youth Participation throughout the organisation
4. Develop, publish and disseminate a standardised pack on how to set up and maintain a children’s forum, drawing on best practice, expertise and literature
5. Develop, publish, disseminate and support staff awareness of, Tusla’s National Children’s Charter and National Young People’s Charter, created in consultation with children and young people
6. Roll out of our Child Protection and Welfare Strategy throughout Tusla incorporating Signs of Safety as our new national model of practice

“ We find that people are listening to us – that’s the major thing. This will make us bond and bring positivity. Everyone is trying to get involved to create something and it lets us explore our own ideas

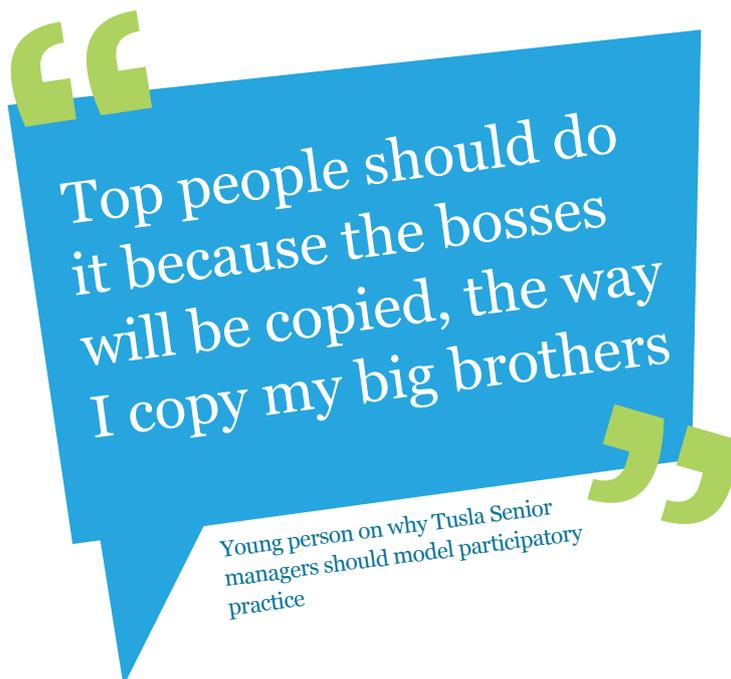
Young person on participation in Tusla

5.2 Culture

Tusla will further develop an organisational culture of participatory practice, as well as systems to support this

Activities

1. Senior managers will complete training and will model, mentor and coach staff in participatory practice
2. Build on the capacity of Tusla staff members in participatory practices, including parental participation
3. Encourage all Tusla staff and funded agencies to use the Child and Youth Participation Toolkit and the Parental Participation Toolkit
4. Participation-proof all future policies, guidelines and procedures of Tusla to ensure that, every time a decision is taken that directly affects a child or young person, individually or collectively, their views are taken into consideration
5. Include 'awareness of children and young people's participatory practice' in the job descriptions of all Tusla staff



5.3 Connections

Tusla will achieve shared goals, standards and competencies in participatory practice

Activities

1. Develop a website for young people by young people providing information on Tusla services
2. Develop an aftercare website for care leavers
3. Initiate and evaluate seed funding projects aligned to the Lundy Model, to support and encourage best-practice development in children and young people's participation
4. Facilitate a diverse range of child and youth representatives to participate in local, regional and national events so that the collective voice of children and young people can be heard and responded to
5. Develop opportunities to hear the voices of children and young people in alternative care



I always found it difficult to mix with new groups outside of my own friends. Yet from working in a team with an amazing group of people, it has become second nature. I am no longer afraid to speak or give my opinion on topics that I care about. I would like to thank all the people involved in this incredible project

Young person on the Child and Youth Participation Seed Funding Projects



5.4 Processes

Tusla will continue to develop new processes to support participatory practice

Activities

1. Engage children and young people in the process of improving Tusla services
2. Develop clear, easy to use processes that enable children and young people to identify and communicate their individual needs
3. Develop creative ways to share information on Tusla services with children and young people using guidance from Hub na nÓg
4. Further develop quality assurance mechanisms to recognise best practice in child and youth participation
5. Support and encourage participation of children and young people in research commissioned by Tusla and conducted by Tusla staff where relevant and appropriate
6. Develop processes to review participatory practices for Tusla staff
7. Staff will support children and young people to participate in alternative care fora
8. Promote participation and partnership and establish local, regional and national capacity to embed participatory practice
9. Initiate further seed funding projects aligned to the Lundy Model to support and encourage best-practice development in children and young people's participation
10. Initiate a Youth Mentoring/Internship Programme for young people who have lived experience of Tusla services
11. Explore possible opportunities for the participation of children and young people in the recruitment process
12. Regularly review Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) Inspection Reports for learning points in relation to participatory practice to feed into Quality Improvement Plans

