

Growing Our Values



On 19 February, the Chinese New Year marked the start of Spring, a sign of new beginnings. 2015 is the year of the Sheep, the Goat and the Ram, which is associated with the values of empathy, compassion and creativity.

Values are core to creating a sustainable inclusive culture. Importantly they underpin our recently published corporate plan and encompass: -

- Courage and Trust;
- Respect and Compassion;
- Empathy and Inclusion.

These values and behaviours represent a firm commitment to the children, families, communities and partners with whom we work, about what we want to be, how we want to act and what we want to deliver. The values and behaviours were informed by a wide-ranging consultation with staff and stakeholders undertaken in the preparation of the Corporate Plan last autumn. I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this consultation.

The Corporate Plan has now been submitted to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and was laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas on 20 February.

The Business Plan for 2015 has also been

finalised and is the first of the detailed annual accounts of what is to be achieved in the year ahead to meet with the overall core outputs and strategic objectives detailed in the Corporate Plan. Unusually for a state agency, we took a decision to include the Tusla vision, mission and values and behaviours in the 2015 Business Plan to demonstrate that these are not just aspirations, but are at the heart of our daily work.

For Tusla, 2015 is about creating a sustainable organisation that is reliable, responsive and consistently applying the highest national and international standards of best practice. This will build upon the strengths of our able and highly committed staff who have worked with dedication, professionalism and considerable resilience to establish this Agency.

Tusla is an agency that not only talks the talk, but walks the walk. My challenge to each one of you for this year is to incorporate the values and behaviours into your dealings with every colleague, service user and external partner.

Gordon Jeyes
Chief Executive

Corporate Plan

Tusla has recently published its Corporate Plan 2015-2017. This plan was produced after wide consultation with staff and key stakeholders and sets out not only the

values underpinning the Agency, but also the way in which those values can be translated into high quality services for children and families.

The plan sets out Tusla's vision and mission. These in turn outline the kind of organisation Tusla wants to be, how it wants to act and what it wants to deliver upon. In order to achieve this, a clear set of values and behaviours are identified to ensure that the Agency interacts with children, families and other stakeholders in a consistent and considered way.

It also outlines a number of initiatives currently underway that will deliver tangible improvements for targeted groups within the first three years. These include a targeted range of family and parenting supports, evidence-informed processes and systems, and embedding education in service delivery for all children in order to produce the best outcomes for children.

These outcomes cannot be realised without delivering on a number of key strategic objectives detailed within the plan along with the actions underpinning them. Tusla believes that it will achieve these objectives and in doing so will be able to provide the best services possible to children and families in Ireland.

The Corporate Plan can be downloaded on www.tusla.ie



Early Intervention and Prevention Programme Tusla

Tusla – Child and Family Agency is undertaking a comprehensive programme of early intervention and preventative work as part of its National Service Delivery Framework (NSDF). The Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) Programme, as it is called, will take place over three years (2015 – 2017) and will build sustainable intellectual capacity and manpower within Tusla enabling the organisation to focus on early intervention and prevention as part of its body of work.

The work is being supported by a once-off funding grant of €8.3 million from Atlantic Philanthropies (AP). Fred McBride, Chief Operating Officer with Tusla explains: “The AP grant is a once in a generation opportunity to change how we do child protection and family support. It will enable Tusla to build sustainable intellectual capacity around early intervention and preventative work, which would not have been possible within current budget restrictions. Importantly, it will create space to develop and embed a new way of working without detracting resources from existing services to children at risk.”

Under the Child and Family Agency, Act 2013, Tusla has a clear remit to provide early intervention and preventative supports to young people. However, by necessity, the vast majority of work has been focused on the high risk end of the spectrum.

Fred McBride explains: “While Tusla works in partnership with and/or funds many organisations engaged in prevention and early intervention work at local level, historically these services have operated independently of one another. This has resulted in some overlap, duplication and gaps in service provision.

“The rationale behind early intervention and preventive work is to stop problems getting worse or, indeed, to stop problems arising in the first place. Tusla was acutely aware of the need to provide accessible services to young people and their families who are not at crisis point but who still require support in an appropriate, proportionate and timely way. We began exploring how this might best be done from an overall national perspective.”



