

# TÜSLA

An Ghníomhaireacht um  
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach  
Child and Family Agency

# Parental Participation Initiatives 2024

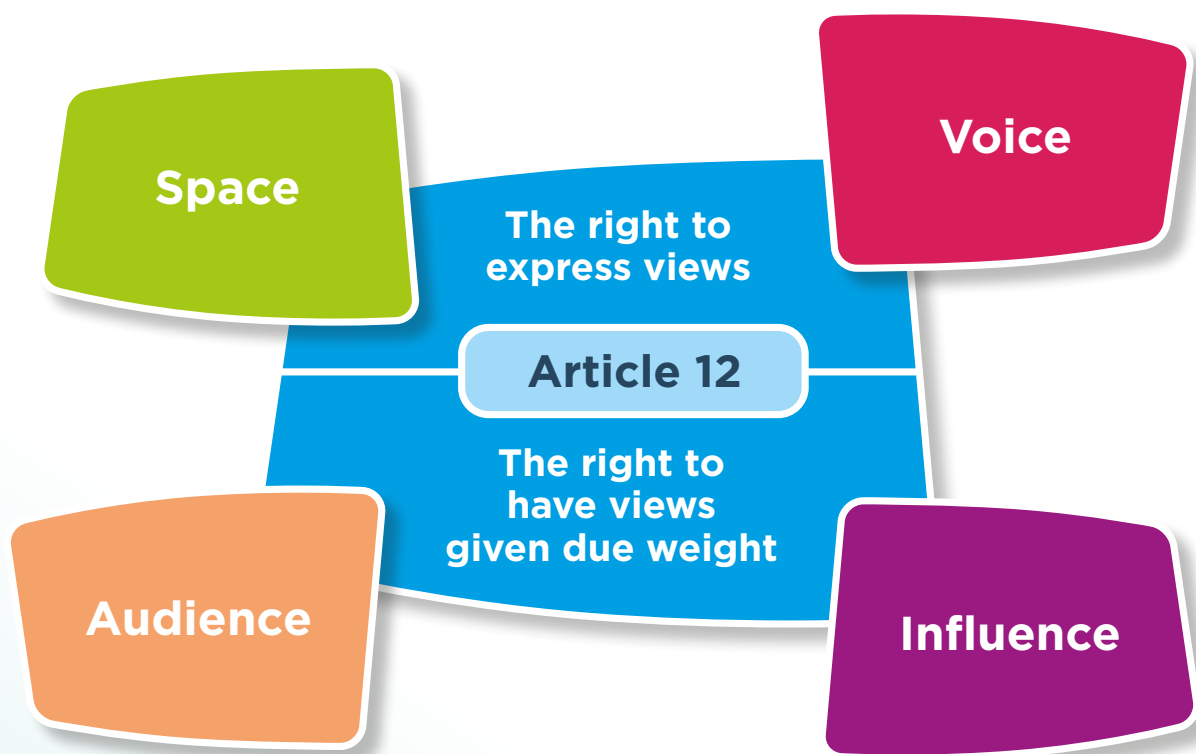




## Under the Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) programme, Tusla has been assisting areas in exploring and developing parental participatory practice initiatives since 2016.

Tusla has made funding available to support new initiatives that require funding to progress. Services and areas had the opportunity to submit one or several proposals endorsed by the relevant area manager. The Lundy Model of Participation (2007) was recommended for reference when completing the applications.

This document contains brief descriptions of all of the Parental Participation Seed Funding projects that were granted funding in 2024. Many of the projects included here can be easily replicated in other areas, and some may have resources available as a result of their work that can be shared with other areas/services. If you would like more information on any of the projects included, please contact your regional participation officer.



**Lundy Model of Participation (2007)**



## DUBLIN MID LEINSTER

### DUBLIN SOUTHEAST / WICKLOW

#### Barnardos – Drop in Service (Women’s Advice and Support)

Participants of the TLC Mum’s group wanted to establish a parent led drop-in service that could support them and other mothers who have experienced domestic violence. The participants voiced they would like to develop the drop-in service further by organising activities and events to increase their sense of self-worth and resilience through confidence building activities and peer support.