I think its been so different because we've got to meet with social workers and can talk to them

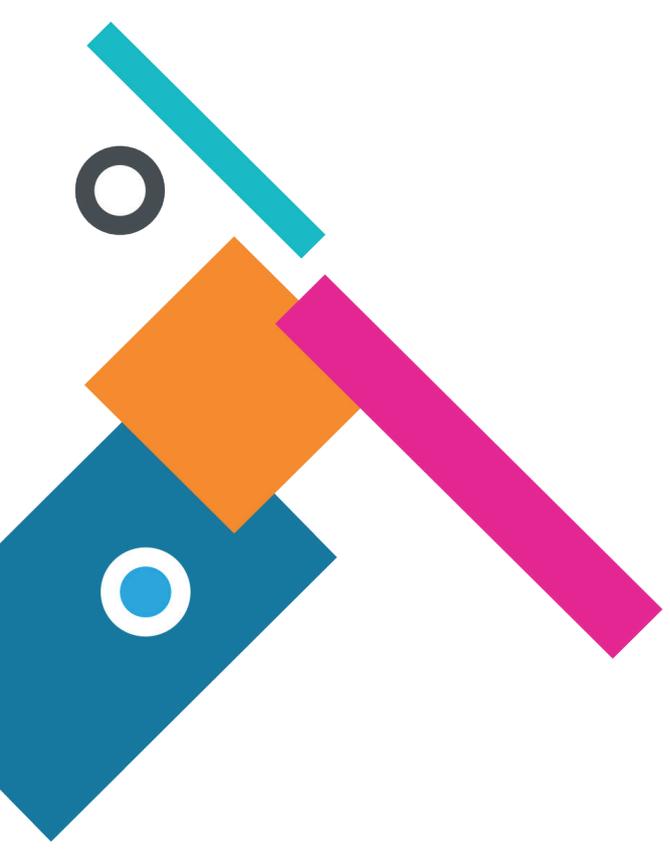
Young person on the Child and Youth Participation Seed Funding Projects

5.5 Scale

Tusla will continue to support all staff and staff in funded agencies in participatory practice

Activities

1. Ensure that participatory practice with children and young people is written into all Tusla Corporate, Business, Area Service and Quality Improvement Plans
2. Ensure that participatory practice with children and young people is written into all Service Level Agreements
3. Develop participatory practice nationally to support best practice and assist with improving participation practice across Tusla and partners agencies
4. Support Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) to continue to put structures and mechanisms in place to ensure that children and young people's active participation is included in the planning, development, delivery and evaluation of children's services
5. Implementation of this Strategy's activities are supported and reviewed



We are supported to come up with lots of different ideas and they help us plan them out

Young person on the Child and Youth Participation Seed Funding Projects

6. Implementation

Implementation Success Indicators

Tusla has identified progress indicators for each activity under the five Key Strategic Objectives. These indicators will help to measure the implementation of the Child and Youth Participation Strategy. Directorates and persons with lead responsibility have been identified for each activity.



The Child and Youth Participation training reinforced how important it is that we as frontline staff working with young people engage them in our work from the beginning. The training gave me the tools that I can use in my role to ensure that the voice of the child or young person is being heard and taken seriously.