Through various fora, Atlantic Philanthropies became aware of Tusla’s interest in early intervention and prevention. In 2010, AP provided funding of €25 million to the Child & Family Research Centre (CFRC), NUIG to work with Tusla to prepare strategy and guidance on prevention, partnership and family support. On the basis of strategies and guidance documents produced and progress made by Tusla in advancing new practice models, AP offered Tusla a non-discretionary grant of €8.3 million to develop and mainstream a programme of work around prevention, partnership and family support within Tusla and partner organisations, across a number of key themes:

- participation;
- parenting;
- commissioning;
- the area-based approach to PPFS and the Meitheal model; and
- public awareness.

This programme will run for three years, 2015-2017, and will involve a national training and change management programme across Tusla and partner organisations.

Fred McBride concludes: “Through this programme, Tusla will be able to bring about a fundamental change in how we protect children: that is to prevent them from reaching crisis point.

“Due to the focus on capacity building, Tusla is working to ensure that the programme is sustainable and will continue to benefit children and young people long after the grant is complete.”

On 13 April 2015, Tusla is holding an event in Dublin Castle to announce details of the PPFS programme.

Business Plan

Tusla has recently submitted to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs its draft Business Plan for 2015. This sets out the priorities for 2015 which build upon the work begun last year to make Tusla a sustainable organisation that is reliable, responsive and consistently applies the highest standards of practice.

The primary focus of 2015 will be working to make the Agency fit for purpose as a responsive partner, collaborator and leader in cross-sectoral service delivery and inter-agency activities. This will be done while seeking the support of all sectors of society to support children and families.

These priorities are contained within each of the five key output areas as laid out in the Corporate Plan.:

- *Child Welfare and Protection*
- *Evidence based services*
- *Family and Parenting Support*
- *Promoting attendance, participation and retention in education*
- *An organisation fit for purpose*

A newscast will be issued to staff once the Business plan has been finalised..

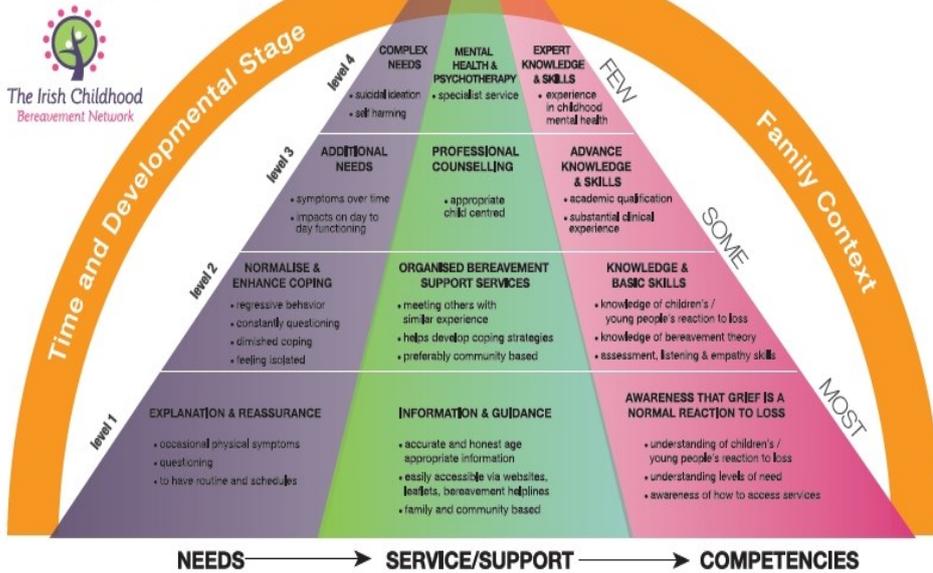


Cycle to Work Scheme

The 2015 Cycle to Work scheme for Tusla - Child and Family Agency, will open to employees on Monday 2nd March. The scheme will run until 31st October 2015. The terms and conditions along with the application form can be downloaded from the Tusla Hub.