#### Daughters of Charity – Socially Connecting Parents Together

Following on from the success of their work in 2023, this parents group continued to work together throughout 2024. The parents were supported to identify the supports and activities they would like to access in relation to parenting support. A common theme amongst parents became evident in relation of the effect of the restrictions imposed due to COVID 19 and the impact this had on their parenting and their own mental well-being. Staff worked with the parents to design a support programme based on these identified needs.

#### Foroige – Social Connections

Through a consultation process many parents highlighted feeling isolated, bored, anxious and have low self-esteem. They voiced getting out of the house for social activities would be good for their mental health. The consultations identified upskilling courses that could be used as a social outlet while also opening employment opportunities for the future. A family day was also planned in consultation with the parents, and this provided further opportunities to build social connections.

### DUBLIN SOUTH CENTRAL

#### Tusla – Hearing the Voice of Parents who have Contact with Tusla

Family Support Service staff worked with parents to create a short film production which shows the development of the service in DSC. The film includes interviews with family support practitioners and parents describing their experiences and parenting journey. This provided parents with the opportunity to describe their experiences with Tusla FSS and offer recommendations of how services can be developed to improve outcomes for their children.



### **Deansrath Family – Father's Group**

Fathers whose children are linked to this service voiced that traditional one to one support that was on offer did not always work for them. They recommended that an activity-based support group was established which would offer them a safe space to access information, peer and professional support, while also engaging in activities of interest to them. The fathers lead the group supported by staff from the service. The fathers take turns facilitating the group, running workshops on topics of interest to them such as copper art, finance, and mental health. The group meet weekly to support members who have suffered from poor mental health, addiction and homelessness issues.

### **Mercy Family Centre - Community-Centred Parenting Empowerment**

This service held focus groups to engage with its service users to discover how they can support parents in a way that works for them. As a result, they developed workshop based on input from the service users, with a curriculum focusing on fostering a supportive community environment. The group now meet weekly and are provided with ongoing opportunities to provide feedback which is used to refine the workshop delivery.

### **Crosscare – Family Meditation Garden**

This project was to create a tranquil outdoor space for parents, young people, and families that is their own. Crosscare staff engaged with parents who are already meeting regularly in the service to plan for the development of the space. Parents were involved in designing the garden space, choosing the plants, fruits and vegetables that they would like to grow. The meditation garden is now available as a place to be still and reflect. It is also used for family and group meditations and sound baths.

## **DUBLIN SOUTH WEST / KILDARE / WEST WICKLOW**

### **Extern – Occupational Recruitment Programme**

Extern's IHSS team engaged with service users to explore supports external to the Extern service that they would like available to them. Surveys were used to identify 'what types of supports would they like to avail of outside of the IHSS programme'. The feedback we received identified numerous course 7 workshops of interest to service users, for example computer training, First Aid and support around managing challenging behaviours. All the courses that were suggested were explored and many were facilitated for the parents.



### **CDI - Hearing their Voice; Parental Participation and Consultation in CDI's Strategic Planning**

CDI recruited an experienced facilitator to run several focus groups and semi structured informal interviews with parents to better ascertain their understanding of their own communities, the supports available and the areas in which they feel CDI should help. The parents views were used to inform CDIs strategic planning and identify priority area for the service.

### **Tusla – Dunlavin Parents Group**

This parent led group provides a warm and inviting space for parents to meet and engage with each other for peer support. Supports such as parent/toddler groups, book club and family fun day are also provided by this group.

### **Daughters of Charity - Listening to the Views and Perceptions of our Clients to Effect Real Change**

The team in Jobstown Family Centre established a parent's group who led this project from the beginning. The members were given full autonomy over the direction of the group. They decided to create a podcast and other supporting materials to have their voice heard.