Staff member on Child and Youth Participation Training



6.1 Structure Indicators – How we work

| Objective | Activity | Progress Indicator | Lead Responsibility | Timeline |
|---|--|--|---|-----------|
| Tusla will continue to support and promote systems to embed participatory practice across Tusla and Tusla-funded agencies | Develop, publish and disseminate the Tusla Child and Youth Participation Toolkit and promote the Department of Children and Youth Affairs 'A Practical Guide to Including Seldom-heard Children and Young People in Decision-making' to all Tusla staff and partners | Both the toolkit and practical guide are available on the Tusla website to all staff in Tusla and Tusla-funded agencies. | National Child and Youth Participation Working Group Workforce Learning and Development (WLD) Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) | Completed |
| | Develop processes and forums to include the voices of children and young people across Tusla services | A resource for the engagement of children and young people in the commissioning processes of Tusla (Tusla Commissioning Strategy 2017) will be developed. | Regional Implementation Managers Limerick PPFS Participation and Partnership Officer (PPO) Commissioning Directorate | Q3 2019 |
| | Collate and disseminate good practice on Child and Youth Participation throughout the organisation | Evidence of good participatory practice initiatives are shared through conferences, events, newscasts, newsletters and yearbooks. Evidence of good participatory practice initiatives presented by Tusla staff and partners at Day 2 of the Child and Youth Participation Training are shared. | Participation and Partnership Officers (PPO) Communications Workforce Learning and Development (WLD) | Rolling |
| | Develop, publish and disseminate a standardised pack on how to set up and maintain a children's forum, drawing on best practice, expertise and literature | A participatory pack and toolkit will be available on the Tusla website. | Empowering People in Care (EPIC) National Policy Manager, Alternative Care | Q4 2019 |
| | Develop, publish, disseminate and support staff awareness of Tusla's National Children's Charter and National Young People's Charter, created in consultation with young people | The National Children's Charter and National Young People's Charter is available to all staff. | National Child and Youth Participation Working Group Participation and Partnership Officers (PPO) All directorates | Completed |
| | Roll out of our Child Protection and Welfare Strategy throughout Tusla incorporating Signs of Safety as our new national model of practice | Demonstrable practice of participation through gatherings, evidence of practice seen in Quality Assurance Reviews. | Senior Management Team Policy and Strategy Operations | Q4 2022 |

6.2 Culture Indicators – How we think

| Objective | Activity | Progress Indicator | Lead Responsibility | Timeline |
|--|--|--|---|----------|
| Tusla will further develop an organisational culture of participatory practice, developing systems to support this | Senior Managers will complete training and will model, mentor and coach staff in participatory practice | Senior Managers will complete Child and Youth Participation Training and actively promote training and participatory practice in all staff from induction onwards. | Senior Managers Workforce Learning and Development (WLD) | Rolling |
| | Build on the capacity of staff members in participatory practices, including parental participation | All staff will attend Child and Youth Participation training. All staff will complete the Parental Participation E-learning programme and promote participation of children and young people with parents/carers. | All staff Workforce Learning and Development (WLD) | Rolling |
| | Encourage all Tusla staff and funded agencies to use the Child and Youth Participation Toolkit and the Parental Participation Toolkit | Staff members within Tusla will complete the 'Making Every Connection Count' self-evaluation checklist in the Child and Youth Participation Toolkit. | All staff | Rolling |
| | Participation-proof all future policies, guidelines and procedures of Tusla to ensure that, every time a decision is taken that directly affects a child or young person, individually or collectively, their views are taken into consideration | The views of children and young people will be explicit in all new policies, guidelines and procedures. | Policy and Strategy/ National Policy Oversight Committee | Rolling |
| | Include 'awareness of children and young people's participatory practice' in the job descriptions of all staff | Job descriptions for all Tusla staff will be adapted to include 'awareness of children and young people's participatory practice'. | Human Resources Policy and Strategy Quality Assurance Directorate | Q1 2019 |

6.3 Connections Indicators – How we work together

| Objective | Activity | Progress Indicator | Lead Responsibility | Timeline |
|---|---|--|---|-----------|
| Tusla will achieve shared goals, standards and competencies in participatory practice | Develop a website for young people by young people providing information on Tusla services | A Tusla website will be created for young people by young people. Implementation plan for sustainability will be created. | Changing Futures Seed Funding Project Dublin South East/ Wicklow National Young People's Website Working Group Communications ICT Directorate | Q1 2019 |
| | Develop an aftercare website for care leavers | A Tusla website will be created for care leavers. Implementation plan for sustainability will be created. | National Policy Manager, Alternative Care Communications ICT Directorate | Q2 2019 |
| | Initiate and evaluate seed funding projects aligned to the Lundy Model, to support and encourage best-practice development in children and young people's participation | Over 40 seed funding projects involving children and young people were established and evaluated. | Seed Funding Projects PPFS Senior Managers Participation and Partnership Officers (PPO) Regional Implementation Managers | Completed |
| | Facilitate a diverse range of child and youth representatives to participate in local, regional and national events so that the collective voice of children and young people is heard and responded to | We will work in partnership with children and young people to organise and host events to promote participation with Tusla staff and partners. | National Child and Young People's Participation Working Group Participation and Partnership Officers (PPO) Workforce Learning and Development (WLD) All directorates | Rolling |
| | Develop opportunities to hear the voice of children and young people in alternative care | Collective participation fora for children in alternative care were established. Fora materials developed and disseminated nationally. | Empowering People in Care (EPIC) National Policy Manager, Alternative Care Participation and Partnership Officers (PPO) | Completed |