New Childhood Bereavement Care Pyramid

The Irish Childhood Bereavement Care Pyramid



Every day in Ireland 80 people die – these people are the grandparents, parents, siblings, aunts and uncles of our one million Irish children. In the main, children adjust to the bereavements that they experience in life within the context of their family and community, but a good understanding of their needs and reactions is essential to their support. Those who care for them need to understand and respond to ‘normal’ grief in order to identify the possibility of situations where children develop maladaptive behaviours.

The Irish Childhood Bereavement Care Pyramid, which is co-funded by Tusla, has been developed by the Irish Childhood Bereavement Network (ICBN), is a quick reference guide for those who are concerned with identifying and responding to the needs of a child or young person who is bereaved.

The pyramid recognises the essential role of families and communities in supporting bereaved children and sees the family (in most situations) as the primary source of support for a child in this circumstance. It emphasises the impact of time on the bereavement processes for any child as well as the need to recognise the impact of their developmental stage. It explores three different facets of concern to adults when supporting a bereaved child. It looks at the child's needs; the supports and services that are appropriate to

address these needs; and the knowledge and competencies required by those individuals who set out to provide information, support, counselling and psychotherapy to children and young people who experience bereavement.

Furthermore, in exploring the different level of need exhibited by children who are bereaved, the Pyramid divides these needs into those that apply to most children (Level 1), those that apply to some children (Level 2 and 3) and those that apply to few children (Level 4).

The model is inclusive in tone, and is intended for use by parents, teachers, health professionals, or any adult in contact with bereaved children and young people.

Tusla's own services and those funded by Tusla are providing supports at all four levels – responding to the basic and some of the more complex needs of bereaved children, whether cared for in the context of their families, foster or adoptive families, residential or special care. The ICBN model is a means of clarifying what may be required and is a step towards comprehensive and joined-up approaches to children's wellbeing.

A background document and copy of the pyramid are available on the ICBN website – www.childhoodbereavement.ie

NRP Event

Tusla are hosting a seminar on the 26th March to publish the Annual Report as well as the most recent selection of reports from the National Review Panel.

The event will focus on the learning as well as contextualising the work that is being, and has been, done by Tusla in response to these serious incidents and child deaths.

The seminar will take place on the 26th March in Chartered Accountants House, Pearse St, Dublin 2 and includes speakers from Tusla as well as Dr Helen Buckley, Trinity College and Professor Andy Pithouse, Cardiff University.

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:

- National Assessment Framework for Foster Care
- Empowering Practitioners and Practice Initiative (EEPI) Newsletter
- Payroll Calendar 2015
- Meitheal Toolkit – for use by practitioners using Meitheal.
- 5th Biennial National Child Protection and Welfare Social Work Conference

Tusla Research Strategy

The Tusla Research Strategy has been signed off at the February meeting of the Board and sets out a plan for the next three years for the development of a research function and the promotion of a research culture across the organisation in support of corporate strategy. This will ensure that all research undertaken or commissioned by Tusla will be nationally co-ordinated and will inform the priority needs of children and families who avail of Tusla services.

Learning organisation

Tusla is committed to being a learning organisation providing evidence informed services. The Tusla Research Strategy places Tusla within a sector wide strategic approach to knowledge about children's lives. The strategy will contribute to understanding the most effective ways to intervene in children's lives and to ensuring that this knowledge informs service development.

This strategy will help to ensure that research findings and data collected by Tusla will be made accessible for use by other researchers to increase the possibilities of meaningful analysis of data across sectors, services, disciplines and over time. It will also help to forge links across the wider landscape of stakeholders and service users with an interest in promoting and developing quality research activities in child care.