### **South Dublin County Partnership – Lámh Training**

St Thomas JNS have a parent's group who volunteer in the school to support teachers in the classroom, including providing support to children with additional needs. The group are committed to learning new skills to better support the children. The parents group reached out to SDCP requesting support to access Lámh training to better support the children they work with.

### **Tusla – Foster Carer Appreciation**

This project aims to support recruitment and retention of foster carers by providing appreciation events for foster carers. The events are planned by a working group which includes foster carers who are involved in all the planning. Surveys are also used to engage with more foster carers from around the area. The appreciation event is planned based on all their feedback. The events provide further opportunities for engagement with foster carers to inform how the service can recruit and retain the areas foster carers.



## MIDLANDS

### Lus na Gréine FRC - Lego Club

The club was established by parents with the support of Lus na Gréine FRC, with parents involved in all parts of the setting up and running of it. The aim of the club is to provide a safe social outlet for parents of children with high levels of stress, anxiety and mental health challenges. It is a space where children can come together to engage in an enjoyable activity, while also providing a peer support network for parents.

### Tullamore Community and Family Resource Centre - 'Creative Expressions'

Parents were supported to help their children on their therapeutic journey by giving the parent an understanding of creative therapy. This empowered them to support their children at home with the use of creative approaches when verbal communications are challenged. Parents were provided with the opportunity to have input into course delivery by expressing what they would like to get from it, they also provided feedback at the end of the course which can inform delivery of future courses.

### Parents First - Embedding Sensory Play for Young Children in the Home

This service provided sensory play sessions for parents and their children. Each child was provided with a small play pack to embed the play activities in the home. The aim was to support parents to give their child a rich home learning environment centred around sensory play and development.

## DUBLIN NORTHEAST

## DUBLIN NORTH CITY

### Finglas summer sun for everyone - Better Finglas, St. Helena's FRC and Finglas West FRC

The service stakeholders engaged parents with additional needs on what they needed, the parents highlighted the need for a summer schedule of events where they can meet other parents in similar situations that's fun based for all. The service provided transport and an array of events that the parents requested to be included in their summer fun day. Additionally, self-care and consultations days with parents were held at their request in the autumn. Some of the parents also wished to become involved in a parenting forum for children with additional needs that can help direct interagency work.



### **Safe play area for children and their parents living in Finglas West - Finglas West Family Resource Centre**

Parents in Finglas West wished to have a safe play area for their children. As a result of their requests ground works proceeded in the latter part of the year to make the area in the family resource centre more suitable to the needs and requests of the families. The area now has play grass, sensory equipment like tactile stepping stones; a gross motor skills set. Also sourced were outdoor musical bongo drums, a willow outdoor Teepee. The play area now caters for weekly Toddler, Baby Sensory and Homework Stay and Play groups and will enhance the opportunities for child development particularly motor skills and self- regulation.

### **Axis Ballymun - Parental engagement initiatives with fathers**

Axis wished to develop their parental supports to fathers, the service wanted to have a support person with community development experience expand its offering to Dad's. The service engaged Dad's in a survey to exactly establish what supports they needed. The service has rolled out a number of events and will in due course collate all the data. According to Axis the audit will enable it to see areas that Dad's feel are working well and those that need to be prioritised and improved.

### **St. Kevins Wellbeing Garden - Finglas**

Parents, transition year students and leaving certificate applied students worked collaboratively with St. Kevin's college staff to develop a wellbeing garden on the school grounds. The parents felt that the wellbeing aspect of the garden should be primarily focussed on student wellbeing. The work commenced in January 2024 and will conclude in January 2025. Together everyone involved helped clear the ground, planted plants and build seated areas. The facilitators noted that they observed positive parental engagement and better relationships between parents and their children.