6.4 Processes Indicators – What can help us do this?

| Objective | Activity | Progress Indicator | Lead Responsibility | Timeline |
|--|--|--|---|----------|
| Tusla will continue to develop new processes to support participatory practice | Engage children and young people in the process of improving Tusla services | A range of feedback tools are developed with children and young people (e.g. Tell Us at Tusla). Advisory groups of children and young people who have lived experience of Tusla services will be established and the establishment of a national advisory group or forum to inform senior management. | Quality Assurance Directorate Participation and Partnership Officers (PPO) | Rolling |
| | Develop clear, easy to use processes that enable children and young people to identify and communicate their individual needs | All staff will continue to create opportunities for children and young people to identify and communicate their needs. See Appendix 1 for examples. | All directorates | Rolling |
| | Develop creative ways to share information on Tusla services with children and young people, using guidance from Hub na nÓg | All materials will be reviewed by young people to ensure that they are understandable to all children and young people. | All directorates Communications | Rolling |
| | Further develop quality assurance mechanisms to recognise best practice in child and youth participation | The Investing in Children Membership Award™ scheme is in place to ensure commitment of services to engage in dialogue that leads to change. | Participation and Partnership Officers (PPO) | Rolling |
| | Support and encourage participation of children and young people in research commissioned by Tusla and conducted by Tusla staff where relevant and appropriate | Develop and support best practice approaches to participation of children and young people in research commissioned by Tusla or conducted by Tusla staff. Report on the number of research ethical applications to the National Research Office that involve children and young people in the study design. | National Research Office | Rolling |

(continued)

| Objective | Activity | Progress Indicator | Lead Responsibility | Timeline |
|--|--|---|---|----------|
| Tusla will continue to further develop new processes to support participatory practice | Develop processes to review participatory practices for Tusla staff | Tusla will include in all staff supervision the principles of participatory practice and the self-evaluation checklist on participatory practice. | All directorates | Rolling |
| | Staff will support children and young people to participate in alternative care fora | Additional staff will be recruited and additional collective participation fora for children in alternative care will be established. | National Policy Manager, Alternative Care Operations Regional Implementation Manager Alternative Care Fora Officers | Q3 2019 |
| | Promote participation and partnership and establish local, regional and national capacity to embed participatory practice | The capacity of Participation and Partnership Officers will be further enhanced and developed. | Regional Implementation Manager Participation and Partnership Officers (PPO) Workforce Learning and Development (WLD) Operations | Q3 2019 |
| | Initiate further seed funding projects aligned to the Lundy Model, to support and encourage best-practice development in children and young people's participation | Additional seed funding projects involving children and young people will be established (with a particular focus on seldom-heard children from groups such as refugees, migrants, homeless and those with disabilities). | PPFS Senior Managers Participation and Partnership Officers (PPO) Regional Implementation Managers | Q2 2019 |
| | Initiate a Youth Mentoring/Internship Programme for young people who have lived experience of Tusla services | Participation interns will be employed at a local, regional and national level. | All staff | Rolling |
| | Explore possible opportunities for the participation of children and young people in the recruitment process | Opportunities for the involvement of children and young people in the recruitment process will be identified. | Human Resources | Q4 2019 |
| | Regularly review HIQA Inspection Reports for learning points in relation to Participatory Practice, to feed into Quality Improvement Plans | Learning from HIQA reports is shared. | Quality Assurance Directorate | Rolling |