5 Strategy Objectives

The Research Strategy sets out 5 key Objectives to be achieved within the timescale of the Corporate Plan 2015 – 2017. These Objectives will provide a framework within which Tusla can progress its overall strategic goals in regard to research. These Objectives are to :-

Develop research infrastructure

Provide research coordination

Use research to develop the capacity of Tusla as a learning organisation

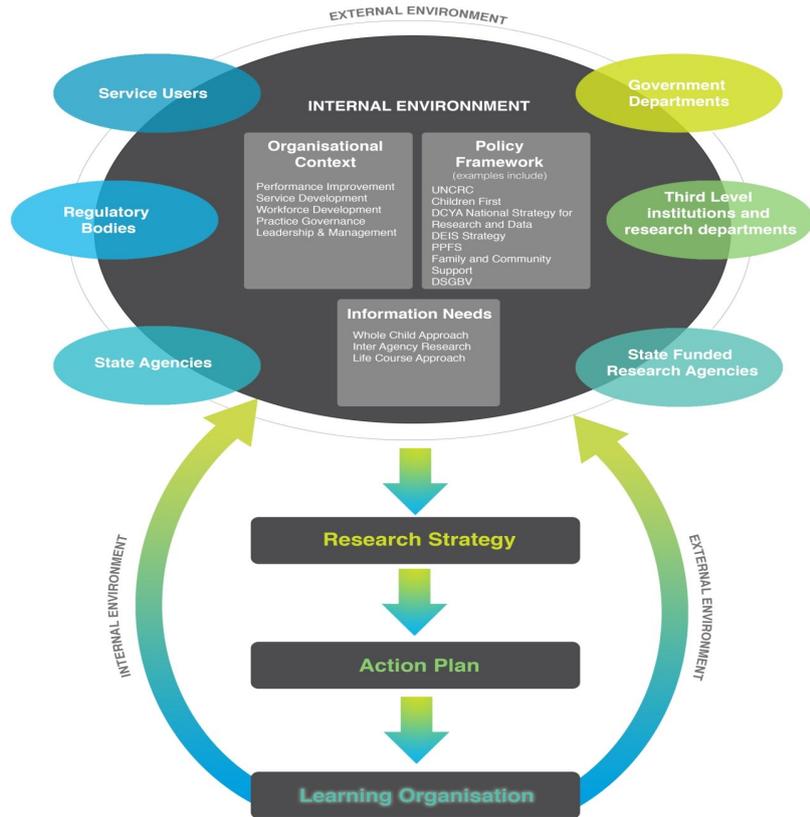
Use research information to support improved service delivery through evidence informed practice

Use research to inform and guide policy development.

3 year Action Plan

In order to achieve these Objectives the Strategy sets out a detailed 3 year Action Plan involving a range of staff, stakeholders and external agencies and work is well underway on implementation. Actions for 2015 include establishing a Research Ethics Committee (REC) and a Research Advisory Group (RAG).

The REC plays an important role in research governance by reviewing research-



proposals, establishing appropriate principles of good practice and establishing robust monitoring arrangements. REC composition will be in line with international best practice.

The RAG will provide independent expert advice to Tusla on identifying and prioritising research topics. Its input will help to enhance the quality of both the research process and the research findings through eliciting a broad spectrum of experiences and views. The RAG will represent a wide range of stakeholders with an interest in promoting and supporting research including service users, academic institutions, regulatory bodies, professional associations and research institutions.

Other Actions for 2015 will be to establish a Research Register, to set up a research web portal, to promote partnership with third level institutions and to conduct research needs analysis.

Research Strategy development process

The ongoing process of research strategy development in Tusla will be informed by knowledge from a range of sources. This is neither a static nor fixed process, rather it is a dynamic and iterative process of development that will be continuously refreshed and updated within an organisational culture that is 'research-minded'.

The diagram above illustrates this process.

Research culture

In order to become a learning organisation with a shared vision there is a need to develop a culture in which there is a commitment by staff to the process of learning and where individual learning can be transferred into organisational learning.

As part of this process Tusla is currently engaging with HSE Library services as key partners in information provision. Tusla is seeking to establish a baseline of data and information in regard to the information behaviour of staff with a view to improving the provision of information to support evidence based practice.

In collaboration with HSE Library Services, a survey was undertaken in October 2014. A cross section of 64 staff representing all directorates and grades were nominated by service directors with a response rate of 78%. The survey report will be available on the Tusla Hub.

This is just one in a number of initiatives designed to support evidence-informed decision making and promote high quality service delivery including establishing research training modules through Workforce Development, establishing research activities in compliance with CPD standards and requirements and rolling out the Evidence Informed Practitioner Programme in liaison with the Centre for Effective Services.