## DUBLIN NORTH

### Parent Information Hub and Website - Barnardos

Following consultations with parents who were part of a focus group they highlighted the need to have a parent information hub and website designed. The service planned a number of consultation sessions in conjunction with parents, they provided transport and refreshments. The bulk of the funding for the website and information hub will be focussed on mobile responsive design, drag and drop facilities, information and contact pages. Separate complimentary functions include but are not limited to options for admin to manage events, category search functions and updates on training.

## LOUTH / MEATH

### Women's Aid - Dundalk

Women's Aid Dundalk invited former service users to share their learning on programmes the service had provided to them. Over a six-week period, nine participants impacted by DSGBV shared what they believed is needed for women parenting through the trauma of DSGBV. The service users wished to see change and better outcomes for families and hope to influence service delivery. During the course of the six-weeks Women's Aid worked with other domestic violence agencies and the participants. It was noted by the service that being part of the project has really encouraged the participants who presented their findings to relevant stakeholders on December 10th, 2024.

## CAVAN / MONAGHAN

### Parenting Monaghan

The service through consultation with parents identified specific needs in the area. The parents identified special needs and early years programmes, talks on social media, worries, anxieties and resilience in children and teens and hypnobirthing. Other topics also included the parenting journey. Parenting Monaghan rolled out a three-month series of talks on the above topics from September to November 2024.





## Parenting Cavan

The service supported parents to write to and arrange to meet representatives of the Department of Social Protection around various issues, processes, rights and entitlements. Parents also wished to address mental health concerns and CAMHS supports needed for children with ADHD and ASD. Parents wish to develop a parent hub; they attended National play week with diverse activities available including a focus on 'Time to Play'. Some of the emphasis has been on Parent and Toddlers Outreach Clinics for parents to have a place to meet and chat. In mid-summer a day trip was organised which involved a boat trip for parent groups.

## WEST NORTH WEST

### DONEGAL

## Donegal Parent and Family Support Service - Parent Hub Donegal Development

Ensuring parents have access to up to date and relevant information is a key part of ensuring parental participation is possible. DPFSS recognised the importance of this and wanted to ensure that their parent's hub and social media was being managed effectively to promote participation. DPFSS employed a part time Parent Hub Coordinator to support the work of the Parent Hub in Donegal. The coordinator links in directly with the Parent Hub Subgroup which includes Donegal PSCs. Parent Hub members have also been actively involved in the review of the website and sharing of information, and promotional material which has renewed their interest and sense of ownership of this work.

### SLIGO / LEITRIM / WEST CAVAN

## Sligo Childcare - No Door is the Wrong Door

The main aim of the Parent Support Strategic Plan is to meet the current identified needs of parents in Sligo/Leitrim. As per the strategic plan there is need for one door for information, training and parenting support programmes. This project aimed to increase parental participation through engaging with parents to make improvements to availability of parenting programmes and accessibility of information. As a result of the work there was a 50% increase in parental participation in programmes, significant increase in the traffic to the web site, and an improved coordinated approach to service delivery with C&V and statutory actors in Sligo Leitrim by ensuring information provision is channelled through the Parent Hub.



### Sligo FRC – Music Group

Parents in the area contacted the FRC in relation to providing music sessions for themselves and their young children. They wanted this option as a social outlet to meet other parents and children. In addition, more parents who moved into the IPAS centre next door to Sligo FRC requested activities for themselves and their children as many of their children are unable to find creche or school places. Sligo FRC agreed to run a pilot music group for parents and their young children. The group is facilitated by a trained classical musician. The parents who attend provide ongoing feedback to the FRC in relation to the music group and other services in the area.

### Tubbercurry FRC - Activity Programs to Support New Communities

This service has an inclusion worker who engages with new community families in the area. The worker uses their meetings as an opportunity to engage with parents from the families to capture their views and encourage participation. The service also hosts monthly connect cafes where isolated or vulnerable service users can participate and share their views. All of the feedback gathered went on to influence events and programmes that were provided throughout 2024.