6.5 Scale Indicators – Who has to do this?

| Objective | Activity | Progress Indicator | Lead Responsibility | Timeline |
|---|--|---|---|----------|
| Tusla will continue to support all staff and staff in funded agencies in participatory practice | Ensure that participatory practice with children and young people is written into all Tusla Corporate, Business, Area Service and Quality Improvement Plans | Participatory practice is written into all Tusla Corporate, Business Area Service and Quality Improvement Plans and this practice is reviewed as part of the on-going review of these plans. | National Directors/ Managers Regional Directors Area Managers Service Director of Commissioning | Rolling |
| | Ensure that participatory practice with children and young people is written into all Service Level Agreements | This process will be reviewed as part of the on-going review of contracts, and best-practice examples are disseminated. | Area Managers Service Director of Commissioning All funding managers | Rolling |
| | Develop participatory practice nationally to support best practice and assist with improving participation practice across Tusla and partners agencies | Child and Youth Participation training will be extended to all funded agencies, community groups and organisations. | Workforce Learning and Development (WLD) | Rolling |
| | Support Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) to continue to put structures and mechanisms in place to ensure that children and young people's active participation is included in the planning, development, delivery and evaluation of children's services | All CYPSC will have a Child and Youth Participation Sub-Group to enhance and support inclusion of children and young people in the planning, development, delivery and evaluation of children's services. | Children and Young People Services Committee (CYPSC) | Q2 2019 |
| | Implementation of the strategy's activities are supported and reviewed | A national lead is identified and supported to work in partnership with directorates and report annually on progress. | Regional Implementation Manager All directorates | Rolling |

6.6 Impact Indicators – How we measure our progress

| Activity | Progress Indicator | Lead Responsibility | Timeline |
|---|---|---|----------|
| Tusla will develop a suite of outcome indicators to best reflect implementation of this strategy and its related objectives | Outcome indicators are developed to best reflect implementation of this strategy and its related objectives | Regional Implementation Managers Participation and Partnership Officers (PPO) Project Management Office | Q2 2019 |

Acknowledgments

We would like to give a huge thank you to the children and young people from across the four regions who gave their time and helped in the development of this strategy:

- Jump Club, Balally Family Resource Centre, Dublin South
- Rosebrook Children's Residential Centre, Dublin South West/Kildare West Wicklow
- Waterford and South Tipperary Community Youth Service
- Head Hackers, Kilkenny
- The Gateway, Monasterboice, Co Louth
- Tir na nÓg, Dublin North East
- Brú Bhríde Girls Group, Tuam, Co Galway
- Mighty Midlanders, The Midlands

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the development of this strategy especially the children, young people and 300 Tusla staff and community partners who participated in the consultations.

We would especially like to thank the Child and Youth Participation Working Group in particular Michelle Sheehan, Avril Dooley, Jacqueline Concannon, Emma Hanway and Joanne Walsh. A special mention to the guidance and support offered by the National Policy Oversight Committee, in particular Colette McLoughlin and Cormac Quinlan.

The overall Tusla – Child and Family Agency Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) programme of work has been supported by The Atlantic Philanthropies and special thanks to the programme lead Dr Aisling Gillen, National Manager for PPFS and Service Director, West.

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Appendix 1

Examples of clear and easy-to-use processes that enable children and young people to identify and communicate their individual needs:

- Implementation of Signs of Safety National Approach to Practice
- Implementation of Meitheal, a Tusla-led Early Intervention Practice Model
- Implementation of the Well Tree Model of Care in residential services
- Young people participate in their aftercare plans, as detailed in the National Aftercare Policy for Alternative Care
- Implementation of the AMBIT approach in the Alternative Care Therapeutic Service, working with hard to reach adolescents





OUR PLAN FOR PARTICIPATION

Our Aim: Every time a decision is taken that directly affects a child or young person, their views are taken into consideration

How we work:

- Participation toolkit for staff
- Sharing good examples of what works
- Sharing Children's Charter and Young People's Charter
- Children and young people's needs included in funding decisions

How we think:

- Participation training for staff
- Mentoring & coaching each other
- Children and young people help us to write our policies
- Participation included in all job descriptions

What can help us:

- Giving feedback to Tell Us at Tusla
- Information that is easy for everyone to understand
- Investing in Children Membership Awards
- Signs of Safety, Meitheal

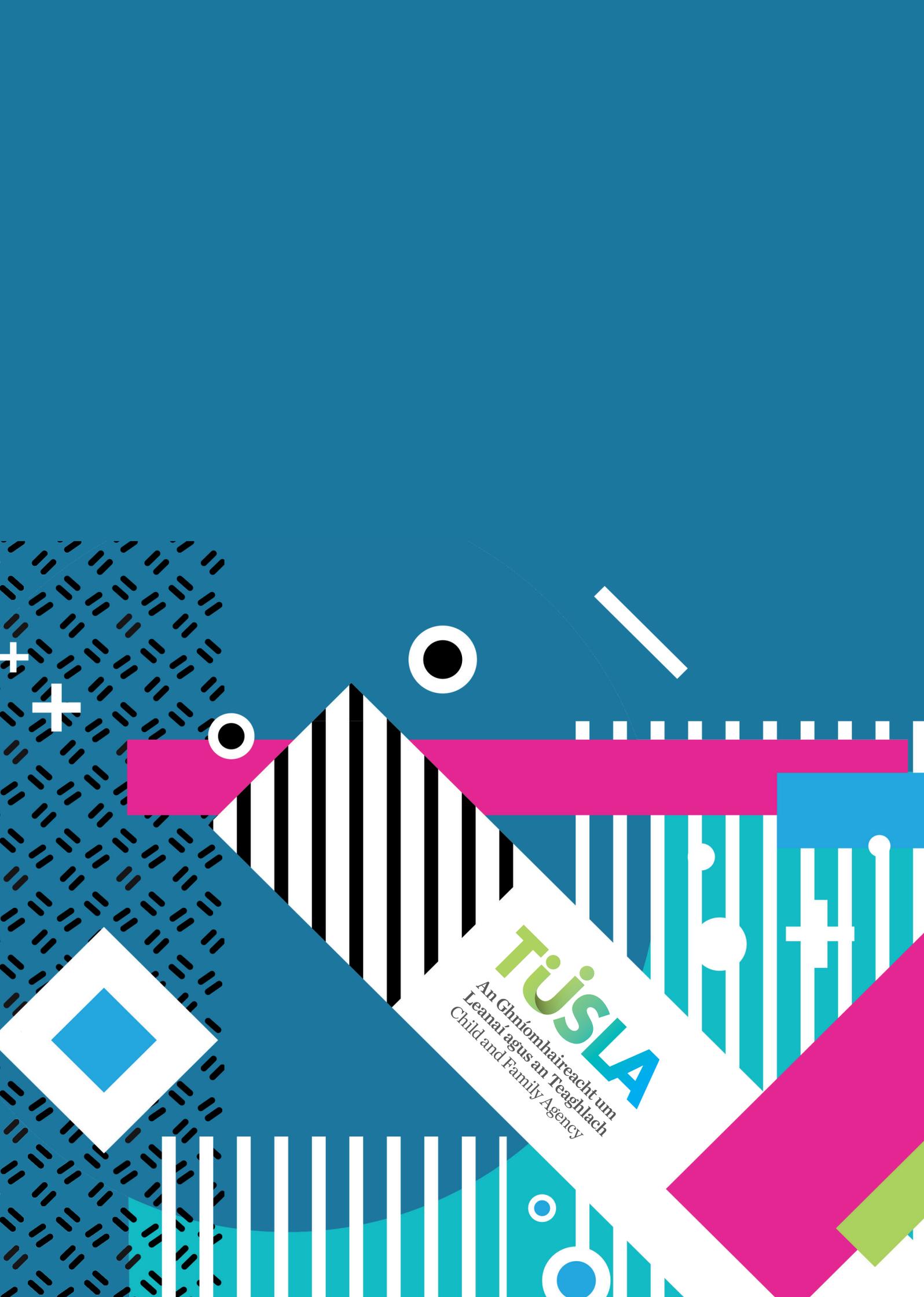
How we work together:

- Tusla National Website for young people, by young people
- Aftercare Website
- Seed funding projects for children and young people
- Participation conferences
- Fora for children with care experience
- Involving children and young people in the recruitment process

Who should do this?

- All Tusla staff
- All staff in organisations Tusla gives money to
- All staff in organisations that work with Tusla in the community

There are lots of ways to become involved with Tusla. Ask your youth worker, family support worker, social worker, social care worker or aftercare worker for more information on projects in your local area.



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Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
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