## MAYO

### Tusla – Mayo Family Support Embracing Inclusion

Tusla's Family Support Service wanted to ensure there was sufficient accessible information available to everyone in the area. They translated into 9 languages their family support information and information for children in care and their foster carers. The Circle of Security Programme was also rolled out to vulnerable parents residing in accommodation centre in Castlebar. Additionally, a resource document was developed with principles on best practice to support engagement of fathers in the area.



## GALWAY / ROSCOMMON

### Boyle FRC – Parent Led Workshops and Volunteer Training

The parents who engage with the service were consulted with and identified a need for some specific workshops and activities that they would like to have available for their children. Based on their feedback inclusive workshops for children with additional needs and their siblings were provided. Training and resources were also sourced to develop a sustainable Building Bricks (Lego) club for children in the community. The parents from the support group were trained as volunteers which now supports further participation opportunities into the future.

### South Roscommon FRC

This project aimed to empower parents of children/teenagers to coordinate and facilitate activities which the children/teenagers have chosen through the consultation process that was supported by the Family Resource Centre. They also created a peer support group for parents of children with additional needs and encouraged the parents to take a leadership role within the group. The peer support group also provided further opportunities to gather feedback from parents regarding their needs.

## MID WEST

### CLARE

### Traveller parents Together – Tusla and Clare Traveller Community Development Project (CTCDP)

Tusla, CTCDP and partners in Clare Local Development Company collaboratively worked together to facilitate the voices of Traveller parents to hear their views, ideas and suggestions. Thoughtful participation focussed on children and families and considered cultural sensitivities and inclusion. Through comprehensive discussion with Traveller parents, they wished to have a series of Christmas parties for children and their families in different locations i.e. Shannon FRC, Northwest Clare FRC and Rice College Ennis Santa. Santa Claus attended the events where there was food and fun activities for all. The families welcomed the events which allowed a respite from the challenges Christmas brings.



## LIMERICK

### Gaggle Podcast – Foroige West Limerick

The project aim was to engage parents in Foróige West Limerick Youth Initiative project through a parent’s monthly coffee morning and a podcast initiative. Parents and young people attended workshops that included introductions to sound engineering, content creation exercises and group discussions. The young people learnt communication and leadership skills and interviewed parents on their experience of parenting. Some topics included creativity, drug and alcohol education, sexual health, relaxation, plus activities included virtual reality and Music Generation music workshops.

## NORTH TIPPERARY

### Parents Hub – Barnardos Thurles

This project aimed to design a parent hub, five services across North Tipperary asked parents for their input into the design and layout of the hub. The services supporting the parents researched other hubs in order to have comprehensive ideas of what could be delivered. The parents were offered the research to review and to make their suggestions for their own hub. Throughout the whole process they gave their submissions to ensure their hub is useable and accessible to all parents. The initiative was supported by the Parent Support Champs who highlighted issues identified by parents that should be part of the hub.

### Infant massage classes - Youth Work Ireland Tipperary

The service rolled out infant massage classes both in May and November having been asked to provide it. There was also a learning element to the classes where parents became skilled at infant massage and also received learning materials. The service provided refreshments during each of the classes and sought the views of parents during and after the process to inform service improvements. The parents noted bond’s with their babies improved, they slept better. The parents said they enjoyed the classes, learned a new skill and shared a social experience with other parents.



### **Parents Plus Adolescent Programme – Roscrea Youth Service (RYS)**

RYS invited parents to attend an 8-week parents plus adolescent programme designed to support them with parenting their adolescent children. The programme was promoted to the wider community and was designed to provide parents with practical tools to improve communication, manage conflict constructively, and better understand the needs and perspectives of their adolescent children. The programme successfully concluded with RYS providing a trip to Waterford Christmas market to mark the event.

## **SOUTHWEST**

### **CORK**

### **Tusla - Groupwork for women impacted by domestic abuse**

The formation of this group provided peer support to women within their community enhancing their support system, building knowledge and confidence regarding awareness of domestic abuse empowering them to make changes to their lives.

### **Barnardos - TLC Cork**

TLC is a programme centring on management of the effects of domestic violence. It brings children who have experienced DV together and helps increase their understanding of what has happened. It also provides space for parents to learn to improve their responses to children's needs. This year awareness workshops were held throughout Cork both in the social work departments and at network meetings. A launch of the Coercive control web saw 100 practitioners come together in Cork city raising awareness of the fantastic tool. The Cork empower kids' group engaged in participation training prior to working on their new local project. Funding also went to training new TLC facilitators.



## KERRY

### Tusla - Kerry Parents Support Groups

Initiatives were developed in four separate areas to address needs and issues as identified by parents who when calling into their local FRC as well as those involved in the Meitheal process, engaged with local HSCLOs. Initiatives were also informed by engagement with local school and from parents' fora's etc. The workshops were directly related to the issues/request of parents. Parents became more empowered and had influence with respect to how their support groups were run in the areas where parents' fora were set up or where parents group is running i.e. Shanakill, Kenmare and Ballyduff. Workshops and support were offered on a range of topics, for example, supporting parents dealing with separation and navigating parenting while separated. Easy lunches for children (cookery workshop), Managing anxiety, dealing with school refusal and Managing aggression/violence in the home. Parental feedback was very positive, and they found the sessions engaging and helpful with the strategies learnt implemented in their home and had a positive impact on family life and functioning.

## SOUTHEAST

### CARLOW / KILKENNY / SOUTH TIPPERARY

### St. Catherine's Community Services Centre - Parents hub promotion

This year promotion of the parent's hub and website took centre stage in the southeast. There was a particular focus on marginalised area's that are not serviced by Family Resource Centres. As a result of this funding was utilised to provide merchandise including leaflets, pens etc for launch of the website. Outreach initiatives such as free paediatric first Aid classes for parents were provided and more will follow the website launch in early 2025.

### Foroige - Parent and Family Well-being programme

This programme was held with the aim of reducing stress and anxiety experienced by parents. A variety of wellbeing sessions to allow parents to experience different styles and approaches to wellbeing were provided. The social connections formed along with tools for management of stress left parents in the area feeling refreshed and renewed.



### **Forward Steps - Music therapy programme**

This programme was held with the aim of reducing stress and anxiety experienced by parents. A variety of wellbeing sessions to allow parents to experience different styles and approaches to wellbeing were provided. The social connections formed along with tools for management of stress left parents in the area feeling refreshed and renewed.

### **Summer Camp for children with Autism**

This summer camp aims to establish a collaborative and supportive partnership with parents of autistic children. The design of the workshops was agreed with parents based on the needs they identified for their children, and they linked in with staff in organising the children into the different areas of interest pertaining to their needs. A range of sports and crafts workshops were facilitated. The parents have continued to meet in Three Drives FRC as a Peer Support Group and are already looking at new ventures going forward.

It was a very successful endeavour and was really appreciated by parents and children and staff of the FRC.

## **WATERFORD / WEXFORD**

### **Barnardos - Women and Mother's social and emotional well-being group**

This group was formed with the aim of increasing social supports and parental well-being. Barnardos recognised that as the primary carers it was vital that the women's confidence and capacity as parents was supported from the outset, as they are the consistent figure of support for their children throughout their childhood.

Over the course of the year a mothers/women's group was held one day per week in Barnardos to the mothers living in the EROC centre. Participation was very important and the activities that were delivered were chosen by the women. The activities that were most popular included dancing, cooking, art, sewing, knitting, and relaxation exercises, physical exercise, a day out shopping in the city, walks on the greenway, a trip out to gardens in the city, trips to local tourist areas. Included was time for discussion on parenting, relationships, culture, family, fears and hopes.

The overall objective of Barnardos intervention with the mothers was to improve mental and emotional resilience and cultural understanding of life in Ireland to ease transition from the reception centre to resettlement communities.

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